

VICO LESSONS

This collection is intended for those who read Vico in private study, wish to relate him to their work, and/or simply want to get more than the official view. It is not definitive or comprehensive. It is an eccentric reading of Vico aiming to explore the hidden territory in which Vico signalizes to the reader as one spy flashes a light to another.

—D. Kunze

preface / Vico's clouds

It would be fair to say that it is mostly scholars and those connected to “institutions of higher learning” who have anything to do with Giambattista Vico. But, Vico’s birthday, June 21, suggests that there is a kind of teaching involved that had already been perfected by the Essenes in the first century BCE, whose most famous practitioner was John the Baptist, whose most famous student was Jesus. To compare the Essenes with university faculty and students is wildly inappropriate. The latter aim to be certified for a semblance of learning, mostly shaped by ideology, whose final products can hardly be said to be wise except by accident or careful inattention. The former, the Essenes, aimed at *kenosis*, a way of “knowing without knowing,” a tactical maneuver aimed to outflank questions involving self-reference, where the knower who frames is also the occupant of the frame. Clearly, Vico was himself aware of the implications of his name and birthdate. He altered it, intentionally, so that years of events that took place later, which he wanted to “calibrate” according to an idealized astrology of genius (based, most likely, on the model of the melancholy genius guided by Saturn), would align. This is an early warning message: if you side with the university crowd you are likely not to be even slightly amused by my take on Vico. I *am* a part of that crowd but I do not side with it. Like Norman O. Brown in his famously “take no prisoners” commencement address to the graduating students of Columbia University, I believe that universities offer more impediments to learning than opportunities, although the opportunities it does offer are undoubtedly rich, varied, and numerous. What I don’t side with is the ideological formation of the university, its organizational drive towards falsification and manipulation through certification — this is like loving God but hating religion.

What little I know of the Essenes is that their teachings were minimalistic, secret, and based on radical subjectification of what is known through meditation, prayer, and conviviality. The part of Vico I like is, like the Essenes, minimalistic and secret, not so much because it has been purposefully hidden from view but because it involves reading between the lines, finding patterns in errors, and wondering why some things, placed in full view, have been ignored consistently by the university crowd. Were Vico alive today, he would have very likely been

surprised that so many of his clues went unnoticed; or that even some of the ideas he placed in the middle of the reader's view still were ignored. There is a "missing Vico" because Vico scholarship has followed only a few paths: (1) the path that has taken as its mission the revival of Vico as a "weak" or "obscure" thinker, a path that tries to attach Vico to any and every "mainstream" thinker or idea; (2) the path of competing extra-sensitivity, where scholars in possession of a lucrative vein of Vichian gold mine it for all it is worth, crediting their discovery on personal brilliance, effort, and insight; and (3) the path of the laborers who, working between paths one and two seek to find some way of using Vico to gain tenure and/or promotion.

If there is a fourth way, it would be best labeled "Vico for idiots," after the popular guides that are willing to condense any subject to pabulum if there is market demand. This presumes that idiots are really not-so-stupid people who just don't want to put in much energy to gain a passing knowledge of a topic. It ignores the original meaning of the word idiot, as a "private person." The idiot need not be a full-time idiot, but rather someone who, desiring to protect the precious commodity of privacy, does not feel the necessity of learning only for the sake of telling others what or that he/she has learned — in other words, learning for other reasons, private reasons: joy, love, curiosity, desire to see beauty up close. The privacy of this fourth way means that there will be no "Vico club" to celebrate it, and the nature of any reading is that of a reading among friends, whose trust trumps expertise and pretended authority. What follows are not arguments, demonstrations of learning, or attempts to dazzle. Each chapter materializes a number of ideas that, like clouds on a summer's day, materialize and then evaporate. In between they may take on animal shapes, cast dark shadows, or bring rain to thirsty plants. They may storm out picnics and parades; they may coalesce to make for a gray spell.

The clouds are in some way barriers to the clear blue beyond that is the understanding of Vico. Vico himself valued the azure, which he cited as *caelum*, meaning both heaven and a wedge. For "wedge," read "wit," for this was the shape of thought designated by the Late Mannerists, whom Vico read and knew well, for the figure of *agutezza*, an "argute" or acute saying that penetrated the mind. This blockage of the blue sky is necessary, in this minimalistic public phase, for the more private personal experience of epiphany. Vico is, if anything, the philosopher of epiphany, and there is nothing more personal, direct, or unsharable than epiphany. Like Saul/Paul on the road to Damascus, when we are struck blind by the vision of epiphany, people around us don't know what the hell is happening. The "for us and us only" aspect of epiphany means that the very thing that convinces us absolutely will not allow us to convince others simply because we tell them about our experience. We will become like Cassandra, cursed to always tell the truth but always be misbelieved. In fact, this may be one way of gauging the learning process.

Once the gears have been reset from the university study of *Vico*, there is a chance that “learning through the personal/idiotic process of epiphany,” where clouds shield the pure azure of truth that shines through if one is persistent and lucky, can happen. Naturally, it won’t be the same for any reader. It won’t even be the same for any one reader’s reading. It is natural to be of one, two, or many “minds” about *Vico*. Quoting *Vico* as an authority is ridiculous, unless care is taken to frame his points. One such case is the famous *verum ipsum factum* doctrine, quoted so often and with such assurance, to prove the “humanistic claim” that humans have full access to their cultural creations, or to prove the opposite Positivist-Relativist claim that the idea of truth is always a construct, that we should probably abandon it entirely. *Vico* can be known in part, and certainly these takes on the *verum factum* have their points to make, but anything borrowed must be repaid with interest. *Vico’s verum* is an interesting commodity. It is constructed out of metonymy rather than metaphor (as so many would claim). It is both a part of the frame’s content and the action of framing. It is both possessed and possessing. It is a gap, a void. It resists paraphrase and/or recycling. This review hopes not to tread on the *verum’s* sacred domain, but it will try to dispel the simplistic views that have attempted to castrate and simplify it.



1 / originality

Vico is not like any other thinker. He is original, but even in an “original” sense of original. Bergin and Fisch, the translators of the *New Science* and *Autobiography*, talk about this in

their introduction to the *Autobiography*. It could be some kind of neural oddity (Vico claims that his fall from the ladder in his father's bookstore was his foundational event; the doctor's prediction that the boy would either die or grow up an idiot is justification of a "Vico for idiots" book). But, my view is that Vico had a sense of his place in history, and his relation to key texts. He saw his life in terms of a destiny with future readers. He realized his life was in some sense a fiction that he could "perfect" in order to make his lucky birthday, June 21, the solstice and day of St. John the Baptist, into a key clue. Note that giving his wrong birthday, which Bergin and Fisch note but don't explain, is a means of "adjusting" other dates within his life and making sure all the numbers add up.

Studying Vico begins with a feeling of desire to see beauty and to know it at the same time. It is not like the usual academic project of wanting to know aggressively or to be "a smart Vico person." It is a loving act because Vico invites only true lovers into his secret rooms. He knows who can love him and who can't.

Dear reader, it's necessary to read most of Vico's minor works (*Antiquissima*, the *Study Methods*, *Autobiography*) before finishing *The New Science*, but you don't have to read in any order. Don't worry about the original Italian versions. Italians only began to be interested in Vico when they read the Bergin Fisch translation! Finally they could get past Vico's 18c. way of speaking and hear him with an original voice; take this seriously! Vico is a *voix acousmatique*. His knowledge is an "emergent knowledge," one that comes about through a kind of internal divination, a freedom *act* of the subject, a strapping on of angel wings. I'm not making this up. Actually I am but it is true, in Marco Frascari's sense, that our wings are artificial and our flight is like the flight in and of dreams — the release from anxiety of vertical distance.

With only the paragraph above this one a reader might have everything needed to know everything worth knowing. But ... wait! There's more! Here is a little about *la voix acousmatique*. You may know the joke about the Italian soldiers, whose commander ordered them to "Charge!" The soldiers did not move, but one of them finally responded "Che bella voce!" (What a beautiful voice!) The acousmatique is not about the main message but about the hidden messages that "signalize" from a distance (this is the function of metonymy). There is a lot of signaling in Vico. Begin with the *Autobiography*, for example. Bergin and Fisch catch Vico in a few obvious misrepresentations, beginning with his birthdate. Vico seems to forget what year he was born, but this is not a memory lapse but rather a way of setting the clock so that the count of when certain inaugural addresses took place has a greater significance. If you figure out which ones match up to other errors in dates, you see how subtle is the cipher that Vico sends to the sensitive readers willing and able to pay attention.

There is more ciphering in *The New Science* (*NS*). Italian readers always complained that the book was repetitive and boring. They never understood Vico until they read him in English!

Again, this is the tactic of pacing the text so that certain alignments take place, and always there is the rhythm of the "ideal eternal history," the narrative order by which subjectivity makes its world: first from myths, then from heroic stories that secularize the myths, then finally in the logical accounts that deal with the world as a non-subjective material that can be empirically measured and objectively known. This final stage is of course its own myth, presuming as it does that subjects and objects live apart from each other. The *Che bella voce!* in Vico is the beautiful voice of the ideal eternal history, the pulse, the heartbeat. Once you tune into the heartbeat you have the means of overcoming Vico's many difficulties.

Vico is dark, a natural melancholic, and like the darkness of the pupils, said to enlarge to throw the beloved into a shadow, the point is to make the distance that Vico creates more understandable, more bearable. This is not the distance of history, of events long past — the "remote mists of antiquity" as Vico puts it. He collapses this distance by comparing multiple cultures in his "Table of Cebes," a large *matrix* at the beginning of the *NS*. By sliding the examples along the horizontal, he shows how beginnings, middles, and ends can take place at any time, any place. This cancels the idea of linear, historiographical time. You can have primitive cultures living alongside late ones (for Vico, "primitive" simply means "first"; he shows how the first humans are actually more sophisticated in their way than the "beasts" of conceptual consciousness). The "Table of Cebes" is drawn from a text famous since the Middle Ages, a polyglot story credited to the Cebes who had known Socrates, but this has been shown not to be possible. There was another Cebes Whoever Cebes was, the image associated with his text is the famous "mountain of choices" (*mons delectus*) that hung on the back wall of the temple of Saturn as pilgrims passed by. They inquired about the meaning of the image and the attending priest warned them: this is an image of wisdom. If you understand it, you will be granted perfect peace and understanding; but if you don't it will drive you mad." Vico knows that the reader will compare this warning with the warning of the physician who treated him after his fall. "If the child lives, he will grow up to be an idiot!" This either/or is a version of the forced choice, but is a forced choice that Vico escapes, and he invites the reader to escape. The temple of Saturn and its image also remind us of the melancholy basis of the *NS*. It is the humor (cold and dry) that is friendly to genius, wit, and absurdity. It can handle paradox. It abandons hope, which makes us think that the temple shown at the top of the *mons delectus* is something that the wise pilgrim will renounce — the idea of absolute knowledge. It is not the goal of the *NS*. Another kind of wisdom takes its place, a wisdom of resonance, and the *voix acousmatique* that creates echoes in everything. Vico says: the ideal eternal history is good at every scale, from the development of whole nations down to the experience of personal events, private perceptions. This is why it is impossible to "interpret" Vico. It is about resonance and the idea that wisdom, true wisdom, is *emergent* rather than additive. We get more than we deserve, with this kind of wisdom; it comes as a gift, and we know the giver: not the divine eye in the frontispiece of the *NS* but from the *donna metafisica*, one of the two women who always appear together, and later

appear together as the Diana of Diana and Actæon and the Diane/Semele of the story of Endymion. Vico's short reference to this pair appears at the middle the *NS* and he points to it as the center anchor of the whole work — yet, no scholar has ever made mention of this!

Reading Vico is thus a personal discovery process, where very little can be confirmed or even acknowledged by the "official" scholarly experts. Reading Vico is like the comparison made by the postman in the film, *Il Postino*: "Poetry doesn't belong to those who made it; it belongs to those who need it." Vico doesn't belong to Vico, so to speak, even less to those who pretend to possess Vico through academic credentials. Vico belongs to those who need him, and this desire is the dimension that Vico uses to replace empirical space and time. It's internal, intimate, and continually reconstructed.

Because of this unique relationship between writer and reader, most people who take up Vico and read him like any other philosophers make grave errors. They are incapable of the kind of conversion Vico plans for the reader. What is this conversion? I recommend that you use the on-line text version of Bergin and Fisch, which will make it easier to search.¹ You can select the PDF version and download it to be within easy reach. The "read online" option is also good. Find, for example, the text where Vico describes the process of reading the *NS*. He specifically describes it as a transumption (the original Latin term designation "metalepsis"!) of the role of the writer by the reader, accompanied by a physical "divine pleasure." There can be no clearer evidence of Vico's intention. It is to give the text to the reader so that the reader can reconstruct it from inside his/her own subjectivity. This is a different kind of book, for a different kind of reader. We have to ready ourselves for this difference. In Vico, we get everything and nothing: complete freedom of subjectivity liberated from the dominance of the Other, and nothing, no specific content, no interpretive designations that fit within any symbolic schema. This is Lacan speaking from inside Vico.

This introduction should be short, because it involves a lot of "homework." But, you should be a bad student, here. You should be lazy in your reading, and forget a lot. You should daydream. You should not care where you are going. You should not take notes except where you feel compelled. Your wandering will be an attitude that matches Vico's and Vico's own wandering style. It will ready you for the big surprises you will meet.

We will find a place for all of the terms that have come to us in studying metalepsis: body loading, super-symmetry, chirality, as well as the compact set of terms that come from Harold Bloom: demon and askesis; tesseræ and clinamen; apophrades and kenosis. To my knowledge no one else uses these terms to talk about Vico, but in my view, it is impossible to understand Vico's own special terminology without them. With Vico we have not just the "ideal eternal history" but the idea of a "common mental dictionary" (two centuries before Jung!), the

¹ <https://archive.org/details/newscienceofgiam030174mbp>.

imaginative universal, the “twin eyes of history and geography,” the famous *verum ipsum factum*. We can only stumble and be confused if we try to see these as separate codes to be deciphered. They work together, in a circular way. The new terms I bring to Vico, from Lacan and metalepsis, show how this circularity is related to the *NS* as a document of subjective desire that attempts to move beyond the “symptom” (an understanding of the human by creating captions and maps) to the “sinthome” (an interactive and recursive understanding that is at the same time, an “unlimited semiosis” which Vico himself enjoys — and says he enjoys).

This guide will be redundant and repetitive, but I will try to include unexpected and difficult projects, things that are necessary to make Vico’s texts come alive. The general structure of study begins where Vico begins, with the images that were inserted in the “second *New Science*” at the last minute, to take up the blank spot left by retracting a letter addressed to Carlo Lodoli. Lodoli planned to finance Vico’s publishing of the second edition but withdrew his support after a misunderstanding. Vico had to raise the money himself and was bitter. But, his letter, an attack on Lodoli, was unwise, and he was advised to remove it. Because books were made to fill the number of pages predetermined by folding a standard size sheet of paper into half, quarters, or eighths, the pages left over would have remained blank. Vico had his (Rosicrucian) friends devise an emblem for his work, and he described the emblem in detail. This emblem, the *dipintura*, is a strange work that has been analyzed from many angles, but in my view no explanation has emerged. Even Verene missed the fact that Vico commented on every object in the *dipintura* except the helmet of Hermes, the “helmet of invisibility” that seems to be the object of the gaze of the blind poet Homer. There is a joke here, I think. A blind man looking at an invisible object is very Lacanian! Lacan says only the blind have the ability *not to see* the things we invest with false dreams, with fetish values. Vico seems to understand this as well, and omits any discussion of the helmet.

The other image, on the title page, is equally mysterious. *Metafisica* is shown leaning against a plinth, on which is engraved a motto in Latin, *ignota latebat* (“she lay hidden”). Verene has gone into this image in detail, but has not connected the two *Metafisicas* with the two *Dianas*. Metaphysics and love, by their nature, “lie hidden,” they have a *harām*, something that should not be seen. Here we exchange privation for prohibition. What we can’t experience or perceive we imagine to be “taken away” from us and kept in a secret place. Value comes from this privation, and Vico understands how the thunder takes away the sky. He makes the moment of this privation into the first moment of human consciousness, and connects it to the first place, the first *matrix*, that establishes the human “site of exception.”

It will take some time to digest even the basics of these two images, but do not get caught up in detail. It is the strategy behind them that is clever, and in my view Vico intends the reader to identify with the divine eye, and we could imagine that the reader looks through this “hole”

into a mirror where the *dipintura* appears in reflection. Once the reader sees him/herself in the role of God does it become apparent just how *verum ipsum factum* might work.

The other place in the *NS* that provides a key is the middle, the short mention of the two Dianas. There are many themes that Vico's contemporaries would notice that we don't. Vanvitelli, the architect of Caserta, with its famous cascade sculptures, was one such reader, and this is why, perhaps, he places the story of Diana and Actæon at the key spot. George Hersey, who never misses an opportunity to miss an opportunity, misses the point of this, and his whole study of Caserta is marred by missing the Vico connection. Many miss Vico's points or try to subvert their meanings. They need a Vico who confirms their more simplistic views; they use Vico as a prop, not a source of continually renewed meaning. We won't do that. We follow Vico's own advice, his kindly invitations for us to read him as he wrote, with chirality, super-symmetry, and reversed predications galore. We will learn how Vico "interrogated the gap," how he understood the constructions of universals out of particulars, causes out of effects. We will see how Vico conceived his work as that of a large super-computer, a *zairja*, from which truth emerges in *mi-dire* formulations that are not, as critics complain, the result of Vico forgetting what he said and didn't say, but Saturnine constructions of an "art of memory" within a back-and-forth within the text. The left and right of the *New Science* construct a parallax that is the basis for the dimension that Vico constructs within subjectivity, within the subjectivity of the reader.

2 / fake beginning

We have to make a short excursion to the question of Vico's religion. Bergin and Fisch, Vico's main translators into English, take up the matter of the Spanish Inquisition, which imposed the prevailing ideology of severe Catholicism in the days of Spanish rule in Naples. Vico grew up and worked his life within the tyranny and oppression of severe Christianity. Was he a Christian? Verene says no, that he was clearly an atheist. I disagree. His disappointment with Descartes (*contra* Pérez-Gómez, Vico was not fully anti-Cartesian; in his youth especially, he took up Descartes' theories enthusiastically. He was a part of the Neapolitan "underground," a mix of late Renaissance mystics, revolutionaries, intellectuals, poets, artists, and critical thinkers, many of them wealthy aristocrats, who flirted with Stoicism, Lucretianism, Epicurianism, and other "occult" and certainly non-Catholic views while at the same time maintaining sincere interest in the religion of their families. This was true syncretism, and my guess is no one in the group that found Vico to be its principal intellect gave a damn about specific dogma. The movement most in touch with syncretism as a formal alternative to Catholicism was that of the Rosicrucians, and, according to the art historian, Eugenio Battisti, in a personal conversation we had in 1988, Vico was definitely and definitively a Rosicrucian.

No "official" Vico scholar has discussed or even mentioned this fact, which Battisti conveyed as incontrovertible. The Rosicrucian "touch" is evident in the use of emblems in Vico's famous frontispiece to the *NS*, the *dipintura*. His ability to call on these artists (engravings typically involved both an artist and an engraver) on short notice would seem to prove that he knew they could "deliver the goods" he wanted without much fuss. So, why the scholarly ignorance or indifference to Rosicrucianism? My only guess is that the religious complexity of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, to say nothing of the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance, is simply too complex. We know from other key projects that collaboration among the "adept" of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity was intense and prolific, but also secret, operating as it did at the edge of all three religions. Luria and the Kabbalists, the appearance of the *Zohar*, the texts that inspired Giulio Camillo ... all of these indicate that there was a level of understanding that cannot exist today, a level which is bound to be misunderstood, and under-appreciated.

Take, for example, Camillo's famous project for François I, the "memory theater" involving a 7x7 matrix (in the true sense). Frances Yates' botched account has poisoned the well of contemporary understanding. She was "assigned the project" by the Viennese Positivist Ernst Gombrich, whose major work, *Art and Illusion*, tells you how he wished to place poetic mentality *opposite* rational thought. Anyone in Vico's circle would have regarded this as sheer idiocy. For them, the poetic *was the only means* to rationality; the two were not opposed. Only when rationality came to be identified specifically with Descartes and reductionistic methodologies did Vico and others feel the need to "stand up for the cause" of the poetic in human life. It was a provoked fight, not a natural one. For at least two centuries, Mannerism had promoted the cause of *agutezza*, the employment of witty, sharp thinking through metaphor. Vico grew up in this atmosphere, where the poetic mentality was key to clear and distinct thinking, the ideal stolen by Descartes and subverted into an early form of positivism. So, for Gombrich to select Yates, then a young scholar without any interest or expertise in the art of memory, to write such a study, was a specific snub of the three scholars who were the rightful heirs of Aby Warburg's famous institute and library, moved from Hamburg to London in the early days of World War II. Fritz Saxl, Erwin Panofsky, and Raymond Klibansky, who had just completed their masterful book *Saturn and Melancholy*, had already laid the ground for the project of artificial memory. Why Yates? The answer can be only that Gombrich saw the threat and nipped it in the bud. Yates stumbled and staggered through the material but pulled off a readable, believable account of artificial memory from Simonides (the official inventor) to the late Renaissance. The criminality of Yates' book is that it missed the chiasmus built into the story of Simonides, and failed to understand the rhetorical "investments" of any subsequent memory methods. The connection between architecture and memory was lost! The use of memory by Llull and the mystics of the University of Paris, including Rabelais ... lost! The central idea of Camillo's theater, again lost by those who embraced Gombrich's positivist purge along with the faint praise Yates had for memory as remembering, not

creating through the epiphany of the disappearing subject (*aphanisis*). She did not recognize in Camillo's small stage, the idea of suicide, of subjective transubstantiation. She did not read Camillo's book, the only evidence of the theater, with any insight. Such are the losses of modern "scholarship," which cannot understand the religious-poetic atmosphere of the Early Modern Period.

So, what was this "syncretic" atmosphere? We know from scholars such as Ioan Couliano, murdered by reactionary Rumanians at the peak of his career in 1991, that it was based on a complex idea of love that believed itself to be connected to the troubadour tradition of the Middle Ages. Cathars and other heretics developed the idea of the troubadour's love for the idealized feminine between the 12th and 14th centuries. Lacan of course is attracted to this unusual form of detached love, based on the impossibility of physical sexuality — impossible in a literal sense long before Lacan declared it impossible in a psychoanalytical sense. Possibly Lacan's famous phrase, "there is no sexual relationship," came from his interest in the troubadours. But, back to Vico. The mystics of the Late Middle Ages came out of cultures where there was natural cultural exchange, mainly Spain and Northern Africa. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they went to places where their skills — map-making, banking, mercantile exchange — were appreciated: Holland and northern Europe generally, Prague ... Venice. The eclipse of Spain as a world power by countries dedicated to free market trade also promoted the pockets of mysticism that had come with the Jewish intellectuals. Keeping a low profile was in their nature, but certainly Camillo could not have acquired his knowledge without their groundwork.

Look at Camillo's text, *l'Idea del' Teatro* (yes, spelled with an 'h'), which has to be gotten in English translation from Lu Beery Wenneker's Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh. Camillo is specific. He employs the Kabbalists' three-part soul model as a basic model, not of the physical design but of the program of how the theater idea works.

Camillo's 7x7 matrix *is* a matrix, and he understood as such. The key to the matrix as uterus involves the place Camillo uses as a clitoris, and this is easy to find, front and center, the place where Apollo should appear in line with the other Olympian gods. He is located, instead, in the next row above. The rows recreate the universe, from the lowest to the last at the top, where human works appear. Camillo narrates the sequence of "gods, heroes, humans," too, anticipating Vico's ideal eternal history by some two hundred years. So, why is Apollo not with the rest of the Olympians? The matter goes to what has filled in the void: The Banquet, referring, Camillo says, to the "Banquet of the Gods," mentioned by Homer. This is the moment when the gods are called away from Mt. Olympus to go to Ethiopia to enjoy roasted meats prepared on the occasion of the winter solstice. Macrobius, in *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, explains: the sun's annual cycle from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn draws up moisture in the zone directly beneath the sun's position above the

spherical earth. We should understand this in terms of the humors, and a way of organizing the astronomical/astrological lore that was well known in Camillo's and Vico's days. Moisture is pulled up, creating deserts or, where moisture is continually re-supplied, jungles.

There is also the Empedoclean logic of strife, represented by the gods to the left of Apollo (Saturn, Jove, Mars), and love, the gods Venus, Hermes, and Diana (the moon). When the sun, Apollo, "wanders," the Olympians are called away, creating an absence that Camillo would have known, through *The Zohar*, as *zimzum*. This is the space that God created by contracting Himself, to allow for the creation of the universe. God thus becomes a mother, a host/ghost, a void. This is the basis of the gnostic view which, many say, informs the Kabbalah. This womb draws in the solitary user of Camillo's memory theater. It is a vagina/uterus combination that means that the user's "memories" take place externally, that "the truth is out there," so to speak. The memories the mnemonicist has are not his/hers personally. They are universal. This is not a place to recall past images or facts; it is a place where the imagination works actively, but in the "modality" of memory. That is, it presents what has always been as a future, towards which the mnemonicist must be "ready." The matrix of course is the expanded womb, the 7x7 "cathexis" grid that moves from the fetish value of the myths (as literary documents or folk beliefs) to the *sinthomic* value that must be discovered in acts of love. You will be very powerful if you can understand this move. You will know what Camillo knew. Remember, Camillo, a very large monk, was said to have died in bed in the company of two women. He knew what he was talking about when he talked about love. But, we would also have to add that this move to the *sinthome*, which is a conversion of memory to imagination and *vice versa*, is also *j'oui-sens*, a listening for the *voix acousmatique*, the resonance from signifiers that act "at a distance" — the Mannerist model of *agutezze*, witty sayings/thoughts.

The emptiness of the middle seat on the first row connects us to the mysticism of Ramón Llull, the Catalan mystic whose methods were taught at the University of Paris up to the 1500s, when the Jesuits finally drove them out as witchcraft. Rabelais attended such classes, very likely, since he practiced a kind of textual Llullism in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Llull's system was a set of empty geometry chambers, each rotating inside the other. It was a genuine *zairja*, and we have to understand how the areas where Christianity, Judaism, and Islam came into contact, mainly Spain and northern Africa, were places where scholarship took flight. And, when the Arabs and Jews were expelled, the Jews went to such places as Holland and Venice, where their map-making, banking, and mercantile skills got them jobs and where they found new friends ready to hear their occult theories.

The idea of Camillo's theater, of Vico's *New Science*, and other grand schemes can be traced back to those who learned, from Macrobius or some other source (Cicero, Quintillian), the trick of Simonides "discovery" of the art of memory. I have analyzed this in several publications but

not won the Nobel Prize. It seems to be completely ignored by modern classicists, just as Poe's chiasmus has been ignored by multiple generations of Poe scholars before Kopley discovered it in "The Purloined Letter." Like the purloined letter, it is set out for all to view, but no one notices. It is in a *poché* space, put there with the technique of body loading. Simonides divides his story into perfect halves, and even some of the halves are divided in two. The bodies crushed by the collapsed building are identified because Simonides knows where they had been sitting. The point however is that the souls may now be released from the bodies. It is a *religious act*, not just a technical act of recall. The trick had been realized "retroactively." This is how Vico thinks of discovery in the *NS*. It will occur retroactively, an always-already thing.

Vico's *NS* is close to what Eric Santner calls a psychotheology. It is something that operates without dogma, without a literal instructional/inspirational text such as a Bible or Koran, without precepts or pledges of belief. It operates instead on the experiences we have of the world, it carries its capacity to create to things themselves. It invests in these things its own tiny pockets/*pochés* of uterine investment, it *delays* our perception and pulls time out of synch. and linear succession. It is a real case for the Real, in Lacan's sense.

You will begin to see how Vico resembles the Cathars, how he is a troubadour, devoted to love like Don Quixote. And this is not the love of boy-girl but the "impossible love" of, say, Krazy Kat for Ignatz. Once you recognize the signs/symptoms you will know what is going on.



3 / the real beginning

You already know the apocryphal story about the *dipintura*, how it was inserted "at the last minute" because of the withdrawal of Vico's acid rebuke to Carlo Lodoli ... well, whatever truth there is to the official account, there is this to be considered: the function of a lipogram, and the relation of the lipogram to the magic of "body loading." Needless to say no one in Vico-land has ever addressed these issues. They have all drawn diagrams, excavated origins of images, pinned down iconographic relationships, the whole nine yards without asking about the basic function of the "signalizing" that goes on when a text that should not have pages has pages and what fills those pages.

The lipogram is famous thanks to Georges Perec's novel, *La Disparition*, "the disappearance," translated as *A Void*. Vico uses the lipogram in another way, that is, he doesn't try to write the *NS* without the letter 'e'. Instead, he writes it without saying what is really the case. Vico creates a space, puts things in it that become invisible (this is the meaning of the helmet of Hermes, lower left). I believe I was the first to discover that Vico had left out mentioning the helmet of Hermes, of all of the objects he carefully inventoried in the text following the



dipintura. Verene at first denied this, then checked it out, then published it without citing our conversation. But, Verene doesn't know about lipograms, so it doesn't matter. The lipogram is a matrix, this is important. There are always two gates. The first gate is *via* the function of *agutezza*: the wit that travels out sideways from the text's normal gravitational fall. Some meaning is operating "metonymically," i.e. on the basis of its absence. It resonates from a distance.

By creating internal wombs inside the *NS*, Vico is able to store things without having them found-to-be-dissected by impious readers who would invade the sacred precinct of Diana. But, here's where the story of Actæon becomes interesting. Ovid knows that Actæon is unwitting in his discovery of Diana. He does not mean to violate her privacy. Accidentally, he sees the goddess's *harām*. What follows is keyed to be a descent, a *katabasis*, into the darkness of the text. This is where the text held by the reader becomes the reader being held/embraced by the text. This is what Vico means when he talks about in this passage, worth repeating:

§345 Thus the proper and consecutive proof here adduced will consist in comparing and reflecting whether our human mind, in the series of possibilities it is permitted to understand, and so far as it is permitted to do so, can conceive 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.

In a sense, the *NS* "comes to get the reader." This is what to look for in your reading, that conversion of extimacy.

We can't understand the *dipintura* without reference to Vico's *Autobiography*. He talks about the meanings of *animus*, as that which penetrates the "passive" *anima* of nature. OK, it's the 18c. Rather than think of sexual role models, however, Vico is thinking about thought, and

how it animates, how it functions as an automaton (doing things for us, without our knowledge) in the "world out there." In the *dipintura* we have a direct representation of the clear blue sky, the *cælum* that Vico says means both a wedge and heaven as blue sky. The sky clears and we see a wedge directly represented, it is also an "eye," both the optical kind and the aperture-opening to the divine mind. This is one of those etymologies that Vico uses to show how thought, in an earlier developmental stage, made concrete links between things that later had to be rationalized as concepts. (The *verum/factum* thing in the *Antiquissima* is an example.) In my perverted (intended meaning) view, this divine eye is actually the reader's eye. The reader looks at a mirror and sees the engraving which is on a panel facing away from him/her. The reader "comes in at the back" so to speak, to augment my whispering from the back method of teaching *Vico in situ*. More on this later. The divine ray is divided into two parts, and this connects to the double frame idea. We certainly also see a matrix from the other side: the objects arrayed in the clearing that Vico says is the first human place (matrix's other meaning), and he inventories this place carefully, showing how institutions develop from the material encounters "spiritualized" by the transposition of effect for cause. The first humans are frightened by the thunder; they transpose the fright (effect) to the cause (fearsomeness; Varro: religion begins with fear).

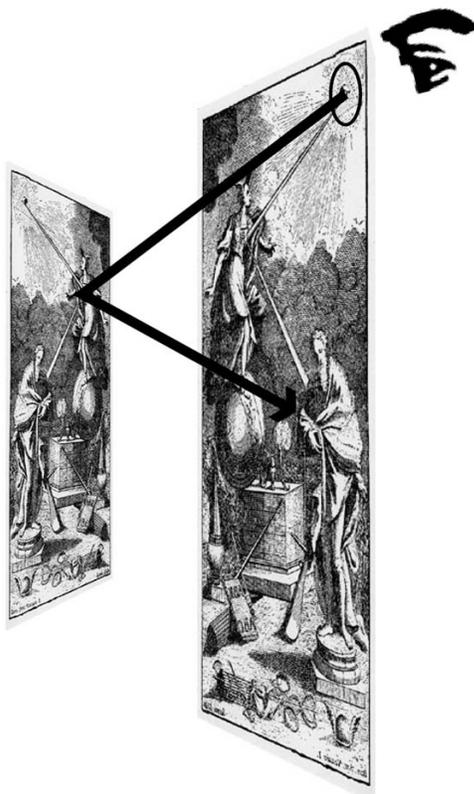
Our inventory ends with an incomplete item, the helmet of Hermes. It is reputed to be invisible, so we have the irony of a blind poet (Homer) seeming to look at an invisible object. (This was covered in lesson 1.) Because the helmet is the first instance of a lipogram, it also teaches us to look for a "cosmogram" inside the *NS*. Maria Frankel suggested that Vico designed the *NS* as a labyrinth because it seemed to spiral. Something like this happens but I think the design is more complex. Yoruba slaves in the American colonies installed cosmograms inside the houses of their masters, hiding herbs, nails, bones, mummified animals, and other magic things inside jars or bags buried behind the woodwork or paving. This created a design that had "sweet spots" where, if the intended victim/beneficiary was standing correctly, a spell/curse could be effected. Vico indeed has sweet spots, so my thinking is that he has a cosmogram. The "buried magic objects" are things like the helmet which enjoy a certain invisibility. Well, no critic mentioned that Vico had not talked about the helmet before I told Verene, and this means that for 250 years the "invisibility" of this fact was intact. This stuff works!

But, because we think of this inventory in terms of the symptoms that invest objects with a fetish value (cathexis), we can think of how fetish applies. Is it just folklore? No, I believe it is also and especially the scholarly fetishizing of certain topics and ways of talking. A matrix must gestate the baby, must move from fetish and symptom to *sinthome* — a love child. This is the job of Vico's reader as a lover, whom he courts with the same care as a troubadour wooing the Lady. AND, we know all about the ladies of Vico's *NS*: the "Donna Metafisica" of

the *dipintura* and the same (?) Metafisica leaning on the plinth bearing the motto *ignota latebat* ("she lay hidden"). The *harām* of Diana is identical to the hidden spaces of the NS.

No one has yet made the connection between *latebat* and the concealment of springs, the sanctity of marriage, and the myth of Endymion — before me, that is (not meaning to brag). I would say that it is essential to see how hiddenness works in general in the *NS*, how the text is a kind of purloined letter written in public but with its invisibilities intact. This is why Vico gives a very Lacanian reason for why Homer, the poet, can "see" the helmet of Hermes. Unlike those with sight, Homer cannot see the difference between the helmet and the other objects in the *dipintura*. That is, "poetry cannot distinguish invisibility as such and must present it candidly, directly." Vico tells us everything but we see very little. Without the eyes of an Actæon we cannot understand the lipogram, the cosmogram, the *poché*, the body loading of the *NS*.

Now, let's take up the silly idea of the Vico Box, the structure that I claim puts the reader in the place of Jove, looking in at the back of the image at a mirror. Yes, it's somewhat ridiculous but...



The point is that there is a "loft" or space between the reading and the conception. We have a double frame, and the reader takes up the role of a penetrating wedge (*animus*). It is not important to push this idea, but important to think that someone in 1744 thought this might be possible, and that they viewed the reflecting jewel on the breast of Metafisica/Diana (moon) as equivalent to what the reader must use to read the *NS*. She returns the gaze of the reader, and it is a sweet gaze, a forgiving and loving gaze. Her gesture shows that all is possible, all is knowable if one gives up the idea of wisdom as a total content. This is not a theory about culture, it is an invitation to be initiated into a sublime form of knowing that changes us, makes us as kind and loving as Metafisica herself.

I recommend that you read *Pale Fire* to prepare for reading *The New Science*, because after all of the idiocy of Kinbote in annotating Shade's poem in terms of his own situation, we forgive him, we see his Zembla as real, more real than the place we live. This little viewing box is not a gimmick except it has within it a great beauty

of understanding, *kenosis*. It is the knowledge that is given us after we give up, after we are defeated, after we are cast into darkness. I don't know who gives us this knowledge, but it is given, freely, simply for our joy. This is the spirit in which I want to give you what I know of *The New Science* and Vico's other works. I found that they had no academic use; no one will believe you. This puts one in the position of being a Cassandra: you will know and have the truth but no one will believe you!

4 / Vico's loft

It would be hard to talk about this image without bringing in the subject of "loft" as a space that is created by lifting up, just as the wind creates an upward force drawing up just the right size and shape of particles to become sand, those to be carried off, dropped somewhere, to form the beautiful dunes and drifts of the desert. That is the spirit in which Vico's loft pulls up out of the details and forgotten obscurities of his writing things into the womb of the reader's brain. This is not reading as much as impregnating, and Vico is not the first to use this idea. There is St. Jerome, who argued that translating the Bible was a matter of being impregnated by the *afflatus*, the divine whisper of God, and not any attempt to match of words from one language to another.

Jerome's brain-child was the translation of the Vulgate, and we have to put Jerome's ear in the same category as Freud's ear of psychoanalysis, a channel to a womb, but not the woman's natural womb. The womb is a matrix-womb where "matrix" is also the crossing and contamination of anything with everything — unlimited semiosis! When you read Vico, you read it this way, drawing up seemingly trivial details into the womb of your brain, allowing a slow mixing of effects and substances, a carnival of anonymous couplings, a preservation of the unity of the gene-pool that is wisdom. This lesson is a kind of cheer-leading lesson, one to provide the courage to read, because it takes courage as much as patience to make it through all the writings to begin to see what Vico is doing. The good news is that he gives encouragements and clues here and there, he plays the role of the perfect host/ghost, holding your hand beneath the table.

The matter of loft is serious, and the erection of the *New Science* is like the erection of a building, the foundation rituals of an ancient city, the raising of the sky above the earth — in other words, a cosmic event! We have to ask ourselves how the NS works as a book of magic, as a *grimoire* or, better, as a *zairja*. Then the matter of loft attains the level of "psychotheology" as does the *afflatus*, the whisper that God blows into Mary to make a Jesus, the same whisper that Antonello da Messina heard to write the Vulgate. This impregnating wind comes with its necessary *matrix*, its home that de-domesticates the womb, hystericizes it, making it a strange house, uncanny, filled with wonders.

One way of exploring this house is to take the *Autobiography* as a part of the NS and see how disinformation is given a key role. The first big lie: Vico gives the reader the wrong date for his birth year, so he is setting up a clock that can be used to re-calculate the times of the annual orations he gave. This "corrects" the accounts of who was where when, something necessary because in one oration the Big Cheese of the Inquisition walked in and Vico, as he says, "had to give a new turn to what he had said before," and here in a nutshell you have the idea of how his imagination works. It is not enough to think in isolation, you have to have danger. You have to have not only someone who doesn't know or think (the dummy, the "dead man" as the French call the ventriloquist's dummy, *le mort*), you need the negative, the dark space or dark cloud hovering within the work, its resistant and frightening element of failure. Vico is not afraid of the dark, he courts it, he needs it, *we readers* need it.

I realize I am not citing specific passages. One has to find them, but you shouldn't waste time looking them up one by one ... let them happen in the course of casual reading. This is the darkness of every reader, the fact that after reading a bit you go out to get something to eat, straighten up the house, sit in the park, walk ... you interrupt your Vico reading to have life, and then interrupt your life to read Vico.

The possibility I want to raise is that of a double transference. This is where the analyst and analysand, writer and reader, change places, or realize that they have been continually and already changing places. In the movie of Patrice Laconte, *The Man on the Train*, a stranger comes to a small town to rob a bank and is taken in by a local older guy, a retired teacher who still tutors. They begin to warm to each other during the stranger's stay in the old guy's large 19c. chateau, with its old furniture (the mother's), books, and piano. The host discovers the stranger's intent but identifies with it, gets him to teach him how to shoot with the guns he has brought. What happens is not that one goes closer to the other but that the other also grows closer to the one, another instance of "the one and the one." They exchange mentalities and spirits. At the end of the movie, when both the bank-robber and the host die, they do this cross-over. Similarly, the reader and writer of the NS open up the gap that connects the analysis of the symptom (the point of analysis) to the *sinthome*. Instead of the unconscious defending itself, it invites the two conversants into it. The attraction to the text is a defensive mechanism, but it is a step into a deeper level. The marvel of the next stage is its double nature, that it cannot be one-sided, it has a symmetry that is "idiotic" in that no matter how you turn it upside down or inside out it is the same, and the sameness is Vico's confidence that the reader can write the *New Science*. "You can write *me*" is Vico's message in §345).

This for me is one of the most important passages in the NS. It authorizes the idea of a "double transference" for the reader and writer and shows how it is turned into a passageway for those who know the passwords (e.g. the meaning of *verum-factum*, the ideal eternal history, the common mental dictionary, the imaginative universal ...) which serve as

acousmatic magic formulas to get across the barriers of the NS. Like any magic spell, the words get us across lines into a non-space on the other side. When we die, there is nothing on the other side, just as when we were born, there was nothing before. So when we face death, it is a line. But, when we “cross” it we contradict this idea of there being nothing, there is a space that is no-space. The integration of death into life, the darkness into light, *chiaroscuro*, is how we take this one-sided boundary into us at a fundamental level, and how we turn the single into a double. The single of transference becomes a crisscross of double-transference.

This is not the paralyzing threat of transference that the unconscious throws up as a way of keeping its secrets. The unconscious reveals its own “lack of a space on the other side of the line” by showing that the double of double transference *is* the space on the other side. It is the unconscious as automaton, the extension of *extinction* into the infinity of unlimited meaning. This is why Lacan was interested in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* as a turn to perversion (*péreversion*) ... that it wasn’t a “meta-language” book with lots of secrets, but a book of glyphs and ciphers that was about the opaqueness of the cipher itself. The secret of the secret is that it’s secret.

What do we do in double transference? We remain *true* in the sense of Vico’s *il vero*. We *make*. How and what do we make? We make the *New Science*, the science of the nine (if Vico was following Dante in using the word for new as also a nine), which brings us back to what Mladen Dolar said about falling in love as a model of transference, that it combines a necessity of accident with the improbability of fate. “Love at first sight” requires the lovers to think they met entirely by chance but that, once they fell in love, they confirm the series of events, arranged by fate, to bring them together, the birthdates, coincidences. At the same time the contingencies (problems of falling in love, the impossibilities, etc.) dominate. Vico shows how to get past this falling in love, and his advice is echoed in Dolar’s analysis. This is a way of getting past ideology, where the consequences of being in love, of conflicting with norms, of hurting others, etc. is inevitable. Where love at first sight involves submitting to the fate of falling in love, double transference involves exploring the structure of that fate, not as an “unconditional surrender to the Other” but as a move past the ideology: falling out of transference love and into listening, *j’ouï-sens*.

As in another Patrice Laconte film, *Girl on the Bridge*, a certain gambling analogy is relevant. The knife-thrower’s assistant has her luck turn, from bad to good. She is not hurt when the thrower throws blind for the first time. He is lucky too! He realizes that this turn of luck is material and extendable. He sends her into the casino, where he has been banned, and advises her on how to bet at the roulette table. (The spin of the wheel is like the spin of the assistant strapped to a board in later scenes, and like Vico’s spin of the NS as something that spins with every new idea — something we have to take up later.) She does this once but then doubts his advice, moves her chips, loses everything; then he sends a “mental message” to

her from his position outside at the bar, and she corrects her error, going back to the agreed-on number. She wins and they leave Monte Carlo in a stylish triumph.

The film doesn't end there; in the end there is a recovery of a "mercy and truth" ending (reference to *Babette's Feast*, the general's speech). The complicated relationship reveals a wealth, a "treasury of signifiers" (Lacan), what Vico called the "common mental dictionary."

We are back to the thesis presented, silently and secretly, in the *dipintura*. The blind man is looking at the invisible object. The blind man means: the one who, like Tiresius, can tell the truth (prophecy) because he *cannot see* the fetish value of objects that differentiates them in cathexis. For him the darkness removes this and in so doing it removes anxiety and fear. The truth, *il vero*, is like the dream of flying. With anxiety of falling removed, we fly "by definition." Our fear and falling are one and the same, and with fear removed we fly. The single transference of reading has become the double transference of the reader become a writer, *the* writer, partner of the writer who has now become a reader. So, maybe Vico is the real inventor who discovers double transference!

Just as in double transference, extimacy is an intimacy that becomes a breath giving life to external things, in externality, in the dimension we find within or inside externality that is permanently interior. Double transference moves past the horror of the end of analysis, in my view. Analysis gets us past ideology, but another step is required, to get past the impasse of transference, its deliriums and invectives. This "getting past" involves semiosis, the matrix, the thought-womb, the double boundary ... even the brilliant Dolar has not taken this step. This is the repair of the Borromeo knot, the provision of a "fourth ring" which is both inside and outside the system. This is like the breath that comes into the *New Science*, that makes it an organ, a mediation of inside and outside. I like to think that the organ of the body really is like the musical instrument, the church organ. Something to play, something to inspire.

The loft for Vico is this invitation to go past the NS as symptom. It has to do with the reader and the writer exchanging identities, losing their identities. It has to be a co-experience of knowing, not the terminating one-sided impasse of transference.

5 / where does the symptom become *sinthome* in Vico?

Moving from symptom (tough text, repetitive ideas, errors and traps) to *sinthome* in Vico creates a new science inside the *New Science*, a science that is Joycean. There is not just the epiphany of the *Artist as a Young Man* or the reverie of *The Dubliners*, or the calculated accidents of *Ulysses*, but the layers of overdetermined text in *Finnegans Wake*. It is a radical reading that has no basis or confirmation in contemporary criticism. It has to be done alone, for private purposes.

This reading theory takes Mladen Dolar's essay on "Beyond Interpellation," with its role of "love at first sight" in the construction of transference, and doubles the stakes by doubling transference, reader and writer become indistinguishable. Dolar did not do this, but instead leaves the matter on the "impasse" between the competing claims of love at first sight: first that it had to happen by accident, the second that fate has set it up "all along" without anyone being aware of its unseen hand.

This paradox of two opposite elements is "fixed" when the agents of transference are doubled, when the reader and writer achieve equivalence. One teaches the other, who teaches the one, etc. etc. Reading becomes the NS's active component, but the result is not a relativistic text of "whatever you see is true" but an over-determination of meaning as in *Finnegans Wake*. Let's take a specific case, the famous *verum ipsum factum* slogan taken from the *Antiquissima*. Normally this is seen to celebrate the materiality of human making, the fact that "truths" are concealed inside material practices. Isn't the *verum/factum* really a case of reversed predication? The fact that the things we make "make us" in turn? Again we reach a sentimental kind of poetic reversal, little more than a clever flip. What Vico supplies is not just reversed predication but the idea of the gap between the two positions. The gap is that the made is not exactly the True. It leaves a remainder. It does not inform humans who they are or provide an accurate negative image of where history has been. There is the permanent space between.

So, there is "trouble" with the *cose* that are the human factums, as well as an emptiness to the Truth that comes with understanding, just as the thunder for the first humans was not at all a clear message but something more like an enigma. In fact you can see how the enigma of the sky constitutes a Lacanian moment of separation and the trouble of the made constitutes a kind of alienation. Even Marx knows this, that the materiality of the made object is the basis of human alienation! So, using the Lacanian pair, alienation and separation, to understand the made and the true in the *verum ipsum factum* is not a bad idea. In my view, the made comes out of the Symbolic mode, where the separation of the *verum* comes out of the Imaginary. The child's relation to the mirror stage is the mode of the Imaginary, where anxiety leads to the question of what the Other would do without me, what if I died? This sounds a bit weird in the context of Vico studies but the key is to bring something unexpected to Vico to see how things sort out. You can't play the straight scholar; you learn nothing this way. The True of the thunder *does* create the anxiety about death in the first humans, this is why they establish marriage and burial as the first rituals, and how the clearings where these sacraments are enacted relate to the sky. The circularity also suggests that the comedy of marriage and the tragedy of death and burial are mediated by a chorus that dances in a circle. See? No matter how much we try to leave Vico we always come back to Vico.

The alienation of the object is the developmental energy in the movement of cultures from one stage to another, from the "mythic" to the "heroic" to the "human" (conceptual). We can see how alienation as anxiety is "settled" by the magic that surrounds objects and their use. For example, a mythic object has an aura — a curse or blessing — that attaches; we have an object, we also have a fate, an obligation, a mandate. If a knife is used to kill someone, the knife itself must be found and punished to achieve vengeance. In the heroic mentality, a little of this lingers, but a causality begins to set in. The knife or sword is "magic" or invincible, can be used only by one person, etc. Then, in the final stage, the relation to the "one person" becomes the person with expertise or luck to find such a weapon. But, we always have this element of alienation! The object is never fully assimilated to a world of "dead things," it always has this aura, just as the *subject* of separation always has an enigma, something indecipherable for the subject, who wonders what the enigmatic other would do without them.

With the *sinthome*, we have to focus on the gap, and the gap between alienation and separation is ... anamorphic! It is going to be related to *agutezza*, the art of the middle term. Where double transference love forces the symptom to be felt as love because the unconscious fears it will be discovered, it is *agutezza* — and the New Science is *agutezza* on a grand scale — that turns around and heads directly toward what it is that has been concealed. It becomes a project of learning. This is why *agutezza* is not simply wit as a turn of phrase or mind that makes something known sound more clever. It creates/discovers knowledge: it is a form of *kenosis*, a way of knowing without knowing — which is to say it does not avail itself of a detached point of view, a new convenient and antiseptic frame. This knowledge is self-invested and self-saturated. It learns by means of the inside-out logic of *extimité*, which Vico turns into his principle of the ideal eternal history applying, as he says, to anything human, at any scale, and at any "general period" of human development.

Here we have to recognize how the demon (eros) works with askesis, and how askesis involves the construction of a womb/matrix.

Vico's Big Gamble

In Vico's *Autobiography*, there is a brief story that is taken, traditionally, to be a kind of self-deprecating joke Vico tells to get the reader in the right mood. Vico's father was a *bookseller* (this is important for a full understanding of the joke). Vico worked in his father's shop as a young man. One day, up on a ladder, presumably accessing some books on a high shelf, Vico fell on his head. His concussion was dangerous. A doctor was called in but things looked bad. The physician presented his diagnosis to the distressed parents: the young Giambattista would either die or grow up to be an idiot.

We are of course reading the story told by a living Vico, so we presume that Vico is trying to disprove the doctor's radical prediction, by demonstrating that not only did he not become an idiot but that he became one of Italy's most intellectual and brilliant philosophers. This complies with the overall boastfulness of *The Autobiography* — where Vico tells over and over again tales of his mental superiority, his unfair suppression by mediocre colleagues, his unrecognized but brilliant discoveries.

The issue is, however, is the second option, that Vico would grow up to be an idiot, really the one Vico intends us to accept with irony? We know he is, however his detractors might fault his work, an idiot. However, there is the option that Vico wishes us to accept the "impossible" thesis: that he writes *The New Science* as a dead person, that the text is a death narrative. This is not as preposterous as it sounds. Vico is aware that most of his readers will be, in fact, reading the NS when he, Vico, is in fact dead. This is a trivial observation, however. Vico may be using a more important literary device: the "death narrative" is known in modern times through its popularity in postmodern fiction and film. Ernest Hemmingway popularized this device in his short story, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," where the point of view character imagines that he has survived a fatal infection. The film *Sunset Boulevard* begins with the narrator recognizing his body floating in the swimming pool of his patron. *Mulholland Drive* begins with a suicide and precedes with what is likely the dying girl's hopeful reconstruction of a sad life.

Vico would have been aware of two famous death narratives: (1) the story told in Plato's *The Republic*, of the "myth of Er," a soldier who, left for dead, revived and related how souls fared in the afterlife; and (2) the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, the Latin author Macrobius's retelling of Cicero's version of the dream of Scipio, taken by his famous uncle, Scipio Africanus, to his abode in heaven. Gazing down on earth, the younger Scipio asks his uncle why those on earth appear to be suffering, diseased or in fact dead while those in heaven appear to be fresh and in perfect health, the uncle replies that, for the soul, entrapment by the body is death, while release from mortality allows the soul to achieve perfection: beauty, goodness, eternity. The value of the death narrative is that, inserted without hoopla in the beginning of a seemingly non-fictional account, adds a frame of indeterminacy. The author may be making a light joke or providing the reader a speculative potentiality. From a living author one expects only a limited, subjective view. The view of a dead author is more complex. First, there must be a living author as a practical producer of the text; but this "living author" can be, in the fictionalization of a "dead author," be aspiring to a larger story.

It is my belief that Vico intentionally used the idea of the death narrative to place himself, as an author, in the position of Er or Scipio: someone who has seen "the other side" and comes back to mortals to tell them what truth is like from the "ultimate perspective" of death — if anything, an "eternal" point of view. It is important to note that Vico could have added this

idea well after he wrote most of the NS in a “straight” way. It is an interpretation that he gives to certain readers in search of a plot twist, a way of accounting for how Vico later wonders if he has been a “demon or a god” in conceiving of the whole of human thought and history. Clearly Vico needs to find a way that does not sound delusional when he makes such comparisons, or when he wishes to pull the reader into an advanced state of mind. In other words, it is not enough for him to “hand the keys” of the NS to the reader, to invite the reader to “write *The New Science* for himself/herself,” but to attain a state of “unlimited semiosis,” where, as Vico claims, the ideal eternal history will be capable of narrating any sequence in human experience, from the development of cultures and nations on down to the micro-experience of short events of perception.

In short, Vico recognizes that his claim is ultimately crazy-sounding. He does not want to give up this dimension of madness, but he feels the need to ground it in a productive way of thinking. Vico, like James Joyce, must become a *pervert* in order to write the NS and have the reader understand it properly. And, also like Joyce, he must relate this turn of critique to the idea of the father (*père-version*, as Lacan writes it). If we imagine Vico’s father as a book-seller, with theoretical access to all written texts, then Vico begins his intellectual life as a parasite of the history of thought. He must address all knowledge that has been discovered before him in a “belated” manner. Coming late, he cannot be the creator of anything new until he has evaluated what has gone before and engaged it, positively or negatively. This is an impossible task to complete, and any portion of it is laborious and boring. Vico wants to begin afresh.

When he is tutor for the children of the wealthy Rocca family at Cilento, he is isolated in the summers (Vico counts nine of them), when the family leaves the miasmas of Naples for the clearer air of the mountains. Here, he has a few key texts, but he imagines an ideal condition for inventive thinking: a situation where the thinker is forced to imagine truth without reference to any existing texts — “as if there were no books in the world.” In other words, like Joyce (whose father was an abusive alcoholic), Vico wishes to reconstruct his paternal condition, of having lots of books around. Where most young men would, in Vico’s position, find a bookstore to be a paradise in which a future intellect would flourish, Vico imagines the opposite: a world without books. He turns the father’s legacy upside down, from a wealth of books to read to an absolute poverty, an *askesis* using the retreat of the summers as a place to “think things from scratch.”

If we combine the idea of the death narrative with this instance of *père-version*, we get an entirely new, productive reading of Vico’s *New Science* and other texts. In Lacanian terms we have an engagement with the famous “between the two deaths,” the interval between an empirical-contingent death (which Vico stages, in the many versions of his defeat at the hands of colleagues and fate) with a “symbolic death,” where the soul/Psyche finds rest after a

period of instructions, tests, and trials. This period is well known in very culture. It corresponds to the period of mourning that parallels the decay of the body from a fleshy to a stable state as skeleton. As Scipio's uncle observes, it is flesh (contingency, uncertainty, the "deadly sins," etc.) that limits the soul. Death purifies, cleanses, clarifies. The soul cannot reach this state immediately. The interval "between the two deaths" must be enacted symbolically, with the symbolic conclusion that is, in an important sense, a sum of all of the gaps that have been papered over by fantasies, gaps in the Symbolic itself, gaps that Vico has identified according to the "species" of mythic, heroic, and modern human mentalities. Once these fantasies are structurally related, the Symbolic as such can be "settled," as in a "settling of accounts." Vico's "big gamble" is that the reader, in noting the death-motive narrative motif in *The Autobiography*, will understand how the NS relates to this interval, as a reduction of flesh to bone and a preparation for nothing less than a "resurrection," on the day designated as the Final Judgment, a rebirth of the Psyche into a spiritual body.

Here it is interesting to note that Vico, understanding the significance of Dante's *Vita Nova*, where the involvement of the number 9 allows us to read the title as "the life of nine" as much as "new life," can also think of the NS as a "science of 9." The number 9 has been used to check calculations' correctness since ancient times. Removing the number from the "input" of an operation and then inserting it back into the "output" or answer is a check of accuracy. Nine has many other curious properties that make "new" and "nine" symbolic of a continually self-generative and self-correcting process of thought. A new science is one that comes out of nowhere, a science that, as we will learn later, is "more than everything" and "less than nothing." It is also significant to note that Dante's *Divina Comedia* is a death narrative, a view of heaven and hell from the point of view of someone who visited and returned — a heroic narrative in the sense of the original meaning of "hero" as, literally, a "dead person."

The death narrative possibility helps us think how Vico manages to move from a "symptomatic" philosophy to a "sinthomatic" one. To know what this means requires a little understanding of Lacan, particularly the late Lacan, who became interested in James Joyce for precisely the reason that Joyce, as a *père-vert*, had moved from an author of "human drama" (*Dubliners*) to the heroic narrative of *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, to the heroic "love at first sight" between Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, whose "eyes met across a crowded city" Of course the conclusion is the fully "perverted" text of *Finnegans Wake*, where words achieve an *acousmatic* and unlimited semiosis, a return of the glyphs of the alphabet to the polyphony of spoken language — Vico's thunder, which Joyce appreciated in four separate versions. (Much has been written about these four words.)

We situate this acousmatic achievement with the knowledge that psychoanalysis, too, is dependent on the sound of words of the analysand: the analyst listens for repetitions, slips of the tongue, denials, stutters, etc. — i.e. *errors* of speech that prove true the dictum that,

while speakers think that their speech always falls short of what they mean, always say more than then intended. This “more” comes from the unconscious, and we have to also situate the acousmatic with the last-ditch effort the unconscious makes when the analyst “gets too close to the truth,” foretelling the end of analysis. The unconscious has the analysand imagine love with the analyst. This produces a “forced choice.” The analyst either falls in love with the analysand or rejects the analysand’s love. Either way, analysis comes to an end, the unconscious avoids discovery. The acousmatic gets beyond this.

Double Transference under the Microscope

Vico bets on another option, an option that would have very much interested Lacan, an option which Joyce had in fact discovered: double transference. This is the condition where the binary pair, reader-writer, corresponds to the analyst-analysand; but where the reader-writer and analyst-analysand, change places and become indistinguishable. In this case, there are *two* who are in the position of discovering an unconscious — the unconscious of the other, the other who remains singular. The unconsciousnesses they discover, through this structural condition, become a single unconscious. Another way of saying this is that, rather than the situation of an unconscious being in the position of being discovered by a “consciousness,” the unconscious is given the opportunity to be revealed by means of a companion, a true “marriage of minds” like that Dante had envisioned with Beatrice (“BeatrIX”). Here, like the number 9, the subtraction or addition of a mind does not change the condition of unity.

Double transference did not occur to Lacan. It has not occurred to any psychoanalyst, to my knowledge. It moves beyond the shock of “love at first sight” to a productive plan, where transference becomes a study method, energized by the dyad of reader-writer (in relation to Vico’s text). The movement from *jouissance*, conventionally the sexualized idea of enjoyment, to *j’oui-sens*, an attentive “listening to sense,” an enjoyment that charges knowledge (cf. the essay by Young-Jin Park) as “organic” (self-constructing). This helps us understand what Vico means by thinking “as if there were no books in the world” and how the death narrative connects his project with Macrobius’s, Plato’s, and Dante’s.

In Lacan’s terms, the move from symptom to sinthome was cut short by death. In his move to the final of the three components of subjectivity, the Real (following the order of the Imaginary of the mirror stage and the Symbolic of language), he had undertaken an intensive study of James Joyce, whom he characterized as, clinically, a pervert who, as many other artists, had made productive use of his symptoms. But, Lacan had realized that the “topological” structure that related the subject to symptoms would require further qualification in the move from *jouissance* to *j’oui-sens*. The Möbius band captured the enigma of subjectivity as three rings of the Borromean knot, in which each ring constitutes a “first and last” ring, lying both under and over within a sequence. Park’s essay shows how this knot

suffers a defect, a broken link, with the move from symptom to sinthome. A "fourth ring" is required to repair subjectivity, a ring that only art can provide — a "beautiful supplement" that is both "nothing and everything," a small ring that is a fiction that becomes true, *verum ipsum factum*, Vico's dictum turned on its head, revealing an original and originary meaning, inaccessible to the standard readings of the *New Science*.

Lacan, if anyone, could understand the "accidental" coincidence of the names, Freud and Joyce. *Freud* in German is joy, and Joyce is homophonic with "joys." What's in a name? Lacan would say, the name, all names are "names of the father." Joyce was faced with a father who was both a wonderful, imaginative, charismatic figure capable of energizing roomfuls of people with his sweet tenor voice. This same father was a terror at home, an alcoholic, a failure as a father and bread-winner. A new father was needed. Freud was similarly dissatisfied with his father, but within more controlled circumstances of a psychoanalytic perspective on family relations. How are fathers related to joy? Primordially, the father is "whatever/whoever takes the mother away from the child," in the love-advance of the child towards the mother, to secure exclusive affection. The name is what calls the subject, what "calls it out." We can consider the acousmatic aspect of the name/call, as something that can, from the crude materiality of everyday events, pulls up small particles in the same way that wind creates a vertical force pulling up gains of sand.

Both Freud and Joyce used a method of "wind," of calling-out, to lift minor details of everyday life out of their anonymity. Joyce was an obsessive note-taker. Freud converted Giovanni Morelli's method of determining the authenticity of artworks by examining unimportant details (fingernails, the flesh of the ear-lobes, etc.) into a full-blown theory of the unconscious. Both were masters of the unnoticed. The name, the call, went beyond the name of the father; the name became synonymous with the *divinus afflatus* that impregnated Mary. In the iconography of the Annunciation, Mary is always shown reading. Vico more than anyone would have been aware that "impregnation through the ear" meant that the "word of God" necessarily was the True in acousmatic terms, where "word become flesh" had an unambiguous meaning. Flesh allowed the word to suffer, to become mortal, to err, to endure the negative. We must not lose the full range of meanings behind this act of impregnation, *nor must we allow ourselves to forget* that impregnation requires a void, a matrix, an artificial semantic womb. Here we get very close to understanding how *jouissance*, which is simply the gap between competing predications (argumentation, polysemy, incongruent meanings, etc.) becomes the double action of *j'ouï-sens* in double transference, writer to reader, reader to reader.

6 / Vico and the cathected field

Cathexis is the Freudian word for “investment” or “interest.” Being interested in something means that the object acquires subjective value, and the subject in return gets objectified (defined) in terms of interests in the object world. A field is like a map marked with zones and locations that draw the subject in one direction or another. Abstractly, the field is also like a matrix (= “womb”), a connection I will exploit later; except I will contrast the function of the cathected field (it shows how the subject sees itself externally, in terms of symptoms) with the matrix/womb, which is a kind of inverse, revealing within the visible those invisible points where interest is defined through the negative. This is going to be a difficult chapter because all of the themes that focus on a “crisis” in Lacan’s thought have to do with the move from *jouissance* to *j’ouï-sens*, a fourth ring that “fixes” the broken relationships between the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real, focusing on the role of the Real in *père-version*, the artistic-poetic reconstruction of paternity and — I argue — the role of double transference. Here, Vico and Lacan seem to line up. Vico’s “crisis” is constructed, however. He knows in advance that the reader will reach an impasse of interpretation and fear to take the last, radical step. This is the point of conscious ambiguation of the role of the reader with that of the writer. But, Vico knows he must go further than to suggest a switch of roles. He must say what happens when the reader and writer change places. This is a move from cathexis as a field to the matrix as a negative version of the field. In this sense Vico develops a *harām*, a series of forbidden spaces of a charged nature, just as the spaces of a woman’s body are forbidden to the view of the stranger. The nexus of this idea is directly addressed by Vico when he places the myth of Diana and Actæon at the center, literally, of the text of *The New Science*, where he couples it with the myth of Semele (another name for Diana, the moon goddess) and Endymion, a mortal shepherd whom Semele visits to kiss while he is sleeping.

The themes of these two Diana myths is unavoidable, so we must see Vico’s crisis as one of love and marriage. Taken with the function of double transference, the theme of chastity has to do with what happens after the “love at first sight” of transference, intensified by the chiasmic crisscross effects of double transference. There is the potentiality of a spiritual marriage, one that Vico would have known through his association with Rosicrucians, who imagined themselves to be the stewards of the traditions of alchemy. Frances Yates has documented the historical prominence of Rosicrucian alchemy in the 18c., and Vico’s use of Rosicrucian imagery in the *dipintura* is clear evidence that he was connected to this tradition.

An “alchemical marriage” is a “marriage of true minds” (Shakespeare’s inadvertently accurate depiction, “the true mind” gets to the idea of mind as the True in the first and fourth place in Lacan’s theory of discourse.) Its chastity has to do with the protection of the thoughts that develop with this mind, which must be considered as a composite singularity that comes about only through the act and preservation of marriage. The *harām* is a part of this chastity, and in

the context of writing a philosophical text, it becomes the problem of developing sub-texts within the main text that function as places of *kenosis*, or “knowing without knowing,” a theme that Vico would have known through his association with philosophical groups active in Naples. He describes some of his activity in these groups directly in *The Autobiography* and his friendship with members of known groups confirms his associations. The atmosphere of these groups derived from the societies advocated by Ficino and others who, following Plato’s idea of *anamnesis* and the need for staged initiation into increasingly higher and more difficult truths, used secrecy to enhance the “theological” sense of humanist speculation. (This sense has been described by Don Cameron Allen in his book, *Mysteriously Meant*.) The “true mind” is thus a collective, and, as Socrates’ inclusion of Diotema as the embodiment of wisdom strongly suggests, the cultivation of this true mind is an act of the demon Eros. In complement, the possession of a truth in Vico’s sense is that of collective mind: collective memory, collective imagination, collective epiphany. Vico’s word for collective is “common,” as it appears in the term “common mental dictionary” and “common” elsewhere, when Vico describes the universality of things such as the ideal eternal history, the imaginative universal, and the resemblance of cultures to individuals (as in the idea, “phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny” — the collective develops in the same way the individual develops).

The translators of the NS, Bergin and Fisch, describe Vico’s use of “common” in great detail, but few contemporary scholars have done more than acknowledge this on the level of Vico’s assertions of universal patterns found in all cultures and all periods of time. Few if any have carried the idea to the level that Vico asserted, the level of individual experiences, perceptions, and feelings. Here, the imperative bond between knowing and loving would have been clear. *Kenosis* is a spatial and temporal relationship constructed between those who, through a double transference, discover entry into a level of knowing that they can know only by sharing. The Lucretian idea of *tessera* is also useful. It is the idea that “knowing by half” is a question of giving the rights and power of completion to the other, of renouncing the idea that knowledge can be possessed by a single individual working alone, without the imagined help of the writer or fellow seeker. Plato of course would have endorsed this outright. It is the necessity of knowledge to be put into dialectic form, and to be inconclusive in any written representation. Those who complain that Plato is maliciously obscure in his attempts to outlay such ideas as justice and beauty do not understand the role of dialectic and the necessity of transference. They insist that the representation be autonomous, i.e. free of subjective obligation and responsibility.

Back to the difference between the cathected field of the symptom and the *matrix* or voids that Vico creates, the *harām* of Vico’s forest that, like the clearing in which Diana bathes, a mystery is preserved. This is the void that Vico will use to “call up” details from their contextual obscurity in an act of epiphany, a “lifting up” and “resurrection.” In one sense, Vico’s *matrix* is the obverse of the field cathected by fetish interests. To get an idea of what

this is, think of the university, whose "territories" are fiercely guarded by jealous academics from those who would "step on the turf" of certain cultivated subjects. This situation is described by Vico as a degeneracy of the concept, which individualizes knowledge and makes knowers viciously protective of what they think they know. In no uncertain terms, Vico condemns this pretense, calling it a return of barbarism worse than the barbarism of the first humans, who projected their fierce natures on to nature itself without recognizing their act of transference. Modern academics presume that knowledge will yield eventually to the process of divide and conquer, and even when they fail to make progress they insist on preventing others access. The university curriculum reinforces this view and encourages specialization, while seeming to offer interdisciplinarity the status of the "valued exception." This of course is a trick, and thinkers like Vico are entertained only within strict limits by those who emphasize his obscurity and difficulty.

Vico's *matrix* is more like the Lucretian idea of a continuous flow, where turbulence creates voids that draw in details in the same way Venturi force pulls up grains of sand and deposits them great distances from their origins. Just as Kobo Abe described this process in *Woman in the Dunes*, sand is "anything" that can be called into the wind and transported in this way. The deposits have a beauty of form that can only be called emergent. There is no "individual cause" for any one grain of sand, only a collective causality that, following the phenomenon of turbulence, treats every grain as an "exception" and "sculpts" it through the process of transport. Vico's matrix is a kind of acousmatic hollow set up within the Symbolic itself, the action of the void, the void that is normally covered by symptom and fantasy but must be revealed through *j'ouï-sens*. This puts Vico at odds with those who hold him to be a phenomenologist who is "especially sensitive" to the operations of cultures, languages, and customs. Vico is the opposite, although he intersects much of the thinking of prominent phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, particularly in his later works, and Mikel Dufrenne (*Phenomenology of Aesthetic Perception*).

Vico's matrix is possibly best imagined as a forest, like the *selva obscura* of Dante. Past the portal where the reader is advised to *lasciate ogni speranza*, the structure of the forest is continued but formalized, as sinners are assigned precise locations in Hell. The matrix is a place where sin is located as well as an acousmatic call. It is a *harām* where the idea of marriage is invoked, a marriage of minds. This is a lot to deal with! How can I make it simpler? There is no way; this requires an experiential encounter with Vico's texts with all of these possibilities set at maximum receptivity. Whatever happens is, in the mind of a reader, a new science that is unpredictable, original, and productive. The ability for Vico's *matrix* to move outward to so many themes, particularly in the psychoanalytical regions, makes it a good *zairja* for disassembling stale ideas and reassembling new versions. Vico's *harām* has some consequences for readers, that they become obliged to regard a condition of *alchemical marriage* with our access to these ideas, that they are a kind of secret.

cathexis and Vico's *certum*

The *certum*, the certain, does not occupy a big place in Vico scholarship, because it seems so straightforward perhaps. In the most restricted sense, the *certum* refers to the harshness of the first laws, derived from auspices, which had to be followed "to the letter." Lacking any sense of irony or mercy, the first human regard the *verum* of the auspices as absolute. They did not understand it as a general truth but, rather, as a specific mandate to be obeyed in all its parts. Vico contrasts this legal *certum* with the gradual softening of the law as principles of human judgment are added to divine mandate. "Case law" begins to adjust and ameliorate "statute law," so to speak. Circumstances are taken into consideration. The concept of mercy softens judgments and punishments. Finally, with the modern mentality, all law is considered to be circumstantial, a variation one could say of "situational ethics," where concepts such as fairness and justice exist as concepts — ideas to be followed as ideals. There is nothing of this in mythic thought.

There is a more general aspect of *certum* that we should consider because of the centrality of divination in Vico's theories. Divination takes place *specifically* because the signs of nature are generally uncertain. Patterns linking the domains of the stars to plants to animals and humans are generally known as a matrix of intricate correlations, but these are not laws *per se*. It takes divination to focus the divine on a specific issue or situation, and we have to take anthropological evidence about divination into account. The one universal feature is the employment of some device that has a randomizing function. An example might be taken from anywhere, but my favorite is a grid of strings stretched between upright sticks used by an African tribe. A bit of meat is thrown into the grid, and a fox is attracted. The fox does not go directly for the meat but circles around before snapping it up. The footprints in the sand beneath the grid are used as the data for the augury. The determination of the divine message from such patterns is usually based on some "canon" of interpretations made in the past, by shamans who often added commentary, at first oral. Vico makes the point that the interpretation of divine messages was the origin of the first writing and use of graphic symbols. Certainly in China this is the case.

There are two main reasons for divination: (1) to interpret what unusual phenomenon, evidently "sent by the gods," might mean, and (2) to send to and receive messages from dead ancestors. The dead of individual families are first segregated ("Cyclopien societies"); as clans and then cities are formed, the dead, too, are generalized into a larger group. Fustel de Coulanges (*The Ancient City*) discusses this at length. Of the "unusual phenomenon," there are several groups that were formally classified: *miraculum*, *ostentum*, *monstrum*, *prodigium*, The Romans were pretty serious and had the most elaborate set of oracular interpretive books. They were and are a seriously superstitious people! The "monsters" typically involved metonymy, and it is important to pay attention to this and stick to your guns, against all those

who want to make metaphor into the big Vico theme. Metonymy is meaning based on an absence, a negation. The monster is a *lack* of integrative content that makes a composite being whole: a head of a goat, body of a lion, tail of a serpent. The key is to see that temporality is involved, that the monster has compressed the natures of spring, summer, and winter to preserve the puzzle of seasonal dynamics. Metonymy (juxtaposition, contiguity logic) is the basis of the divine sign, and auspices deal with this metonymically. There is no pictorial or prosaic interpretation. There is, as with the riddle of the sphinx and other chimerical beings, always always metonymy.

So, the *certum* is something that is "known" but not known as much as "specified, then followed slavishly." Early cultures have specific and detailed ways of doing things, resistant to change or personal variation. This is to preserve the relationship to the divine, whose metonymical aspect was more of a wiring diagram than a general description or picture (or story). On the matter of the story, metonymy explains why fairy tales and myths are "empty" of specific advice until later interpreters insert morals or a bit of advice. These have no place in the emptiness of the myth or fairy tale. They begin weird and end weird. There is no "moral lesson," only a specification.

Certum = metonymy. Now you can see how metonymical thinking (based on contiguity rather than semblance) is more characteristic of mythic thought than metaphor. Metaphor for Vico is the formation of a semblance *in ignorance of the terms of the transference relationship*. The first humans see nature as a bigger version of themselves, but they are *not aware* that they are the original model of this design. Thus metaphor in the modern sense is not happening. Rather, it is what happens after this "metaphoric" formation that is important: that the thunder intends to tell humans something, but it is a negative message. In response they open up a void in the forest. They develop a science of auspices to regularize the signs of the sky, to observe and record, to build up an archive, a practice, a set of signs that become laws. These are all metonymical in that their *certum*, their certainty, has an absolute structure that is transferred literally and absolutely, nothing left out, nothing interpreted. There are no ancient humans who reflect on the beauty or cleverness of a myth. This comes only later, and then the myths are corrupted and these responses are anachronistic.

This is a double-dose shot to immunize against inserting "interpretation" (conceived metaphorically) into the mythic mentality. There was only consideration of how it would be possible to make a direct transfer between the data of the gods and human responses to that data. The *certum* concealed within the *verum*, which would be known only through the modern discovery of the imaginative universal that "sees the whole process in perspective." The *factum* is the metaphoric process of transference, from human nature to nature's nature. The *verum* is both the conception of this process and how it works, and the *automaton* created by the transference. In ignorance, the first humans establish a means of civilizing themselves,

based on a metonymic apprehension of divine signs, made certain through ritualized procedures of divination. In the beginning, there are no concepts or images of gods; the divine was exclusively and uniquely the "voice" determined through auspices. Vico understands how this institution leads to a cultural process that makes this vision itself obsolete, how it opens the way to heroic consciousness, and that to the fully ironic modern mentality. The last humans have no access to the poetic consciousness of the first, because they possess reflection and irony; but they can, through the discovery of the *automaton* that has produced their own mind, figure out where they came from. This is not an option to "be poetic" or "take a poetic option" as some have claimed. This is a matter of self-discovery. Vico set it out in an essay, *De Mente Heroica*, reprinted in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Michael Mooney, and Donald Verene, 1976. Vico connects the heroic mentality with the sublime, and he uses language from Macrobius's *Dream of Scipio* — a death dream that links us back to Vico's metaphor of falling off a ladder, to be diagnosed as fatally wounded or mentally incapacitated. These are the two traits of the hero: the need to visit the underworld (to gain auspices) and to be willing to act irrationally (i.e. courageously). There is not a lot of "fat" in Vico's thinking. It has its own chirality, symmetry, and timing.

7 / Vico and the Hermetic Project

Hermes, we learn from Norman O. Brown (*Hermes the Thief*), combines multiple divine functionalities. The diversity of these has long puzzled classicists who, used to seeing gods as precursors to natural forces, cultural values, or practical skills, cannot resolve Hermes' equal commitment to theses as diverse as communications, thievery, boundary passage, transport of the dead, market trade, erotic love, and secrecy. Brown shows how the practice of "silent trade" involves most if not all of these attributes, and it is productive to consider how *The New Science* is in fact a kind of silent trade. What *is* silent trade? For peoples who regard contact with strangers as dangerous if not fatal, silent trade is a mode of exchange that allows trading partners to establish markets redistributing key goods. As a result, separate groups may specialize their exploitation of ecotomes: those who fish can be assured that they will not suffer the lack of other material goods requiring raw materials and skills they cannot themselves acquire. Key to silent trade is a location, typically a cross-roads. A stone is placed next to or on top of another, and as passers-by add to this construction, a pile of stones comes to indicate directly the potential traffic of the site. The pile of stones gives its name to Hermes: "herm."

A reader and writer constitute two "groups" who must exchange something without ever physically meeting, so this is not a bad beginning. How does the market of silent trade develop its rules and regulations? The key is to see dialectic as self-regulating, and the internal rules and limits as a product of emergence. As exchanges progress, "errors" of "overpayment" and "underpayment" lead traders to arrive at trading ranges they can rely on.

This means that value emerges as a consciousness that is also an unconscious. No one party to a trade knows exactly what value is, but taken together the group of traders knows precisely. This emergence idea translates to Vico's idea of memory, which is also collective and emergent — i.e. *The New Science* is a product of collective memory, not a collection of memories but an emergent memory that belongs to humanity as a whole — which he specifically labels as a “common mental dictionary” and equates with a collective imagination (“imagination and memory are the same thing,” he says elsewhere). Without the idea of emergence, most of Vico's ideas make no sense. The *verum* of the *verum ipsum factum* cannot be understood unless what is made is understood as being made dialectically, as in the actions of silent trade. The *verum* then comes into focus in a very Lacanian way. For Lacan, the true is a position within the field of discourse. Lacan says that it is both in the first and last place. As first, truth is suppressed (a very Vichian idea!) in order that signifiers may proceed according to rules of binary opposition. Truth however returns (the “return of the Real”: the “letter that always reaches its destination”) at the end of discourse, to rectify and reclaim discourse without resorting to a meta-language or transcendence theory.

For Vico as well, truth has a first and last place. The truth of myth is that the first humans cannot help themselves in their transference of their own attributes to external nature, in the form of divine capabilities. Without reflection, they see what they have made as literally true, not understanding that they have projected divine qualities of their selves. This is a kind of truth “in spite of itself,” a metaphoric truth. The truth at the end of things is different. It cannot be produced by abstract thought. It cannot be a concept, or the result of rationality. It can only be a kind of poetry that re-constitutes mythic truth while knowing fully that the mind is incapable of being mythic in the original sense. Vico relates this to what he calls the “heroic mind,” which some scholars may access if they understand and, in understanding, will be able to write a “new science,” a “science of nines.” With Dante in mind, Vico thinks that this true will be a salvation, a resurrection, a new life, a life made possible through the intervention of love, a “bea-trix,” a matrix, or matr9 (matrIX). The matrix, by the way, is the site of exception that is the place of Vico's “silent trade.” The reader and writer will construct this new science as a knowledge of emergence, a collective. Hermes will be key.

The helmet of Hermes is the only item in the frontispiece known as the *dipintura* that Vico uses to explain the whole of his new science that is not mentioned in his detailed and otherwise complete commentary. Homer, the blind poet, seems to be looking at this; and since Hermes' helmet was a helmet of invisibility, we have the “joke” that a blind man is looking at an invisible object — a very Lacanian situation! This helmet is thus a *lipogram*, a void intentionally placed in a key location. It is the point of silent trade, the *herm* of *The New Science*. Now we can understand that Vico begins his work as a kind of trade or exchange, something requiring both transference (not just from writer to reader but reader to writer) but

also love, the last-ditch defense of the unconscious of this new science, which may threaten to limit progress unless it is understood.

The lipogram is like Georges Perec's missing 'e' in *A Void*. It creates a vacuum, a matrix, a blank that is capable of drawing up seemingly meaningless details into its web of new meanings. Vico's project seems to be obsessed with this: finding obscure customs, words, and objects that can be explained as keys to the *ideale storia eternal*. The vacuum function is important. Like the grain of sand pulled up by the wind, it is a flow that self-defines what is the sand whose emergence is based on flow, energy, and transport — very Lucretian ideas, where the *clinamen* and *tessera* will figure. But we are at an important and critical point. This lipogram function addresses the issue of anxiety. In dreams of flying, we have two components: an extimacy of a bodily condition (air suspended inside the body becomes the body suspended inside air); and the absence of anxiety converted into the un-anxious feeling of floating and flying. The grain of sand is relieved of its "anxiety," mixed as it is with other particles on earth. It is lifted ("called up" — the image of music, with trumpets and bells, is appropriate, as in the call of a song or whisper or name). It is transported without the anxiety that bound it, with heaviness, to earth. Without anxiety, sand is sand, and the landscapes of sand are the emergent form, or rather, the *beauty* of sand dunes is the result.

Comedy is a force that relieves us of anxiety in everyday life — the ability to laugh, to experience joy, levity, mirth, etc. — and in the lipogram we have the opportunity to connect this quotidian cure with the special philosophical cure Vico offers. In philosophy, anxiety is present as *gravitas*, the function of truth put in terms of weight. Arguments are "weighty," and flawed arguments *fall*. Serious philosophers are those who have their feet firmly planted and are immovable. All of the evidence points to serious thought being heavy, resting on "solid foundations," i.e. susceptible to the fears of flying.

In contrast, fools are known for their ability to jump and even fly. The magic fools of ancient times were credited with the ability to levitate and even fly great distances. (See Enid Welsford's excellent study, *The Fool*). Fool plays were called *sautées* ("jumps") and were juxtaposed with acrobatic acts in popular entertainments. Thought that is not weighty is "flighty," and fools are "air-heads." Comedy is light in its ability to lift our spirits. All the clichés have some basis in the tradition of the lipogram's ability to lift thought out of the ground and into the air.

Let me say that this is an important cross-roads (!) because with the issue of anxiety we may be able to say how Vico is going to link the "project of alienation" (the forced choice of the ego ideal, i.e. the Symbolic) with the "project of separation" (the enigma of the other and the necessity of imagining an interval "between the two deaths." Because in the *Autobiography*, Vico says that the physician who attended him after his fall from the ladder (in the bookstore,

we note!) said he would either die or grow up to be an idiot (i.e. clown), we have a forced choice situation, but the literary option of seeing the *New Science* as *both* a comedy, as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and a death narrative. We have a way of seeing how Vico accomplishes what Lacan could or did not, i.e. a *sinthomic* fix of the defects of the Imaginary and Symbolic. How so?

We know how the Imaginary fixes the Symbolic in the symptomatic mode. The Symbolic is a chain with many broken spots. To save the appearances, i.e. to see our networks of symbolic relationships as more than false constructs, we have to have fantasies about their "utopian" or imaginary nature. Our fantasies are cover-ups, patches. They house the symptoms we have to manage our mis-fits, our discomfort within the Symbolic, our *alienation*. Some of the fantasies deal with separation — how we might escape the Symbolic entirely, in a far-away land, in a journey to some Elsewhere. Vico does not make use of these fantasies, rather he wants to see where they come from by discussing the system of fantasies constructed by the mythic, the heroic, and the fully human/abstract mentalities. The "project of the Symbolic" addresses the anxiety of alienation, and here Vico uses lipograms such as the helmet of Hermes and other voids to create dreams within *The New Science* where the reader may have "lucid dreams" of its meaning. Vico is able to "kiss" the reader, like Semele kisses Endymion *while he sleeps*. The silence of this kiss is the darkness inside the NS that is the structure of the stage, where the reader is instructed to be silent and wait, to attend to meanings that have not been revealed. Lacan is clear on this structure. Anxiety, he says, is a matter of staging. We see reality as lying beyond a screen, on a stage where the furniture looks normal. Yet, because we witness the play, the scene on stage is uncanny because of our silence, our symbolic death. We can come back alive only if the imagery on stage disappears. It's an off-on situation. Our anxiety can be put in terms of a *relief from anxiety* at the expense of our mock death. We float, as if in a dream. This is a key to how art works in general, and at this point we might claim that Vico has a key insight into esthetics theory, but this would be involved and take us away from the main points.

What happens is that Vico shows, in his structural revelations about the truth behind the relations of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, how we may reclaim from our symptomatic constructs of fantasies a *sinthomatic* understanding that reveals our role in their construction: *verum ipsum factum*. You can see how those who are taken in by the simpler interpretation of the *verum factum* are going to be hopelessly lost. They will not be allies of the deeper, more correct meaning. The project of alienation that deals with the Symbolic is linked to the project of separation of the Imaginary. Vico gives us both the prospect of his writing a death narrative and also taking up the role of the idiot/fool. He gives us these in a joke he tells about himself in *The Autobiography*. This joke is "laughed off" by every Vico scholar before us. Yet, this joke is the means of seeing how Vico accomplishes something Lacan desired to do but failed in doing: his "Joycean" study of the Real.

Vico is not a standard philosopher, and this can be summarized in his relationship to gravity/*gravitas*. Where most philosophy is “heavy,” Vico identifies with predecessors whose commitment has been to “staging” effects: the dialogs of Plato/Socrates, the jokes of Diogenes the Kynic. Had he lived long enough, the funny comparisons of the otherwise sober Hegel would have appealed to Vico — how for example the same body part is used to piss and create life. Comedy is not welcome in most philosophy, which means that the comic — as the ability to tolerate opposition and contradiction — is what is expressly fought, and why Vico’s accommodations are distrusted and sometimes despised; why his inconsistencies are condemned; why his ideas are continually credited to others. Bergin and Fisch make the case, however, that Vico’s originality is permanent and deep. He is the first to think of many things, and the first to think of many things in a certain way. His accomplishments are not laborious but witty, and in this he is the master of *agutezza*, the expression of wit.

Agutezza is sharp, argute. This is why Vico discusses *cælum* as being both a wedge and heaven. The azure divinity of heaven is sharp because it is able to penetrate to the heart of everything. It is an edge, a weapon, a cut. *Agutezza* make Vico a comedian, although he does not cease to be a philosopher; but we have to understand the consequences of this combination, the funny thinker. Hermes is a thief, a messenger, an undertaker, a keeper of secrets. How does the hermetic function help Vico the comedian? We have to understand the relationship of comedy to organicism, which is not “nature” in the popular sense but rather “that which is related to the function of the organ.” The organ mediates an inside to an outside. It is in simplest terms a boundary, but a double boundary, like the two lips of the labia, the vagina and cervix of the womb, the doubling of every boundary in the body and in perception, where every literal frame is shadowed by a second imaginary frame.

The double frame is key to the potential of reversed predication, the ability to reverse figure and ground, actor and act, sign and signified. What we remember about this reversal is that there is a *gap* between the two states; that there is never a fully seamless switch between the two. This, for death and life, a seemingly unambiguous case of absolute contrasting states, we have the uncanny of life, A, shadowed by fate, d — Ad — and the dead person who has “forgotten how to die” (Da), the traveler of the interval between the two deaths. Ad and Da are the primordial conditions of the uncanny, and the representatives of the themes of alienation (Ad) and separation (Da) in popular culture. This brings us to the important point: what is the gap? And, how does Vico treat this important element? Especially: how does this gap relate to what we have said about Vico being a comedian who goes from the death-narrative motif to the idiot motif in the physician’s prediction?

Vico is if anything the artist-philosopher of the gap between reversed predications. He knows fully well how devastating the standard modality of the binary signifier is for the humanities. One cannot understand the human condition as the search for a middle term balancing the

interests of two opposites, whether those opposites are divine and mortal, life and death, mythic and modern. This is particularly evident in his search for a “middle term” allowing moderns to understand myth, the co-called “imaginative universal” (*universale fantastico*). He says this discovery cost him nearly half of his adult life, and this is clearly something he thinks to be his main accomplishment. The imaginative universal is the Lacanian extimate, applied to the first humans who see outer nature through their inner nature. This is not simply a criss-cross transfer. The *gap* between the predicate positions is what allows the mythic mentality to develop *out of itself*, to evolve another kind of mentality — the heroic. The gap is the void that is created in the transfer of inner nature to outer appearances. This is the fact that humans see nature as mysterious, as something that *intends* to say something to them but falls short of any clear meaning. This gap is a matrix, a void. It calls the science of divination into being; it allows humans to cover over the gaps in nature’s chains of signifiers. It allows them, as Vico puts it, to settle nature within the *certum*, as a stand-in for *il vero*. The made (*factum*) is not the certain, *il certo*; it is the means to the certain, a science that, in developing, can extend beyond itself, from religious-sacred applications to secular ones. Secular language develops out of the sacred singing of the mythical consciousness. Secular behavior results out of the sacred rituals of marriage and burial. Economy and trade result out of the “sacred exchanges” of silent trade. Geography and history develop out of the sacred symbolic staged conflicts of mythic warfare. Without the gap, there can be no ideal eternal history. The gap is what distinguishes Vico’s concept of a universal mechanism of the human from the standard humanist list of binary signifiers representing diverse polarities of life and thought.

We put our alternative to binary signification as reversed predication, sometimes written as a cross-inscription, as in the two primary cases of the uncanny, Ad and Da. When the living person feels shadowed by fate, time and space are affected. There is a ghost element, a future meeting with that which has “always belonged to the subject but which was never recognized.” When the deceased dies but is carried by momentum past the moment of literal death, Da, the complementary condition is realized, this time within the Imaginary as opposed to the primarily Symbolic mode of fate. Both are, however, chiasmatic. The labyrinth through which the deceased’s soul wanders, seeking instruction and revelation, is similar to the labyrinths of “reality” (think of *Don Quixote’s* La Mancha), “stained” with anamorphic presences that will become visible only at some future point.

Cross-inscription preserves the idea of the gap, because the two conditions, Ad and Da, are not perfectly symmetrical. There is a remainder, which is the way in which the labyrinth is not quite a perfect stereotomy. The Imaginary is never fully equivalent or complementary to the Symbolic. The gap is the need for the *sinthome*, the repair-job, the little ring that re-attaches the Imaginary and the Symbolic in the Borromeo knot. The *sinthome* is the element of perversion, which is the *ability to return to the primary state, where the subject was given a (forced) choice of being and speaking*. The subject who “could not refuse this offer,” chose

speaking. But, not all was lost. Being was not fully sacrificed in this choice. The subject can go back to find the Real, which is *precisely* what Vico does when he “goes back” to myth to find the *universale fantastico*. He goes back to claim the Real of the human, he claims the *sinthome*.

Because Vico qualifies the *universale fantastico* precisely as a gap, and connects this gap to the *factum* of the human project and, hence, its dynamic forward construction of the heroic out of the mythic and the conceptual out of the heroic, we know *for sure* that he is a sinthomic pervert, i.e. a true Lacanian. The sinthomic status of the gap and the gap’s relation to Vico’s most important discovery gives us a sound basis for arguing against those who would have Vico to be a philosopher of the binary signifier. You know who, I do not have to repeat myself! With this argument you can extend Vico’s techniques — the combination of the death narrative with the “comic” claim of his being an idiot-clown — to all of Hermes’ functions. In particular we should focus on the technique of “body loading,” which combines Hermes as a “site of exception” where trades take place silently with the idea of theft, erotic love, (double) transference, secrecy, and revelation. We are also on the point of how Vico relates to the reader as the dead relate to the living (*apophrades*), where the reader will not know, as Vico does not fully know, whether he is dead or alive. In Vico we die, in Vico we live. AND, there is a gap.

8 / Who Is Diana?

We are going to be looking at something no Vico scholar has ever noticed. Whatever we do with it will be a “first,” but we shouldn’t be reckless. We should take our assignment as a big responsibility, out of respect of Vico, who invented his amazing science, and out of respect to those who will come later.

This is one way of taking up the question of Diana, whose name tells us a lot. The “Di” is a modernization of “Dj,” and the other modernization takes Dj to J, revealing that Diana is Djana or Jana, the feminine of Janus. Between Janus and Jana, the masculine and the feminine, there is the gap, and this gap is the space for those who would discover the loft of the NS.

Vico to some extent requires us to think like a woman. The way he places Diana and Semele (another name for the moon goddess) in the middle of his work, nearly in the geometric center in fact, indicates that he thinks that this is important. Also, the way he divides Diana/Jana into two stories shows how the NS is reversely predicated by Jana’s two faces. The hinge, Jana, is a woman. Again, Vico scholars have taken no notice of this.

The Diana/Semele hinge has to do with two stories, one about Actæon, the other about Endymion, the mortal shepherd whom Semele found unbearably beautiful. In the Actæon

story, it seems that there is no love lost between Diana and the hunter who stumbles across her bathing. He, a stranger, has encountered her *harām*, within a space reserved for this divinity and her attendants. Ovid says that he did not mean to do this; there is some suspicion that his discovery was related to his aspect as a hunter who was out to kill whatever he could that day, that he did not count on the magical aspect of the forest, specifically that aspect of Diana's protection of the animals of the wild; her aspect as a spirit of the forest itself.

This myth was so popular in antiquity that it is hard to recover its roots in shamanistic practices, clearly indicated by Actæon's transformation into a stag. Shamanistic cultures everywhere use animal transformation to learn the truths of the cosmos. Thanks to rituals involving dancing and singing, but especially drugs, the shaman enters into the being of a bird or wild animal, sees the world from the animal's point of view. Again, we have a Lacanian point to make. The humanist sees the animal at the core of the human, but prefers to leave it behind. Civilization softens and refines this core, turns the animal into a proper human. If the human reverts to the animal, the humanist says that the human has "failed," has reverted to a "mere" animal existence of passion and violence. This is not Lacan's view. Lacan and Lacanians see the animal as not just the core but an essence. It is not something left behind, but it is the continually regenerated remainder. Like the shamans of old, the animal is a way of seeing, a way of learning, a way of knowing. It is essential to "enter into the animal" to learn what being a human is. This is, essentially, the dimension of *eros*, the demon who takes us into a primary sexuality, which is not the same as "carnal desire" but, rather, an ability to go between man and woman, a space between. Because the woman herself can encompass the idea and actuality of the void, we have to say that the man-woman is the articulation of a prior being, the Woman, who "does not exist" as Lacan says, and now we know why. Even Edgar Allan Poe realized this when he borrowed imagery from a 17c. poem to write his short story about Arnheim, an imaginary kingdom that was, like a woman, "nonexistent" but all-the-more universal. Here is the poem by Giles Fletcher that Poe may have used:

The garden like a lady fair was cut,
That lay as if she slumbered in delight,
And to the open skies her eyes did shut.
The azure fields of Heaven were 'sembled right
In a large round set with the flowers of light.
The flowers *de luce* and the round sparks of dew
That hung upon their azure leaves did shew
Like twinkling stars that sparkle in the evening blue.

Details about this poem: I found it when researching Poe's landscapes in a paper I did with Kevin Benham in 2006. Part of what we said: "

Each line of the poem presents a pair of terms of two types. The first type are positional and presentational: "cut," "lay," "shut," "sembled," "set," "round," "hung," "shew." The second type are optical, relating to effects of light: "open skies," "azure fields," "flowers of light," "flowers *de luce*," "round sparks," "azure leaves," "twinkling." "Delight" could be read as "de-light," the English form of *de luce*. This word-play would have attracted Poe's cryptological imagination, and he would have seen that it was easy to find the chiasmus in the paired terms. There are two positions, "open" and "shut" (third line). "Cut" refers to the open, chiastic shape; "like," "sembled," and "hung" refer to the process of closing or combining the two sides. The poem's eight lines are divided into two four-line sections. The last of the first, line 4, presents an optical term first and a positional term second; the first of the last half, line 6, reverses this order. Line 3, the "tell" giving away the design of open and shut, pairs two positional terms; line 6 pairs two optical terms. Line 7 pairs two positional terms. Line 8 pairs two optical terms. Lines 1 and 2 combine contrasting optical and positional terms.

Blah blah blah. You do not need to know this, but it is a bit of evidence that others have thought about this and gone to some trouble to put the poetry straight. The Fletcher poem "signalizes" in the same way Vico "signalizes" — i.e. shows us something without saying explicitly what it is.

So, is Actæon a shaman or just an unlucky hunter who accidentally finds Diana's *harām*, and is punished for it by being transformed into a stag and consumed by his 33+3 dogs? The number 3 is the key, as you might guess. Dogs, the representative of the reverse predication between life and death, are enumerated by Ovid in such a way that we cannot miss his point. There is too much detail; this is another act of "signalizing." Three dogs, bitches, are late to join the chase but take a short-cut over the mountains and arrive first — a case of the super-symmetrically charged space of the forest that, like Little Red Riding Hood's wolf, finds a worm-hole that is simultaneously a spatial dimension and a means of identity transformation.

Like all shamans undergoing transformation, the human must die before the animal may be reborn. Of course in the Actæon story the stag dies as well, but we don't actually *read this*, do we? No. We witness the consumption of Actæon, not his actual death, although Hades is where Actæon the shaman must visit. The horns are magical head-ware. They are like antenna that transmit the force of the forest into his head. Diana is the forest; it is Diana who, in this alchemical marriage, enter into the head of Actæon. Well, you're not going to get this story from the standard mythologies or from any classicist. You're going to see however how the function of marriage, so central and important for Vico, comes through in the myth, about which Vico actually says very little. Don't be put off. Vico expects you to put comedy together with the idea of the death narrative, i.e. to understand his physician's prediction, and to see how he went from the book store to learning to think "as if there were no books in the world"

— i.e. like every pervert, he constructs a new father.

What about Semele? She is a goddess of the moon, and therefore another Diana, the kind of Diana who, unlike the virginal version, falls in love. She wants to make love to Endymion. But, to do this she must put him to sleep. She must address his unconscious. No problem; in dreams we know that there is no *death*; the event of death is elided. We have the “between the two deaths” condition. Now, we have a symmetry with the Actæon story. Actæon is about the *kenosis* of the shaman. He goes to Hades to learn something, to learn what the forest has to teach him. He separates himself from his mates, finds Diana, goes to Hades. Endymion is the condition of anxiety. He must be neutralized through the dream, always to some extent the dream of floating or flying. Endymion is in the darkness of the dream, when moonlight illuminates this encounter within a weightless expanse of moonlit silver sky. As anxiety disappears, so does the weight that encumbers thought. In Diana/Semele we recover the truth of the sky, the azure, the *cœlum*, the *agutezza*.

I don't like the idea that there is perfect symmetry, that Diana and Actæon on one side and Semele and Endymion on the other constitute a kind of natural division of the NS. But, I do like the idea of a “stereognosis” that forces us to go *between* the two stories, that forces us to see how magical transformation talks of knowledge in terms of marriage *within unconscious*. This is a partial clue to the idea of double transference as something *required* by the NS to understand it. This is not just the reader and writer who change places — transference — but all readers who realize, in reading, “the common mental dictionary.” This takes us from symptomatic fantasies to a *sinthomic* reality, or rather Real, where identity is lost (Actæon) while true exchange becomes possible. This is Lacan's “truth in the first place” that is also a “truth in the fourth, or last place.”

Stereognosis is knowledge of the world through chirality — the logic of left and right, really chiasmus. The complementary term is “propriocept,” the subject's knowledge of his/her body and position within a world with other bodies. Take these together and we have a kind of mirror of Actæon and Endymion. Actæon is put in the position of not knowing his body, of finding a new body (propriocept). Endymion on the other hand must experience the chirality of life as a chirality of dreaming and waking. The question is, when Endymion wakes up, what does he remember? Our reading of the NS is always a condition of waking up. We have been kissed by Vico/Semele, but what do we remember? How do we remember? We remember that we remember collectively.

9 / Vico and Anamorphosis

This lesson is going to take anamorphosis from the place we expect it — the discussion of the images known as the *dipintura* and *impresa* — and expand it into a model of the transition

from symptom to sinthome by means of the conversion of *jouissance* to *j'oui-sens*. This last term is about listening, and in psychoanalysis, listening is everything. The analyst listens to hear the analysand make a slip, use the wrong word, "say more than intended" or struggle to say enough. It is always a condition of "more than everything" and "less than nothing," a Hegelian way of describing the unconscious. Vico always seems to be saying less than we need to hear, but at the same time, through the acousmatic version of truth, *il vero*, we have an anamorphic principle. Things are not all they seem. In addition to the standard philosophical "signal" of argumentation, there is a "signalizing" that relates to Vico's inner voice, and we have to think of how ventriloquism is an active force within *The New Science*.

Because analysis is about the unconscious, when we connect Vico to Lacan, we have to talk about the Vichian unconscious. Vichians do not use this word, not in any way, let alone a Lacanian way. It is antithetical to the way Vichian criticism is done, so almost anything we might say about it is going to be provocative and original. So, what else is new?

The standard idea of anamorphs will not do. We have to see this primarily visual phenomenon synesthetically, as something that happens also in sound (the sound of words heard while reading, but also the concept of the voice) but other senses as well, *especially* touch, which will be Vico's means of "hysterically" re-wiring the NS so that if we touch one place we feel another. This becomes a kind of charged physical imagery when Vico relates the most important moments of the NS to the theme of marriage, introduced through the dyad of Diana (and Actæon) and Semele (and Endymion). It is possible also to relate smell and taste, but these are subtle and broad effects about which, nonetheless, something can be said. We enter into a new world with anamorphosis. It's where we have to be specific about certain actions that could be called "magical." We can find examples in popular culture, where magic as a performance art has done something Vico does more invisibly, but we can't allow ourselves to be accused of characterizing Vico as a "magician," because since he really *is* a magician, but to understand how we have to know what magic is in the first place.

Take the example of magic as it appears in Stanley Kubrik's *The Shining*. The failed writer and his family are being shown around the remote resort they will be guarding by the building manager, Dick Halloran. He "turns" to the writer's young son to ask him if he would like some ice cream, but he does this telepathically. We see his "reality" image stay in place while the "turn" is ghosted over like a double exposure. Halloran has realized that the boy has psychic abilities and is able to access a dimension that "lies between them" but cannot be mapped onto 3-space. If we make a diagram of this, we get the 90° turn as equal to 0° in reality, and the "orthogonal" nature of the angle stands for the "correction" of the psychic message. It is a supplement in two senses — a space outside of space and a space inside space, qualified as a dimension of truth. Naturally, as good Lacanians, we think of Truth as being in the first and fourth place of the discourse quadrangle. Now we see that Lacan's discourse model has its

own "slice" of the Real, truth in the first and fourth place, and that the other dimensions are like the XYZ of 3-space. The Agent and Other constitute all frontal exchanges, while Production is always the "occulted materiality" that goes into the artifact. Truth is "on the side of the occulted dimension," but it constitutes a means of returning to the forced choice situation where the subject has given up being on behalf of speaking (the Symbolic, patched up by the Imaginary).

Anamorphosis relates normally to the imaginary "patch" of the Symbolic's chains of signifiers. It is a play on the idea of the point of view, constructing things that can only be seen "awry," as if a secret has been concealed within the visible. But Vico's anamorphosis goes further than this. It is the *animus* of *cælum*, clearly identified with the divine — and with Vico, "divine" is clearly headed in a feminine direction with his emphasis on sexuality and marriage *via* Diana and Semele. The *animus* penetrates *anima*, and it is hard to avoid the base sexual imagery of it, but the penetration has more to do with cross-inscription that makes them a version of the uncanny's Ad (the living person inscribed with an element of death/fate) and Da (the dead person's momentum past the moment of literal death. This is closer to Plato's idea in the *Timeus* of being with various combinations of male and female. The divine and penetration/wedge-function are aligned. Cross inscription, and with it, reversed predication, are at the heart of the NS, so it's important to see how they involve anamorphosis.

You know the example of Edgar Allan Poe's story design for "The Purloined Letter." The text is divided by a mid-point, an exchange (this is the Hermetic point of a silent trade). What came before then "aligns" with what comes after, but there is a way in which the latter half narrates the first half again but in reverse, i.e. a mirror. A mirror in the middle is precisely what Vico has with his stories of Diana and Actæon and Semele and Endymion. Diana's exchange involves giving Actæon shamanistic powers. Lacan would have a lot to say about the "negative" of the *objet petit a*. What we are after with the Poe comparison is the space that is opened up *inside* the story, and how this space is viewed from a special point of view — the essential idea of anamorphosis.

Vico says that his best idea is that of the imaginative universal. This is the way the first humans see the world, by transferring their own nature to external nature, turning nature into a subject whose intentions to say something always turn out to be enigmatic. This is a world where the first human "does not know that he knows" or "knows without knowing." That is, it is his own nature that makes the world appear as enigma, but the enigma is truly unknowable. This is the wedge that has been inserted into nature as *animus*. It is a wedge that begins by being divine, i.e. heaven is inside the world.

The *verum* is concealed within the *factum* because the *factum* is "already and always" the *verum*. It is not something to be revealed at some future point; it is in the structure of the

factum, and this structure is the same as Poe's. Think of the role of Truth, the Lacanian first and fourth, in Poe. What is concealed? What allows the story to proceed? It is the letter that is never opened, never read; which has value only because it is stolen. Hermes, remember, is the god of theft-by-stealth, so be alert! We have a site of exception, a place of a "silent trade" between two partners, who turn out to be the first and second halves of the narrative. Poe knows his stuff, and uses the idea of the game of Morra as a model. He advises that to win in this game, one has only to accurately guess whether one's opponent is intelligent or not. This is like the Turing Test! Only the curtain is required to create intelligence, or the appearance of intelligence, and in Poe this curtain is the division between the first and second, echoing, part of the story.

The purloined letter is a radical anamorph. The police cannot find it because it is something that should be concealed. Concealment is the key to their Symbolic. They systematically scour the minister's apartment with protocols that are like the Lacanian Symbolic: every chain must be connected to every other chain, every visibility to every other visibility (the idea of space). The "invisibilities" (inside chair cushions, under floor-boards, etc.) have to be brought into this realm of the visible, to be inventoried. The letter escapes this protocol because it is not concealed; it is left in plain sight. This clever reversal is effective, because it does not depend on the Symbolic but rather uses the fantasies patching the Symbolic (the belief that the letter may be in a hollowed-out table leg, for example) in reverse. The letter is a classic anamorph, in that we can see it only from the "special angle" of being a reader directed by Dupin, the master sleuth; but it is anamorphic in a Vichian sense as well. It explains not just the clever hiding method but the entire *way of reading the story*, which is that an "unconscious" develops once the text has been divided in this way. The story, "The Purloined Letter," is just as anamorphic as the letter *in* the story. We have direct proof of this in the fact that not until 2010, with Richard Kopley's analysis, no Poe scholar even noticed this structure, despite the abundant evidence.

This seems to be the case with other "chiasmatically" constructed stories: Simonides' invention of the art of memory, Holbein's clever use of sun angles and numerology in *The Ambassadors*, Antonello da Messina's reference to the partridge in his painting of St. Jerome — you know the list. The astounding thing about these is that all involve chiasmus, all are not understood until someone recognizes the chiastic elements, and even after this, there is little reference or acknowledgement of the finding. Such is the case with Vico, since the "establishment" scholarship will never give adequate attention to the helmet of Hermes, the only object not mentioned in Vico's extensive inventory of everything in the *dipintura*, nor will they even begin to comment on Diana and Semele as the dividing line of text in *The New Science*. Yet, it seems that artists, writers, musicians, poets, and some philosophers seem to "get in touch with each other" by using these forms — always in a "correct" manner and always for the same desired end: to create an extimate condition.

Vico's anamorphosis is radical. We have the case where every object in the human world now has two "reference points": (1) the spatio-temporality the object has as its historical and cultural context and (2) the new spatiality and temporality created once we "open up" the human project through the technique of chiasmus/anamorphosis. The space inside the NS is like the space Dick Halloran uses to "turn to" the young boy to offer him ice cream. It is a rotation that doesn't appear on the map. It is a wedge, it is *animus*. Now we can go back to how Diana and Semele work as wedges. Diana's case is clear. The grove where she bathes is inserted into the forest. It is a *poché*, the model of all *poché* spaces perhaps. It is the uncanny "thing that should not have been revealed." Her *harām* is within the "space of the family," in terms of the rituals of the hearth, of Hestia. This space is originally cyclopean: each family has their own religion, based around the hearth. The stranger cannot witness these because the family spirits, the *gens*, maintain strict segregation, which is evidenced at the "cyclopean" stage of culture, where groups avoid each other (i.e. the place where silent trade is necessary). Without the *harām* there is no culture, and Vico realizes this in the story of Diana and Actæon, in very "shamanistic" ways (for those who have eyes to see).

Now, about the unconscious, without which there can be no culture. It is also true that Vico realizes there can be no *New Science* without its own unconscious, but that this is a collective unconscious of the reader and writer — always a creation, not a storehouse of secrets that are waiting to be discovered by the clever investigator. The NS does split in two, thanks to the "two dianas," into an unconscious put in spatial terms (Actæon) and mental terms of an unconscious of the NS and its reader (Endymion). I need to go into these cases further but for now you have to accept that the unconscious *is* an unconscious — i.e. it will always be a kind of echo from a distance, a faint memory of a dream that haunts the NS, an uncanny element of "fate" for the reader who hears the echo, but also the death dream momentum that, as Vico says about his own life, qualifies him as a kind of Scipio who sees the realm of death and returns. This makes Vico a hero in the ancient sense of the world (where "hero" originally meant just a "dead person") and a hero such as Orpheus, who goes to the underworld to "sing out" its captured Eurydice. We go very quickly to the more popular myth of Cupid and Psyche, where issues of the unconscious are put in terms of invisibility. This is the "real story" behind the NS, best translation is Robert Graves' *The Golden Ass*.

Anamorphosis is the theme of the interior dimension within the NS, an internal space where a special point of view sees things in the way Dick Halloran speaks directly to the young boy. Vico turns 90° to speak directly to us through this interior, so the anamorphosis is as much "acousmatic" (the audible dimension of the True) as the visual. Think of how this works in psychoanalysis. The analyst looks for errors, repetitions, stammers. This is the internal aspect of speech that goes directly to the unconscious. It is a "signalizing." The analyst doesn't know, and the analysand doesn't know. Now the question is, in the case of the NS, does the unconscious constitute something collective between the reader and writer? Let's go back to

the idea of truth occupying the first (suppressed) and fourth (revelational) position in the scheme for the four discourses. This is like the place where the Möbius band is twisted and attached to the other end, a first and last condition that is now merged without losing the difference, the twist. Lacan says somewhere that this is also the condition of the subject who, escaping the Cave in the Platonic metaphor, stands at the edge, after thinking that all reality had been just a projection on a wall. What the Möbius band teaches is that the twist is not a location; it is a condition of all space, but it can be "found" inside of any discovery or anomaly. It is global and local at the same time.

I would claim that Vico's internal dimensioning needs Lacan's idea of the psychoanalytic unconscious to understand it, but I would also point to Lacan's own recognition of the limits or end of analysis, namely around the crisis of transference. In Lacan's thinking, this marked the point where his work left matters of the Symbolic and the Imaginary and undertook the Real, the case of perversion exemplified by Joyce. This is key, because Joyce found Vico to be his most informative philosophical support. Had Lacan lived longer, perhaps, he would have discovered Vico's role in the structuring of *Finnegans Wake*. Basically, it's about the construction of a complete imaginary world based not on the idea of reproduction and simulacrum but originary meaning, the *hapax*. This is something that comes into existence as soon as it is said, but it is not arbitrary, not a hoax. It "immediately" rings true. It has to do with the kind of experience associated with epiphany and religious encounters. It is truly a magical event because, like performance magic, it is structured so that the "event" takes place as a Real between the construct and the participant. It is carnival, it is transformative and randomizing.

At this point it would also be interesting to use Bakhtin to link Rabelais to Vico, a kind of "herm" linking of the psyche to the phallus, just as the ancient herm showed only these two elements. We know Vico is thinking of something of this kind with his images of the two Dianas. He is also thinking of an "end of philosophy" just as Lacan is thinking about an "end of analysis," not just transference love but the end of his own life-long career. Does transference have to do with all of these different kinds of ends? Is its delirium a toxic barrier to understanding or a necessary trial of fire? Possibly Lacan cannot think of the way in which an "idiotic symmetry" or "reversed predication" might turn transference into a criss-cross, a chiasmus, that first blocks access to the unconscious but then converts the negative blocking into a positive staging. We don't know because there can be no "representational level" at which explorers can present a journal of what happened or a map of where they went. It is pure experience, purely experienced, without any permanent or external features. That's my guess, at least. So, the status of works that involve *hapax* to create epiphanies are more like places where things happen, but not the things that happen, which must continue to happen with different readers and different "errors of reading."

Can we go back to carnival? I like especially the historic footnote that explains why celebrants disguise their identities completely. This allows copulation the maximum randomness, so that the upper classes are able to escape extinction from genetic over-breeding — the need to balance endogamy and exogamy is the special phrase I think. This seems to have an echo of Freud's "polymorphous perversity," and the hysteria transformation of the body so that, underneath the concealment of the domino, any place is potentially erotic. In other words, *eros* comes to rule the day, which is the theme of any culture's carnival but also the key to what happens with identity. Randomness is the key to a lot of other things as well. It was the key to Ramón Llull's memory wheels, and to Camillo's borrowing of Llull's basic ideas. It turns out to be the key to Dolar's idea of "love at first site," where accident is the necessary prelude to the feeling that fate has drawn lovers together, i.e. that their love "had to happen." Truth in the first and fourth place, first in subtraction (randomness), fourth as the lock of fate.

We "fall" for the NS, and randomness creates the anamorphic conditions where an internal space opens up. It is a "body loading" of the NS. Truth, *il vero*, is suppressed, and Vico gives an account of this suppression in his idea of the imaginative universal (*universale fantastico*). Vico knows that truth is in the first place, as a negative. He also knows that truth returns as an avenging angel, a product of the heroic reader's understanding and descent into the underworld of the NS. The hero plays dead, like Vico; the hero is the subject in *aphanisis*, between the two deaths. (Vico has an essay "On the Heroic Mind," published in an issue of *Social Science*.) Truth in the negative is also the idiot, the isolated mind, just as Vico was isolated throughout his life — he makes a big deal of this in the *Autobiography*! So dying or growing up to be an idiot are fused in the necessary final steps of reading the NS, being dead and an idiot, or at least alone. I like the idea of "idiotic symmetry" because the self confronting a double is the most idiotic of situations and it goes directly to the idea of stereognosis.

10 / binary signifiers and occulted signifiers

The idea of anamorphosis involves the construction of a point of view as a "metaleptic" element, hence entirely propositional and potentially magical in its use of *poché* within the work, sites of exception where the reader and writer may change places. We are nearly in the position to consider how the NS works as a memory theater. This will require a lot of elements to be set accurately within a configuration that will work like a "cosmogram." The Yoruba Africans who were brought to America as slaves practiced this form of body loading, placing magical objects (plants, nails, body parts, writings, etc.) within the floors, jambs, and frames of the master's house so that a diagram would focus the power of an uttered curse or blessing. Vico does the same for the NS, planting (occluding) facts, phrases, errors, anomalies, etc. in certain parts of the book so that they construct a pattern to resonate meanings that the reader-who-becomes-a-writer will draw on as a "treasure of signifiers."

In this lesson we will see how occultation operates within the pretended normative procedure of constructing arguments using binary signifiers. There are many binaries that we might find in Vico: ancient/modern, human/animal, divine/human, mythic/(heroic)/conceptual, and perhaps the most famous, the *verum/factum*. If these binaries were treated in the standard “humanistic” procedure of seeking some middle or golden mean, some middle term to explicate the relations of the opposites, we would be missing an important point. The NS is not a system of resolutions of “problems” even though there are many dynamic linear oppositions that run through it. In the process of binary signification itself is a little-recognized process of “occultation.” One of the terms is “suppressed” — considered indefinable, too problematic to be readily included in the signifying chain that would create a continuum between opposites. (An example is Truth, which in the dyad Truth/Error, cannot remain “pure” while it is attached to the chain of relationships that define varying degrees of error. Error is the stuff of experience and the source of the useful examples that will help define Truth, but Truth itself will never be knowable in any absolute sense, apart from the imperfect examples that show what it is *not*. Truth is thus “occulted” or taken out of the signifying chain. This chain is primarily metaphoric, that is, it moves meaning along from one site to another, one set of objects or actions to another. There is always a transfer, a potential of analogy. The action of metonymy is different. It is meaning that is based on an absence. The signifier that is active in metonymy is absent or negative in some way. We “know” it because we “don’t know it.” The metonymical suppressed term must effect the metaphorical signifying chain “at a distance,” as a kind of echo that “haunts meaning” from afar, from its exile.

All binary signifiers act this way, although we pretend that the process is simply a matter of contrast and compare, division and reconstitution. But, in fact, occultation takes place in every binary signification. One term or another requires a metonymy that arises from its inability to fit easily in the signifying chain. For example, in the dyad Life/Death, we can represent life through many examples but Death eludes signification; we have to consider it the suppressed or occulted term. It is possible to turn the tables, however, in fiction. We can imagine that death is not the end, that the deceased, through an act of momentum, is carried past the moment of literal death. He/she “does not know he/she has died.” This fictional point of view is the basis of much literature, including popular art such as the movie *Sunset Drive*, where the narrator encounters his own corpse lying in the swimming pool at the beginning of the film. In this fictional reversal, it is Life that is occulted and forced to “resonate at a distance.” The reminder to the deceased that he must die keeps getting ignored and postponed, intensifying the drama of the story.

The process of occultation creates a triangle as opposed to the linear model of binary signification. The occulted term “drops out” but then returns to the metaphoric line through a series of metonymic steps that climb back up to make a chiasmic conclusion. This is, literally, a semantic space that “exists and does not exist.” It requires metaphoric linkages that progress

from one end to the other, while metonymic “hauntings” or “contaminations” bubble up from an imaginary underworld to haunt the signifying chain. This combination of horizontal (metaphoric) and vertical (metonymic) meanings-as-dimensions create a literal space or zone where the reader and writer play ambiguous and dynamic roles. This is the *internal dimensionalizing* of the NS, the construction of sites of exception that escape normative interpretation. In a kind of quantum physics way, all of these sites link up, or are really the same site, viewed “prismatically” from different positions from within the NS and labeled with different operative terms. Vico has used this method to convert the NS to a zairja, and it works. But, first, we have to turn to another, more “European” zairja, the memory theater.

new science as memory theater

The NS is a memory theater if only because Vico believed in the idea of knowledge as “anamnesis” — something we have recalled in a past life or in our time in Hades/Heaven (possibly we don’t know which!) — which every good Lacanian will recognize as a theory of the unconscious. However, Vico’s radical idea of the unconscious is that it is constructed by “twins,” not just the two occupants of the reader-writer “pole.” We think of the reader as the occupant of one end of a line whose other end is initiated by the writer. Somewhere in the middle they “meet”; the writer accommodates the reader by addressing common concerns, using a common mental language, etc. But this linear model is not productive for the reading/writing of the NS. The binary signifier version of reading and writing forces the occultation of the writer as an “enigmatic” lost entity: “Vico is dead now so we’ll never know what he really meant.” He haunts the signifying chains of the NS from afar, like any dead author. This influence is specifically metonymic (i.e. dependent on absence), whereas the meanings of the NS are metaphoric in that they presume continuity across the text’s pages. We expect consistency (i.e. that the NS is “one book”) but allow for gaps (lacunæ, errors, unaccountable leaps in logic, etc.) about which we must construct scholarly fantasies. Many of the fantasies become more actual than Vico may have intended, such as the prevailing views about the *verum ipsum factum* principle put forward in the *De Antiquissima*. Others, such as the “common mental dictionary,” are regarded as not worthy a fantasy and are reduced to the status of a commonplace construct.

Our ultimate goal is to see how the NS functions as a memory theater in the spirit of Giulio Camillo’s. Only a few have realized what this is, so a bit of explanation is necessary. Camillo promoted his theater to Francis I as a place where the user could remember anything whatsoever, any content of the “collective memory” of human consciousness more or less beginning with the ancient Greek myths continuing to the European ideas of the 16c. It was not a place to remember something personal, such as names or memorized facts. It was a place for memory as active, and collective. The theater was to “automate” memory in the sense that its adjacencies constituted affordances (Aristotle’s *tuchē*) able to reveal

unconscious content, already organized (automaton). Camillo says as much in his book on the theater, which may actually *be* the theater itself — that is there may have not been an architectural version in mind.

Vico knows about this kind of thinking, which probably originated with the Lurianic mysticism of the *Kabbalah* and *Zohar*; he was also surely aware of the “zairja” idea — a device related to astrology that purposefully randomized facts and ideas to create new *tuchē* opportunities. Ramón Lull had popularized this idea with his religious diagrams in the 11c., taught at the University of Paris for nearly four hundred years. A theater as zairja to unlock a collective unconscious was thus not an outlandish idea in Vico’s day, only in ours. Thus, no contemporary scholars have discussed Vico in these terms, or connected Vico to Camillo using the idea of *tuchē* and automaton. We must and we will.

11 / between two walls

We are at the critical point, a hinge between an “introductory attempt” to see Vico through some novel ideas, and a moment of commitment after which everything is “up for grabs.” I would compare reading Vico to being a horse who must gallop across a landscape without knowing where he is going, wanting something he does not know exists, let alone what form it may take. This galloping is into the void, into a darkness, where the horse may step into a hole that could cripple and kill it. Because the horse is noble and courageous, the clouds in the sky take pity. Normally their job is to mask the pure azure of the *caelum*, the heavens, to give life on earth water to drink, and to supply imaginations with imaginary shapes to fashion into animals faces. In this case, seven clouds, who happen to be sisters in that they always serve each other and sometimes join up to make new shapes, take pity on the horse and decide to help him. They can cast shadows on the ground, open up spaces of light, give the horse signs. The clouds are never definitive, but they always invite speculation.

The reader must gallop, full out. There is time for rest and grazing, but when the wind picks up a certain scent, movement — fast movement — is essential, and to some extent it is blind at the surface (where there is the danger of holes that can kill) but the clouds’ love make it possible to trust their judgment and guidance, as long as we don’t wish to fix their form or expect them to always say the same things. *Levo meos oculos in montes*, it says in the Bible: “I lift my eyes into the mountains ...” from which comes my help. The mountain, with clouds concealing its peak, is the *mons delectus* of Cebes’ Table, which Vico cites in his introduction. This is the memory theater, which turns the mountain upside down (V) so that the reader is on the small stage, as a singularity. The reader is the sacrifice, the reader is between two walls, a *murmur*, or audience (hearer) of murmuring. This is the acousmatic aspect of the NS, its status as low voices reverberating between the walls of the streets of the city, where at any moment there may be a “shout in the street.”

A crazy guy has written about the shout in the street, believe it or not. He was interested in James Joyce's Dalkey episode, where he converses with his school-master about his job as a teacher. The school-master is pedantic and his monolog obsessed with "hoof and mouth disease," then rampant in Ireland. Stephen Dedalus hears the boys in the schoolyard outside. His mind wanders. The crazy guy, Kaplan I think (you can find him by looking in Stuart Gilbert's guide to *Ulysses*), finds that Joyce has used Vico's sequence of gods/heroes/men to structure the whole episode. This is interesting but there is more. Joyce: "no-one here to hear." Convert this to a positive. The reader, a "nobody," is placed in a *here* to *hear*. Reverse predication reveals also the secret of Camillo's theater, that it is chiasmic, structuring a left-hand reversed theater (the audience speaks to the singular occupant of the stage) to the right-hand version (the audience, conventionally, listens).

In analysis, the analyst normally is the listener, but actually the analysand also is listening. The ear of the analyst makes the ear of the analysand a different kind of listening organ: it listens to what the voice is saying but also listens to what the analyst hears. In reading the NS, there is also this kind of double listening, and by virtue of the chiasmus a new kind of unconscious is created, one that correlates to the murmuring of the street. When the shout comes, it will be from this unconscious. It will be the *act*, a pure message from the unconscious. It will be a *hapax*: immediately knowable, known "already and always" even before it is shouted. It will call us up and out. It will be our reason to gallop into the void.

The graphic image of reversed predication is useful, because the chirality of two "positions," two elements that take turns predicating or framing each other, fold around a void, a vertical element. Harold Bloom allows us to name this verticality as a retreat (*askesis*) from a *demon*, best thought at this point to be Eros, so that we can combine positive and negative elements into a single character. This gap cannot be consolidated within the horizontal shift of frame positions. In analysis, this gap is the link to the unconscious, but not the unconscious of the analysand only; it is a collective/collected unconscious that belongs to both the analyst and the analysand. It is hard to say, given this vertical passageway, just *who is* the analyst and who is the analysand. This is the point where Vico realizes that it may be the future reader who has somehow "already and always" written his own book, the NS. Vico attends to this vertical connection with his references: falling off the ladder in his father's bookstore, possibly visiting the land of the dead during his unconsciousness, possibly being an idiot, the story of Semele who visits Endymion to kiss him while he sleeps. These verticalities structure an "instant" that is a portable *certum* in the NS. It can go to any part of the book, which is flowing in a conventional way from the left to the right and then to the turning of pages, to create a "time within time," or rather/also a "time outside of time."

Imagine that something like a "rotating-head tape recorder" actually exists in the mind. Back in the days of analog audio equipment, this was a sophisticated kind of tape recorder where,

instead of moving magnetic tape across a fixed head that recorded and then picked up sound, the head itself was capable of rotating. If it was still, the tape moved across it in real time, and the sound came out as "normal": same pitch, same duration. If the head was rotating, however, it was possible to slow down the signal. Instead of lowering the pitch, the pitch stayed the same because the head was continuing to rotate although the tape was moving very slowly. The device could play one note, at the correct pitch, by reversing the element of motion. The tape could be still while the head rotated. The same technology was applied to video recorders, which could freeze motion. The interesting thing is that, with practice and a bit of meditation, we can do the same thing with our own sense, and often do it unconsciously: see "instants" within moving time. We say we have "snapshots" of experience, but in reality we have continued to "rotate the heads" of our "recorders" while holding the "tape" of linear time still. This is not a slice; it is a dynamic stasis. We are in the moment, vertically rather than horizontally.

We become singular in such moments. We appear to be "trapped between two walls," but actually this mur-muring liberates us. It is the vertical connection to the unconscious. Vico creates opportunities for this many times in the NS, but actually the whole text is open to such "instantaneous" events, such vertical drop-throughs. It is as if we have access to our own self-sacrifice, our "immurement" as "victims" sacrificed (made into nobodies) to protect and defend the spiritual integrity of the Vico Building. We may be in some sense dead, but so is Vico. We join his ghost/host and gallop into a void, guided by clouds.

Now we have to face a serious matter. Just as the conclusion of analysis is threatened by transference, when the analysand's unconscious, in a last-ditch effort to avoid discovery, creates an emotional disturbance by having the analysand fall in love with the analyst, the reader at some point may "fall in love" with the NS, seeing it as an object of scholarly desire. This is bad, in the sense that following out the usual sequence of desire, pursuit, satisfaction will terminate analysis permanently; but good, in the sense that transference is a sign that the unconscious has *no other means of defense*. In effect, analysis is close to finding out the truth. This is a time to compare Vico's truth, *il vero*, with Lacan's, the element of his discourse model that has Truth in a "first and fourth" position. Truth is in the first position as the element of the binary signifier that is occulted. Binary signification is a version of predication. Good/bad ... which shall we use to predicate the other? Let's use "the good." We must occult it, hold it to be an ideal that is enigmatic, indefinable. We can show instances of the "not-good," attempts to articulate the good that fail, and sometimes fail miserably. We arrange these instances through metaphoric (comparative) relations that move "horizontally" in an understandable, human-experience way. The occulted term, the Good, "haunts" this signifying chain from below. It is metonymy: a form of metaphor based on absence, on the negative. Because we "can't say what the Good is," we can say what it is not.

This Truth-in-the-first-position relates to Truth in the fourth position: as an unconscious. It is Truth that sends up love in order to resist being discovered. The first position, occultation, is indispensably connected to this Truth of the fourth position, to the "love defense." Now, back to the condition of reversed predication. The agent and the other, we know, can switch positions. The master addresses other masters. Each wants to "take each other's place" as master, and the impasse leads to the famous (Hegelian) resolution of the discourse of the Master. Instead of fighting it out until the last man is left standing, the masters devise hierarchies where fealty is given: a chain of signifiers creating a hierarchy of high to low, the king or god at top (the relation is occulted, we have the "two bodies of the king") and the subjects below, from princes and dukes on down to foot-soldiers. This hierarchy follows the consistent principle of the willingness of those within it to give their life. What "haunts the signifying chain from below" is the occulted King, whose enigmatic position is that he has become a pure signifier. Without his crown and scepter, he does not exist. He is in a "first position" and, simultaneously, a "fourth position": the king is dead, long live the king.

Murmuring and kings is a historical fact. In many cultures, the king's speech is garbled; there must be a special interpreter to make sense of what the king says. The king, a super-ego if there ever was one, an Ideal Ego, is able to make his subjects face forced choices. His message is "enigmatic." Like the ego-ideal, however, the king's enigmatic (*Ché vuoi?*) aspect makes the subject wonder what the king would do without him — he offers himself as a sacrifice, he submits to being a nobody. This simultaneous submission to the *alienation* aspect of the forced choice and the *separation* aspect of the *ché vuoi?* connects in the anamorph that opens up the signifying chain's horizontality to the "unconscious" depths (and heights) of the True that has been concealed/occulted. The small stage of Camillo's theater turns the mnemonicist ("the one who will realize truth in the form of memory") into a nobody. Vico's "slips of the tongue" and carefully constructed errors turn him into an analysand who makes the analyst-reader into a nobody, too.

Emily Dickenson: "I'm Nobody! Who are you? Are you – Nobody – too? Then there's a pair of us!" or, in another poem, which Claudio Sgarbi was thoughtful enough to point out:

I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.
He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth, -the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.
And so, as kinsmen met a night,

We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips,
And covered up our names.

The name is another important clue, here offered “accidentally” by Dickenson but found immediately in Lacan (name of the Father, which is the key to Joyce’s use of *j’ouï-sens*), but we already have too much for this chapter. We have Dickenson’s gift of the clue, that the nobody is the mnemonicist on the stage, “immured,” and Apollo, who is moved out of the row of planetary gods, replaced by a banquet. Host and ghost are etymologically and poetically-philosophically related. Host is also related to “hostility” but also Geist or Spirit. The host is the matrix, the womb, the acousmatic resonant chamber, the auditorium. The two — beauty and truth — must be dead and in the tomb to appreciate this, they must be “between the two deaths” (Lacan) or “between two walls” (murmuring) where enigmatic speech is like the background noise where the soul will be called up and out by a “shout in the street.”

12 / What Is the “Heroic Mind”?

In a year-end university oration that is little known, Vico referred to a “heroic mentality” available to the modern consciousness. This mentality comes within the third age of human self-construction, an age when irony dominates and literalism has created a society plagued by competition, pettiness, and reductionisms. In short, ours is a world of binary signification: the comparison of everything to an occulted polar term in order to create a *gradus* of options. Between beauty and ugliness there are things that are “not so ugly” that they might be acceptable. Between goodness and evil there are shades of gray where we must determine acceptability through convention and “situation ethics.” The modern world of the binary signifier is metaphoric through and through. Metaphor establishes a basis of comparison by semblance, and semblance works through distinction — the “shades of gray” mentality. This consciousness denies that there is an occulted term; that the project of finding the right balance depends on suppressing the signifiers that frame the *gradus* of continually reversing predications. “What is beauty?” is held to be unanswerable, a matter of abstract and useless philosophical debate. “What is goodness? ... justice? ... truth?” are all equally distant from binary signification (Plato was the first to make a big deal about this) because they allow us to continue to act in an ironic and duplicitous way — *using* concepts without having or giving access to their meaning. We cannot see the whole picture because of occultation, which is an ideological project. Ideology promotes a cynicism about the occulted terms because it is then able to undermine the chains of signification between the polar terms without being called into question (this is the point of Vico’s formula for “university discourse”). Thus, Plato’s dialogues about truth, justice, etc. must be called into question *precisely* by those (e.g. Karl Popper) whose claims about society are that honesty is based on scientific transparency, but that this transparency is in the hands of experts.

Vico's solution to the modern mentality, what we know of it at least, is grounded in the sublime. The sublime is a subject made famous by Kant who, following Burke, tied the sublime to the experience of a "beauty beyond beauty," an inexplicable combination of beauty, ugliness, and horror — such as might be exemplified by storms, wars, or natural disasters — afforded by a minimal detachment allowing a point of view: the idea of standing on a threshold, the *limen* of sublime. Vico's sublime is not exactly Kant's or Burke's. It has to do with a confrontation with Providence and Glory, where representation is impossible (it is defeated by the sheer *quantity* of its objects) and thought as we know it is barely able to remain conscious. Vico was not among those neo-Platonists who claimed that knowledge of the absolute, though possible, did not allow any consciousness that would constitute "mind" or "individual." He held out for what Paul Friedländer characterized as the true Platonic dedication to *Eros*, based on Socrates' relation to Diotima of Mantinea, a feminist doctrine of love and *dæmon*, a doctrine that Socrates employed but did not explain. Vico, with his two Dianas, is most likely a follower of Diotima, in spirit if not consciously, since his *Eros* is tied to the heroic mentality. *Eros* belongs to all humans, of all of the three Vichian ages. It is *dæmonic*, however, in three modes. In the mythic mode, it is the sheer terror of nature as occulted will, the spirit concealed within mute substances, a spirit that might be courted through ritual, song, dance — acts designated by the sciences of divination. In the heroic mode, love becomes human, and here the two modern components of love are born: the idea of accident (*tuchē*) combined with that of fate (*automaton*), the two forms of causality that lie outside Aristotle's system of efficient, final, formal, and material cause but influence it metonymically, "at a distance." *Tuchē* means that we find the lover not by design but coincidentally. This element of chance, by the way, is also an essential component of divination. *Automaton* as fate means that, within the affordances of chance, there has been a hidden design operating retroactively. This operation constructs an internal dimension that is identical with *eros* as *dæmon*. Its scale is both/neither grand nor small. It is a topology rather than a geometry of extended spatial relations. But, its spaces and times are more real than any extended reality.

Love's relation to the sublime is not a *coincidentia oppositorum* of *tuchē* and *automaton*. Rather, we must re-employ the idea of double transference — the sudden appearance, near the end of analysis, of a final defense put up by the unconscious to protect itself — as happening within the design of an "idiotic symmetry" preserving the intrinsic energies of falling in love. Love/*eros* is not the true; but it leads us to the *threshold* of the true, once its fictionality has been discovered. *Eros* is thus a guide, a Virgil to Dante, a role passed on to BeatrIX, taking the poet up to the edge of something and allowing him to look over to the promised land. I use the gender of pronouns here to borrow from Dante's conversion of Virgil to Beatrice as guides in his journey. Virgil must stop at Purgatory; his status as a pagan does not permit him access to the Judeo-Christian heaven. But, when Beatrice takes over, she uses the same "sublime" principle: she takes Dante to a threshold in order for him to "look over" into what is truth — truth in the fourth place as Lacan would put it.

What is this "fourth place" I keep bringing up. It is a place-non-place, a place where we know but don't know, i.e. *kenosis*. Sublime knowledge cannot be possessed, represented, captioned, packaged, or discussed. It can only be experienced "at a distance," but this distance is the minimum/maximum internal distance. In the case of Beatrice and Dante, this is the distance between Beatrice's *two eyes* and the reflection of God Dante sees within them — what better demonstration of Lacanian extimacy could there be? This inside-outside is Dante's goal, and we remember that Dante is undertaking the classical "heroic act," the *katabasis*, the visit to the underworld in order to discover divine truth. This truth is sublime in the sense of being "in two places at once," a "first place" (as occulted) and a "fourth place" (as *kenosis*, a truth that is "more here than here," a truth embodying the "minimal distance" of metonymy — the truth of human making, the *factum* that is also *verum*).

Vico felt that he had used the heroic universal to discover the imaginative universal. He describes his life as a *katabasis* of trials — a labyrinth of tortures, disappointments, betrayals, etc. Yet, this journey was one of instruction, and one in which Vico, like the Australian aboriginals, felt it essential to *sing the Real into being*, to liberate the *verum* from the *factum* by constructing the text of *The New Science*.

With Vico's primary autobiographical conceit — where there are two ways of reading the NS, one as a death-dream the other as the work of an "idiot" — we have satisfaction in the former case that the heroic universal is the "golden bough" of the hero visiting the underworld. To be able to return from the land of the dead, the hero requires a password/passport (think of the magic flute of Mozart's famous opera), and in Vico's case this is the imaginative universal. This is a compact formula for the union of *tuchē* and automaton. *Tuchē* is the metaphoric transfer of human qualities to natural substances, automaton is the metonymy of divination, the light that shines forth, to the jewel on the breast of *Metafisica*, down to Homer, who further automates metonymy in the songs of heroes. Metonymy is a logic of 1:1 — there is an exact transfer in this "contiguity function" of consciousness, which resists all picturing and characterization in favor of the actual bodies of things in all their particularity. This "automates" all subsequent transfers by building in a secret code that is also the password allowing metonymy to transcend barriers of media, cultures, individuals in cultures. This "fate" is Providence: it preserves humankind through an invisible presence that acts automatically. For Vico this has been described in terms of the built-in tendency of selfishness to reconstruct itself as benevolence and justice (cf. Mandeville's "thesis of the bees," Vico's probable source). Wishing to preserve their families, the first fathers extend the idea of the family to those servants in need of protection, and the idea of the city begins to develop, etc. etc.

How Eros leads us to a threshold where we may "look across" into the Aleph-spacetime of the True in the fourth position requires us to leave Eros as love and accept its dæmonic aspect as portal. It is an eye, an opening, a sublime picture where we are simultaneously the viewer and

the viewed. Hegel: "At the same time that 'I' am the content of a relation, 'I' am also that which does the relating." Here we see there is no Absolute Knowledge that can be defined as a content. Rather, we have pure relation. Pure topology. We have the "fourth ring" of the Borromean knot's defective linkages. The Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real are held together by a *j'ouï-sens*, a "listening to meaning" in its *acousmatic* aspect, its *erotic* aspect. Love is not the answer *per se*, it leads to the answer, a *shared* or common unconscious, akin to a collective memory that occurs "as sensation" as Bergson would predict so many years later ("The pure present is an ungraspable advance of the past devouring the future. In truth, all sensation is already memory"). Ironically, had Alberto Pérez-Gómez held out a bit longer and not forced a conflation of the first humans into all humans just to have a "poetic alternative" to modern instrumental consciousness, he would have discovered the option he had been seeking all along, i.e. a heroic option depending on the sublimity of love — a love that one can truly "build upon." But, such is the fate of those who would short-circuit Vico's ideas into convenient paraphrases to fit their own purposes. Our short-circuits serve different ends: we wish to fulfill Vico's physician's prediction, that the "boy will either die or grow up to be an idiot." We wish to use the death narrative and a (symmetrical) idiotic reading to restore *The New Science* to Vico's erotic/dæmonic and original design.

13 / "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden"

Freud's famous enigmatic saying, "Where it was, there I shall be," seems to be a strange place to start the strangely numbered chapter 13, but in this case it may be the chief clue in the mystery story involving Vico's triad of terms, the *verum*, the *factum*, and the *certum*. Roughly translated these are "the true," "the made," and "the certain." The true and the made are the famous couple of the *Antiquissima*. Unearthed from antiquity, they reveal their twinship or at least kinship. "The true is convertible with the made" is the equally rough translation of Vico's own motto, *verum ipsum factum*, used by Carlo Scarpa as the model of the architecture school where he taught in Venice, displayed in the modernist entrance he designed for the school, IUAV, Santa Croce 191, Venezia. Perhaps, as I once wrote in an article for VIA, the "ipsum" ("itself") carries the majority of the meaning; maybe it is the "it" of Freud's quote, indicating autonomy, automatism even, in the self-generating power of this relationship. Maybe this "it" makes way for the "I" that will come later; or maybe the "I" is, as Hegel put it, "that which does the relating and is also the content of the relation." If "the I which does the relating" is the heroic universal the modern mind must use to discover the truth of the mythic mind, the "I which is also the content of the relation" is an "it," an Id, something unconscious, suppressed, occulted.

The content would be Lacan's "truth in the first position"; the it that does the relating is "truth in the fourth position"; making Vico's imaginative universal and heroic-scholarly universal correspond to Lacan's first form of discourse, that of the Master/Servant, embody the

condition of the first humans while the final discursive formula, analysis, corresponds to the situation of analysis and the need to see the unconscious for what it is. That this quest involves an understanding of metaphor and metonymy as a dialectic relationship seems evident from the three "original" terms, the *verum*, the *factum*, and the *certum*, is not self-evident. Nor has it ever been suggested that the *verum*, the *factum*, and the *certum* might ever be compared to Lacan's Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary, respectively. The link that fuels such a Quixotic project is equally surprising: James Joyce. Joyce took a keen interest in Vico, and Lacan took a keen interest in Joyce. Lacan, who seemed at the time of his death to be on the verge of discovering why Joyce was fascinated with Vico to the extent that his major novel, *Finnegans Wake*, is almost a biographical version of *The New Science*, did not have the opportunity to make these connections, so to some extent this Vico-Joyce-Lacan speculation takes up Lacan "where he left off." It would be intriguing, in this speculation, to apply Freud's idea to another thing he, and later Lacan, said about psychoanalysis — that no matter how original the theory of psychoanalysis might be, it had always been preceded by art. Art, in its dramatization of the love affair between beauty and ugliness, always anticipates theory, which is why "examples" taken from art are more than "instructive." They are way ahead of the game.

We have to skip Joyce for the moment however, and stick to the point. "What is the *certum* in relation to the true and the made?" and "How do the certain, the true, and the made" come to represent the metaphoric-metonymical meta-project of Vico's *New Science*, even though *certum* appears only briefly in this work, and then only in relation to divination; and even though the *verum-factum* appears not at all? We can justify this only by means of the centrality Vico gives to the imaginative universal, the basis of mythic thought. This is a "function" that produces the mythic world, so in one sense it already belongs to the scholar who discovers it, and is the "scholarly universal" associated later with Vico's "heroic mind," required to connect the last human things with the first. What is the imaginative universal? Basically, it's metaphor. But, this is not metaphor in the modern sense of "carrying meaning across the threshold separating one class of things to another." Rather this is an act of occultation, carried out unconsciously by the first humans. This metaphor was completely suppressed, Vico said, in the moment when the thunder frightened the first humans into thinking it was the word of a god. "The gods begin in fear," says Varro, and Vico would have known this quote. Fear itself concealed the first human action: a transposition of human nature into the elements of the external world. There could be no better or more impressive example of Lacanian "extimacy" (*extimité*)! Because this nature was not consciously recognized as such, the transposition involved a double blind. Unknown as a possession, it was doubly unknown when it appeared to be the force and "mind" behind natural appearances. "The 'I' that does the relating is also the 'I' that is the content of the relation," says Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right*. Extimacy specifies two kinds of unconsciousness: one, which corresponds to the Lacanian "truth in the first position," is the fierce and wild natures of the

first proto-humans who, being unreflective, had no awareness of themselves as anything other than will — hence, “wild,” which contains the same linguistic roots as “will,” both in the sense of intention and a future action, is by definition unknown to itself. A wild man is unable to reflect, unable to conceive a self-image. Hence, “he/she” is an “it.” *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*. The truth of the wild is the imaginative universal, the “it” of the first human nature that was unknown and then, transported to the substances and elements of nature as a dæmonic interior, unknown even though “it” was attempting to communicate through signs: thunder, patterns of stars, the use and appearance of plants, the actions and forms of animals, the magic powers of the soil, the tumults of weather and other natural forces, the colors, smells, weight, darkness, cruelty, and joyous beauty of the external world.

The intention to communicate something was what made thunder more frightening than simply a loud sound for the first humans. It was the lack/surplus of meaning, the thunder’s inability to say exactly what it meant — and hence the potential that, for those who discovered the code, the thunder would reveal more than it intended to say. This is the formula of psychoanalysis, that the analysand always complains of being unable to put his/her exact thoughts into words while of course she/he is, through slips of the tongue, revealing much more than intended — “the man/woman who knew too much” is also the “man/woman who knows without knowing” (*kenosis*). The occultation of self-awareness, the first metaphor initiating the human world as such, is the discovery of the imaginative universal, which Vico says cost him a good twenty years of his life. This is not the “poetic mentality” put forward by those who like Vico but do not understand what the metaphor of the imaginative universal involves. This is not an alternative to thinking scientifically or reductionistically. Vico’s imaginative universal was his Science, and science is, if anything, reductionistic, says Lacan.

The “it” of the first human moment was metaphor, and Vico gives prominence to metaphor as the “first among the figures” of human thought. But, it is metonymy, not metaphor, that just as suddenly gave form to the human world. Where metaphor is a physical transfer of meaning, between domains that are more or less equivalent in materiality, metonymy’s meaning is grounded in negation and formed by absence. It is meaning that “echoes from a distance.” It is never immediate, it is always “out of synch.” It “never says what it intends, but says more than it intends,” and thus metonymy is an analog of the unconscious. It is the modality of the human nature that was transported into the external world. It is a logic of the dæmon, a logic of Eros in that desire to say something is at the heart of all desire, and both expression and silence (and absence, and negation, and defeat, and incompleteness ...) are a part. What the thunder means to say to the first humans, the True, is not a truth of content; it is the “straight story” about how the metaphoric transfer happened. It is a truth that cannot be known until the final stage of human development, known by a mentality that is unable to experience mythic poiesis directly but which may discover the principle of poiesis, which is the relationship between metaphor and metonymy.

So, what is this relationship? We might say that, just as Vico advised that the heroic mind must witness the sublime from the position of a threshold, looking over to a space that forbids entry, we must “look over” to a diagram that, while pretending to sit still on a flat page, truly exists in a space created by the true, the made, and the certain. This is a 3-space or, rather, a 2-space on a curved closed surface, a 2-sphere. Curvature is not a quality *of* the other two terms; it is a quality *in* them. But, we can see it only by imagining an “of” dimension, a point of view that allows the scholar to look across. Hence the diagram is a relation where the ‘I’ that does the relating is also a content of that relating.

Truth in the first place, the truth about metaphor, is a downward vector of occultation. The transfer of metaphor drops out of consciousness, it becomes the unconscious of the individual, the collective, but as such it is an unconscious that exists in the externality of the material world. It is collective in the sense that everyone has access to this materiality, embodied in objects that are commonly perceived. We see the material world; it is the collective mind; it is the fact of metaphor’s occultation, even for non-mythic, non-poetic subjects. This vertical vector “affords” the forward motion of a horizontal vector, the made. The made constructs chain of signifiers by creating causes with effects and converting the effects into new causes (which, in turn, generate more effects ...). This self-perpetuating world of made things is not meaningful *per se*. It is useful. In the mythic mentality, the dæmonic control of use is evident and must be cultivated, appeased, compensated, consulted. One does not build a house without asking for the permission of the materials, the tools, even the design, which is held to have a religious origin. The modern poet, half ironically, half seriously, asks for help and permission from the muses, the mother of whom (Mnemonsyne, memory) is the collective memory of how things go together. Forward motion of the *factum*, a series of reversed predications (effects into causes, signifieds into signifiers, etc.) creates opportunities for relations that embody the modern sense of metaphor, as a transfer of meaning across a bar. This is the bar that separates “levels of meaning” or “domains.” The cosmic (stars and other sky-signs); the human domain, divided by social class, nationality, race; the zoological of beasts, wild and domesticated; artificial objects; natural objects; landscapes; plants; rivers ... all establish layers separated by lines containing and distinguishing them, lines which can be crossed by metaphor: “the lion king,” “the rock of salvation,” “rivers of time,” etc. Crossing a horizontal line requires a vertical movement, but to preserve the horizontal logic of semblance/dissemblance this verticality, like the original verticality of occultation, is suppressed. It is the vertical hinge allowing the horizontal swing of the door from open to closed, the horizontal swing of predication from effect to cause, the horizontal flip of container to contained.

This vertical hinge has an ancient predecessor: divination. Vico is clear on this matter. The surplus/lack of nature-as-signifier creates the “more than and less than” condition requiring the first humans to invent the sciences of divination. In the context of the world that the

metaphoric transfer of mind has made, a world of unstable meanings that “slide past each other,” divination aims to secure contact with the dæmonic interior through a reductionist procedure. To be put in direct contact with the spirits guiding natural substances, with the spirits of departed ancestors who continue to advise and punish the living, with the gods who control the future, human must devise a protocol with procedures and methods that are invariant and exacting. Indeed, the augural practices of cultures around the world take virtually identical forms: (1) a randomizing element to “isolate” the divination procedure, (2) a matrix-like interpretation device that converts the outcomes of divination into judgments or symbolic, and (3) enforcement mechanisms that assure that the directives of the auspices will be enacted. That divination has its own “Law and Order” structure repeats what Vico taught, that divination rituals give rise to human legal systems, “systems of signifiers” that in turn civilize and soften human nature. At first severe, later accommodating and merciful, law logic is also the logic of sign systems, which also originated in augural practices. Vico adds that death/burial and marriage had to be done within the sanctity of divine consultation, and we have the “of” and “in” of divination expressed in the separation (the “of”) of death and the co-presence of combined opposites within the same plane, the “in” of marriage. Hegel’s two “I’s” are really this of/in condition: the ability to stand outside a frame/distinction and at the same time be a content of that same frame/distinction.

Divination’s aim is to construct, within the turbulence of the *factum*, a *certum* — a certain outcome. Metonymy, the echo of the occulted unconscious, the first and founding metaphor of human life, comes in as a weak signal, complicated with negations and contradictions. Divination’s strict procedures strive to make these weak signals definitive and enforcable. The invariable components of divination tell the story. The isolating randomizer and the matrix-like codifier work as frame and fortune. They use “of” and “in” as verbs, to alienate then define the selected data of sacred signs. Metonymy is thus a “break” in the chain of causality, but in its verticality it identifies with a “break” that has already existed within the causal chain, the “hinge” that has made reversed predication of effect into cause, signified into signifier, possible. Divination opens up the imaginary line that is the hinge converting effect to cause. It doubles it, then it expands it into a thin space. This is not an abstract idea; rather, it is the same thin space that is the space between the walls where victims sacrificed to provide buildings with spiritual protection are immured. It is the thin space between the person and his/her shadow, a space that can be invaded by magic that would try to kill that person. It is the thin space of the labyrinth, a space held together “stochastically” — through wobbles and vibrations — to amplify weak signals, making them audible. It is the space of whispers. It becomes the space of retreat (*askesis*), monasteries where rules of silence and meditation open up for the perception of the acousmatic voices of gods.

To draw this space’s logic (not its literal form) requires another diagram, this time showing how the conscious subject, in retreating from a screen, constructs his/her own unconscious

that is able, through a secret metaphoric transfer, to become a content lying on the other side of the screen. If the screen is "nature," this content is the dæmonic force concealed within nature. But, in truth (truth in the fourth place), it is the same content that was occulted by the observing subject. The thin space becomes the space of this fourth place, a kind of divination that is enacted not by the first humans but the last humans who, existing in a "third age," construct a fourth possibility, a "heroic mind." This is "divination for moderns," so to speak, Vico's idea of how to discover a "new science," a science of divination just as the first augurial practices had also constituted a legitimate science: both poetic and instrumental, both religious and atheistic. Both "autistic" and communal. And, of course, both "of" and "in."

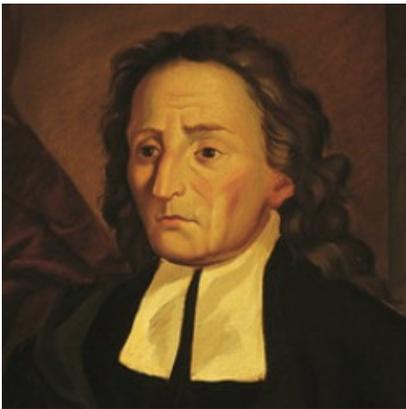
The certain, the *certum*, is far from being the obscure or minor element, barely mentioned in The New Science, that has little to say about Vico's project. It is not just a correlate of divination; it offers the key to divination's status as a science that links the first humans with the "last humans" who opt out of the idiocy of concepts and categories. This is a bit over the top for most Vico scholars. It is certainly over the top for American-based Vico scholars who do not recognize Vico's Rosicrucian affinities or who ally Vico with phenomenologists out to offer poetry as an "alternative option" to reductionist thinking. Vico is an alternative, to be sure, but he is an alternative only to the "heroic mentality" that confronts the sublime with the same exacting methods that had been employed by the first "scientists," the scientists of divination. The two sciences, the old and the new, combine in the idea of the alliance, in Latin, between new and nine. Dante had realized this in his *Vita Nova*, which is just as credible as a "Life of Nine" as it is "A New Life." Vico's new science is a "science of nine" in the sense of being (1) the last of the decimal number system, a number on the verge of a new "decade," a *ricorso* or return to mythic mentality; and (2) a number that can be added or subtracted from mathematical calculations "silently," without altering the results. This capability, known at least as early as the development of Vedic mathematics in India, is subtle. Although nines can be removed and added without changing results, their removal and addition constitutes a check, a verification of the truth of the procedures. This is the way that the heroic universal operates with a metonymical logic of absence/presence, of/in, returning to that to which it cannot return, knowing that which it cannot know, securing a *verum* from the *factum* with a procedure that is *certum*. Where it was, there I shall be. I shall be at the moment I predict — the future anterior — by the time of which I shall see myself *facie ad faciem*, face to face. I won't recognize it, in that thin space of mur-muring, but I will hear it whisper.

14 / Vico Goes to the Movies

The *certum* leads us to an inescapable conclusion: that the "heroic mind" requires a "scholarly universal that is the symmetrical partner of the imaginative universal. Just as mythic thought used the imaginative universal by occulting the role of metaphor, this occultation would not be discovered until Vico, in the 18c., made it the pivot of his *New Science*. Something that gives

rise to all cultures everywhere, how could it have been so ubiquitous yet remained undiscovered? The imaginative universal was/is the “purloined letter” of human culture. The partner of this open secret stands at the opposite end of history, at a threshold overlooking the sublime. Since the sublime itself is structured as a point of view overlooking that which exceeds the senses, we have to consider the excess. What is it in relation to the “scholarly universal”?

The *certum* comes in at this point as the Third Man who, as in the 1949 British *film noir*, “must have been there” to carry the corpse of Harry Lime to the other side of the street. Who was the third man is of course well known. It was Lime himself, who faked his own death. There is a curious parallel with Vico’s own death, reported in an addendum to Vico’s *Autobiography*, written by the Marquis of Villarosa. As in the film, there is an issue about the body. Two groups showed up to claim the body after Vico died, allegedly of throat cancer. One was from the university, the other was a “sodality,” a guild related to the church. The stair to Vico’s apartment was steep and narrow. There was a *fracas* in the courtyard once the body reached the ground floor and at one point it seemed that the corpse was to be abandoned by both parties. Was there a Third Party? One could use the groups to formalize the conflict in Vico between a religious devotion (albeit non-Catholic) and a purely intellectual project, but this is not the point. A “third option” is like the third term, the *certum*. It is metonymy, it is a middle that is both there and not there. It “divines” the future of *The New Science*. It carries the body of Vico to the other side of the street.



Vico is not Harry Lime, but he is a shadowy figure even now. Verene has to excavate an archaic word to describe Vico’s appearance as “adust” (burnt). There is something dark about Vico, and, thanks to the incredible scholarship of the book by Panofsky, Saxl, and Klibansky, *Saturn and Melancholy*, we know that a dark complexion is a sign of the melancholy genius. Verene is right to go past “dark” to “adust.” It is the idea of something shining out of the darkness, a fierceness, anger, or resentment — perfect dramatic expressions for the artist who is unrecognized in

his own time, who is thwarted by inferior colleagues and unappreciated by students hell-bent on professional success. Possibly, the best actor to play the part of Vico would be Giancarlo Gianinni, in his role in Lina Wertmuller’s *Seven Beauties*, able to play the fool, to witness horror, to fake adoration. In short, Vico is in some way a “man without qualities” who adapted to his times by “laying low” while at the same time working hard on something of extreme value and then defending his work with caloric fierceness.



Vico's personality explains something important about the *certum*. The melancholy personality profile combines fierceness/courage with despondency. These opposites — extremes — show how intensity is able to change its polarity suddenly, without warning. The *certum* takes us directly to the practice of divination. As a third term, a key explaining the relationship between the *verum* and *factum*, it says "you must not attempt to understand this relation, you

must divine it." How? What is the meaning of a term that inverts itself, > to <, in order to function as a vanishing mediator? What does the *certum*'s identity as metonymy tell us? What is the meaning of the sublime in connecting us to the *poiesis* of the first human mentality? The *certum* seems to raise more questions than it can answer.

One by one: We have one version of a vanishing mediator in the example of the enthymeme, the rhetorical "syllogism." Like standard syllogisms, there is a middle term that appears in both the major and minor premise but does not appear in the conclusion. "Socrates is a man; all men are mortal; Socrates is mortal" shows that "man" working first as to predicate Socrates, <, then as a predicate of mortality, >, "vanishes" when > and < are combined by the conclusion. Serendipitously, the >< is the opposite of <>, Lacan's sign for fantasy — \$◊a — this is both a *poignon* or cancellation/negation and a combination of > and <, greater than and less than, reminding us of that the human subject always feels that she is not able to say all she means but that in fact she says more than she intends.

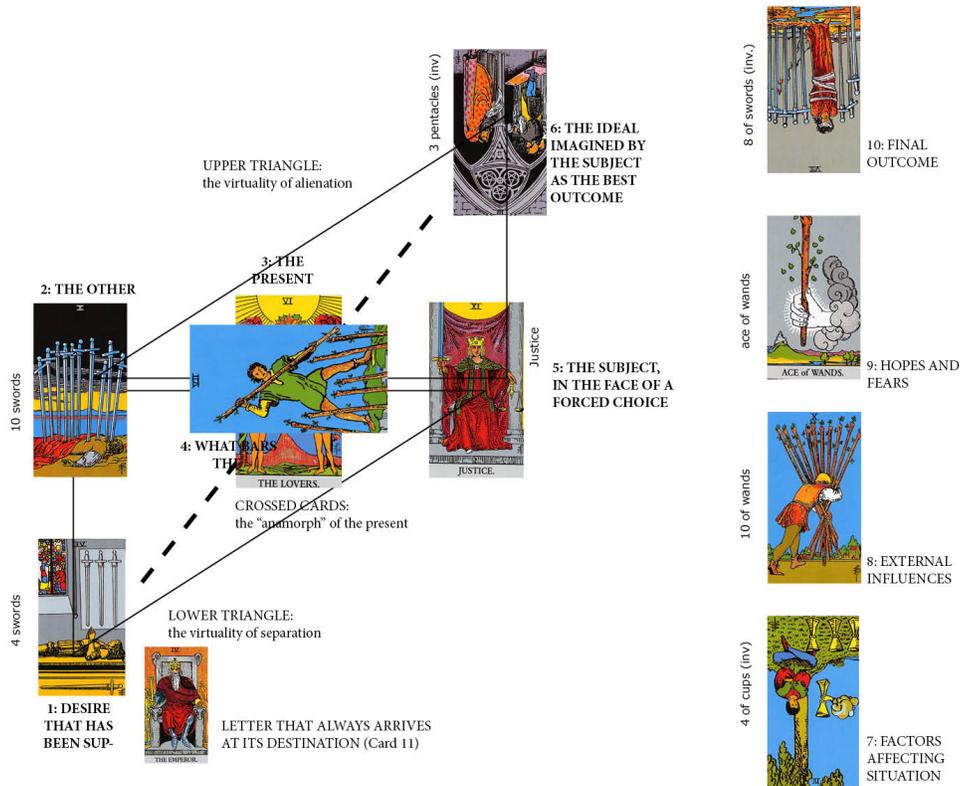
The enthymeme is a bit different. The vanishing mediator is the silence of the audience. Metonymically suppressed/occulted, it is the audience's feeling for the speaker's role in the speech. It sees the speaker as a "defective narrator" who, as a subject who fails to realize what it is he knows, nonetheless is able to communicate this blind spot to the audience. This is a "less than" that communicates a "more than." Because the speaker is "defective" in this way, the audience sympathizes, gets more than is said, reads between the lines. Vico feels he has not been able to tell us everything we need to know; his defects are well known. But, we see beyond them. We see by means of the *certum* that there is a future to be divined, a future of *The New Science* that is ours to discover. The *certum*, the vanishing mediator, is the gap whose single boundary is doubled into two walls that open slightly to contain a narrow space, a labyrinth, an acousmatic space where we here echoes, murmurs ("mur-murs").

When Vico puts one and one together, he gets two, but he also gets one, a one. Since *The New Science* is also speculatively a “science of nine” inviting a bit of numerology, it is worth considering how the real numbers between 1 and 10, divided by nine, yield repeating sequences ($1/9 = .111\dots$; $2/9 = .222\dots$; etc.). The extension of this logic is the $9/9$, which we commonly take to be 1, is, to be consistent with the series, $.999\dots$ Vico’s *Nuovo Scienza*, as a “science of nines” is about seeing the world in fractals of this kind. The ideal eternal history, he argued, was the pattern of individuals and their particular micro-experiences, not just the pattern of nations. In Haruki Murakami’s novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, an enigmatic wizard named the Professor explains that such repeating number sequences allow time to stop, to find an alternative idea of eternity: not eternity based on infinite extension but one based on continuous repetition. Vico’s ideal eternal history was exactly this: that human life was eternal not because it could endure the ages but because it was perpetually repeating itself, rolling over in the same cycle repeatedly, at the scales of whole cultures but also individuals and even moments within the life of an individual. The message of *The New Science* is quasi-occult: life is life eternal.

The *certum* is (thanks to the association with divination) a 1:1, a metonymic exact transfer. When the first humans apply the 1:1 principle of divination to their legal judgments, the results are severe. The auspices dictate radical punishments that must be carried out. It is this horrifying exactitude that compels the first humans living in cyclopean societies to gradually soften their customs, i.e. to civilize themselves. But, the point is that this move from severity to mercy, the same as the move from mythic to heroic to human in the ideal eternal history, is an infinite loop, $><$, the extimity of fantasy, the *certum*.

Divining the future of *The New Science* is the business of heroes, and the hero is the person who visits the invisible (Hades) to learn what cannot be known (*kenosis*). The hero knows without knowing — the “defective narrator” if there ever was one! But, what is known is an excess, the occulted signifier. We can discover this signifier only through divination. It cannot be sought logically, although our minds must exercise extreme discipline to maintain the 1:1 metonymical relationships of divine truth. To introduce the idea of divination in a pop-cultural way, with no pretense to authenticity or even the minimal scholarly value, I cast Tarot cards while asking the question, “What is the future of *The New Science*.” I used a “Lacanian spread,” a design I devised by diagramming relations between a main line representing signifying chains (metaphoric relations), “qualified” by extensions generated metonymically as surpluses to the Symbolic (the ego ideal) and the Imaginary (the object-cause of desire, the “occulted” signifier that, once removed from consideration, allows discourse to proceed. The spread allows for a return of the “letter which always reaches its destination,” the eleventh card. Cards 7–10 however follow the Tarot tradition of defining (7) factors affecting the situation, (8) external influences, (9) hopes and fears, and (10) final outcome.

Here is what appeared:



Commentary begins with the first card, 1, the four of swords, with one sword associated with the tomb of the hero: "desire that has been suppressed." IDEAL EGO (IMAGINARY): The first place is the suppressed element that allows discourse to go forward, and the suppressed signifier for Vico is the forgotten prediction of the physician that Vico, having fallen from a ladder as a boy, would either die or grow up to be an idiot. The option of death is suppressed, but finding the fourth ring is a matter of taking this option seriously, and seeing how the New Science might in fact be a death narrative.

Card 2, the nine of swords, the devastation of the subject: The Big Other of this study of Vico involves an impasse of contemporary views. The '10' is a number of completion, indicating that the other views believe themselves to be complete and exhaustive, that nothing else can be known or discovered. This leaves the new reader of Vico no choice but to accept the bleak views of Vico as an obscure failure.

Cards 3 and 4 (the anamorph): The ANAMORPH shows that Vico is a philosopher of EROS, shown by the Lovers (6) in the Socratic tradition; indeed his "two Diana's" thesis, plus his use of transference love to reach a common consciousness is the center of my revised view. THE INVERSE CARD: covers Vico's Eros with a "fighter" who chooses one wand out of 7, adding a wand to the number of Eros above (6+1) to "take a stand" against the aggression of the Big Other (10). This new view makes 11, the card that is the "letter that always reaches its

destination.”

Card 5, Justice, holding a balance: The barred subject’s forced choice in this case is the choice between Speaking and Being; those who see Vico as choosing only Speaking end up with 10 swords and the limitation of a view of the New Science as simply a series of arguments. However, *jouissance* is only the first phase. *J’ouï-sens* takes us to the fourth ring, Eros, which opens on to the vision of truth in the fourth place.

Card 6, three pentacles (stars): EGO IDEAL (SYMBOLIC): The ideal as three pentacles in the Lacanian spread refers to the Borromeo knot; the inverted card shows what Lacan argued, that the knot is defective without the “fourth ring” that can be supplied only by the Artist/Poet who, using the heroic universal, is able to indicate what had been originally suppressed, as a “fourth ring.” This is truth in the first place.

Card 7, four of cups, one offered to the subject sitting under a tree (standard): FACTORS AFFECTING THE SITUATION: The inversion of a card indicating internalization, in the Lacanian context, indicates extimacy — the imaginative universal that sees the world as a “subjective object.” But, this is also the “internal dimensionality” that is associated with discovery of the fourth ring.

Card 8, ten of wands, here indicating tasks (standard): EXTERNAL INFLUENCES: This card’s number is significant. It matches the 10 swords of the Big Other; our view of Vico converts the collection of contemporary theories about Vico into just as many wands to call forth, in shamanistic fashion, a new view, a new reading.

Card 9, the ace of wands, the highest in the suit, so the wand has “magic powers” (standard): HOPES AND FEARS: As the card succeeding the 10 wands, the Ace of Wands is none other than the “golden bough” used by any who would visit Hades and return alive. It is the magic password/token (*tesseræ*) that allows passage beyond death’s defenses, past the dog Cerberus who guards this boundary.

Card 10, eight of swords, with the subject bound (standard): FINAL OUTCOME: The 8 of Swords indicates powerlessness; just so, Vico is dead, unable to defend himself against the 10 Big Others and their reductive theories; but the card is inverted. The final outcome of our study will be a conversion of powerlessness, not through aggression but alternative.

Card 11, the emperor (rule, superiority): The letter that arrives finally, as the eleventh card, is TRUTH IN THE FOURTH PLACE, a restoration of justice, here represented by the Emperor, a card that coincidentally carries the number 4 — the justice Vico restores is the heroic universal and the conversion of *Eros* into *kenosis*, as the “transference love” of the reader and writer are realized to be symmetrical and complementary.

What can be said about this ridiculous operation? First, it was not as ridiculous as it might first seem. Most surprisingly, the numbers of the cards, reflecting relations between 10s and 11s, and the singularity of swords and wands that are identified with Vico’s own singularity, resonate with what we already know about Vico’s project, that it stands alone. It is a one among ones. What is also surprising is the over-presence of swords and wands in key locations, indicating possibly that for every trial Vico has an effective strategy. Particularly in card 9, “hopes and fears,” we have a wand that appears to be a “golden bough,” the passport required of all “heroes” who would descend into Hades and wish to return. Like the seventh

stave taken up by the cross-card in the anamorph, the location identified with Vico's essence, it is both a token that "signalizes" (means more and less than a conventional sign) and a weapon.

The most striking coincidence, in my view, is the eleventh card, which carries the number 4 and is also "truth in the fourth place." This shows Vico, possibly, as an Emperor on a throne ("thrown"?), restored to majesty. The letter, the purloined letter of *The New Science*, the *certum* letter of metonymy, returns from the last place to the first place, from the heroic mentality taken up by the last human thinkers to the first, mythic mentality that had suppressed metonymy and, with it, its own nature.

Is Vico the movie star played by Giancarlo Gianinni, whose "adust" visage identifies him as a melancholy genius? He is certainly the protector of the "nine beauties" rescued from prostitution, recovered and restored to the sanctity of marriage, the rites of Diana and the privileges of Eros/Psyche. Perching in the middle of *The New Science*, Diana in her double guise as the Diana of "Diana and Actæon" and "Diana and Endymion" has shown us the double function of Eros: Socratic wisdom, kenosis, ><; and the metonymy of bodily engagement, one to one. Shakespeare's formula equating the artist, lover, and madman again proves true. Through Vico's madness (which invites us to join it), we gain the love of the verum and the material beauty created by the artist, the factum. Madness as certum? It's as good a definition as any.