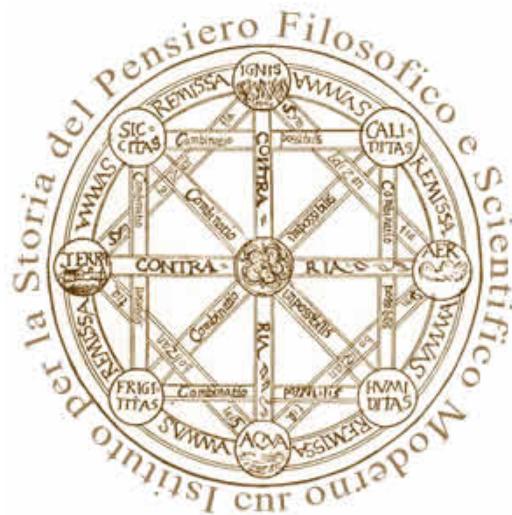


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**Mind, Body, and Language**  
in Vico's *Scienza nuova*



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## 1. Introduction

The theme and topics of this essay are taken from the conclusion of Book IV of *Scienza nuova* (1744) where all three entities appear in a single compact statement, as shown here, first in English translation, followed by the original statements in the 1744 and 1730 editions:

To sum up, a man is properly only mind, body, and speech, and speech stands as it were midway between mind and body. Hence with regard to what is just, the certain began in mute times with the body. Then when the so-called articulate languages were invented, it advanced to ideas made certain by spoken formulae. And finally, when our human reason was fully developed, it reached its end in the true in the ideas themselves with regard to what is just, as determined by reason from the detailed circumstances of the facts<sup>1</sup>.

In somma non essendo altro l'uomo propriamente, che *mente, corpo, e favella*; e la *favella* essendo come posta in *mezzo* alla *mente*, & al *corpo*; il CERTO d'intorno al *Giusto* cominciò ne' *tempi muti* dal *corpo*; dipoi ritruovate le *favelle* che si dicono *articolate*, passò alle *certe idee*, ovvero *formole di parole*; finalmente essendosi *spiegata* tutta la nostra *umana ragione*, andò a terminare nel VERO dell'*idee* d'intorno al *Giusto*, determinate con la *Ragione* dall'*ultime circostanze de' fatti* [...]<sup>2</sup>.

In cotal guisa, non essendo altro l'huomo propriamente, che *mente, corpo, e favella*, e la *favella* essendo *mezza* tra la *mente*, e 'l *corpo*; il *Certo* cominciò ne' *tempi muti* dal *corpo*; dipoi, ritruovate le *favelle articolate*, si passò alle *certe idee delle formole*; finalmente, venendo la *ragione spiegata*, terminò in quello dell'*idee determinate con ragione d'intorno all'utilità*; la qual *volontà ragionata* è 'l *subbjetto della giustizia*, e di *tutte le ragioni*, ch' *ella ne detta*<sup>3</sup>.

The approach, initially employed in this paper, is to view this statement in terms of a *crux interpretandum*, and furthermore as posing an interpretative problem on more than one level. The first kind of interpretative issue is the refer-

<sup>1</sup> G. Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Th. G. Bergin - M. H. Fisch, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1968, § 1045. Hereafter paragraph numbers will appear in the text in parentheses. Other translations consulted include: *New Science*, trans. D. Marsh, London, Penguin, 2001; *La Science Nouvelle*, trans. A. Pons, Paris, Fayard, 2001; *Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft über die gemeinsame Natur der Völker*, trans. V. Hösle - Ch. Jermann, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1990; *Ciencia nueva*, trans. R. de la Villa, Madrid, Editorial Tecnos, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> G. B. Vico, *La «Scienza nuova» nell'edizione del 1744*, in Id., *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni del 1725, 1730 e 1744*, ed. M. Sanna - V. Vitiello, Milano, Bompiani, 2012-2013, p. 1229. We are adhering to Vico's typography, such as capital letters and italics, restored in this edition «per sentire nella scrittura di Vico la sua voce. La sua più autentica voce». (M. Sanna - V. Vitiello, *Nota editoriale*, in G. B. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., pp. CLXXIX-CLXXX, p. CLXXX). Among the functions of Vico's typographical choices, Manuela Sanna highlights «la richiesta di attenzione che l'autore propone al lettore». (M. Sanna, *Evoluzioni di un'immagine vichiana*, in *Le rifrazioni dell'Io. Saperi umanistici e creazione artistica tra moderno e contemporaneo*, ed. A. Mascolo, Salerno, Edizioni Arcoiris, 2016, pp. 145-170, p. 151. Vincenzo Vitiello also calls it «la auténtica escritura “visual” de Vico». (V. Vitiello, *Vico. Filósofo de nuestro tiempo*, trans. J. M. Sevilla Fernández, «Cuadernos sobre Vico» (<<https://institucional.us.es/cuadernosvico>>; hereafter «CSV»), 32 (2018), pp. 371-377, p. 372, n. 1). Alas, we cannot do justice in this essay to Vico's rhetorical intentions.

<sup>3</sup> G. B. Vico, *La «Scienza nuova» nell'edizione del 1730*, in Id., *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., pp. 733-734.

ence to the mind-body problem which as such was a much-debated philosophical topic in early (Western) modernity. Vico, however, injected into this discourse something seemingly unrelated, namely, language, thus apparently not strictly staying within the bounds of received dualistic anthropology. The second kind of interpretative problem results from the fact that Vico appears to mix or commingle entirely heterogenic semantic domains, or fields of sense<sup>4</sup>. Heterogeneity becomes particularly glaring in comparing the 1744 edition with its 1730 counterpart: «il CERTO» (*the certain*) and «nel VERO» (*in the true*) vs. «*Certo*» (*the certain*) but without an equivalent term for «el VERO». What is *certain* and what is *true*, irrespective of their positional value in Vico's epistemology, are categorically different from mind and body. Nor can it be said that «[i]l *Giusto*» (*what is just*) – appearing twice in this paragraph in the last edition but not in the previous edition, except as «*giustizia*» (*justice*) in a supportive function, not even as the main point – has any inherent relationship to, or functions at the same ontological level as, *certainty* or *truth*. Enrico Nuzzo has observed such apparent heterogeneity in other places and contexts in Vico's writings, and termed it “oxymoronic”<sup>5</sup>.

In order to appreciate the boldness on Vico's part in adding *language* as a fundamental anthropological constituent, it is helpful to keep in mind the hold that mind-body dualism had on Western philosophical discourse and imagination, within which Descartes' *res cogitans* and *res extensa* and other early modern thought stand merely at the end of a tradition dating back to the pre-Socratics<sup>6</sup>. And mind-body dualism, in various guises, has also been attributed to Vico<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Fields of sense* is borrowed from M. Gabriel, *Fields of Sense: A New Realistic Ontology*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, pp. 160-163; Id., *Sinn und Existenz. Eine realistische Ontologie*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2016, pp. 186-190.

<sup>5</sup> E. Nuzzo, *Gli “eroi ossimorici” di Vico*, in *Eroi ed età eroiche attorno a Vico. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. (Fisciano – Vatolla – Raito, 24-27 maggio 1999)*, ed. E. Nuzzo, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004, pp. 189-216, p. 189; Id., *La “mente contratta”. Tra corpi smisurati e facoltà dell'infinito*, «Laboratorio dell'ISPF» (<[www.ispf.cnr.it/ispf-lab](http://www.ispf.cnr.it/ispf-lab)>; hereafter «ISPF-Lab»), I (2005), pp. 106-119, p. 107; Id., *Le naturel nécessaire. Critères et figures de la science de l'histoire chez Vico*, «Noesis» (<https://journals.openedition.org/noesis/>), 8 (2005), pp. 1-20, p. 11, § 47. For other examples of Vico's oxymoronic expressions, see G. B. Vico, *On the Death of Donn'Angela Cimmino, Marchesa of Petrella*, trans. R. L. Thomas, «New Vico Studies» (hereafter «NVS»), 25 (2007), pp. 11-33, pp. 12, 23, 29, n. 4; the original language oration can be found in *Portale Vico* (<[www.giambattistavico.it](http://www.giambattistavico.it)>), *Opere di Giambattista Vico. Illustrate da Giuseppe Ferrari, Vol. IV, Poesie e altri scritti*, Napoli, Giuseppe Jovene Librajo Editore, 1840, pp. 220-241.

<sup>6</sup> H. Schmitz, *Leib und Seele in der abendländischen Philosophie*, «Philosophisches Jahrbuch», 85 (1978), pp. 221-242; D. Garber - M. Wilson, *Mind-Body Problems*, in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. D. Garber - M. Ayers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 833-867; G. Makari, *Soul Machine: The Invention of the Modern Mind*, New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 2015; Th. Gontier, *Descartes et les deux corps de l'homme*, «ISPF-Lab», I (2005), pp. 226-233; Ch. Meyns, *Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophy of Mind*, «Philosophy Compass», 14 (2019), pp. 1-13.

<sup>7</sup> G. Cacciatore, *Le facoltà della mente “rintuzzata dentro il corpo”*, «ISPF-Lab», I (2005), pp. 91-105; G. Patella, *Il corpo si dice in molti modi. La sapienza corporea di G. Vico*, «ISPF-Lab», I (2005), pp. 129-139; A. Stile, *Le corps endormi*, «ISPF-Lab», I (2005), pp. 307-322; C. Megale, *Con Vico nei «sotterranei dell'anima»*, «Logos», 8 (2013), pp. 187-196, p. 188.

However, § 1045 of *Scienza nuova* (1744) has served as a basis for viewing the dualistic mind-body paradigm in a new light. Romana Bassi, in particular, has shown that Vico here went «[b]eyond dualism» by implying simultaneous inter-relationships of *body - language*, *mind - language*, and *mind - body*, which represent all the combinations into which the tripartite division of *mind*, *body*, and *language* can be partitioned (taking two entities at a time)<sup>8</sup>. All three entities or subjects are also the focus of this essay, but instead of addressing them immediately or systematically from the beginning, we will let their meaning in *Scienza nuova* emerge context-dependently.

The contextual reading of mind, body, and language attempted in this paper is suggested already in the second part of § 1045. As already noted, the main or key topic is *what is just* (il *Giusto*). The larger context, therefore, in which mind, body, and language are embedded, is a philosophy and/or theory of justice together with the practice of jurisprudence, alluded to in the *spoken formulae* (*formole di parole*) and *detailed circumstances of the facts* (*ultime circostanze de' fatti*). These references to justice and law, however brief and cryptic, are in full keeping with the overarching theme of *Scienza nuova*, namely, the nature and historical development of “natural law” in human society – inseparable from the struggle(s) for (certain) rights between ruling elites, the so-called *patricians*, and the mass of the people, the *plebeians*, in what Vico calls *il mondo civile*<sup>9</sup>. It is through this prism that mind, body, and language will be refracted.

<sup>8</sup> R. Bassi, «Fancied bodies to be gods»: ethical aspects of the mind-body relationship in the New Science, in *Investigations on Giambattista Vico in the Third Millennium. New Perspectives from Brazil, Italy, Japan and Russia (Moscow, 29-31/05/2013)*, ed. J. V. Ivanova - F. Lomonaco, Roma, Aracne, 2014, pp. 95-108.

<sup>9</sup> Of the extensive body of studies on Vico's virtually lifelong focus on the role and function of the ideas and their realization, related to matters of justice, rights, and jurisprudence, in its historical setting, we will limit ourselves to the following: J. Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law: Religion, Rhetoric, and Sensus Communis*, New York, Routledge, 2019; R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur. Introduzione al Diritto Universale di Giambattista Vico*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010; Id., *Il sistema delle leggi e la finzione poetica nel Diritto Universale*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, ed. A. Battistini - P. Guaragnella, Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia Editore, 2007, pp. 181-205; G. Giarrizzo, *Vico, la politica e la storia*, Napoli, Guida Editori, 1981; Id., *Aequitas e Prudentia. Storia di un topos viciliano*, «BCSV», VII (1977), pp. 5-30; S. Mazzarino, *Vico, l'annalistica e il diritto*, Napoli, Guida Editori, 1971; G. Bedani, *Vico Revisited: Orthodoxy, Naturalism and Science in the Scienza Nuova*, Oxford, Berg Publishers, 1989, pp. 115-129, 152-160; G. Fassò, *The Problem of Law and the Historical Origin of the New Science*, trans. M. Brose, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, ed. G. Tagliacozzo - D. Ph. Verene, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. 3-14; D. R. Kelley, *Vico's Road: From Philology to Jurisprudence and Back*, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, ed. G. Tagliacozzo - D. Ph. Verene, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. 15-29; W. Rech, *History and Normativity: Vico's "Natural Law of Nations"*, «Journal of the History of International Law», 17 (2015), pp. 147-169; D. Monteverdi, *Vico, le XII Tavole e lo spirito del tempo*, «Revista General de Derecho Romano», 28 (2017), pp. 1-34; P. Olivier, *Du «Diritto universale» à la «Scienza nuova»: continuité ou rupture?*, «Noesis», 8 (2005), pp. 1-15; M. Vanzulli, *Sulla relazione di ideale e fattuale, di metafisica e storia nel passaggio dal De uno alla Scienza nuova*, «BCSV», XXXIV (2004), pp. 199-219; M. Scalerio, *Il futuro come problema politico. Francis Bacon e Giambattista Vico come matrici del moderno*, «ISPF-Lab», XV (2018), pp. 1-17; F. H. Llano Alonso, *Vico y los albores de la experiencia jurídica*, «CSV», 32 (2018), pp. 163-167; F. Lomonaco, *Mis lecturas viquianas*, trans. A. M.

## 2. (Socio)-historical background to *Scienza nuova*

As just noted, from a high-level standpoint, *Scienza nuova* can be understood as Vico's theory of justice, based on the conviction that *il Giusto* is the prime force for good in human civilization (340)<sup>10</sup>. This discourse properly takes place at the level of Vico's philosophy of law which will not be pursued here further. Rather we will descend to a lower level of analysis to which Vico himself gave extraordinary attention and space in *Scienza nuova*, that is, Roman law and jurisprudence. The 1744 edition is the culmination of his decades-long engagement with social issues in his native Naples. This has been reconstructed and recounted in detail by Barbara Ann Naddeo in her *Vico and Naples*<sup>11</sup>. Naddeo refers a number of instances where Vico departed from historical accuracy in furtherance of his theoretical assumptions and expectations<sup>12</sup>, but this all the more so underlines his making Rome a paradigmatic case study, both in the general sense of an ancient civilization, and in the more special sense of the history of human and legal rights, in the words of Naddeo: «At the heart of Vico's history, in other words, was an examination of the natural right to the property of oneself and of one's things, as evidenced by the Roman example»<sup>13</sup>. Another major conclusion and theme developed by Naddeo was Vico's projection of Rome's social world and conditions onto urban Naples, both polities being divided, in Vico's view, into equivalents of ruling elites or dominant groups and plebeians or the common people<sup>14</sup>. One of the main points of insight and interest for the present discussion is Naddeo's study of the *urban* origins of Vico's history and theory of rights, *equity*, and law, calling Rome the *originary city*<sup>15</sup>. Naddeo's study deals with selected Vico writings up to *Diritto univer-*

Damiani, «CSV», 32 (2018), pp. 169-177; A. Sconamiglio, *Mi idea de la filosofia de Vico. Mi experiencia de su estudio*, trans. M. J. Rebollo Espinosa, «CSV», 32 (2018), pp. 299-306; A. M. Damasio, *La secolarizzazione politica nella Scienza nuova*, «BCSV», XXX (2000), pp. 213-229; D. Fauci, *Vico and Grotius: Jurisconsults of Mankind*, trans. E. Gianturco, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, ed. G. Tagliacozzo - H. V. White, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, pp. 61-76; E. Gianturco, *Vico's Significance in the History of Legal Thought*, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, ed. G. Tagliacozzo - H. V. White, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, pp. 327-347.

<sup>10</sup> First occurrence of *il Giusto* in *Scienza nuova*, while *giustizia* (outside *Idea of the Work and Notes on the Chronological Table*) appeared first in Book I, Section II. *Elements*, Axiom XXXI (179). See G. B. Vico, *Principi di Scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni. Concordanze e indici di frequenza dell'edizione Napoli 1744*, ed. M. Veneziani, Florence, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1997. Vico's concern with matters of justice and legal rights is also an important, if not the most important, reason for his study of Roman history, as Ferdinand Fellmann pointed out: «Durch das Primat des Rechtsdenkens weist Vico dem Römertum eine weltgeschichtliche Bestimmung zu [...]». (Id., *Vicos Theorem der Gleichursprünglichkeit von Theorie und Praxis und die dogmatische Denkform*, «Philosophisches Jahrbuch», 85 (1978), pp. 259-273, p. 264, n. 10).

<sup>11</sup> B. A. Naddeo, *Vico and Naples: The Urban Origins of Modern Social Theory*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2011; Id., *Vico Anthropologist: From Civic to World History*, «BCSV», XXXIII (2003), pp. 103-118.

<sup>12</sup> Naddeo, *Vico and Naples*, pp. 83, 100, 129, 134, 136, 154, 157, 159, 163.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 159-160.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 97, 182.

*sale* and *Scienza nuova* (1725), and concluded with alluding to fundamental changes in emphasis in the later editions of *Scienza nuova*<sup>16</sup>. However, Vico's almost reflexive notion of the *urban* stage on which the struggle for the type of rights, laws, and justice that he is concerned with plays out, does not change<sup>17</sup>: right from the beginning of *Scienza nuova*, in the *Idea of the Work*, the *Città* (cities) are introduced in the narrative (13, 16, 17, 18). Although Naddeo does not go as far as saying so, Vico's work might be said to reflect the *urban* origins of social theory of early *urban* civilizations. Vico thus was applying his own dictum of developing a theory (of early *urban* polity) from studying other *urban* polities (Rome and his own Naples), rather than relying on merely abstract ideas of debatable validity or relevance projected back into the remote past: «Doctrines [theories of early urban civilizations] must take their beginning from [must be based on] that of the matters of which they treat [urban polities]» (*Elements*, Axiom CVI; 314; *Idea of the Work*, 13). Enrico Nuzzo called Vico «filosofo della "città"»<sup>18</sup>.

This is already reflected in the *Chronological Table* with which Book I begins. The civilizations featured in the table (in Vico's terminology) are the Hebrews – starting with the call of Abraham –, the Chaldeans, the Scythians, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greek, and the Romans – all “advanced” civilizations when compared to any hypothesized primitive world of lifeways<sup>19</sup>. The chronologically earliest entry is about «the kingdom of the Chaldeans (*Regno de' Caldei*) which had been aristocratic [but] overthrown by means of the popular

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> Vico himself claims a certain continuity between *Diritto universale* and *Scienza nuova* (1744) in *Elements*, Axiom XIX (155): «That this [statement about the Law of the Twelve Tables] is true, we showed many years ago in our *Principles of Universal Law*, and the present work will throw further light upon it». From drawing this arc from *Diritto universale* to *Scienza nuova*, it does not follow that the latter work is essentially a more highly developed version of the former rather than fully autonomous. (R. Ruggiero, *Il sistema delle leggi e la finzione poetica nel Diritto Universale*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, cit., pp. 181-205; Id., *Vico Giambattista*, in *Écrivains juristes et juristes écrivains du Moyen Age au siècle des Lumières*, ed. B. Méniel, Paris, Classique Garnier, 2015, pp. 1262-1270, p. 1264). At the same time, already in *Diritto universale*, in the chapter entitled *Nova scientia tentatur* of *De Constantia*, Vico had in mind the core concept of the future *Scienze nuove*. (M. Sanna, *Vico*, Roma, Carocci editore, 2016, pp. 75-76).

<sup>18</sup> E. Nuzzo, *Tra ordine della storia e storicità. Saggi sui saperi della storia in Vico*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2001, p. XXVII. In this connection it might also be relevant to relate Vico's focus on urban civilization to his engagement of Plato's “ideal” and “corrupt” city. (N. D. Marcus, *Vico and Plato*, New York, Peter Lang, 2001, pp. 159-191).

<sup>19</sup> An indispensable guide to early civilizations is B. G. Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations: A Comparative Study*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003. For seven early civilizations (ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Shang China, the Aztecs, the Classic Maya, the Inka, and the Yoruba), Trigger compiled and compared information regarding their «environmental setting, population density and distribution, family and community organization, government, legal system, technology, land tenure, subsistence patterns, trade, manufacturing and distribution of goods, art, architecture, religious beliefs and practices, moral codes, specialized knowledge, and beliefs concerning the universe, the nature of the individual, and esteemed forms of behaviour». (Ibid., p. 53) From this comprehensive description it is apparent that Vico had a much narrower and selective focus. On the other hand, Vico's listing includes several early civilizations that are outside Trigger's purview.

liberty of the plebeians of that people» (55). This statement is extraordinary in several ways. It states already at the very beginning of the work what arguably is only later developed, throughout the book in its entirety, as one of the main themes, namely, the struggle for certain rights and equitable treatment in the *mondo civile*, of others beyond the ruling elites. Secondly, the urban nature of these early civilizations is implicit in the entries about Nimrod and Abraham; in the Biblical account in *Genesis* that Vico glosses, Abraham is called out of the city of Ur while Nimrod's empire is described as being city-based and having even a capital city. Furthermore, it is bold in speculating that conflicts over equitable laws took place already in the very first urban centers thousands of years ago, given the paucity or even absence of evidence in the archaeological record to that effect in early modern times, and still today<sup>20</sup>. Thus Vico took his theory of the dynamics of certain socio-political developments – related to fundamental civic rights and obligations – to its logical conclusion, referring to the difficulty and problematics of doing so in saying at one point that it cost him decades of intellectual effort (34).

While it is not our intent here to argue on behalf, or in defense, of Vico's accuracy, either in theory or actuality, it is noteworthy that to the best of current knowledge, early civilizations are closely associated and identified with cities<sup>21</sup>. The definition of *city* allows for a variety of qualitative and quantitative criteria, and for our purposes we will highlight the fact that ancient cities were intimately connected and integrated with surrounding countryside (referred to at times conveniently but anachronistically as *hinterland*) so that the notion of a *rural-urban* divide was inapplicable in principle<sup>22</sup>. There is also evidence for land

<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, sometimes it is possible to get a glimpse of ancient socio-political dynamics, see e.g. Ph. J. Boyes, *Negotiating Imperialism and Resistance in Late Bronze Age Ugarit: The Rise of Alphabetic Cuneiform*, «Cambridge Archaeological Journal», 29 (2) (May 2019), pp. 185-199; Ch. Shen, *Compromises and Conflicts: Production and Commerce in the Royal Cities of Eastern Zhou, China*, in *The Social Construction of Ancient Cities*, ed. M. L. Smith, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 2003, pp. 290-310, pp. 304-307, reporting a massacre of tens of thousands of civilians resulting from social conflict in the 4<sup>th</sup>-century B.C..

<sup>21</sup> «From the fourth millennium BCE to the early second millennium CE, the world became a world of cities». (N. Yoffee - N. Terrenato, *Introduction: a history of the study of early cities*, in *Early Cities in Comparative Perspective, 4000 BCE - 1200 CE*, ed. N. Yoffee, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 1-24, p. 1); *Cities in World History*, ed. P. Clark, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 120: «Urban centres were features of all early civilizations. Contrary to a once fashionable belief, there is no evidence of a “civilization without cities” [...]»; *The Ancient City: New Perspectives on Urbanism in the Old and New World*, ed. J. Marcus - J. A. Sabloff, Santa Fe, School for Advanced Research, 2008; *Cities in World History*, ed. P. Clark, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013; *The Social Construction of Ancient Cities*, ed. M. L. Smith, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 2003; M. L. Smith, *Cities: The First 6,000 Years*, New York, Viking Press, 2019; *Papers on Italian Urbanism in the First Millennium B.C.*, ed. E. C. Robinson, Portsmouth, Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Yoffee - Terrenato, *Introduction: a history of the study of early cities*, cit., pp. 1-2; M. L. Smith, *Introduction: The Social Construction of Ancient Cities*, in *The Social Construction of Ancient Cities*, ed. M. L. Smith, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 2003, pp. 1-36, p. 4; G. Emberling, *Urban Social Transformations and the Problem of the “First City”*: *New Research from Mesopotamia*, in *The Social Construction of Ancient Cities*, ed. M. L. Smith, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 2003, pp. 254-

cultivation within urban confines<sup>23</sup>. With this more holistic approach to ancient urbanism in view, Vico's inclusion and discussion of agriculture can claim certain authenticity. He even applies one of his favorite slogans, *necessary* and *useful* (*necessità* and *utilità*), nominally), to food production, calling farming and viticulture (la *villereccia*) the *necessary arts* (*l'arti del necessario*), and herding (la *pastoreccia*), the *useful arts* (*[l'art] dell'utile*) (686). Obviously, no city could survive without a reliable food supply, and agriculture rather than pastoralism was deemed most critical.

However, Vico's elevation of agriculture also had to do with its direct connection to the social problem of natural rights which included ownership rights to agricultural land and its yield<sup>24</sup>. The historical development of (Roman) agrarian laws in terms of levels of property rights – especially the difference between *bonitary* and *quiritary* land use control (266) – plays a large role in Vico's evidence on behalf of his theoretical framework; only quiritary ownership constituted full property rights with the right to pass on property to heirs. Against this background it becomes understandable why other types of food resources, while important and common both in his part of the world and elsewhere, are not featured in Vico's reflections, such as animal husbandry and fisheries<sup>25</sup>. In this sense, Vico cannot unequivocally be said to be taking a “materialist” approach to human history.

The two main observations just made will be used as the basis for our working hypothesis that mind, body and language in *Scienza nuova* can and need be understood primarily in relation to the struggle for certain rights in complex urban societies. In suggesting this approach, Vico's grand scheme of the three *ages of gods, heroes, and men* presents an immediate interpretative *crux*, among others. Before going any further in this exposition, this fundamental issue will therefore need to be confronted.

### 3. *The three ages of gods, heroes, and men in context*

The initial basis for arguing for our thesis will be Chapter IV. *Corollaries concerning the Origin of Languages and Letters* (*Corollarj D'intorno all'Origini delle Lingue, e delle Lettere*), of Book II, Section II. *Poetic Logic* (428-455). Rather than highlighting first the often-cited §446 as a solution to the problem, early in this chapter Vico actually provided certain details about the three ages that are cru-

268; B. Gaygarska - M. Nebbia - J. Chapman, *Trypillia Megaliths in Context: Independent Urban Development in Chalcolithic Eastern Europe*, «Cambridge Archaeological Journal», published online 14 October 2019, pp. 1-25, doi: 10.1017/S0959774319000301.

<sup>23</sup> For “urban farming” see J. D. Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East*, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2001, p. 335.

<sup>24</sup> Naddeo, *Vico and Naples*, cit., pp. 143-145.

<sup>25</sup> M. A. Zeder, *Food Provisioning in Urban Societies: A View from Northern Mesopotamia*, in *The Social Construction of Ancient Cities*, ed. M. L. Smith, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 2003, pp. 156-183; for an example of the importance of fisheries in antiquity see H. Hung et al., *Prosperity and complexity without farming: the South China Coast, c. 5000-3000 BC*, «Antiquity», 93 (368) (April 2019), pp. 325-341.



cial to their proper interpretation. Referring to the languages of the three ages – a tripartite scheme credited to the Egyptians – , he calls the “language” of the first age of gods, *hieroglyphic*; the “language” of the age of heroes, *symbolic*, and the “language” of the age of men, *epistolary* (*pistolare*) (432, 439, 440, 442; also 32, 52, 173). We may have here another instance of seemingly oxymoronic language, considering the categorical incongruities of the characterizations of the “languages”: on the one hand, *prima facie*, *hieroglyphic* refers to a certain type of representation of language in written form, while *symbolic* has a rhetorical connotation, and *epistolary*, a functional meaning.

However, of special interest for our purposes for now are not the first two “languages” – which historically have received much attention in Vico studies – but *epistolary* “language”. Vico attributes it to «men at a distance to communicate to each other the current needs of their lives» (432). Vico thus refers to two aspects of such epistolary “language”, firstly - as suggested by topic prominence – communication with others separated geographically by distance, and secondly, the purpose being economic transactions (i presenti bisogni della lor vita). Thus, Vico is raising the subject of letter-correspondence in the context of long-distance trade. Ancient trade took place within polities, regionally, as well as “internationally”, but descending to such fine-grained levels of analysis would have been beside the point<sup>26</sup>. It is significant that Vico associates a certain kind of “language” with long-distance trade, rather than with merely transforming spoken language into written texts as such, which would have been logically more coherent with the other two characterizations<sup>27</sup>. Vico’s topicalization of long-distance trade, however, is historically relevant in any account of ancient civilizations in general, and cities, in particular: «Long-distance trade was a second means [along with development of their countrysides] of obtaining economic power in early cities»<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, the picture that has emerged from the archaeological record is one of intensive trade flows over vast distances of the ancient world<sup>29</sup>. The popularity of including carts and wagons in

<sup>26</sup> For the sake of convenience we will use the term “trade” despite the caution in T. B. Wilkinson, *Tying the Threads of Eurasia. Trans-regional routes and material flows in Transcaucasia, eastern Anatolia and western central Asia, c. 3000-1500 BC*, Leiden, Sidestone Press, 2014, p. 24: «These terms [“trade”, “import/export”, “trade routes”] are [...] clunky and anachronistic simplifications of the full process of human interaction in the past, indeed as they are for the present».

<sup>27</sup> Pace V. Vitiello, *Vico, filosofo de nuestro tiempo*, cit., p. 373, for whom «la lengua “epistolara” [...] había dividido palabras y cosas, pensamiento y realidad»; Id., *Certum Pars Veri? La «Scienza Nuova» tra mathesis universalis e lingua eroica*, in *Eroi ed età eroiche attorno a Vico*, cit., pp. 353-364, p. 362, where *epistolary language* is identified just with reflective reason and the language of science in the sense of being universally applicable and commonly shared; see also Id., *Vico. Storia, linguaggio, natura*, pref. F. Tessitore, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008, p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> D. L. Stone, *Economy*, in *Cities in World History*, ed. P. Clark, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 135-146, p. 137.

<sup>29</sup> We are limiting ourselves here to a few selected works on the subject, chosen mainly for their wide range, both geographically and chronologically: Ch. M. Monroe, *Scales of Fate: Trade, Tradition, and Transformation in the Eastern Mediterranean ca. 1350-1175 BCE*, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2009; Wilkinson, *Tying the Threads of Eurasia*, cit.; M. H. Hansen, *Analyzing Cities*, in *The Ancient City: New Perspectives on Urbanism in the Old and New World*, cit., pp. 67-76, pp. 74-75;

grave goods has been interpreted as a manifestation of the importance of mobility<sup>30</sup>.

By specifically highlighting correspondence by letters, Vico – even without the benefit of the breadth and depth of archaeological evidence accumulated during the past centuries<sup>31</sup> – showed that he realized and postulated the need for literacy in early urban-centered polities and their trade networks. Indeed, the evidence shows that literacy existed early on and was the province of the elites, be it the ruling elite, merchants, landowners, or religious leadership, which often but not necessarily were one and the same<sup>32</sup>.

Against this background of early cities, the complex picture presented in § 446 becomes clearer: whereas the terminology of *ages* of gods, heroes, and men carries connotations of distinct chronological constraints – seemingly echoed

Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, cit., pp. 342-355; Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol*, cit., pp. 83-89; Ph. Beaujard, *From Three Possible Iron-Age World Systems to a Single Afro-Eurasian World-System*, «Journal of World History», 21 (1) (2010), pp. 1-43; J. G. Manning, *The Open Sea: The Economic Life of the Ancient Mediterranean World from the Iron Age to the Rise of Rome*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018, pp. 39-53; L. Rahmstorf, *Scales, weights and weight-regulated artefacts in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain*, «Antiquity», 93 (371) (July 2019), pp. 1-14, doi: 10.15184/aqy.2018.257; D. Berger et al., *Isotope systematics and chemical composition of tin ingots from Mochlos (Crete) and other Late Bronze Age sites in the eastern Mediterranean Sea: An ultimate key to tin provenance?*, «PLoS ONE», 14 (6) (26 June 2019), doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0218326; F. Iacono, *The archaeology of Late Bronze Age interaction and mobility at the gates of Europe: people, things and networks around the southern Adriatic Sea*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2019; S. C. Murray, *The Collapse of the Mycenaean Economy: Imports, trade, and institutions 1300-700 BCE*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017; M. N. Pareja - T. McKinney - J. A. Mayhew - J. M. Setchell - St. D. Nash - R. Heaton, *A new identification of the monkeys depicted in a Bronze Age wall painting from Akrotiri, Thera*, «Primates», 5 December 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Wilkinson, *Tying the Threads of Eurasia*, cit., p. 322.

<sup>31</sup> P. Burke, *Vico*, Oxford, Oxford university Press, 1985, p. 74: «[...] his knowledge of other cultures was derived from relatively few sources»; however, for Vico's deep interest in antiquarian research, see C. Lucci, *Vico lettore e interprete dei poemi omerici nella Scienza nuova (1744): fra storia, antropologia e antequaria*, «BCSV», XLIII (1-2/2013), pp. 35-73, contra A. Momigliano, *Sui fondamenti della storia antica*, Torino, Giulio Einaudi, 1984, p. 226.

<sup>32</sup> J. M. Kenoyer, *Indus Urbanism: New Perspectives on its Origin and Character*, in *The Ancient City: New Perspectives on Urbanism in the Old and New World*, cit., pp. 183-208, pp. 192-197; Monroe, *Scales of Fate*, cit., 140-148; H. J. Nissen, *Urbanization and the techniques of communication: the Mesopotamian city of Uruk during the fourth millennium BCE*, in *Early Cities in Comparative Perspective*, cit., pp. 113-130; W. Haicheng, *Writing and the city in early China*, *ibid.*, pp. 131-157; D. Law, *Reading early Maya cities: interpreting the role of writing in urbanization*, *ibid.*, pp. 158-180; G. Urton, *Inka administration in Tawantinsuyu by means of knotted-cords*, *ibid.*, pp. 181-206; D. Law - W. Haicheng - H. J. Nissen - G. Urton, *Writing and record-keeping in early cities*, *ibid.*, pp. 207-225; R. P.-J. E. Decorte, *The First "European" Writing: Redefining the Archaic Script*, «Oxford Journal of Archaeology», 37, 4 (2018), pp. 341-372; *Understanding Relations between Scripts: The Aegean writing systems*, ed. P. M. Steele, Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2017; *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures*, ed. S. L. Sanders, Chicago, The University of Chicago, 2006; J. Bottéro - C. Herrenschildt - J.-P. Vernant, *Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in Mesopotamia, Elam, and Greece*, foreword F. Zabbal, trans. T. Lavender Fagan, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 29: «If there is a realm where writing, created to eliminate distances, plays its indispensable role to perfection, it is certainly that of letter-writing between distant correspondents. The ancient Mesopotamians, beginning at least in the second half of the third millennium and to the very end, made great use of writing for this purpose [...]».

in Book IV, Section XI. *Three Sects of Times* (975-979) – , in this paragraph Vico clarifies that «gods, heroes and men began at the same time» and «so these three languages began at the same time». At the same time, he explains that it is still appropriate and necessary to speak of distinct ages and languages considering their dominant characteristics – leaving their interpretation for later: «the language of the gods was almost entirely mute, only very slightly articulate, the language of the heroes, an equal mixture of articulate and mute [...], the language of men, almost entirely articulate and only very slightly mute». In another place (629), Vico used the metaphor of a great river flowing into the sea which retains its sweet water quality for a long distance until eventually getting mixed with salt water, just as the age of the gods persisted for some time<sup>33</sup>. As the three languages exist contemporaneously<sup>34</sup>, this betokens a complex state of affairs, as one would expect to prevail in the early cities about which we have knowledge. Another implication of their concurrency is that from the beginning the seeds were sown for epochal changes, and that Vico's explanatory framework eschews a rigid or oversimplified categorization<sup>35</sup>. Thus, there is embedded in it at the same time a diachronic dimension, in fact, without it, Vico could not have spoken of «[t]he Course the Nations run» (DEL CORSO Che fanno le Nazioni) in Book IV<sup>36</sup>.

But in what sense could Vico historically justifiably speak of the ages of *gods* and *heroes* integral to his three-ages conceptual framework rather than in a different terminology?<sup>37</sup> The historical evidence is very clear on the fact that early cities/urban polities had a definite religious character. This religious physiognomy was manifest at several levels. At the physical urban level it displayed itself in the religious sanctuaries and temples that dominated the cityscape, as well as the religious processions that periodically circulated through the cities' neighborhoods<sup>38</sup>. Thus, it could be said that «[c]ities were also the home of the gods»<sup>39</sup>. But these were of course only manifestations of underlying belief-systems that, in antiquity, were of a religious nature, to the extent that most if not all aspects of everyday life and civic activity were not just colored by but imbued with religious notions and/or symbolism<sup>40</sup>. And it is particularly rele-

<sup>33</sup> Vitiello, *Certum Pars Veri?*, cit., p. 361.

<sup>34</sup> S. Caianiello, *Filologia ed epoca in Vico*, in *Vico nella storia della filologia. Atti del Seminario Internazionale, Napoli, 21 novembre 2003*, ed. S. Caianiello - A. Viana, Napoli, Alfredo Guida Editore, 2004, pp. 139-175, pp. 166-167.

<sup>35</sup> In the words of N. S. Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 57: «This is not explanatory pluralism – an environment of equal opportunity – it gives no sense in which the possibilities are compatible or even comparable: they are simply possibilities».

<sup>36</sup> R. M. Zagarella, *Le tre spezie di lingue nella Scienza nuova di Vico: interpretazione diacronica e funzionale*, «ISPF-Lab», VI (2009), pp. 20-36.

<sup>37</sup> Lucci, *Vico lettore e interprete dei poemi omerici nella Scienza nuova* (1744), cit., pp. 46-51.

<sup>38</sup> J. A. Baird, *Religion and Ritual*, in *Cities in World History*, ed. P. Clark, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 181-196, p. 190: «Religion was key to the development and form of early cities».

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>40</sup> Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, cit., pp. 409-443, 472-494.

vant for our perspective that «in early civilizations the struggle to protect local and individual rights of subjects [...] was conducted primarily in a religious idiom»<sup>41</sup>. Furthermore, one can speak of “organized religion” already in these early urban centers, given the existence and roles of priesthoods responsible for cult activities and the performance of rituals<sup>42</sup>. However, it does not appear to be accurate to identify the highly-religious early cities as being “theocracies”, since priests/cult functionaries were not a social order or estate *sui generis* wielding governmental power<sup>43</sup>. Rather, it often included individuals from the elite segments of society who served in that capacity, creating a tight nexus – or rather an inseparable entanglement – at the highest leadership levels of the community<sup>44</sup>.

This brief historical excursus into early civilizations shows that their urban-centric nature was also inextricably intertwined with religiosity at several levels, and in that sense, not inappropriately designated by Vico as the “age of gods”. This will be kept present in examining our topics of *mind*, *body*, and *language*, starting with the latter.

#### 4. Vico’s multifaceted “language”

First of all it needs to be recognized that Vico’s exposition(s) on language in *Scienza nuova* have been the subject of extensive and major studies for several decades, apart from numerous studies of specific and specialized aspects. Among the major, as well as groundbreaking, studies, the work by Karl Otto Apel, Gianfranco Cantelli, Antonino Pagliaro, and Jürgen Trabant has established key parameters in Vico scholarship, and will be engaged at, and on, certain points<sup>45</sup>. The originality of the approaches by these Vico students, howev-

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 493

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 495-521.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 521.

<sup>44</sup> M. Liverani, *Power and Citizenship*, in *Cities in World History*, ed. P. Clark, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 165-180, pp. 167, 172-173; D. Wengrow - D. Graeber, *Farewell to the “childhood of man”: ritual, seasonality, and the origins of inequality*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2015, doi: 10.1111/1467-9655.12247; <<http://eprints.Ise.ac.uk/62756/>>, pp. 1-24, p. 1, speaks of «the Bronze Age where sacred and political power were initially fused». Two concrete examples from different parts of the world and periods may illustrate this history: L. von Falkenhausen, *Stages in the Development of “Cities” in Pre-Imperial China*, in *The Ancient City: New Perspectives on Urbanism in the Old and New World*, cit., pp. 209-246, p. 214: «Given the importance of ritual display in the exercise of political authority, palace and temple functions were to remain united in elite architecture throughout the Bronze Age»; G. Cifani, *Aspects of urbanism and political ideology in Archaic Rome*, in *Papers on Italian Urbanism in the First Millennium B.C.*, ed. E. C. Robinson, Portsmouth, Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2014, pp. 15-28, pp. 22-24: a terracotta group of Hercules and Minerva was installed on the rooftop of a temple (late 6<sup>th</sup>-century BCE) of the Forum Boarium, for the implied political purpose of linking the Tarquins to the mythical Hercules.

<sup>45</sup> K. O. Apel, *Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante bis Vico*, Bonn, H. Bouvier u. Co. Verlag, 1963, pp. 318-380; G. Cantelli, *Mente Corpo Linguaggio*, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, 1986; Id., *Gestualità e mito: I due caratteri distintivi della lingua originaria secondo Vico*, «BCSV», XX (1990), pp. 77-116; Id., *Alcune considerazioni sulla tesi vichiana che la lingua originaria*

er, will not be dwelt on at length here, in place of which a reading is attempted that is guided by what we understand to be Vico's overarching theme and historical framework.

For a basic outline, we will return to *Corollaries concerning the Origin of Languages and Letters of Poetic Logic* (428-455). Since this material comes in the middle of the section of *Poetic Logic*, it presupposes familiarity with certain expressions that already appeared in the preceding chapters of the section; in turn, *Poetic Logic* is linked to earlier expositions in *Scienza nuova*, even going back as far as *Elements*, in Book I. Thus, any reading of these *Corollaries* requires recourse to pertinent earlier passages. This is evident as of the very first sentence which reiterates key concepts – spelled out typographically in the original – by way of introduction: «Now from the theology of the poets, or poetic metaphysics, by way of the poetic logic sprung from it, we go on to discover the origin of languages and letters» (Ora dalla *Teologia de' Poeti*, o sia dalla *Metafisica Poetica* per mezzo della indi nata *Poetica Logica* andiamo a scuoprire l'*Origine delle Lingue, e delle Lettere*) (428). Additionally, it is necessary to incorporate Chapter VI. *The other Corollaries announced at the beginning* (GLI ALTRI COROLLARJ, Li

dell'umanità è stata una lingua parlata dagli dei, «BCSV», XXII-XXIII (1992-1993), pp. 119-129; Id., *De la lengua heroica del Diritto universale a la lengua divina de la Scienza Nuova*, trans. J. M. Sevilla, «CSV», 9/10 (1998), pp. 57-73; M. Danesi, *Language and Myth: A Note on Cantelli's Study of Vico's Views on Language*, «Rivista di Studi Italiani», VII (I) (1989), pp. 39-46; A. Pagliaro, *Altri Saggi di Critica Semantica*, Messina, Casa Editrice G. D'Anna, 1961, pp. 297-475; Id., *Le origini del linguaggio secondo Vico*, in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul tema Campanella e Vico* (Roma, 12-15 maggio 1968), Roma, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1969, pp. 269-288; Id., *Giambattista Vico fra linguistica e retorica*, in *Giambattista Vico nel terzo centenario della nascita*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1971, pp. 133-162; A. Battistini, *Gli studi vichiani di Antonino Pagliaro*, «BCSV», VII (1977), pp. 81-112; M. Mancini, *Il "caso Pagliaro" fra linguistica e dottrina politica*, in *Saussure e la Scuola linguistica romana. Da Antonino Pagliaro a Tullio De Mauro*, ed. M. De Palo - S. Gensini, Roma, Carocci editore, 2018, pp. 33-78; J. Trabant, *Neue Wissenschaft von alten Zeichen: Vico's Sematologie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1994; Id., *Vico's New Science of Ancient Signs*, trans. S. Ward, foreword D. Ph. Verene, London, Routledge, 2004; Id., *Immagine o segno. Osservazioni sul linguaggio in Vico e Humboldt*, «BCSV», XXII-XXIII (1992-1993), pp. 235-250; Id., *Semata: Beyond Pagliaro's Vico*, in *Italian Studies in Linguistic Historiography. Proceedings of the Conference In ricordo di Antonino Pagliaro – Gli studi italiani di storiografia linguistica, Rome 23-24 January 1992*, ed. T. De Mauro - L. Formigari, Münster, Nodus Publikationen, 1994, pp. 69-82; Id., *Tristi segni per una sematologia vichiani*, «BCSV», XXVI-XXVII (1996-1997), pp. 11-27; Id., *La sematología de Vico*, «CSV», 9/10 (1998), pp. 175-187; Id., *La lingua di questa scienza: Lingua antica – scienza nuova*, in *Pensar para el nuevo siglo. Giambattista Vico y la cultura europea*, ed. E. Hidalgo-Serna - M. Marassi - J. M. Sevilla - J. Villalobos, Napoli, La Città del Sole, 2001, vol. I, pp. 189-218; Id., *La science de la langue que parle l'histoire idéale éternelle*, «Noesis», 8 (2005); Id., *A la búsqueda del "metodo accertato" de una ciencia de los signos del hombre*, trans. P. Badillo O'Farrell, «CSV», 32 (2018), pp. 337-342; Id., *On the Vico Road: The Sematological Lane*, in *The Vico Road. Nuovi percorsi vichiani*, ed. M. Riccio - M. Sanna - L. Yilmaz, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2016, pp. 101-114; Id., *Wie "geschichtlich" ist Vicos Mondo Civile?*, in *Geschichtlichkeit von Sprache und Text. Philologien – Disziplinengenese – Wissenschaftshistoriographie*, ed. W. Oesterreicher - M. Selig, Paderborn, Wilhelm Fink, 2014, pp. 31-46; Id., *Quanto è "storico" il mondo civile vichiano?*, trans. J. D'Alonzo, «BCSV», XLVI (2016), pp. 75-90; S. Marienberg, *Zeichenhandeln. Sprachdenken bei Giambattista Vico und Johann Georg Hamann*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 2006; S. Caianiello, Review of Trabant, *Neue Wissenschaft von alten Zeichen*, cit., «BCSV», XXVI-XXVII (1996-1997), pp. 258-265.

quali si sono da principio proposti) (473-493), which function similarly to the practice in modern scientific writing of providing supporting data in the form of “supplementary information”.

First, it is to be noted that the chapter is not a free-flowing, expansive disquisition, but a rather tightly structured narrative. This is evident in the way in which three specific problems or questions are framed that Vico is addressing. The first problem is the origin of letters (written language) vs. the origin of language as such (429). The second concern was how to explain «that there are as many different vulgar languages as there are peoples» (445). And finally, how the three kinds of languages (of gods, heroes, and men) were formed (446). Vico uses the rhetorical method of intensification, not only for structuring the material, but especially for emphasis of the main argument: the first problem is simply called “difficult” («the difficulty as to the manner of their origin») (*la difficoltà della guisa*); then the second issue is associated with «the very great difficulty» (*la grandissima difficoltà*), and lastly, the third question is the «extremely difficult [question of the way]» (*difficilissima guisa*)<sup>46</sup>. As noted earlier, in *Scienza nuova*, Vico heuristically treated the three “ages” as distinct, and often provided sufficient language for the reader to reasonably assume that he intended strict chronological sequence. His assertion now of a more complex state of affairs that relativizes chronology, and even more radically, posits contemporaneous beginnings of all three eras, indeed made matters *difficilissimo*. It calls for the highly challenging reading of all that was said before in the light of this assertion, and as pointed out earlier, specifically in the context of early urban polities and the social conflicts over rights in various forms and settings.

This challenge presents itself also in connection with the first question regarding the origin of languages and writing. The history of early urban civilizations that was sketched earlier shows that writing was a common part of life – although one cannot yet speak of literacy in the case of the general or common population – so that it should be possible to make Vico’s answer intelligible in this context: «[...] for, as will here be shown, all nations began to speak by writing, since all were originally mute» (*che tutte le Nazioni prima parlarono scrivendo, come quelle, che furon dapprima mutole*) (429). Thus, writing was part of civilization from the beginning, and a few paragraphs later Vico specifically refers to *hieroglyphic* and *epistolary* languages, both being forms of written language. However, Vico goes beyond the “technical” or strictly linguistic issue by adding that all *nations* – not individual humans – were originally *mute*.

This metaphorical muteness will need to be more closely examined as discussed by Vico earlier in the book as well as in *The other Corollaries* (473-493). The main point of interest, instead, for now is how Vico “intercalates” seemingly heterogeneous notions, a rhetorical feature found throughout this chapter, and in fact, many other parts of *Scienza nuova*. Intercalation has to do with layers, and so, figuratively, Vico’s approach to language could be understood

<sup>46</sup> On Vico’s penchant for gradation and superlatives, see M. Vitale, *L’«autodidascalò» scrittore. La lingua della Scienza Nuova di Giambattista Vico*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2016, pp. 39-41, 58-60.

more accurately as multi-layered rather than multifaceted. It remains to be seen whether Vico takes a similar multi-layered approach to *mind* and *body*.

But for Vico, not all layers are of equal interest or importance: there are certain levels of analysis that are superior to the rest. This fact comes to the fore in statements such as the following: «[...] the first nations thought in poetic characters, spoke in fables, and wrote in hieroglyphics» (429); «[t]he first language had been hieroglyphic, sacred or divine (o sia sacra, ovvero divina), the second symbolic, by signs or by heroic devices (Imprese Eroiche), the third, epistolary» (432); «the origins of languages and letters, and thereby of hieroglyphics, law, names, family coats-of-arms, medals, money, and of the language and writing in which the first natural law of the nations was spoken and written» (434). Even without a detailed analysis of every term used, it is evident that linguistics in the traditional sense, or as a scientific field of study is not the central topic<sup>47</sup>. Rather, succinctly stated, the overarching concern is *the first natural law of the nations*, the making and development of law not merely in the processual sense of rule of law but with respect to the content of law, that is, the articulation of what is just and fair, *il Giusto*, in the form of certain rights.

The higher levels of Vico's concept(s) of "language" are also found in how he described the language of the *age of heroes*: «[...] they must have been metaphor, images, similitudes or comparisons, which, having passed into articulate speech, supplied all the resources of poetic expression» (*Favella Poetica*) (438). The types of expressions listed are part of the major tropes, and evince rhetorical intentionality, in particular in support of *poetic* language, in Vico's contextual use of *poetic*; furthermore, the function of rhetoric is primarily civic and forensic. An analogous civic role of language is associated to common peoples whose "language" – «vulgar speech and writing» (439) – is said to have been «a right of the people» (*diritto de' popoli*). When the Roman emperor Claudius, in Vico's version of events, wanted to add three new letters to the Latin alphabet, the Roman *popoli* resisted<sup>48</sup>. Thus, the issue was recognized by the parties to revol-

<sup>47</sup> In order to situate Vico's reflections on language vis-a-vis early modern currents in theories and the philosophy of language, see E. Coseriu, *Die Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Eine Übersicht, Teil I: Von der Antike bis Leibniz*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 1975; Id., *Die Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Eine Übersicht, Teil II: Von Leibniz bis Rousseau*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 1972; *Teorie e pratiche linguistiche nell'Italia del Settecento*, ed. L. Formigari, Bologna, il Mulino, 1984; L. Formigari, *Signs, Science and Politics: Philosophies of Language in Europe 1700-1830*, trans. W. Dodd, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing, 1993; *Historical Roots of Linguistic Theories*, ed. L. Formigari - D. Gambarara, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing, 1995; L. Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, trans. G. Poole, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing, 2004; *Il linguaggio. Teorie e storia delle teorie*, ed. S. Gensini - A. Martone, Napoli, Liguori Editore, 2006; L. Formigari, *Introduzione alla filosofia delle lingue*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Claudius*, 41, 3; Tacitus, *Annals*, XI, 14, 6; this can be contrasted with the earlier reform of the Latin alphabet and script by Appius Claudius Caecus (c. 340 BC-after 280 BC), «so that it better reproduced the sound of Latin speech, by using the letter "G" to stand for the hard, guttural "C," and adjusting the script to the altered pronunciation of intervocalic "S" as "R" (rhoticism)» (J. Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion*, trans. D. M. B. Richardson, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018, p. 173; originally pub-

ve around control of “language”, and with it the terms of discourse. As a result, for Vico, rights became the central issue, and the matter of rights became part of the “vocabulary”, showing that more was involved than sociolinguistics<sup>49</sup>.

The foregoing discussion casts light on what Vico means by the *origin(s)* of languages. It does not have to do with how human language originates as a means of communication or expression of thoughts, that is, in terms of its most fundamental or elementary functions. Rather, Vico focuses on the *use(s)* to which language is put, with special interest in the early urban world. In this respect, the “supplementary information” provided in *the other Corollaries* is helpful, as undoubtedly intended. Its section I (473-482) makes the point that «along with this first birth of characters and languages was also born law» (Con tal primo nascere de’ caratteri, e delle lingue nacque il *Giùs*) (473)<sup>50</sup>. Vico will be more specific in the other sections about the area(s) of law in view (sections II through IV), whereas in this first part he makes the point that in all early civilizations legal authority and legitimation were initially sought by appeal to higher powers. He particularly highlights interpretation of the *auspices (auspici)* and other forms of divination as the means of looking to the *sky (il Cielo)* for «divine admonishments or commands» (*divini avvisi, o comandi*) (473), and, drawing on classical authors, briefly points out this fact for seven past civilizations (Mesopotamian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Germanic, Inka) (474-480). And as stated already at the beginning of *Scienza nuova*, he excludes the *Hebrems* here also from the same explanatory approach (481).

At the conclusion of this section he calls the fact «that the first laws everywhere were the divine laws of Jove» (che dappertutto le *prime Leggi* furono le *divine di Giove*) an example of the *Mental Dictionary (Vocabulario mentale)* (482). Thus, just as “language” in *Scienza nuova* requires a context-dependent reading, so does “mind”, since here it is the legitimation of certain rights by “divine” fiat as seen in the auspices which constitutes an “entry” in the *mental dictionary* rather than a term or a word. It is a “mental” dictionary because its entries are not words but ideas, and, within Vico’s theoretical framework, specifically ideas about law, rights, and justice. At the end of the section Vico takes Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf to task for failing to see the religiously-sanctioned introduction and application of the first laws (493).

Having established the “origins” of law, in section II to IV, Vico proceeded to identify the specific area(s) of law and rights involved, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the manner and ways in which the main beneficiaries of, and stakeholders in, ancient law, namely, the elites – the *heroes*, the *aristocrats*,

lished as Id., *Pantheon*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 2016). On Appius Claudius, see also P. A. Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law: The Structure of Legal Communication*, foreword G. Mazzotta, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 2014, pp. 266-268.

<sup>49</sup> For an ancient case of sociolinguistics, see P.-A. Beaulieu, *Official and Vernacular Languages: The Shifting Sands of Imperial and Cultural Identities in First-Millennium B.C. Mesopotamia*, in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures*, ed. S. L. Sanders, Chicago, The University of Chicago, 2006, pp. 187-216.

<sup>50</sup> *New Science*, trans. Marsh, cit.: «birth of law»; *La Science Nouvelle*, cit.: «le droit»; *Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft*, cit.: «das Recht»; *Ciencia nueva*, cit.: «el derecho».



the *lords in the first commonwealths* (*signori nelle prime Repubbliche*) (491) – tried to stay in control and cede as little as possible to the *plebs* (*le plebe*) (490).

As the first sentence of section II makes immediately clear, the key area of law and rights in ancient civilizations, according to Vico, revolved around «certainty of ownership» (*certezza de' domini*) (483; also 487). Vico sees this right to ownership expansively. First, he applies it to the identity of extended elite families, or clans, the «houses branching into many families» (Case diramate in molte famiglie). Then, he applies it to the world of trade, and the necessity to identify ownership of livestock and merchandise to be traded, but the most important problem of establishing lawful ownership concerns landed property, or stated in the words of Cicero quoted approvingly by Vico, «ownership of real estate subject to no encumbrance private or public» (*dominio di roba stabile non soggetto a peso, non sol privato, ma anche pubblico*) (490). In concluding the discussion of private ownership rights to *fields*, agricultural land, Vico points out that another kind of ownership developed also, which was the right of eminent domain (*dominio eminente*) under «civil or public authority» (*l'autorità civile*); this type of ownership was associated with «the hieroglyph of the pome [apple]» (*geroglifico d'un pomo*) (491).

What all three areas have in common in Vico's early civilizations is the “language” in which “ownership” identity and identification is asserted, namely, by the use of visual markings in a variety of ways. In the case of elite families, this often took the form of coats-of-arms (484), or more generally, ensigns/insignia (*Insigne*). When engaged in warfare, visual markings were also used for military insignia, and Vico calls this the primary use of *hieroglyphics* (487). Thus, Vico is using the term *hieroglyphics* for various kinds of visual displays of identity, with particular reference to the claim to “ownership” in a contextually relevant sense. Vico went even a step further in his own semantics of *hieroglyphics*<sup>51</sup>. In the case of agricultural land, property rights were asserted by means of «real terms [boundary posts] of these fields» (*i termini prima reali di tali campi*) (486). To illustrate this use and purpose of objects, Vico brings up again the Scythian king Idanthysus who sent Darius the Great five «real words» (*parole reali*), one of which was a bird, intending to let Darius know that he, Idanthysus, was subject to none but God, a meaning that Darius apparently did not catch on to, however (435). In our present section, Vico calls Idanthysus' bird one of the «real hieroglyphs» (*geroglifici reali*) (488)<sup>52</sup>, thus using *hieroglyphics* in the same way as for insignia of various kinds. These two categories of *hieroglyphs* share the property of being visual, and also of functioning symbolically.

<sup>51</sup> On Vico's engaging Bacon's *De Augmentis scientiarum* on *hieroglyphs* and *real characters*, see Pagliaro, *Giambattista Vico fra linguistica e retorica*, cit., pp. 140-142.

<sup>52</sup> V. Vitiello, *Le “parole reali” di Idantura*, «BCSV», XLVIII (2018), pp. 141-149, p. 145, states: «Cosa significa questo episodio, su qui Vico torna più volte anche nelle tre edizioni della *Scienza nuova*? Fondamentalmente questo: che l'origine del mutamento del linguaggio, e col linguaggio del mondo, è *politica*». (Italics original). This comes close to, but is not necessarily coterminous with, our approach.

However, this discussion is taking place in the context of ownership rights, including “immaterial property” rights, as in the case of the elite “houses”<sup>53</sup>, which Vico termed «characters and names» (*I caratteri, e i nomi*) (483). In Vico’s mind, the issue was ownership claims and rights in the first urban polities, and in support of his speculation he endeavored to marshal evidence in these *Corollaries*. The evidence presented, however, is supporting material, and not the main point. This perspective is also relevant in reading Vico’s distinction and contrast between the often used terms *mute* and *articulate(d)*.

In the co-text, Vico contrasts «mute times» (*tempi muti*) with «articulate language» (*lingua articolata*) (490). The “articulate language” consists of the Roman patricians declaring that «the auspices are ours» (*AUSPICIA ESSE SUA*). The reading we are arguing – as well as the reading of other language-related statements – is that the “articulation” in view by Vico was not the use of words itself, putting thoughts into words, the use of language as such, or the act of speaking or writing. Rather, that “articulation” took place at a much higher level of discourse. This higher level is the identification and concomitant assertion of a right or rights. In this historical situation, it consisted of the assertion that the right to the use and interpretation of the auspices, conveying ultimate authority, belonged to the Roman elite, not the commoners. Their declaration first of all made the auspices an object of ownership, and secondly, claimed rightful ownership by themselves, the elite. In many ways, the auspices were the most valuable kind of “property” to hold unencumbered. Their control was superior to another instrument for securing privileges mentioned by Vico, i. e., when «right was reckoned by strength» (*il diritto della forza*)<sup>54</sup>.

It is with this perspective on “articulate language” in mind, that the “mute times” or the condition of being “mute” at any given time take on their contextual meaning. If “articulation” means the identification, including invention, of ownership rights to certain “objects”, however construed, then being “mute” has to do with the absence of such construals. In “mute times” it was sufficient to be in possession, and in charge, of the auspices to wield authority, and from time to time just to make symbolic displays (for example, by the bird of Idanthysus; by the wings of the Greek fables); it was in these ways that «the heroes maintained their heroic constitutions» (*sostenevano le loro ragioni eroiche*)

<sup>53</sup> Beaulieu, *Official and Vernacular Languages*, cit., p. 209: «These urban elites [in Late Babylonia] were organized mostly into extended families that claimed descent from a common ancestor [...]». As explained in Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law*, cit., pp. 255-256: «A perpetuity is formed in which generations extend the life of the family as an institution. [...] Power now becomes embodied in a *house* that passes on its signs and activities to later generations». (For a review of Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law*, see R. Ruggiero, *Vico e la semantica giuridica*, «BCSV», XLVI (2016), pp. 171-176). This is reminiscent of early modern Neapolitan aristocratic socio-economic and sociopolitical ethos, examined in M. A. Visceglia, *Il bisogno di eternità. I comportamenti aristocratici a Napoli in età moderna*, Napoli, Guida editori, 1988; Id., *Identità sociali. La nobiltà napoletana nella prima età moderna*, Milano, Edizioni Unicopli, 1998.

<sup>54</sup> This is described in greater detail in Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law*, cit., pp. 244-253, following Vico’s *Diritto universale*, as «the phenomenology of force».

(490)<sup>55</sup>. The auspices were not (yet) conceptualized as potential objects of ownership, and thus subject to ownership rights, as well as ownership disputes. This level of “muteness” thus goes beyond the more literal kind of “muteness” that is an aspect of the ancient practice of auspices and other religious rituals, namely their visual rather than phonic expression<sup>56</sup>.

##### 5. “Mute” and “articulate” language

Returning now to the *Corollaries concerning the Origin of Languages and Letters of Poetic Logic* (428-455), in light of the supplemental information provided in *The other Corollaries* (473-493), there is therefore a way to make Vico’s seemingly oxymoronic statement more intelligible, namely, that «all nations began to speak by writing, since all were originally mute» (479) – the word picture of a speech-impaired person who communicates her/his thoughts in a fragmentary manner by means of short written notes. “Originally”, that is, in early (urban) civilizations, writing itself – albeit limited to privileged groups – was common; however, they were “silent” with respect to concepts of certain rights. At the same time, Vico posited an important qualification in § 446: the language at the time of the gods was *almost*, not absolutely, mute, and so very slightly articulate, in other words, *inchoate*. In *Idea of the Work*, he stated more explicitly: «They had only the bare potentiality (facoltà), and that torpid and stupid, of using the human mind and reason» (6). Vico thus speculated that already in the early civilizations the seeds were sown of concepts of law and rights, or in the felicitous phrase of Cantelli, there existed «una prima embrionale riflessione consapevole»<sup>57</sup>.

Paul Angelo Brienza has pointed out that the Roman republic for some time «did not have a written law but relied on a customary tradition based [...] on the dominance of the patrician classes and their understanding of right»<sup>58</sup>, and that the sea change brought about by the Twelve Tables consisted of the fact that the laws were put in writing and thus became «a fully *public thing*», thus moving «away from the ambiguities and obscure metaphors of theocratic laws and towards the simplicity of written codes [...] and the creation of a simplistic and clear language [...]»<sup>59</sup>. However, historically the mere codification of laws does not seem to have been the driving force behind development of a more equitable exercise or administration of justice, judging by the oldest written law

<sup>55</sup> *New Science*, trans. Marsh, cit., p. 201: «maintained their rights»; *La Science Nouvelle*, cit., p. 223: «soutenaient leurs droits»; *Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft*, cit., vol. 2, p. 248: «begründeten [...] ihre heroischen Rechte»; *Ciencia nueva*, cit., p. 311: «mantenían sus derechos». The German translation appears to come closest to the original contextual meaning of «sostenevano» by using a term that has the connotation of “justifying”.

<sup>56</sup> Apel, *Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante bis Vico*, cit., p. 363; A. Corsano, *Discussione*, in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul tema Campanella e Vico*, (Roma, 12-15 maggio 1968), Roma, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1969, pp. 291-293.

<sup>57</sup> Cantelli, *Mente Corpo Linguaggio*, cit., p. 209.

<sup>58</sup> Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law*, cit., pp. 266-267.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269-271, italics original.

codes currently known, such as the law code of the Mesopotamian king Hammurabi from about 1700 B.C. Although it claimed in writing to “cause justice to prevail” so “the strong might not oppress the weak”, yet, as in other early civilizations, this legal code primarily «expressed and defended» social inequality<sup>60</sup>. Hammurabi’s code, and earlier codes, it has also been suggested, actually were not «comprehensive sets of laws meant to be applied literally but generalized [...] models of sound legal judgement [...]. Hence the spirit of these laws was more important than the letter»<sup>61</sup>. Interpretation of the spirit of the laws was the province of the upper classes<sup>62</sup>.

Alternatively, our thesis is that Vico’s sense of “articulated” language is properly understood at a higher conceptual level than the level of the dichotomy of oral vs. written law<sup>63</sup>. The type of “articulation” suggested in this context does not even begin as a linguistic phenomenon, as something that is developed or “articulated” discursively. Rather, it consists of the identification of certain rights – together with certain duties and responsibilities, to be sure – that previously had not been clearly identified. To illustrate such “articulation” with an anachronistic, modern example: «civil rights guaranteeing liberty, political rights guaranteeing participation, and social rights guaranteeing basic welfare»<sup>64</sup>. Once such rights have been identified, it engenders and leads to discursive articulation<sup>65</sup>, but the fundamental articulation is at a much higher, namely, the conceptual, and ontological, level. According to Vico’s statement in § 446, the process of conceptualizing, or “articulating”, rights began already in early urban polities, continued developing, and became highly pronounced in the *age of men*<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, cit., pp. 231, 232; on other civilization, pp. 221-239.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>63</sup> For a debate over of this dichotomy, see M. Herman Hansen, *Oral Law in Ancient Greece*, in *Ancient Greek Law in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. P. Perlman, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2018, pp. 172-192, discussing examples of societies with oral law, *pace* M. Gagarin, *Writing Greek Law*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., p. 101, acknowledges «that even the Laws of the XII Tables operated long before they were written», and sees the value of their written form in its “existence”, «as an object and, as an object, can be objectified, analysed, interpreted, and criticized».

<sup>64</sup> A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. J. Anderson, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995, p. 115; originally published as Id., *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-121.

<sup>66</sup> The historical process leading to universal human rights is described in J. D. Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 179: «[...] the easiest rights to understand are those tied to institutions. [...] family, private property, citizenship, or membership in an organization [...]. But now we come to an interesting historical development: in addition to the idea that there are rights of property owners, citizens, and kings, someone got the brilliant idea that there are rights that one has just in virtue of being a human being. [...] In addition to property rights and citizenship rights there are *human rights*» (Italics original).

What was the force or impulse undergirding this seemingly inexorable development? In connection with it, Vico employed a term which on its face does not seem to have anything to do with it, the term *senso comune* (*common sense*). The term is used most succinctly, but also “packed” most densely, in Axioms XII and CV (142, 311):

Axiom XII: «Common sense is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, or the whole human race». (Il *senso comune* è un *giudizio* senz’alcuna *riflessione*, comunemente *sentito* da tutto un’*ordine*, da tutto un *popolo*, a tutta una *Nazione*, o da tutto il *Gener’ Umano*.)

Axiom CV: «The natural law of nations is coeval with the customs of the nations, conforming one with another in virtue of a common human sense, without any reflection and without one nation following the example of another». (Il *Diritto Natural delle Genti* è uscito co i *costumi delle Nazioni* tra loro conformi in un *senso comune umano*, senza alcuna *riflessione*, e senza prender’ *esempio* l’una dall’altra.)

Before engaging in a closer reading of these Axioms, the results of deep and wide-ranging Vico studies on *senso comune* need to be acknowledged<sup>67</sup>. While the views argued and elucidated are rich in nuances and facets, at their core, there prevails consensus about *senso comune* as «a body of cultural knowledge and social value»<sup>68</sup>, present in any and all human societies, their institutions and customs. And, on the basis of Vico’s highlighting of religion, marriage, and burial practices, these institutions are often taken as paradigmatic expressions of such *senso comune*.

Giuseppe Modica made the perspicacious observation that «[i]l *senso comune* non assume mai in Vico la forma esplicita d’un discorso tematico e, al di là di pochi e saltuari cenni, invano il lettore ne cercherebbe una pur breve ma organica trattazione»<sup>69</sup>. However, a closer reading of the co-text of Axioms XII and CV helps to narrow down Vico’s intended meaning, and to point interpretation

<sup>67</sup> Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., pp. 65-79; J. Gebhardt, *Sensus communis: Vico e la tradizione europea antica*, «BCSV», XXII (1992), pp. 43-64; G. Modica, *La filosofia del «senso comune» in Giambattista Vico*, Roma, Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 1983; Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law*, cit., 60-73, 204-208; J. Milbank, *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744). Part 2: Language, Law and History*, Lewiston, Edmin Mellen Press, 1992, pp. 208, 213, 231; P. Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico. Introduzione alla lettura*, Roma, La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1995, pp. 98-105; N. Erny, *Theorie und System der Neuen Wissenschaft von Giambattista Vico. Eine Untersuchung zur Konzeption und Begründung*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1994, pp. 48-104; L. Formigari, *Ermeneutica giuridica e teoria della lingue in G. B. Vico*, «Intersezioni», VII, 1 (April 1987), pp. 53-71, pp. 54-56; G. Cacciatore, *Metaphysik, Poesie und Geschichte. Über die Philosophie von Giambattista Vico*, trans. M. Hanson, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2002, pp. 191-210; for an extensive bibliography, see *ibid.*, p. 77, n. 10. Cacciatore points out an epistemological dimension of *common sense* (*Gemeinsinn*) as mediating between the universal and the particular (pp. 193, 204), a discussion of which, however, is outside the scope of this study. Analogously, so is Vico’s underlying philosophy of history, language, cultural psychology, science, or sociology. See also S. Santasilla, *La forza della realtà. Il senso comune nel pensiero vichiano*, «BCSV», XLVII (2017), pp. 183-195.

<sup>68</sup> Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., p. 65.

<sup>69</sup> Modica, *La filosofia del «senso comune» in Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 11.

in a certain direction. Both Axioms are imbedded in discourse about «the natural law of nations» (141, 145-146, 312-313), and, furthermore, *senso comune* is directly associated to law-making: «This axiom [Axiom XIII] is a great principle which establishes the common sense of the human race as the criterion taught to the nations by divine providence to define what is certain in the law of nations. And the nations reach this certainty by recognizing the underlying agreements which, despite variations of detail, obtain among them all in respect of this law» (145)<sup>70</sup>.

The second major characteristic attributed to *senso comune* in both Axioms is it being *without any reflection*, that is, not being contingent on intellectual articulation, be it at the theoretical or philosophical level. Taking together these two identifying marks outlined by Vico, *senso comune* can be defined as the fundamental human *sense of justice*<sup>71</sup>. Admittedly, this interpretation stands in a problematic relationship with other interpretations, such as Gadamer's understanding of Vico's terminology as holding among the Romans but not among the Greek, and in a general sense uniting particular communities – morally, culturally, and aesthetically<sup>72</sup>. It has been succinctly defined as «valori della comunità nazionale»<sup>73</sup>. On the other hand, *senso comune* as the human sense of justice is universal, not merely shared by an entire (group of) people, but by all humans. There is a certain affinity, therefore, with Aristotle's *koine dynamis*, translated by Thomas Aquinas as *sensus communis*, and interpreted as an faculty or “sense” like the traditional five human senses, except at the metalevel, thus being able to discriminate among the physiological senses<sup>74</sup>. Vico's *senso comune*, then, might be understood as an innate faculty at an even higher level<sup>75</sup>. In fact, the way Vico sees it, its existence and presence *without any reflection* testifies to its *indispensability* in the strongest possible sense: it is the ultimate grounds of justification

<sup>70</sup> Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 99, also places these Axioms in the context of Vico's interest in «le istituzioni politico-giuridiche»; Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., p. 70, also acknowledged this implication: «Here Vico relates *sensus communis* to natural law».

<sup>71</sup> See the exposition of *senso comune* as «de sens du juste et de l'injuste» and «sens commun juridique» in J.-P. Larthomas, *La “Scienza Nuova” comme philosophie du droit*, «Noesis», 8 (2005); Formigari, *Ermeneutica giuridica e teoria della lingue in G. B. Vico*, cit., p. 54, calls *senso comune*, not inappropriately, «un istinto umano»; Naddeo, *Vico and Naples*, cit., 126, 131, 134, 153, uses the terms «humanity's natural sense of justice», «intrinsic sense of justice», «the plebeians' natural sense of equity», as central to Vico's interpretation of Roman history.

<sup>72</sup> Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law*, cit., p. 61-63.

<sup>73</sup> P. Girard, *Linguaggio poetico ed eroico nel pensiero politico di Vico: La questione della poesia*, in *Eroi ed età eroiche attorno a Vico*, cit., pp. 319-335, p. 325.

<sup>74</sup> Aristotle, *De anima*, 425a27, 450a9-15; Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., p. 68.

<sup>75</sup> An analogous gloss of Aristotle can be found in M. Gabriel, *Der Sinn des Denkens*, Berlin, Ullstein, 2018, pp. 50-55, where *thinking* is argued as being a “sense”, in addition to various physiological senses which are not limited to the handful of “classical” senses. Thus, the title of the book is to be read as a subjective genitive, that is, thinking as a sense. Gabriel also reminds readers of the original meaning of the term *sense* as “direction”, which is still preserved in the Italian *senso unico* for a one-way street (p. 83).

and legitimation; it does not require independent validation itself<sup>76</sup>. If it is considered “pre-reflexive”, it is so by virtue of being a *precondition* of reflection, rather than a condition to be superseded by reflection.

This is the context of *mute* and *articulate* “languages” in which Vico brings up selectively certain typical elements of ordinary language: onomatopoeia, interjections, pronouns, particles, nouns, and verbs (447-453). While Vico emulates Aristotle, for example, in *De interpretatione*, in briefly discussing certain lexical categories, at the same time it can be said of Vico what has been said of Aristotle, that is, that he was «interested neither in syntax nor in semantics»<sup>77</sup>. On the other hand, what Vico *is* interested in, is language as an instrument used in the historic struggle over rights in various areas of life, beginning with property rights. Vico’s view of the use of language is thus integrated into a larger body of issues. This is apparent in including onomatopoeia and interjections in the discussion although they have nothing to do with lexical categories, but much to do with rhetoric<sup>78</sup>. Onomatopoeic words were formed in connection with the roar of the thunder as indicative of the authority of Jove; interjections were the expression of «violent passions»<sup>79</sup>. What kinds of “passions” is Vico referring to? First of all, it is «lament» (lamento), «fear» (spavento), and «grief» (*afflitti*), replaced by «jubilan[ce]» and «extreme happiness» (when Apollo had slain the great serpent called Python), and these reactions are attributed to the «fathers, the strong men, the giants, the mortal gods» (448-449), opening a window on aspects of the reality of early civilizations, rather than on a general psychology of emotions.

It is noteworthy that in this section more space is devoted to these two forms of expressiveness than to the properly key lexical categories of *nouns* and *verbs*<sup>80</sup>. John Milbank summed up Vico’s approach to language as «situated in a particular context of actions [...]». For Vico this context is a social and political

<sup>76</sup> Pace Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., p. 69, who sees the absence of reflection psychologically or cognitively as being «unselfconscious judgement».

<sup>77</sup> J. Barnes, *Rhetoric and poetics*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 259-286, pp. 265-266; Trabant, *Sémata: Beyond Pagliaro’s Vico*, cit., pp. 71, 77 states: «[...] Vico does not contribute to the description of any language. He shows little awareness of the structural diversity of languages. [...] By equating words and messages, Vico clearly missed the mark in defining the specificity of language». Trabant added that «one could conceivably label Vico’s correlations between political organization and linguistic organization “proto-sociolinguistic” – but [...] only vaguely so». Our argument, on the other hand, runs counter to a sociolinguistic interpretation by situating the issues at a higher level of concepts, i.e., notions of justice and equity, broadly defined. For a case study (involving immigrants to Germany) of sociolinguistic aspects of the use of lexical categories, see N. Dittmar, *On the Connection between Ideology and Linguistics*, in *Ideologia, filosofia e linguistica. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Rende (CS), 15-17 settembre 1978*, ed. D. Gambarara - A. D’Altri, Roma, Bulzoni, 1982, pp. 469-497, pp. 491-495.

<sup>78</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, VIII, VI, 31-32, treats onomatopoeia under the tropes.

<sup>79</sup> For Cantelli’s view, see Id., *Mente Corpo Linguaggio*, cit. pp. 101-106; for Pagliaro’s view, see Id., *Le origini del linguaggio secondo Vico*, cit., pp. 273-274.

<sup>80</sup> M. C. Baker, *Lexical Categories: Verbs, Nouns, and Adjectives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

one, in which the linguistic poverty is related to a structure of subordination»<sup>81</sup>. In the case of nouns, Vico keeps clearly in mind the social and civilizational environment from which «a great number of nouns [...] sprang up, beginning with the sylvan life of the Latins and continuing through the rural into the earliest city life (*vita* [...] *prima civile*)». His examples are *con, pig, mouse, fence, snake* (452). The *vita civile*, actually, transcends urban life as such in contrast to life in the country, as it primarily has in view civic institutions, particularly having to do with rights, law, and justice<sup>82</sup>.

Verbs were employed for issuing monosyllabic commands : *es, sta, I, da, dic, fac* (be, stand, go, give, say, make) «under the terrors of patriarchal rule» (453). The required response was «silence and [...] blind obsequiousness» (*con cieco ossequio dovevano tacendo eseguirne i comandi*). Their metaphorical “silence” or “muteness” consisted in being constrained from giving voice to legitimate concerns. But such relative “muteness” was the condition not only of the socially weaker, but also of the authority figures: their onomatopoeic imitations of the “language” of the gods, and their peremptory interjections, served as *manifestations* of their authority, but were devoid of an articulation of their legitimacy. As stated earlier, when the patricians, however, declared «AUSPICIA ESSE SUA», they ended their own “muteness” by expressly stating the idea of a property right<sup>83</sup>.

This begs the question whether this perspective on “mute” vs. “articulate” language has a bearing on reading certain other statements in *Scienza nuova*. A case in point is the statement: «In Greek the fable was also called *mythos*, “myth,” whence come the Latin *mutus*, “mute.”» (401). Leaving aside the etymological mix-up, there remains Vico’s association of “myth” and “muteness”. On a literal/literary level, mythical narratives are the opposite of non-verbal communication, thus anything but “mute”, however, it is a characteristic of mythological accounts not to treat (conceptual) issues and principles in an ex-

<sup>81</sup> Milbank, *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 95.

<sup>82</sup> Vico, *Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft*, cit.: «aus dem ersten politischen Leben»; Caianiello, Review of Trabant, *Neue Wissenschaft von alten Zeichen*, cit., p. 264, commented on §443: «[...] Vico da una spiegazione politica del passaggio tra le diverse lingue, conferendo all sacertà del linguaggio essoterico dei padre tutto il senso di una simbologia del potere».

<sup>83</sup> For Vitiello, *Le “parole reali” di Idantura*, cit., p. 146, mute and articulate languages have a more literal meaning: «[...] così la voce monosillaba delle genti primeve si muta in suoni articolati, in voci distinte del parlare comunicativo [...]». This example of divergent views illustrates the continued prevalence of heterogeneous currents in Vico reception; as Giuseppe Cacciatore acknowledged, «[i] testi vichiani [...] sono naturalmente soggetti alla [...] diversità delle interpretazioni, talvolta anche radicalmente confliggenti». (Id., *Contro le borie “ritornanti”. Per un sano uso della critica*, in *Le «borie» vichiane come paradigma euristico. Hybris dei popoli e dei saperi fra moderno e contemporaneo*, ed. R. Diana, Napoli, ISPF Lab - Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, (I Quaderni del Lab, 3), 2015, pp. 31-42, p. 35). Of course, conflicting interpretations likely are due more to conflicting hermeneutics on the part of interpreters than to Vico’s writings themselves, a “classic” example being Benedetto Croce’s Hegelian approach. (Id., *La Filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, Bari, Laterza, 1911; Id., *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, trans. R. G. Collingwood, New York, Macmillan Company, 1913); see also J. Trabant, *La science de la langue que parle l’histoire idéale éternelle*, «Noesis», 8 (2005).



PLICIT manner – the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* serving as Vico’s paradigmatic evidence<sup>84</sup> – so that they justifiably can be said “not to give voice” to these matters. Vico also contrasts *mutus* with *logos*, meaning “word” (*parola*), as its literal opposite, but also with “idea” (*idea*). It is “ideas” – specifically, and primarily, relating to *il Giusto* – that Vico sees “articulated” – topicalized – historically, as outlined in *Scienza nuova*<sup>85</sup>.

Besides ancient myths, Vico includes other cultural phenomena among the “mute language” that prevailed in early civilizations, as summarized in Book IV, Section V, *Three Kinds of Languages* (TRE SPEZIE DI LINGUE): «mute religious acts or divine ceremonies (*atti muti religiosi*, o sieno *divine cerimonie*)[...] language [that] belongs to religions (qual *lingua* si conviene alle *Religioni*) [...]» (929). The (pre)dominant religious dimension in early civilizations has been noted earlier, so that Vico’s characterization aligns with historical reality<sup>86</sup>. The value and effectiveness of gestural actions, in general in any formal settings, and, following Vico, specifically in religious rituals, cannot be gainsaid<sup>87</sup>. Nevertheless, rituals and ceremonies in early civilizations were not designed to convey notions of social and political rights applicable to all members of the community, hence they remained “silent” in this sense, and not, coincidentally, due to being visual rather than aural. Their expressions, «whether gestures or physical objects» (*cenni, o atti, o corpi*) (401), were meaningful in themselves, «had natural relations to the ideas» (avessero *naturali rapporti all’idee*), but did not transcend this transparent level of association. King Idanthyrus’ frog, mouse, bird, ploughshare, and bow were used in this manner, each of which arguably having a certain “natural relation” to the message the king wanted to send to Darius<sup>88</sup> (435).

In modern language, it consisted of a set of *compositions* of *mappings* from *domains* to *co-domains*: the first set of mappings comprised maps (associations)

<sup>84</sup> For K. Simonsuuri, *Homer’s Original Genius: Eighteenth-century notions of the early Greek epic (1688-1798)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 90-98, Vico’s discovery was «that languages and linguistic forms are the key to the minds of those who use words [...]». In our account, Vico also realized that there were matters that the language and words in circulation did not (adequately) address.

<sup>85</sup> *Contra* M. Cherchi, *A Note on Vico’s Typology of Language*, «NVS», 18 (2000), pp. 77-93, who explains Vico’s thoughts on language, thinking, muteness, articulateness, in processual terms.

<sup>86</sup> Cantelli, *Gestualità e mito*, cit., p. 113, neglects to address the explicit religious context indicated by Vico.

<sup>87</sup> F. Valagussa, *Vico. Gesto e poesia*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2013; G. Patella, *Giambattista Vico, padre de los estudios culturales*, trans. M. J. Rebollo Espinosa, «CSV», 28 (2014) / 29 (2015), pp. 73-89; A. Zacarés, *La Scienza Nuova y el gusto estético*, «CSV», 13-14 (2001-2002), pp. 253-273; Id., *Poética, estética y crítica*, «CSV», 32 (2018), pp. 379-386; A. De Jorio, *Gesture in Naples and Gesture in Classical Antiquity. A translation of La mimica degli antichi investiganti nel gestire napoletano. Gestural Expression of the Ancients in the Light of Neapolitan Gesturing*, intro., notes A. Kendon, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000; D. McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005. The iconicity of sign-language needs to be considered as a separate field of inquiry.

<sup>88</sup> Cantelli, *Mente Corpo Linguaggio*, cit., pp. 118-121.

from the *domain* of being a son of that land, to the *co-domain* of being born of the earth; from having established his nation there, to making his house where he was born; from being subject to no one but God, to having the auspices; from the duty and might to defend Scythia, to having cultivated the lands. The results of these maps, in turn, were mapped into another set of co-domains: from the *domain* of being born of the earth in summer rains, to the *co-domain* of the frog; from making its house where it was born, to the mouse; from the place of the auspices, to the bird; from having reduced the lands to cultivation, to the ploughshare; from being supreme commander, to the bow<sup>89</sup>. While these *mappings* (*rapporti*) indeed created meanings that could be considered “natural”, that is, associated with concrete reality, they were not useful or in fact, able to express higher level concepts such as the rights of self-defense and territorial integrity, just as ancient religious rites and ceremonies could not explicitly “articulate” concepts of justice and equity.

Vico himself employed *hieroglyphs* in this sense in *Scienza nuova*, namely in the frontispiece and his explanation in *Idea of the Work* (1-42). He designated all the objects depicted in the frontispiece associated with «the civil world or world of nations» (2) to be *hieroglyphs*, and proceeds to elucidate their meaning (8-30, 40): the lit torch, symbolizing marriage; the urn, the first separately owned fields; the rudder, migration by seafaring; the fasces, the powerful “fathers” making common cause; the sword, the law of force subject to religious constraints; the caduceus, perpetual conflict, pillage, piracy; the balance, civil equality, to mention a few. It is to be noted that these “hieroglyphs” only become meaningful with Vico’s (extensive) elucidation. Absent his discursive explanation, a variety of readings would have been possible, and in the final analysis, no reading at all, analogously to Martial’s quip “He who lives everywhere lives nowhere”<sup>90</sup>. Vico could still “technically” correctly claim that «the mute language of acts and objects [...] had natural relations to the ideas they were meant to signify» (34), but his own use – and the Scythian king’s use – of “hieroglyphs” demonstrates the depth and breadth of thought that goes into their *mappings*<sup>91</sup>. There is no basis for considering these thought processes “irrational”, “pre-logical”, or “pre-reflective”, otherwise Vico’s work itself, also, would have to be branded as such, directly counter to his own insistence on the scientific nature of his work. Without these mappings, the objects are indeed mute<sup>92</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> V. Vitiello, *Le “parole reali” di Idantura*, cit., p. 145: «Cosa significa questo episodio [...]? [...] che l’origine del mutamento del linguaggio, e col linguaggio del mondo, è *politica*» (Italics original).

<sup>90</sup> G. B. Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric (Institutiones Oratoriae, 1711-1741)*, trans. G. A. Pinton - A.W. Shippee, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1996, p. 181.

<sup>91</sup> G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World. The Poetic Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 3, also uses the metaphor of *mapping* but in a different way; however, both uses of the term are derived from a common basic idea.

<sup>92</sup> This perspective on Vico’s *hieroglyphs* diverges from other analyses of both Vico’s views and 18<sup>th</sup>-century speculation, especially William Warburton’s theories, for which see A. Graczyk, *Die Hieroglyphe im 18. Jahrhundert. Theorien zwischen Aufklärung und Esoterik*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2015; E. Nuzzo, Review of A. Verri, *Presenza di Vico. Confronti e paralleli* (Lecce,

This proposed “non-linguistic” view of Vico’s approach to language will now be placed in a more general framework.

### 6. Language as “ideology”

This framework proposes to interpret Vico’s treatment of “language” in the sense of *ideology*. The direction in which we are taking this discussion has much in common with Peter König’s comparison of Vico’s three *languages*:

Human authority itself is threefold: it consists of the authority of the first poetic giants who following the authority given to them by God by a *language of fear and terror* begin to settle [...]. Whatever man does out of his free will needs an authorization by these heroes and the way this authorization is transmitted is again by a special language, the language of signs and formulas, which can be interpreted as a *language of protection and preservation*. And finally, after having left behind the heroic stage of history and attained a stage where everybody counts as a man and is recognized as equal with all other men, history is governed by a truly human authority. And the dominating language that is proper to this stage is not anymore the mute language of fear and terror, but a *language of liberty and equity* [...]<sup>93</sup>.

The progression inherent in this (idealized) historical process corresponds to the “articulation” of language in terms of concepts discussed earlier. In referring to these “languages” as *ideologies*, the term *ideology* needs to be used in a “neutral” sense, however, as follows: «an ideology is the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group»<sup>94</sup>. Thus, implicitly, the presence of ideology is not attributable reflexively only to the dominant groups or elites, or universally applicable in a pejorative manner<sup>95</sup>. This neutral connotation of

Milella, 1986) and W. Warburton, *Scrittura e civiltà. Saggio sui geroglifici egiziani*, ed. A. Verri (Ravenna, Longo Editore, 1986), «BCSV», XIX (1989), pp. 278-285; A. Verri, *Vico e Warburton*, «BCSV», X (1980), pp. 179-190. Another level of “muteness” of *hieroglyphs*, that is, ancient in-scriptions in general, that nevertheless “speaks” is pointed out in P. Machinist, *Final Response: On the Study of the Ancients, Language, Writing, and the State*, in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures*, ed. S. L. Sanders, Chicago, University of Chicago, 2006, pp. 291-300, p. 295: «The point is that by the very fact of its display [...] a royal monument inscription such as a stela or a relief communicated a message of power and sovereignty, whether or not the individual could read the actual message, that is, the denotative text [...] The denotative text, then, gave to those who could read it another form of enhancement [...] the sense of exclusiveness, the privilege of elite membership it conferred on its readers».

<sup>93</sup> P. König, *Vico’s Philosophy of Authority: A Dead-End on the Vico Street Map?*, in *The Vico Road. Nuovi percorsi vichiani*, cit., pp. 115-129, p. 125 (Italics added.)

<sup>94</sup> T. A. van Dijk, *Politics, Ideology, and Discourse*, in *Elsevier Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. E. K. Brown - A. Anderson, Boston, Elsevier, 2006, pp. 728-740, p. 729. Of the extensive literature on the topic of ideology, only the following introductory treatments will be cited here: T. Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, London, Verso, 1991; Ch. Henning, *Ideology*, in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Vol. V, ed. G. Ritzer, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007, pp. 2330-2231; W. L. McBride, *Ideology*, in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. W. A. Darity Jr., Detroit, Thomson Gale, 2008, pp. 558-560.

<sup>95</sup> Eagleton, *Ideology*, cit., p. 221. The “neutral” use of the term thus rejects the influential Marxian approach to “ideology”. When the term is used pejoratively, it is helpful when this is

ideology accords with Vico's treatment – in the form of brief sketches in Book IV, Sections I-XI (916-979) – of the social and civic conditions which characterized the three basic types of *ages* involved in developing just and fair legal foundations of human society. In purporting to produce a work of *scientific* research and theory – presented in the genre of a scientific treatise – Vico, without prejudgment, gave equal weight and consideration to all three stages.

Vico did not yet have the term *ideology* in his vocabulary since it was invented only half a century later, during the French Revolution, by Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836) who coined the term in a lecture in 1796<sup>96</sup>. Furthermore, Tracy's neologism *idéologie* used the ending *-logie* in its original sense of the study or science of a subject matter, so *idéologie* was *la science des idées* as abstract entities, or so it was claimed<sup>97</sup>. In Vico's case, on the other hand, the focus is on the content of the ideas that prevailed at various historical periods among different "nations". That is why he could call his *Scienza* «a history of [...] ideas» (*una Storia dell'Idee*) (368).

To illustrate Vico's ideological interpretation of the "languages" in ancient polities, a glance at the modern "Cambridge school" of historiography might be informative, associated with the name and work of Quentin Skinner. It gives a central role to language, not language *per se*, but in the form of *political language*, standing for ideologies<sup>98</sup>. Skinner's aspiration was to write «a history of

made explicit, rather than assumed, as in Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, cit., p. 410; Gabriel, *Der Sinn des Denkens*, cit., p. 27.

<sup>96</sup> Eagleton, *Ideology*, cit., pp. 66-69; B. W. Head, *Ideology and Social Science: Destutt de Tracy and French Liberalism*, Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff, 1985, pp. 1-43; E. Kennedy, *A Philosopher in the Age of Revolution: Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of "Ideology"*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1978.

<sup>97</sup> Eagleton, *Ideology*, cit., p. 63; Head, *Ideology and Social Science*, cit. p. 32.

<sup>98</sup> L. Schorn-Schütte - S. Tode, *Einleitende Bemerkungen*, in *Debatten über die Legitimation von Herrschaft: Politische Sprachen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. L. Schorn-Schütte - S. Tode, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2006, pp. 9-15; Q. Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*. Vol.1: *The Renaissance*, Vol. 2: *The Age of Reformation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978; M. Printy, *Skinner and Pocock in Context: Early Modern Political Thought Today*, «History and Theory», 48 (February 2009), pp. 113-121. On the virtual equivalence of "political language" and "ideology", see H. Hamilton-Bleakley, *Linguistic philosophy and The Foundations*, in *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, ed. A. Brett - J. Tully with H. Hamilton-Bleakley, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 20-33; see also M. Varoli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992; Id., *Dalla politica alla ragion di Stato. La scienza del governo tra XIII e XVII secolo*, Roma, Donzelli, 1994; for a study of the ideological content of cultural language, outside of the Cambridge school, see G. Capone, *Il linguaggio creatore. Teoria della letteratura e sistema della parola nell'Illuminismo inglese*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1976, pp. 279-291, with respect to the terms *judgment*, *imagination*, *wit*, *image*, and *idea*. An example from Neapolitan history is the "language" of *Magnanimità* and *Liberalità* espoused by Antonius Panormita (1394-1471), the panegyrist of Alphonsus the Magnanimous, in connection with Alphonsus' triumph over the Angevins. (F. Delle Donne, *Alfonso il Magnanimo e l'invenzione dell'umanesimo monarchico. Ideologia e strategie di legittimazione alla corte aragonese di Napoli*, Roma, Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 2015, pp. 6, 135.)

ideologies», not in a Marxian sense as «distortions of reality, but rather in a Weberian sense to refer to discourses of legitimation»<sup>99</sup>.

In Vico's case, the ideologies involved were not so much political in the full sense as being ideas related to the development of notions of equity and justice, and even brought down to the fundamental level of the human right of ownership, as already repeatedly emphasized. While the term "political" is a convenient umbrella term, and used in *Scienza nuova* in certain contexts as in Book II, Section V. *Poetic Politics*, it should not be allowed to blur one of the main arguments of the establishment of a framework of legal rights and jurisprudence beyond the traditional unfettered grasp of "political" power.

Vico's most significant case study of ideological use(s) of language involved *the age of the gods*, and its protagonists, the *theological poets* (*Poeti Teologi*). Both parts of this designation are significant. Since it is a noun phrase, the noun *poet(s)* requires attention first. Donald Philip Verene has shown how Vico engages Aristotle, explicitly and implicitly, throughout *Scienza nuova*<sup>100</sup>. This includes Aristotle's view of "poetry" and "poetics"<sup>101</sup>. Aristotle's view is highly nuanced, but the underlying "root" word is *poiein*, to make, and its derivative is *poiêtikos*, able to produce, productive<sup>102</sup>. Thus, poets are defined by Aristotle as «makers of likenesses»<sup>103</sup>. So *poets* are makers, creators, and this fundamental Aristotelian sense accords and aligns with Vico's description of the role they played in early civilizations: «[...] the first men of the nations [...] created things according to their own ideas. [...] it perturbed the very persons who by feigning did the creating, for which they were called "poets," (*Poeti*) which is Greek for "makers" (*criatori*) » (376). Furthermore, Vico's adjective *theological* glosses Aristotle's *theologoi* in his *Metaphysics*, "speakers about the gods" among whom Aristotle included poets like Homer and Hesiod<sup>104</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> Q. Skinner, *Surveying The Foundations: a retrospect and reassessment*, in *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, cit., pp. 236-261, p. 242, n. 15. A distinction needs to be made, therefore, with a view of language as such, in Searle, *Making the Social World*, cit., p. 85, to the effect that «[l]anguage doesn't just describe; it creates, and partly constitutes, what it both describes and creates». In this scenario, there is no analytical framework to critically deal with pernicious forms of social and political language, such as studied in V. Klemperer, *Language of the Third Reich: LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii*, trans. M. Brady, London, Athlone Press, 2000; originally published as Id., *Lingua Tertii Imperii: Notizbuch eines Philologen*, Halle, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1957.

<sup>100</sup> D. Ph. Verene, *Vico's New Science: A Philosophical Commentary*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2015, pp. 10-11, 23, 30, 75,77-79, 94-95, 128-129, 132, 140-142, 153, 160, 178-180, 184, 187, 196, 198, 224-227, 234.

<sup>101</sup> Barnes, *Rhetoric and Poetics*, cit., pp. 272-276; A. Schiaparelli - P. Crivelli, *Aristotle on Poetry*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, ed. Ch. Shields, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 612-626.

<sup>102</sup> F. D. Miller, Jr., *Aristotle on the Separability of Mind*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, cit., pp. 307-339, pp. 314, 330, n. 26; Marcus, *Vico and Plato*, cit., p. 39.

<sup>103</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, 25, 1460b7-8; Barnes, *Rhetoric and Poetics*, cit., p. 274-276, comments that "likeness" must include, not just imitation (*mimesis*), but also original artistic creations, such as musical compositions and works of fiction, and «[c]ertainly, Aristotelian poetry cannot be identified with verse and distinguished from prose».

<sup>104</sup> St. Menn, *Aristotle's Theology*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, cit., pp. 422-464, p. 426; for further historical background of the expression, see M. G. Pia, *Nota sui poeti teologi*, «BCSV»,

Thus, Vico's original "poets", or ideological minds, were the creators of the intellectual framework of the early social world, and the main medium through which this was accomplished was "theology", religiously-inspired and legitimated language, so that it could be said that «[i]n this manner the poets founded religions among the nations» (*i Poeti fondarono le religioni a' Gentili*)(383)<sup>105</sup>. This was such an important argument in *Scienza nuova* – and part of his *discoveries* – that Vico went into great detail of Greek and Roman mythology, dealing with each one of the twelve major deities in the pantheon (502, 511, 528, 533, 549, 562, 589, 604, 634). Vico's focus, however, was not on their strictly religious meaning, but on their central role in purveying and communicating an ideology, his objective consisting of providing «a natural theogony or generation of the gods [...] in the minds of the founders of the gentile world (*Autori della Gentilità*), who were by nature theological poets» (392). The deities are therefore associated to key institutions of the "world" at an early time, including religion, marriage, sedentism, burial, agriculture, asylum, servitude, aristocracy, the agrarian laws, war and colonization, and marriage law<sup>106</sup>. The often-quoted Axiom LXIV, «The order of ideas must follow the order of things» (*L'ordine dell'idee dee procedere secondo l'ordine delle cose*) (238), can also be regarded in this light, that is, that there exists a close nexus between ideologies and institutions or civic affairs. As the next Axiom elaborates, the *things* or *cose* Vico has in mind are the «human things» (*cose umane*), by which he does not mean human affairs in general, nor mental processes, but specifically the coming together of members of a community. He gives the Latin term *lex* the root meaning of "collection", and so attributes to «"a collection of citizens" or the public parliaments» the authority of making law (239-240)<sup>107</sup>.

As noted earlier, religion was inextricably bound up with life in early civilizations, and Vico's approach to mythology throws light on how this nexus was established and perpetuated<sup>108</sup>.

XXIV-XXV (1994-1995), pp. 259-260, including reference to Augustine. Parenthetically, Augustine himself might fall in the class of *theological poets* under the interpretation suggested here.

<sup>105</sup> In this respect we agree with Cantelli, *Mente Corpo Linguaggio*, cit., p. 203: «Anche le città, come già le famiglie, sono creazioni dei poeti teologi».

<sup>106</sup> P. G. Pandimakil, *Das Ordnungsdenken bei Giambattista Vico als philosophische Anthropologie, Kultur-entstehungstheorie, soziale Ordnung and politische Ethik*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1995, p. 212.

<sup>107</sup> Axiom LXIV has been referred to as «a direct translation and a homage, of sorts, to the enunciation of a proposition in Spinoza's *Ethics*, Book II, Proposition 7: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things"». (H. S. Stone, *Vico's Cultural History: The Production and Transmission of Ideas in Naples 1685-1750*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1997, p. 302; see also Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 81). For Ferdinand Fellmann, the *order of ideas* refer to the systematic aspects of epistemology (*Erkenntnis*), and the *order of things* to its (onto)genetic aspects, inseparable of each other, as well as the sense of temporal "order" going back to the beginning of history. (Id., *Das Vico-Axiom: Der Mensch macht die Geschichte*, Freiburg, Verlag Karl Alber, 1976, pp. 154-155). These authors, despite their differences, locate Vico's statement at the level of concept formation, and methodology, respectively, rather than the level of the (contentious) process of creating law. Cf. more recently, T. Armaner, *The order of ideas: Vico and Spinoza*, in *The Vico Road. Nuovi percorsi vichiani*, cit., pp. 93-99.

<sup>108</sup> Vico's "non-linguistic" approach to *language*, and its integration in his "scientific" study of early societies, sets him apart from early modern speculations on the origin of language(s).

### 7. Imaginative universals

Vico did not stop at investigating *what* took place and *who* were the key “players”<sup>109</sup>, but went on to theorizing *how* the theological poets “generated” their mythology<sup>110</sup> (392). This preoccupation with theoretically framing not only the phenomena, but also the processes that govern them, can be understood as imbedded in Vico’s explicitly chosen *scientific* approach<sup>111</sup>. Any scientific study needs to explain, not just describe, at a certain level of detail how its phenomena are generated from underlying processes. With respect to the methodology employed by the theological poets in “poetically”, that is, creatively producing their theogony, Vico’s thesis is that it was by means of *imaginative universals* (*universali fantastici*) (209, 808, 934). The language of *universals* is Aristotelian<sup>112</sup>, but

Cf. P. Rossi, *I segni del tempo. Storia della terra e storia delle nazioni da Hooke a Vico*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1979, pp. 226-246.

<sup>109</sup> The term is used only semi-colloquially, given the fact that Wittgenstein philosophizes about “language games”.

<sup>110</sup> *Mythology* is used here for the collection of myths, not as the study of myths.

<sup>111</sup> Apart from choosing a book title on a par with Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organon* and Galileo’s *Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche, intorno à due nuove scienze attinenti alla meccanica ed ai movimenti locali*, Vico is also emulating Bacon in engaging Aristotle, albeit in a different sphere of scientific inquiry. (Verene, *Vico’s New Science*, cit. pp. 5-6). For Vico’s claim of “science”, see M. H. Fisch, *Introduction*, in Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, cit., pp. XIX-XLV, pp. XXX-XXXIII; L. Pompa, *Vico’s Science*, «History and Theory», 10, 1 (1971), pp. 49-83; Id., *La scienza di Vico*, «BCSV», II (1972), pp. 13-51; E. McMullin, *Vico’s Theory of Science*, in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, ed. G. Tagliacozzo - M. Mooney - D. Ph. Verene, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1979, pp. 60-90; Bedani, *Vico Revisited*, cit., pp. 163-183; A. Tosel, *La “Science nouvelle” de Vico face à la “mathesis universalis”*, «Noesis», 8 (2005); O. Remaud, *Vico et l’idée d’une science comparée*, «Noesis», 8 (2005); Trabant, *La science de la langue que parle l’histoire idéale éternelle*, cit.; D. Ph. Verene, *Vico’s Science of Imagination*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1981, pp. 127-158; Trabant, *Quanto è “storico” il mondo civile vichiano?*, cit., pp. 86-89; E. Nuzzo, *Le logiche dell’impossibile e del necessario. Vico e la decifrazione dei tempi favolosi attorno al primo ’700*, «Bollettino filosofico», XV, 2 (1999), pp. 205-233; Id., *Die Logiken des Unmöglichen und des Notwendigen. Vico und die Entzifferung der “sagenhaften Zeiten” zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts*, in *Die Hermeneutik im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. M. Beetz - G. Cacciatore, Cologne, Böhlau Verlag, 2000, pp. 287-309; Stone, *Vico’s Cultural History*, cit., pp. 242-249.

<sup>112</sup> M. J. Loux, *Aristotle on Universals*, in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. G. Anagnostopoulos, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, pp. 186-196. The scope of meaning of *universals* in Aristotle and Vico will not be argued here further, except to say that *universals* continue to engender debate in the philosophy of science. (*Carving Nature at Its Joints: Natural Kinds in Metaphysics and Science*, ed. J. K. Campbell - M. O’Rourke - M. H. Slater, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2011; M. H. Slater, *Are Species Real? An Essay on the Metaphysics of Species*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; M. A. Khalidi, *Natural Categories and Human Kinds: Classification in the Natural and Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013; A. R. J. Fisher, *Structural universals*, «Philosophy Compass», 2018, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12518>>; D. Ludwig, *Letting Go of “Natural Kind”*: *Toward a Multidimensional Framework of Nonarbitrary Classification*, «Philosophy of Science», 85 (January 2018), pp. 31-52). Not to be overlooked is how “universals” are dealt with in conceptual mathematics (topos theory), as well as outside mathematics, in the form of *subobject-classifiers* (F. W. Lawvere - St. H. Schanuel, *Conceptual Mathematics: A first introduction to categories*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 337-347; J. Lurie, *Higher Topos Theory*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 564-569; G. Mazzola, *The Topos of Music: Geometric Logic of Concepts, Theory, and Performance*, Basel, Birkhäuser Verlag, 2002).

Vico's adjective *imaginative* in conjunction with universals is entirely his own<sup>113</sup>, seemingly constituting an oxymoronic juxtaposition. On the one hand, *universals* are the result or product of a process of classification of entities at different levels of abstraction, while *imagination* implies the forming of images or concepts of objects not present to the senses<sup>114</sup>. More importantly, *imagination* has been understood as a *confrontation* with rational, abstract thought<sup>115</sup>. However, not only are Vico's *universals* echoing Aristotle, but also their *imaginative*/*"fantastic"* quality<sup>116</sup>, and thus the meaning and connotation of this attribute needs to be traced back to Aristotle<sup>117</sup>.

In bringing Aristotle's thinking about *phantasia* to bear on Vico's *universali fantastici*, we follow here the Aristotle scholar Victor Caston<sup>118</sup>, starting out with deriving the term *phantasia* from the (passive) verb *phantazesthai*, meaning «the capacity through which things are made to *phainesthai*, to appear or seem to us to be the case. It thus has more to do with things' appearing a certain way in experience than with our inventing imaginary scenes»<sup>119</sup>. Thus, Aristotle's *phantasia* has little if anything to do with creativity or invention; nor does it *ipso facto* involve imagery and visualization<sup>120</sup>. On the other hand, it entails *intentionality* to a varying degree, as it produces representations (*phantasmata*), that is, «internal representation that underlies mental states quite generally»<sup>121</sup>. Vico also associ-

<sup>113</sup> Vico also uses the synonyms *caratteri fantastici* (431), *generi fantastici* (403), *generi poetici* (210, 495), and *universali poetici* (933) (Verene, *Vico's New Science*, cit. p. 270). The adjective + noun phrase *imaginative universals* could also be parsed as the subjective genitive *universals of the imagination*.

<sup>114</sup> *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. A. Stevenson - Ch. A. Lindberg, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>115</sup> M. Granatella, *Imaginative universals and human cognition in The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, «Culture & Psychology», 21, 2 (2 June 2015), pp. 185-206; see especially Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, cit., pp. 65-95; Id., *Imaginative Universals and Narrative Truth*, «NVS», 6 (1998), pp. 1-19.

<sup>116</sup> Sanna, *Vico*, cit., pp. 89-125; Id., *Immaginazione*, Napoli, Alfredo Guida Editore, 2007, pp. 17-24, 59-68; Id., *La "fantasia, che è l'occhio dell'ingegno". La questione della verità e della sua rappresentazione in Vico*, Napoli, Alfredo Guida Editore, 2001, pp. 40-63; Id., *Il sapere dell'immaginazione e le sue forme di conoscenza*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, cit., pp. 283-295.

<sup>117</sup> Sanna speaks of «la rievocazione dello schema aristotelico». (Id., *La "fantasia, che è l'occhio dell'ingegno"*, cit., p. 65), and that «Vico ha bisogno di collegarsi al *De anima* aristotelico [...]». (Id., *Il sapere dell'immaginazione e le sue forme di conoscenza*, cit., p. 292); see also the references to Aristotle in Id., *Vico*, cit., pp. 40, 45, 48, 65, 93, 106, 108.

<sup>118</sup> V. Caston, *Phantasia and Thought*, in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. G. Anagnostopoulos, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, pp. 322-334.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 323; Sanna, *Immaginazione*, cit., pp. 8, 66, proposes the term for light, *phaòs*, following Aristotle's *De anima*, as the root of the term *phantasia*; Id., *La "fantasia, che è l'occhio dell'ingegno"*, cit., p. 43, agrees up to a point with Caston, *Phantasia and Thought*, cit., p. 323, on «*imaginatio* [...] con il suo rendere presente [...] una sensazione quando è ormai assente»; D. Ph. Verene, *Philosophy and the Return to Self-Knowledge*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 63.

<sup>120</sup> Pace Sanna, *Immaginazione*, cit., p. 19.

<sup>121</sup> Caston, *Phantasia and Thought*, cit., p. 325; see also Sanna, *Il sapere dell'immaginazione e le sue forme di conoscenza*, cit., p. 293: «Quindi la fantasia [...] produce una rappresentazione del proprio oggetto».



ated *fantasia* with intentionality when he said that it is «imagination when it *alters* or *imitates* them [things]» (*fantasia*, mentre l'altera, e contrafà) (819)<sup>122</sup>.

Vico himself elucidated the intended meaning of this type of *imagination* (*fantasia*) in several passages: Book I, Section II. *Elements*, Axioms XLVII- XLIX (204-210); Book III, Section I, Chapter IV. *Homer's Matchless Faculty for Heroic Poetry* (806-809); Book IV, Section VI. *Three Kinds of Characters* (932-936), as well as in *Idea of the Work* (34-35). In harmony with the Aristotelian concept of *phantasia*, Vico points out that imaginative universals are brought into being by «imaginative representation» (il fecero con la *fantasia* per *ritratti*) (933). Vico's meaning of "portraits" or "portrayals" becomes evident from the examples that he cites, consisting of three different categories: (1) "divine" characters such as, for example, Jove, for everything concerning the auspices, or Juno, for everything connected with marriage; (2) "heroic" characters, such as, for example, Achilles, for all valiant fighters/heroic valor, Ulysses, for all clever men/heroic wisdom, or Godfrey, for all true chiefs of war, and (3) "human" types portrayed in the persons of the New Comedy (34, 205, 808, 809, 933, 934).

Thus, first of all, these *ritratti* are not described as paintings, drawings, or sculptures of subjects, nor as depictions in language<sup>123</sup>. Rather, they are referred to in terms of cognitive psychology: «the first men [...] had a natural need to create poetic characters; that is, imaginative class concepts or universals, to which, as to certain models or ideal portraits, to reduce all the particular species which resembled them» (da ridurvi, come a certi *Modelli*, o pure *ritratti ideali* tutte le specie particolari a ciascun suo genere simiglianti) (209). The result of this classification ("reduction") of «particular species» into «universals» (*generi*) is, in modern terms, *equivalence classes*. *Equivalence* consists of conforming to the same defining criterium, as seen in the case of Achilles and Ulysses, while not denying any other characteristics or qualities, just as Achilles and Ulysses transcended the stereotypes of valor and wit, and could with equal justification be made into paradigms of other, different qualities<sup>124</sup>. Equivalence,

<sup>122</sup> Italics added; *Ciencia nueva*, cit., p.574: «fantasia, cuando las altera y transforma». Sanna, *La "fantasia, che è l'occhio dell'ingegno"*, cit., p. 43: «l'immaginazione [...] non fa, ma configura le cose, conferisce loro delle immagini e le mette a disposizione dell'intelletto che di queste no potrebbe fare a meno». See also Vico's *Oration I*, in Id., *On Humanistic Education (Six Inaugural Orations, 1699-1707)*, trans. G. A. Pinton - A. W. Shippee, intro. D. Ph. Verene, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 42-43.

<sup>123</sup> Pace Sanna, *Vico*, cit., p. 92, who sees in *ritratti* «un evidente privilegiamento dell'organo della vista».

<sup>124</sup> The complexity, and underlying intentionality, of establishing equivalence classes is discussed in Ludwig, *Letting Go of "Natural Kind"*, cit., ranging over *special purpose kinds*, *general purpose kinds*, *mind-independent convergent kinds*, *cognition-dependent convergent kinds*, *practice-dependent (convergent or divergent) kinds*, *environment-dependent divergent kinds*, *biosocial kinds*, which itself at the meta-level is reliant on equivalence relations. This (irreducible) complexity, and "multidimensionality", likely is behind Paolo Fabiani's critical view of "genera" in Id., *The Philosophy of the Imagination in Vico and Malebranche*, trans., ed. G. Pinton, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2009, p. 58: «The genera are a fallacious criterion that cannot define univocally the terms that are at the root of the sciences, of philosophy, and of jurisprudence».

therefore, is epistemologically distinct from abstracting particulars into generalities<sup>125</sup>. Vico implicitly recognized the selectivity inherent in equivalence classes by qualifying *fantasia* in certain ways: as robust (*robustissima*), vast (*vastissima*), vigorous (*vigorosissima*), strong (*forte*), and corporeal (*corpulentissima*)<sup>126</sup>. In other words – interpreting the *fantasia*-related phrases objectively – they saw things and phenomena primarily in terms of robustness, vastness, vigor, strength, and corpulence, and constructed equivalence classes accordingly. As a result, their *fantasia* – as well as its product, the *fantasie* – was not immune to being false (*falsa*), confused (*confusa*), an illusion (*inganno*), and in error (*errore*) (378, 665, 916).

Vico, in effect, without using our terminology, thought along the same lines when he spoke of «expressions comprising in one general concept various species of men, deeds, or things» (*parlari comprendenti in un general concetto diverse spezie di uomini, o fatti, o cose*) (210)<sup>127</sup>. As just stated, in equivalence classes, the members of the class bear certain well-defined relationships to each other but not to other equivalence classes, so Vico accurately characterized them as «univocal» (*significati univoci*) rather than «analogous» (*non analogi*) (210) which would entail comparison with another equivalence class<sup>128</sup>. That is why Vico could call *phantasia* the eye of ingenuity (*phantasia [...] quae ita est ingenii oculus/ la fantasia, che è occhio dell'ingegno*)<sup>129</sup>: as the eye literally focuses on a particular element in the visual field, so *phantasia* generates an equivalence class according to a particular criterium, and, separately, other equivalence classes in terms of other criteria, while ingenuity is able to range not only over a variety but also a great diversity of equivalence classes<sup>130</sup>. But it is *phantasia* that first makes “objects” available to ingenuity to be connected<sup>131</sup>.

<sup>125</sup> Pace St. Otto, *Giambattista Vico: razionalità e fantasia*, trans. A. Giugliano - G. Cacciatore, «BCSV», XVII-XVIII (1987-1988), pp. 5-24, p. 19.

<sup>126</sup> See *Concordanze e indici di frequenza dell'edizione Napoli 1744*, cit., under *fantasia*.

<sup>127</sup> G. Cacciatore, *Vico: narrazione storica e narrazione fantastica*, in Id., *In dialogo con Vico. Ricerche, note, discussioni*, ed. M. Sanna - R. Diana - A. Mascolo, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2015, pp. 53-70, pp. 65-66.

<sup>128</sup> Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 873, n. 36, defines *univoci* as constituting *identity* rather than merely *similarity* (somiglianza), whereas in our view, it bears repeating, *univocity* only requires conformity with a certain criterium, indicating equivalence, rather than strict identity. Relations of *identity* and *equivalence* occupy opposite poles in the spectrum of *equality*, or *sameness*. Cf. Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, cit., pp. 75-77; Id., *Imaginative Universals and Narrative Truth*, «NVS», 6 (1988), pp. 1-19, p. 13.

<sup>129</sup> G. B. Vico, *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia*, ed. M. Sanna, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005, Ch. VII, *De Facultate*, §. IV *De certa facultate sciendi/La facoltà specifica del sapere*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>130</sup> *Ingegno/ingenuity/ingenium* is therefore the faculty that is operative in the creation of metaphors. Verene's comments about metaphors make sense when the references to imaginative universals are read as references to *ingegno* (Id., *Vico's Science of Imagination*, cit., pp. 77-79).

<sup>131</sup> Sanna, *La "fantasia, che è l'occhio dell'ingegno"*, cit., p. 10: «*ingenium* definito come la capacità di unificare ciò che si mostra separato». Vico credits *Ingegno* with all kinds of practical and artistic *inventions*, including «the world of the sciences». In Vico's estimation, mankind reached its full potential through science: «[...] onde fu affatto *compiuta l'Umanità*», and he expresses great appreciation for the results (*gran frutto*) of applying Francis Bacon's scientific methodology (*Sperimentale Filosofia*) (498-499). Ferdinand Fellmann, on the other hand, questions Vico's fun-

The *phantasy* or *imagination* operative in creating imaginative universals, genera, or characters, is therefore a fundamental function of human cognitive psychology guided by intentionality, just as artistic, literary, or historiographic “portrayals” of «*uomini, o fatti, o cose*» are never devoid of intentionality (204, 933). Vico’s use of the metaphor of *ritratti* brings this functionality of *phantasy* to light, and is itself, in doing so, “phantastic” in the Aristotelian, as well as Vichian, sense. This interpretation of *fantasia* finds support in the distinction that Vico makes with another term for “imagination”, that is, the Italian *immaginazione* in its various (18<sup>th</sup>-century Italian) forms, such when he exclaims «that we can scarcely understand, still less imagine, how the first men thought who founded gentile humanity» (ch’ or’ appena intender si può, affatto immaginar no si può, come pensassero I Primi Uomini, que fondarono l’ Umanità Gentilesca) (378). While understanding something, and being able to imagine something are very different outcomes of an intellectual effort, they are presented by Vico as parts of a continuum, with imagination requiring the extraordinary effort to put oneself, mentally and psychologically, in a virtually completely unfamiliar situation<sup>132</sup>. But here, the agents or practitioners of this type of “imagination” are the modern students of early civilization, not the “first men of gentile humanity”. This is the same observation Vico made in *Idea of the Work*: «because with our civilized natures we cannot at all imagine and can only understand by great toil the poetic nature of these first men» (perocchè tal *natura poetica* di tai primi uomini in *queste nostre ingentilite nature* egli è affatto impossibile immaginare, e a gran pena ci è permesso d’intendere) (34). Here again, “imagination” has to do with the challenge, but not necessarily impossibility, of putting *ourselves*, mentally and psychologically, in the midst of an early civilization, rather than *their* powers of imagination. This is not contradicted by Vico’s expression of «*vasta Immaginativa di que’ primi uomini*» (378), since *Immaginativa* (“imaginativeness”), read contextually, refers just to the “images” (*immagine*) of Nature as a woman – expressly called false by Vico – held by some in the remote past, rather than imagination as a special faculty operative in and only in “the first men”<sup>133</sup>. The unreal, fictitious nature of deities topicalized by the “theological poets”, which act constituted “un *parlare fantastico*”, is confirmed by Vico by calling them «imagined to

damental understanding of Bacon’s “inductive method” and “methodological rationality of experiments”, on the basis of his (Fellmann’s) interpretation of Vico’s *imaginative universals* and *ingenuity* (*ingenium*), culminating in stating: «Die Deutung der experimentellen Naturerkenntnis im Sinne der Ingenium-Lehre vermag den Fortschritt der mathematisch-naturwissenschaftlichen Methode nicht zu begreifen». (Id., *Das Vico-Axiom*, cit., pp. 63, 183, 186-187, 189).

<sup>132</sup> Sanna, *Immaginazione*, cit., p. 61, speaks of «un modo specifico di pensare qualcosa che non c’è [...]».

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Sanna, *Immaginazione*, cit., p. 61: «L’immaginativa si offre così come un sapere specifico del linguaggio del mito, una conoscenza peculiare dell’infanzia dell’umanità»; see also Cacciatore, *Vico: narrazione storica e narrazione fantastica*, cit., pp. 55-57, and the key bibliography on the subject. Cf. translations of *Immaginativa* in *Vico, The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Bergin - Fisch, cit.: «imagination»; *New Science*, trans. Marsh, cit.: «imaginative powers»; *La Science nouvelle*, cit.: «faculté imaginative»; *Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft*, cit.: «Einbildungskraft»; *Ciencia nueva*, cit.: «imaginación».

be divine» (*immaginate divine*) (401). Vico attributes the “creation” of the characters of Achilles and Ulysses also to imaginativeness (si fingevano da *fortissime immaginative*) (809). Imaginativeness is thus a quality that may come into play in identifying, forming – and in hindsight understanding – certain equivalence classes brought into being by *fantasia*. However, in contrast to *fantasia* (as well as *ingegno* and *memoria*), *immaginare/immaginativa* – notwithstanding its occasional exercise, properly or improperly – plays no integral or indispensable role in Vico’s theoretical framework(s). In *Scienza nuova*, universals/genera are never called *universali/generi immaginative*<sup>134</sup>.

The problematic conflation of *fantasia/phantasy* and *immaginazione/imagination* can be seen in translations of an important passage in *Oration I*, stating about *phantasy* that it «imagined the gods (*finxit [...] gentium deos*); [...] imagined the heroes (*finxit heroas*)», and «immaginò le divinità [...], immaginò gli eroi», respectively<sup>135</sup>. However, the original verb (*fingere*) belongs to a different semantic and epistemological domain, as its appearance in another of Vico’s early works demonstrates<sup>136</sup>. In *De antiquissima*, Vico states: «*Phantasia certissima facultas est, quia dum ea utimur rerum imagines fingimus*»<sup>137</sup>. «*Rerum imagines fingimus*» has been translated as «ci rappresentiamo le immagini delle cose», and «we feign images of things», respectively<sup>138</sup>, which succinctly reiterates Aristotle’s cognitive concept of *phantasia* as intentionality. The examples that Vico presented in *Oration I* confirm this innate mental process: «I would just mention (*dixerim*) the land of Magellan, and you have already walked there. I may just have indicated (*protu-*

<sup>134</sup> Translation of *universali/generi fantastici* is a thorny problem, regardless of whether as *imaginative universals/genera*, or *universaux/genres fantastiques*, *phantastische Allgemeinbegriffe/Gattungsbegriffe*, *universales/géneros fantásticos* (*The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Bergin - Fisch, cit., *passim*; *La Science nouvelle*, cit., *passim*; *Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft*, cit., *passim*; *Ciencia nueva*, cit., *passim*). Alternative renderings of the adjective *fantastici* might be *representable*, *representative*, *representational*, or similar descriptors, used as connotations of Vico’s comparison with *ritratti*. The locution *universali fantastici*, therefore, is neither tautological nor oxymoronic, but draws attention to *intentionality* underlying all universals/genera; thereby it also turns universals/genera into subjects of inquiry and examination. Cf. Sanna, *Vico*, cit., p. 46, which characterizes *fantasia* as «componente innata della mente umana», but, together with ingenuity and memory, «[n]on dipendenti in alcun modo dalla volontà».

<sup>135</sup> Vico, *Oration I*, cit., Section 6, p. 42; Id., *Le Orazioni inaugurali. I-VI*, ed. G.G. Visconti, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1982, p. 83; see also G. Cacciatore, *Sulla genesi dei concetti vichiani di ingegno e fantasia*, «BCSV», XLVIII (2018), pp. 21-28, p. 22; M. Granatella, *Imaginative universals and human cognition in The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 190; for the Latin text, see *Portale Vico*, <[www.giambattistavico.it](http://www.giambattistavico.it)>, under *Opere, Orazioni inaugurali*. Vico employed the term *phantasia*, a transliteration of a Greek term, not *imaginatio*.

<sup>136</sup> In Vico, *Oration I*, cit., Section 6, p. 42, n. 16, it is acknowledged that *phantasia* is to be distinguished from *imaginatio*, translated as *imagination*; however, the passage does not contain the noun *imaginatio* or the corresponding verb.

<sup>137</sup> Vico, *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia*, Ch. VII, *De Facultate*, p. 112; Id., *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, trans. J. Taylor, intro. R. Miner, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010, p. 102.

<sup>138</sup> Vico, *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia*, cit., p. 113; Id., *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, cit., p. 103; Id., *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, trans., intro. L. M. Palmer, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 94.

lerim) “Novaya Zemlya,” and you have already arrived there. I would just name (*commemorarim*) an ocean and you have already crossed it by swimming<sup>139</sup>. *Mentioning, indicating, and/or naming* are expressions of *phantasia/fantasia*, as emphasized by the original word order, and more generally so is, in their inherent intentionality, bringing up something, raising – and thus “framing” – entities for engagement, implicitly involving issues of equivalences, that is, classification. Geography is no exception. Images, be they visual or only mental, are incidental rather than essential to this process.

In the same passage, Vico recognized the faculty of *phantasia* equally in both the early peoples and the modern, as his examples illustrate<sup>140</sup>. The three kinds of *imaginative universals* referred to earlier in this section, used with reference to (1) “divine” subjects, (2) “heroic” subjects, and (3) “human” subjects (34), thus have in common the same constitutive *phantasia*, the same cognitive psychology. At the same time, at another level of analysis, a distinction is drawn by Vico among universals, or equivalence classes: while adhering to the locution *generi/universali fantastici* in connection with classification of “gods” and “heroes”, Vico sets “human” matters apart from them by bestowing a different designation, *generi/universali intelligibili*. This gives effect terminologically to the stark contrasts he draws in Book IV between the first two “ages”, on the one hand, and the third “age” or stage of development of notions of equity, justice, jurisprudence, and civic governance, on the other hand. To elucidate what he means by intelligible universals/genera, Vico turned to «the most civilized times of Greece» (*ne’ tempi umanissimi della Grecia*) (934). However, if one expected Vico to draw on their epoch-making philosophical and epistemological breakthroughs in the (Western) history of ideas, the source he actually relied on might come as a surprise: the Greek New Comedy (34, 806-808, 934) and specifically, «the persons of the comedies» (*i Personaggi delle Commedie*) (34). These “persons” included the adolescent boy in love, the grouchy or amiable old man, the clever rascal-slave, the parasite, and other members of extended households, as well as members of different social classes, and relationships, such as father-son conflicts<sup>141</sup>. The source material mainly came from the domestic and/or private lives of the common people, rather than the public-civic affairs of their city-state, as was previously notable in the Old Comedy. Furthermore, what distinguishes the New Comedy from the Old Comedy is its representation of individuals as stereotypes, not as actual, specific individuals, as did the Old Comedy, but «with characters entirely fictitious» (*Personaggi tutti finti di getto*), as Vico said (806, 817). As a result, standard masks worn by the actors could serve as depictions of certain personality types and behaviors.

<sup>139</sup> Vico, *Oration I*, cit., p. 43.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43, notes 17, 18, go into detail of Vico’s references to Roman religion, on the one hand, and early modern geographic discoveries, which impressed Vico, on the other hand.

<sup>141</sup> These comments follow, and quote from, D. F. Sutton, *Ancient Comedy: The War of the Generations*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1993, pp. 39-53; see also Verene, *Vico’s New Science*, cit., pp. 177, 187, 200.

These character types were «readily identifiable representatives of distinct social classes, [...] immediately identifiable to the audience for what they were»<sup>142</sup>.

Thus, in developing and employing stereotypes and stock characters in its stage plays, the New Comedy was engaging in creating “equivalence classes” of social actors, and so exercising the faculty of *phantasia*. Vico, therefore, was historically and contextually accurate in his recourse to the New Comedy. This allows us then to interpret Vico’s *intelligible universals/genera* in light of the salient characteristics of the New Comedy, suggesting and justifying a twofold contrast with *imaginative universals/genera*: firstly, the *intelligible universals* dealt with a fundamentally different category of entities and subjects, namely, of the common people and their everyday lives, rather than other-worldly realms, or the lives of the privileged elites, both of which were fused ideologically<sup>143</sup>, and, secondly, these universals were transparent, easily recognized, and open to scrutiny, unlike the types of universals that were used in the legitimation of legal rights initially reserved for a privileged few only. So while all kinds of universals/genera/equivalence classes are the product of intentionality, of *phantasia/fantasia*, intelligible universals (simultaneously being *universali fantastici*) are noteworthy by virtue of being non-secretive, on the one hand, and focused on the interests of the common people, on the other hand, thus processually and substantially distinct from the imaginative universals typical of the earlier stages of “juridical” development.

This distinction is crucial for another reason. Vico’s exposition of intelligible universals is not an end in itself, however insightful it might be epistemologically, but rather a supporting framework for understanding how ideas and concepts of equity and justice came into being. First of all, Vico’s focus on *universals* has a direct bearing on perceiving *law* as applicable across the board rather than a collection of unrelated, special cases<sup>144</sup>. Secondly, *intelligible univer-*

<sup>142</sup> Sutton, *Ancient Comedy*, pp. 40, 42. While the Old Comedy is closely associated with Aristophanes, Menander (ca. 342-291 B.C.) was the most prolific playwright of New Comedy. (Ibid., p. 44)

<sup>143</sup> Vico made reference to «the age of heroes, who were considered sons of the gods, and of whom Hercules was believed to be the greatest» (53). A Renaissance Neapolitan example of this mindset may be seen in Palazzo Diomede Carafa (ca. 1466), Via San Biagio dei Librai, that prominently displays a statue of Hercules in a niche above the entrance portal (in addition, separated from it, to much smaller busts of Roman emperors Claudius and Vespasian atop the portal pediment), interpreted as (fictive) «memoria genealogica» (B. De Divitiis, *Le dimore del Rinascimento a Napoli, in Dimore signorili a Napoli. Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano e il mecenatismo aristocratico dal XVI al XX secolo*, ed. A. E. Denunzio - L. Di Mauro - G. Muto - S. Schütze - A. Zezza, Napoli, Intesa Sanpaolo, 2013, pp. 128-140, p. 137).

<sup>144</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Imaginative Universals and Historical Falsification: A Rejoinder to Professor Verene*, «NVS», 6 (1998), pp. 21-30, pp. 29-30, specifically relates “universals” to «Vico’s treatment of the universals of law», in the context of engaging Suarez’s philosophy of law. Cf. also Stone, *Vico’s Cultural History*, cit., p. 251: «The primary example of Vico’s use of imaginative universals [...] is contained in his analysis of *il diritto naturale* (natural right). *Il diritto naturale* were the first words of the first edition of *Scienza nuova*. (G. B. Vico, *The First New Science*, ed., trans. L. Pompa, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 20002, p. 9; Id., *La «Scienza nuova» nell’edizione del 1725*, in Id., *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 43).

sals represent and give voice to the rightful legal interests of the greater number of people. Vico illustrates this with the term «civil wisdom» (*Sapienza Civile*) (209), that is, “civil/civic” in the sense of the rights of the common people<sup>145</sup>. The introduction of the idea as well as the term of *civil/civic* brings about an intelligible universal in the Vichian sense. He contrasts it with the inability of the ancient Egyptians to articulate the idea of *Sapienza Civile/Civile Sapienza*, only vaguely adumbrating it in the imaginative universal of Hermes Trismegistus<sup>146</sup>. The figures of Achilles and Ulysses, also, as imaginative universals as already noted, convey something important beyond the personal qualities of bravery in fighting, and quick-witted intelligence, respectively. In the description of Achilles’ paradigmatic qualities, Vico includes «violence, the arrogation of all right to might» (*violenti, ch’arrogano tutta la ragione all forza*) (809). Achilles is therefore also representative of the time or stage when «right was reckoned by strength in the first times of the world» (*estimandosi il diritto della forza (conforme ne’ primi tempi del Mondo si truoverà)*) (490). The figure of Ulysses also transcends general cultural significance by way of «always preserving propriety of speech» (*salva sempre la proprietà delle parole*), thus in the ability to employ consummate rhetoric for the purpose of bending others to his will against their own best interests, «so that others may of themselves fall into error and may be the causes of their own deception». For Vico, these two figures accurately conveyed the reality of early civilizations in which rule by intimidation, and control over public dissemination of information, were prevalent<sup>147</sup>. The «common sense of an entire nation» (*senso comune di tutta una nazione*), their innate sense of justice, nonetheless, tolerated the elites’ prerogatives.

Vico’s higher level purpose in connection with imaginative/intelligible universals is apparent from the way he concluded their discussion in *Idea of the Work*, which was written *post factum* as a helpful summary of *Scienza nuova* (34-35). After referring to the three so-called “languages” prevalent in times of the “gods”, “heroes”, and “human things”, Vico concludes the section by classifying them under the singular term of «the language (la *Lingua*) spoken by the ideal eternal history (*Storia Ideal’ Eterna*) traversed in time by the histories of the nations». Even without taking into account the meaning of *ideal eternal history*, it

<sup>145</sup> While it would take a separate excursus to engage Vico’s term *civile*, especially in the locution *mondo civile*, here it is interpreted, not as “civilization” as society, culture, and way of life overall, but more strictly as the *civic* realm, extent, and practice of legal rights and status of people (qua *citizens*) of a given society, subsumed under *il Giusto*; it is thus even more narrowly defined than *politics* in general. Cf. J. Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico’s “New Science”*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 80-81.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Verene, *Vico’s Science of Imagination*, cit., pp. 66, 68, defining *intelligible universals* strictly in terms of «the logical concepts of genus and species», and *imaginative universals* as «a theory of the image and not of the concepts in any traditional sense». Our interpretation differs radically from this view insofar as it considers Vico’s elucidation of the cognitive functions of universals/genera as primarily supportive of, and therefore secondary to, Vico’s fundamental concern(s) with issues of justice, law, and jurisprudence throughout history. *Vico’s Science of Imagination*, ch. 3, *Imaginative Universals*, pp. 65-95, makes to reference to these matters.

<sup>147</sup> Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, cit., pp. 238-239, 677.

is clear that no literal language is meant<sup>148</sup>, but the concepts developed by Vico himself for the kind of history he had in mind, built with the aid of a heuristic scaffolding of three fundamental types and/or stages of societies on the way to becoming fully *civile*, that is, not merely “civilized” in a general sense, but endowed with a measure of equity and justice beyond the elites. These concepts are interrelated, so they form a “language”, a network of connected ideas, and therefore an *ideology*. The ideology that is at the center of Vico’s view of the ideal eternal history is «the natural law of nations and hence [...] every particular jurisprudence» (*Diritto Natural delle Genti, e quindi [...] ogni Giurisprudenza particolare*) (35). That is why Vico is interested primarily in imaginative universals as they have a bearing on this core topic<sup>149</sup>.

While the title of this study of *Scienza nuova*, and the key reference to § 1045, implicitly promised equal importance or attention to *mind*, *body*, and *language*, it is obvious from the foregoing discussion that *language* has been foregrounded, in its examination of language as ideology, of the theological poets, as well as of the imaginative universals, with only incidental mentions of matters of the mind and body. Thus, this lacuna remains to be filled before concluding this essay with (re)reading § 1045 in light of the interpretation of these three concepts that has been proposed here. As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the basic premise is that Vico’s use of the *mind-body* terminology is metaphorical rather than beholden to (Western) philosophical anthropology.

#### 8. *Mind-Body in Scienza nuova*

Study of Vico’s use of mind-body language can be seen as not only metaphorical but also as context-dependent. This means that the connotations vary substantially; at the same time, however, they relate in their own ways to the key thematic development(s) of *Scienza nuova*<sup>150</sup>. This is the case in *Idea of the Work*

<sup>148</sup> Marcus, *Vico and Plato*, cit., p. 157 defines it formally as «stages of development that all nations undergo which make this temporal progression a universal one»; Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, cit., pp. 131-132, presents several interpretative options, but also highlights the notion of «a certain universal pattern». Other studies of the *ideal eternal history* tend to agree on these basic points, so we will forego a bibliography, except for Fellmann, *Das Vico-Axiom*, cit., pp. 134, 149, who interprets it as «Geistesgeschichte» and «Entwicklung des objektiven Geistes».

<sup>149</sup> C. Muscelli, *Il segno di Giove. Essere, storia e linguaggio nella Scienza nuova di Vico*, «MLN», 120 (2005), pp. 93-110, p. 100: «I risultati di questo atteggiamento umano sono i caratteri universali fantastici, primi significati di natura giuridica, istituzioni, elementi regolativi dell’etica umana. Sicché la teoria (sulle origini) del linguaggio di Vico è contemporaneamente una teoria del diritto».

<sup>150</sup> According to G. Cacciatore, *Le facoltà della mente “rintuzzata dentro il corpo”*, cit., p. 93, «il vero oggetto della *Scienza nuova* resta pur sempre il mondo storico e il processo della sua civilizzazione». As stated earlier, we are taking a more restricted and specialized view of Vico’s subject matter. Cacciatore argues, and presents, a “non-reductionist”, as well as metaphorical, interpretation of the mind-body relationship in Vico; of particular relevance to our study is Cacciatore’s reference to «ordine civile delle cose e i principi giuridico-politici dell’autorità». (Ibid., pp. 93, 105). Cf. also G. Patella, *Il corpo si dice in molti modi. La sapienza corporea di G. Vico*, «ISPF-Lab», I (2005), pp. 128-139, p. 137, who considers the body described in *Scienza nuova* «un continuum fluido di interno ed esterno» (Italics original); M. Sanna, *Nature discordi e corpi*



where Vico makes the statement: «This plan of commonwealths (*Repubbliche*) is founded on [...] the mind (*la Mente*) and the body (*l'Corpo*) of the men who compose it. For men consist of these two parts, one of which is noble and should therefore command, and the other of which is base and should serve. [...] in commonwealths, those who use their minds should command and those who use their bodies should obey» (18). Vico leaves no uncertainty about who he specifically meant by *Mente* and *Corpo*: the early cities comprised «two communities, one of the nobles (*Nobili*), to command, the other of the plebs (*plebei*), to obey. Of these two parts is composed the entire polity or law or civil governments» (25). In Book II, he describes the same reality from another point of view: «This sovereign civil person (*Sovrana Civil Persona*) was formed of mind (*mente*) and body (*corpo*). The mind was an order of wise men [...] without an order of wise men states may present the appearance of commonwealths, but are so many dead and soulless bodies. There was also the body, formed of the head and lesser members. Hence [...] some men must employ their minds in the tasks of civil wisdom, and others their bodies in the arts and crafts that are needed in peace as well as in war. [...] the mind should always command and the body should have perpetually to obey» (630). In these contexts, mind and body have no anthropological, psychological, or ethico-social dimensions but serve as proxies for the (underdeveloped) civic realm of polities under ruling elites<sup>151</sup>, based on a legitimating ideology<sup>152</sup>. And *body* here carries no connotation(s) of the senses contrasted with the intellect or power of reflection<sup>153</sup>.

Vico uses the expressions *mental language* (*Lingua Mentale*), *mental dictionary* (*Dizionario Mentale*), *mental vocabulary* (*vocabolario Mentale*), and *modifications of our mind* (*modificazioni della nostra medesima Mente Umana*) (145, 161, 162, 331, 355). Reading the contexts/co-texts of these expressions serves to demarcate the domain of *mental/mind*: it is «the natural law of nations» (*Diritto natural delle Gentì*), «human social life» (*umana vita socievole*), «the state of the families and of the first commonwealths» (*Stato delle Famiglie, e delle Prime Repubbliche*), «the world of civil society» (*questo Mondo Civile*), «human social things» (*cose umane socievole*). Thus, preliminarily, the context is not philosophical mind-body dualism, but the realm of “civic” rights and relations. Within this thematic complex, Vico “pinpoints” the *mind* as consisting in «the underlying agreements which, despite variations of detail, obtain among all in respect to this law» (*l'Unità sostanziali di cotal Diritto, nelle quali con diverse modificazioni tutte convengono*) (145). It is an idiosyncratic use of the term *mind*; it radically dif-

*fantastici*, «ISPF-Lab», II, 1 (2005), pp. 182-195, with respect to mind and body in connection with «la nascita di una società civile».

<sup>151</sup> Cf. A. Stile, *Le corps endormi*, «ISPF-Lab», II, 1 (2005), pp. 306-322, p. 321.

<sup>152</sup> For an early modern case of metaphorical “body” language to represent political systems or ideologies, see M. Cambi, *Corpi ermafroditi e corpi politici*, «ISPF-Lab», II, 1 (2005), pp. 195-225.

<sup>153</sup> Despite the references to, and discussions of, *mind* and *body/senses* throughout *Scienza nuova*, *Idea of the Work* does not contain any substantive discussion, apart from a brief reference to «the crude minds (*menti*) of the first founders of the gentile nations, all robust sense (*sensi*) and vast imaginations (*fantasie*)» (6). If this is read as the sum and substance of the material on mind and body in the tome, it would significantly circumscribe the space of interpretations.

fers from the way Vico used it in the passages referred to in the preceding paragraph, except, importantly, sharing the same context and *idée fixe* of the *mondo civile*. The characteristic that Vico highlights as key to the *mind* is «the underlying agreements» (*l'Unità sostanziale*) (see also 161, 355, 445), and such “underlying” commonality concerns “natural law”.

Vico, therefore, appropriates the term *mind* to stand for fundamental notions held in common by all people with respect to equity, justice, and law; this concept of *mind* is needed since there is a multiplicity of ways in which human societies deal with these issues in real life: «the same in substance as felt by all nations but diversely expressed in language according to their diverse manifestations» (sentite le stesse in sostanza da tutte le Nazioni, e per le diverse modificazioni spiegate con lingue diversamente) (355). However, this problem is addressed by a *mental dictionary/mental vocabulary* (*Dizionario Mentale/vocabolario Mentale*). Actually, it might be compared, metaphorically, to a mental *thesaurus* since it relates seemingly separate and different notions to common overarching principles<sup>154</sup>. Part and parcel of these common constitutive concepts is the legitimation and exercise of *authority* over the application and enforcement of rights and law<sup>155</sup>. That is why the autocratic “fathers”, in their positions as heads of clans, in the early polities are included by Vico in the *mental dictionary*, although they may be called by many different names («the fathers of families, considered from fifteen different points of view in the state of the families and of the first commonwealths» (445)<sup>156</sup>.

Vico's *mental dictionary* has to be seen also in relation and in contrast to another “dictionary”, that is, Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697). In fact, it is a confrontation with the latter, as Gianfranco Cantelli has elucidated<sup>157</sup>. The most important point of contention was Bayle's attack on religion,

<sup>154</sup> G. Cacciatore, *Die Hermeneutik Vicos zwischen Philosophie und Philologie*, in *Die Hermeneutik im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, cit., pp. 311-330, p. 319: «Deshalb muß die gemeinsame geistige Sprache vor allem eine gleiche politische und soziale Funktion haben». Cf. Muscelli, *Il segno di Giove*, cit., pp. 93-110, p. 100, who interprets “mental” simply as “non-verbal”. The opposite interpretative pole might be identified with Fellmann, *Vicos Theorem der Gleichursprünglichkeit von Theorie und Praxis und die dogmatische Denkform*, cit., p. 271, who sees in Vico's *mental dictionary* «die apriorische Erkenntnis des geschichtlichen Gesamtverlaufs», and similarly with Apel, *Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante bis Vico*, cit., p. 377, equating it with «ein transzendental-hermeneutisches Apriori». See Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, cit., pp. 72-73.

<sup>155</sup> Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., p. 27.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Trabandt, *La science de la langue que parle l'histoire idéale éternelle*, cit., §§ 33-38. Vico has been shown to have his own *intellectual lexicon*, for which see F. Bruni, *Dal bene comune all'utilità comune. Nuove osservazioni sulla terminologia intellettuale della Scienza nuova*, I, «Lingua e Stile», L, 1, (2015), pp. 63-90; II, «Lingua e Stile», L, 2, (2015), pp. 225-245. For an anachronistic, modern day example, see M. De Palo - S. Gensini, *Continuità e rinnovamento degli studi linguistici: il contributo di Tullio De Mauro*, in *Saussure e la Scuola linguistica romana. Da Antonino Pagliaro a Tullio De Mauro*, cit., pp. 97-140, pp. 102, 127, referring to *classe, democrazia, artista, and arte*, as part of the «vocabolario intellettuale delle nostre lingue».

<sup>157</sup> G. Cantelli, *Vico e Bayle. Premesse per un confronto*, Napoli, Guida, 1971; Cantelli's points of comparison are further elucidated and commented in G. Severino, *Principi e modificazioni della mente in Vico*, Genova, Il Melangolo, 1981.

ancient and modern<sup>158</sup>. Already as early as in the 1725 edition of *Scienza nuova*, in the first sentence of Book I, Vico took aim at Bayle, saying, «there has never been a nation of atheists in the world», reiterated in 1744 (179, 198, 502, 1039, 1043, 1110). Although Bayle's *Dictionnaire* was a “dictionary”, literally, due to its format and alphabetical arrangement, the presumptively authoritative dictionary/encyclopedia genre was appropriated to promulgate *ideas*, not just well-organized factual information, as already alluded to in the adjective *critique*; from this standpoint, Bayle's work constituted a *mental* dictionary. Vico could therefore justifiably classify the body of ideas that he identified in the history of law and jurisprudence<sup>159</sup>, as a *dictionary*, and thus signal his polemical stance toward Bayle with equal authoritativeness<sup>160</sup>.

Vico's concept and expression of *the modifications of our human mind* is closely related to the *mental language/dictionary* just referred to, when the underlying common domain of discourse, *il mondo civile*, is kept at the fore: «a truth beyond all questions: that the world of civil society (*Mondo Civile*) has certainly been made by men, and that its principles [are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind]» (331)<sup>161</sup>. The demarcation of *the modifications of our own human mind* to the realm of issues of equity, rights, and law is crucial<sup>162</sup>; it is related only tangentially to changing basic human desires, attitudes, and interests, or development of a more highly “rational” approach to matters<sup>163</sup>. In the context of our thesis, the modifications of the mind, of ideas

<sup>158</sup> A. McKenna, *Pierre Bayle historien de la philosophie: Un sondage*, «Lexicon Philosophicum», 5 (2017), pp. 55-59, p. 55: «In other words [...] to attack rationalist theology from a variety of angles: he thus seeks to demonstrate that Christian faith is irremediably irrational». Cf. Severino, *Principi e modificazioni della mente in Vico*, cit., pp. 36-42.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Verene, *Vico's New Science*, cit., p. 256, who interprets the *mental dictionary/language* spoken of by Vico as «that of human nature itself».

<sup>160</sup> In his letter of 12 January 1729 to Francesco Saverio Estevan, Vico was critical of «Dizionarij di Scienze», however not of the dictionary genre itself, rather due to their being based on Cartesianism which postulates the mathematization of every kind of phenomena, including the human social world, «che metodi così fatti trasportati dalle matematiche all'altre scienze». See *Portale Vico*, <www.giambattistavico.it>, under *Opere, Epistole*, Letter 57. Thus, Vico unlikely would have objected to glossaries, such as found in Fisch, *Introduction*, cit., pp. XX-XLV; Vico, *The First New Science*, cit., pp. LVII-LXIV; Verene, *Vico's New Science*, cit., pp. 251-270; Vitale, *L'«autodidascalò» scrittore*, cit., pp. 191-258. For further historical background on early modern dictionaries/encyclopedias, see A. Battistini, *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, «NVS», 12 (1994), pp. 16-32; C. Vasoli, *L'enciclopedismo del Seicento*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2005; J. Loveland, *Encyclopaedias and Genre, 1670-1750*, «Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies», 36, 2 (2013), pp. 159-175.

<sup>161</sup> It has been shown that Vico borrowed the term *modifications* from Malebranche (A. Corsano, *Giambattista Vico*, Bari, Laterza, 1956, pp. 219-220; G. Giordano, *Il rapporto circolare fra mente e realtà: Vico, Husserl, von Foerster, Morin*, «Logos», 9 (2014), pp. 111-126, p. 71; also see the bibliography in G. Cerchiai, *L'«acerrimus Malebrancius». Vico, il De antiquissima Itolorum sapientia e Malebranche*, «ISPF-Lab», XIV (2017), pp. 1-14, p. 3, n. 7).

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Giordano, *Il rapporto circolare fra mente e realtà*, cit., p. 114, who includes in the *mondo civile* all of the following: «le forme di organizzazione sociale e politica, l'arte, la letteratura, la filosofia, le diverse espressioni della cultura».

<sup>163</sup> Vico, *The First New Science*, cit., *Glossary*, p. LXI; Giordano, *Il rapporto circolare fra mente e realtà*, cit., p. 71: «La serie delle modificazioni è espressa, meglio che da ogni altra, dalla

held by people comprising both elites and commoners, that Vico identified had to do with the changing ideologies over time<sup>164</sup>. As noted earlier, in necessarily oversimplified form, “civic” ideologies and “language” may have started in terms of *fear and terror*, and subsequently changed into “language” of *protection and preservation*; finally, the ideas of *liberty and equity* were articulated<sup>165</sup>.

Although prolix, the foregoing exposition was necessary as prolegomena to reflection on the contextual meaning of *mind*, *body*, and *language* in § 1045.

### 9. Conclusion

By beginning with the words «To sum up» (In somma), § 1045 signals its direct relationship with the preceding *Corollary* section (1027-1044), divided in three subsections, which bear repeating: (1) *The Ancient Roman Law was a Serious Poem, and the Ancient Jurisprudence a Severe Kind of Poetry* (1027-1037); (2) *The First Outlines of Legal Metaphysics in the Rough* (1038-1039, 1044); and (3) *Among the Greeks, Philosophy was Born of the Laws* (1040-1043). This abstract-like subheading emphatically identifies the subject matter as *law* and *jurisprudence*.

In § 1045, Vico first established the three-part sequence of *mind-language-body*, but then reversed the order chiasmatically to *body-language-mind*<sup>166</sup>. The preceding main text of the *Corollary* will be read in order to see whether it is developed along these lines, as well essentially in the same order<sup>167</sup>.

In the first subsection, the *body* plays a key role, and Vico outlines two ways in which it does so, first, “literally”, and secondly, symbolically. In the first instance, it is represented *pars pro toto* by the *hand*, and the hand, as Vico explains, means the use of «real force» (*vera forza*), adding that «[a]mong all nations the hand signified power (*potestà*)» (1027, 1029)<sup>168</sup>. Vico also identifies the realm of

successione di senso, fantasia e ragione»; similarly A. M. Damiani, *Hermenéutica y metafísica en la Ciencia Nuova*, «CSV», 5/6 (1995-1996), pp. 51-65, p. 56; Id., *Orden civil y orden metafísico en la Ciencia Nuova*, «CSV», 11-12 (1999-2000), pp. 97-105, p. 102.

<sup>164</sup> Similarly, J. J. Valone, *Vico's Human Science: The Paradox of Consciousness and Access to the Social*, «The Southern Journal of Philosophy», 18, 3 (Fall 1980), pp. 371-392, p. 380: «The best approach, then to “mind” is not by introspection but through institutions. What I think Vico means by studying the modifications of “our own mind” is to study the institutional character and origin of one’s meanings, values, activities, and unintended consequences».

<sup>165</sup> For a case of ideological developments in early civilizations, see Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol*, cit., p. 262, in the Levant: «The overly familial model of political relations in terms of “fathers,” “sons,” and “brothers” seems to have gone out of favor in the Iron Age. [...] Instead, the master-servant terminology is used. That is still household-based terminology, [...] but the language of political subordination and alliance nonetheless appears to have become less vividly personal».

<sup>166</sup> On Vico’s use of chiasmus, see Vitale, *L’«autodidascalò» scrittore*, cit., pp. 30, 42, 47.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 168-181.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Brienza, *Vico and the Social Theory of Law*, cit. pp. 270-271: «Social power prior to the Twelve Tables, was grounded in the almost arbitrary authority of the patrician. If a patrician maimed or killed a plebeian there was no way to bring him to trial and, therefore, no possibility of compensation or punishment»; R. W. Schmidt, *Die Geschichtsphilosophie G. B. Vicos*, pref. O. Marquardt, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1982, p. 38, refers to «harte[s] Gewaltrecht».

application of such “corporeal” force, namely, «mancipations» (*Mancipazioni*), which are the transfer of a good in which one has absolute ownership rights<sup>169</sup>. These types of rights are the recurring topic of this section, including the next to last paragraph that concerns itself with «valid titles for the conveyance or property» (*valevoli titoli a trasferir' il dominio*) (1044). Another kind of “corporeal” agency is *usucapione* which is the acquisition of property by way of its possession for a period of time only (1028, 1032, 1039)<sup>170</sup>. The *body* originally was implicated because this kind of «[p]ossession was originally exercised by continuous physical tenure (*continuo ingombramento de' corpi*) of the thing possessed» (1028, 1032). People also took the law in their own hands, «carried out with real force (such were the first duels or private wars in the world)» (1029), which Vico associates to «the savagery of the times» (1030). Other examples cited by Vico for the preeminence of the *body* in setting forth law, specifically with respect to property rights, is the fable of «the chain whereby Jove had bound the giants to the first unoccupied lands» (1030), and the «imagined corporeal forms» (*forme corporee*), including *Hereditas*, or Inheritance, as goddess of hereditary property (1035).

Vico also refers to another way in which the *body* made an appearance in the development of a legal system: the use of the hands, in ancient nations, not as a physical force, but only symbolically, in the ceremony of the laying of the hands on the heads of those elected to power. Among the Greeks, those who had been formally appointed to positions of power could exercise their power simply by raising their hands in voting. And Vico added: «Such ceremonial gestures are proper to mute times» (1027, 1030). Other symbolic objects used to support claims to special status, or inherited land, were the skins of wild animals, and lumps or clods of dirt from a farm, respectively. As explained earlier, this “muteness” consisted of the absence of an understanding and articulation of fundamental concepts and principles of equity and equitable application of law<sup>171</sup>. Nevertheless, at the same time, they did not lack an innate sense of equity/justice, however inchoate: «Thus, if they did not understand, they at least sensed in a rough way that rights were indivisible» (1035).

It is in this context that Vico introduces the poets (*poeti*). Their great achievement consisted in transforming the hitherto private exercise of force into «the public force called civil sovereignty» (*forza pubblica, che si dice Imperio Civile*) (1030). These *poets* actually were none other than the first peoples, the people of the early civilizations. They could be called *poets* by Vico in an Aristotelian sense, because «the solemn civil conveyance» they created, for example for mancipation, was an “imitation” of «the real forces that they had previously

<sup>169</sup> Vitale, *L'«antodidascal» scrittore*, cit., p. 256.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>171</sup> Formigari, *Ermeneutica giuridica e teoria della lingua in G. B. Vico*, cit., p. 69, also uses the term metaphorically, but takes a more restricted approach to “muteness”, applying it at a different phenomenological level: «Il mutismo civile è lo stato di minorità che esclude dal possesso della terra, dalla perpetuità del nome, che inabilita a pronunciare le formule sacre nei riti e le formule giuridiche negli atti pubblici».

employed to preserve their rights and institutions» (diritti, e ragioni), represented by the handing over of a *symbolic* knot. This symbolic knot itself was an “imitation”, namely, of «the chain whereby Jove had bound the giants to the first unoccupied lands» (1030). Clearly, “imitation” takes on a complex and high-level abstract sense here, guided by intentionality, rather than by causality as when something is merely copied<sup>172</sup>. At the same time, Vico noted: «The founders of Roman law, at a time when they could not understand intelligible universals, fashioned imaginative universals» (1033). As noted earlier, *intelligible* universals are generated by *fantasia* as much as *imaginative* universals, but *intelligible* universals are equivalence classes constructed in and from the (social and civic) world of people in general, whereas *imaginative* universals – in this polarized context – use as their source domains the worlds of deities and self-aggrandizing “heroes” as a way of legitimating the unequal distribution of rights and privileges. The primary venue for imaginative universals is the Roman forum, and the Athenian agora or marketplace (*piazza*; *piazza d’Atene*) (1033, 1043)<sup>173</sup>, since «[i]t is in the Athenian agora or marketplace and in the Roman forum that laws originate»<sup>174</sup>. These first framers (“poets”) of law were able to create legal “fictions”, «*jura imaginaria*, rights invented by imagination», and some of these legal constructs dealt with “bodies”, such as «those not yet born as already born, the living as dead, and the dead as still living in their estates pending acceptance [as legacies]» (1036).

This subsection also contains information about the second subject, “language”, and what Vico meant by it in the context. The context that is in view by Vico is «to make certain of one another’s wills in contracts» (1030). “Language” was made into a critical element of the transaction, as «they determined that agreements [...] should be clothed with solemn words in which certain and precise stipulations were conceived». This is an example of a more fundamental characteristic of Roman law, not shared by Athenian law<sup>175</sup>. Roman law

<sup>172</sup> Vico’s comment that «children [...] have a powerful faculty of imitating the truth in matters within their capacity» (1032, also 215), also needs to be read in this sense. Jean Piaget recognized in developmental psychology the presence and role of “reflective abstraction” (J. Renn, *Learning from Kushim About the Origins of Writing and Farming*, in *Culture and Cognition. Essays in Honor of Peter Damerow*, ed. J. Renn - M. Schemmel, Berlin, Edition Open Access, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, <www.edition-open-access.de>, 2019, pp. 11-27, p. 20). For an argument against a parallelism of ontogenesis and historiogenesis, see K. Bödeker, *Können Entwicklungspsychologie und Wissenschaftsgeschichte voneinander lernen?*, in *Culture and Cognition. Essays in Honor of Peter Damerow*, cit., pp. 123-130.

<sup>173</sup> In speaking of the *piazza*, Vico refers to *names, family coats-of-arms, emblem of a house (nomi; Insegne delle Famiglie; Insegna di casa)*. Since this does not fit the Athenian agora setting, there may be in the background the *piazza/e* of Renaissance and early modern Naples where *piazze* were the aristocratic factions and their power bases in different districts (*seggio/i*) of the city (Naddeo, *Vico and Naples*, cit., p. 45; G. Galasso, *Napoli ai tempi del Vico*, in *Giambattista Vico nel terzo centenario della nascita*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1971, pp. 13-35, pp. 23-24).

<sup>174</sup> Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 170.

<sup>175</sup> M. Gagarin, *Hyperides’s against Athenogenes and the Athenian Law on Agreements*, in *Ancient Greek Law in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. P. Perlman, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2018, pp. 35-53, p. 36, states: «[...] Athenian law is not Roman law, and [...] unlike Roman law, it does

developed and relied on «the formulae in which the laws were expressed, because of their strict measures of such and so many words – admitting neither addition, subtraction, nor alteration» (1036). *Formulas* in Roman law did not mean general, universal maxims, or formulaic literary phrases, but specifically legal terminology, the meaning of which came to be developed and settled over time<sup>176</sup>. Vico illustrates the key role of «precise and proper words» (*proprie, e precise parole*) with «contracts which are valid titles for the conveyance of property» (1044).

As discussed earlier, Vico was able to use the term *language* very differently in the context of *mute, epistolary, and articulate* states of affairs. Most importantly, rather than merely being instances of polysemy, they share a common subject matter, jurisprudence. Essentially, this is all that Vico has to say about *language* in this *Corollary*, apart from further examples (1030, 1031, 1036), in contrast to his far lengthier expositions on *body*, as already discussed, and on *mind*, as follows. His thoughts on the place of the “mind” in the development of the principles and practice of equity and justice are elucidated in the subsections *The First Outlines of Legal Metaphysics in the Rough* (1038-1039, 1044), and *Among the Greeks, Philosophy was Born of the Laws* (1040-1043).

The term *metaphysics* is apt for this subsection: the topic is not the principle of equity and justice itself, or any positive law; rather, it considers law from a higher, philosophical vantage that is not part of law itself. This vantage consists of two conceptual, non-legal categories, *indivisibility* and *eternity*. In terms of *indivisibility*, Vico explains, rights (*diritti*) as such are not tied to or dependent on something concrete (*nudi di corpolenza*), as though subject to being broken into parts, destroying their integrity. Rights are in fact the opposite of being “corporeal” in this sense, and thus can be considered “spiritual” (*diritti modi di sostanza spirituale*). If *indivisibility* denotes a synchronic dimension of rights, the attribute of *eternity* indicates their diachronic nature, «[f]or time cannot give a beginning or put an end to the eternal» (perchè ‘l tempo non può cominciare, nè finire l’eterno) (1039). This is illustrated by comparison with specific ownership rights like *usucapion* and *prescription* (*usucapioni, e prescrizioni*), and the resulting *usufruct*, which are in force only for a limited period of time. The concept itself of own-

not usually define offenses in great detail or elaborate the precise conditions required for enforcement of a law». Vico makes the interesting comment about «ancient Roman law, which those who compare it with Attic law confess did not come from Athens to Rome» (1031).

<sup>176</sup> Schaeffer, *Giambattista Vico on Natural Law*, cit., pp. 29-31: «Vico saw in the formulas a gradually developing body of legal language that came to express principles of equity that emerged after decades of practical experience. In Roman legal practice, certain formulas emerged as the most acute and most useful. [...] The continual development of formulas required meticulous attention to language. [...] *formulas* did create a vocabulary for stating future cases, and the meaning of the formula depended upon the meanings of its terms; these meanings were the products of a history of use». Cf. Naddeo, *Vico and Naples*, cit., p. 262, n. 262, on how «the patriciate perpetuated [the secrecy and rigor of patrician jurisprudence] in the form of arcane legal formulae for the strict application of the published law [the Twelve Tables]». For legal codes in other early civilizations, see Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, cit., pp. 231-239.

ership rights, however, is different: «rights exist eternally in the understanding as an idea»<sup>177</sup> (*i diritti eterni nel lor' intelletto, o sia nella lor' idea*). In the introduction to the subsection, Vico says that «the intellect was brought into play in the great assemblies, and universal legal concepts abstracted by the intellect were [...] said to have their being in the understanding of the law» (1038). Thus, it is apparent that Vico is thinking of the *mind* here as the principles governing law and rights at a meta-level.

Finally, Vico goes so far as claiming that «the rights can come to men only from God». He also – boldly – asserts that «all the countless various rights [...] in the world, are diverse modifications of the power of the first man [...] and of the ownership which he held over the whole earth». Thus, while elucidating the development of certain meta-attributes of law (*Legal Metaphysics*), Vico does not lose sight of his proximate area of juridical concern and interest, rights of ownership<sup>178</sup>. Just as *body* and *language* are given non-anthropological meanings, by being viewed strictly in terms of the history of law, analogously *mind* becomes a codeword for further developments in the understanding of legitimate and universal rights. The practice of “producing” (*poiêtikos*; ‘poets’, which is Greek for ‘makers’) (376) *universals*, first *imaginative* and later *intelligible*, from the very beginning of early civilizations laid the basis for «universal legal concepts abstracted by the intellect» (*le ragioni astratte dall'intelletto ed universali*) (1038).

Next, Vico, in the third subsection (1040-1043), addresses the question of whether this highest achievement in the philosophy of law was to be credited to the great Greek philosophers. His answer is a resounding *No*, showing this not to be the case either for Socrates, or Plato, or Aristotle. In each case, the «idea of an equal utility common to all» was first articulated in the public assemblies of the Athenian citizens, out of which these great minds subsequently derived their «highest intelligible ideas». Vico more specifically describes how Aristotle was inspired in his view of «justice as the queen of virtues» by observing the sovereign civil power (*Civil potestà Sovrana*), the senate, the armies, festivals, the public treasuries, and the forum (1042)<sup>179</sup>. Vico calls this account a «history of philosophy told philosophically» (*Storia della Filosofia narrata filosoficamente*) (1043). It was not the traditional approach to the history of philosophy by way of elucidating, and comparing, the ideas of philosophers synchronically and/or diachronically. Philosophy makes the claim and effort to get at the fundamental nature of phenomena, and to represent the highest possible, supreme, level of analysis and discourse. Thus, Vico did not stop at engaging these paramount thinkers on their own terms, but subjected their thought to assessment at a more fundamental, and at the same time, transcending level. In other parts of *Scienza nuova*, he used the same approach with respect to early modern thinkers. In the case of Spinoza, for example, he judged his philosophy

<sup>177</sup> *New Science*, trans. Marsh, cit.

<sup>178</sup> By referring to «divers modifications» of property rights over time, rights shared by all men by virtue of descent from «the first man», Vico relativizes the prevailing aristocratic ethos of *il bisogno di eternità*, preserving patrimonies “forever”. Cf. Visceglia, *Il bisogno di eternità*, cit.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 172-173.



to be a belief in fate (1109). Spinoza considered his own philosophy to be as the ultimate truth about reality, but Vico – philosophically – assessed it at an even higher level of ontology. In this respect, *Scienza nuova* is *Enlightenment* enlightened.

These are then the *body*, *language*, and *mind* that are “summed up” in § 1045: «the certitude of law (*Giusto*) began in mute times with the body (*corpo*). [...] it passed to certain ideas or verbal formulae (*formole di parole*). [...] it reached its end in the truth of ideas concerning justice (*idee d'intorno al Giusto*)». However, not to be overlooked is the phrase that immediately follows, «determined by reason from the detailed circumstances of the facts» (determinate con la *Ragione* dall'*ultime circostanze de' fatti*). This is reminiscent of how the Neapolitan high court, the *Sacro Regio Consiglio*, purported to proceed according to their motto of *de plano, sola facti veritate inspecta*, that is, «guided by the general principle of ascertaining the truth solely on the basis of an analysis of the facts». This was the type of jurisprudence that Vico advocated<sup>180</sup>. Vico further draws the distinction with the narrow, punctilious use of the legal code (*formole di parole*) by calling his argued approach to jurisprudence, by comparison, «a formula devoid of any particular form» (una *Formola informe d'ogni forma particolare*). The seemingly oxymoronic *Formola informe* links to, appropriates, and co-opts narrow applications of law. The advance this represents in the practice and exercise of law and justice in the proper comprehensive sense (il *Giusto*) is evident in the ability to deal with the “facts” in the case. Under a strict reading of the code, purportedly representing “clear and distinct” statements of law, much of the full body of “facts” bearing on the case will not be recognized as relevant; contrary to the Cartesian postulate, the body of facts remains “opaque” (*i corpi opachi de' Fatti*), murky, and fragmentary. On the other hand, jurisprudential guidance by true principles of justice, – *Formole informi* arguably lacking clarity and precision – will result in due consideration of every detail, no matter how small. In contrast with viewing an opaque object, it is like seeing every fine detail on a surface under a bright light (ch' a guise di *luce di sè informa* in tutte le ultime minutissime parti della lor *superficie*)<sup>181</sup>.

Grammatically, the way that § 1045 is written, and translated, suggests *prima facie* a form of antecedent/protasis and consequence/apodosis; in other words, that the ontogenesis of the sphere of law and justice is an anthropological epiphenomenon, due to, or closely correlated to the fact that humans can be reduced literally to mind, body, and language. This study, however, would suggest the reverse direction of syllogism. Throughout *Scienza nuova*, including this *Corollary*, the subject at its core is the history of the search and struggle for il *Giusto*; other subjects are relative, and supportive. This is true in the case for *mind*, *body*, and *language*, also. Rather than understanding § 1045 as first suggested, it needs to be read in terms of a *composition* of *mappings* from *domains* to *co-domains*, analogously to the thought process by which the Scythian king

<sup>180</sup> Naddeo, *Vico and Naples*, cit., p. 85.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 181. For other contexts in which Vico co-opts the Cartesian precept of “clear and distinct” ideas, see §§ 344, 367, 444, and 502.

Idanthysus arrived at five «real words» (*parole reali*) to symbolize his right to self-defense and his realm. *Mind*, *body*, and *language* in *Scienza nuova*, therefore, are not the starting points, but the resultant symbolic, metaphorical representations of key processes in the history of legal systems, and *imaginative universals* in their own right.



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– **Mind, Body, and Language in Vico's *Scienza nuova***

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**ABSTRACT**

This essay explores how Vico employs the terms mind, body, and language in his *magnus opus*, on the basis of the *crux interpretandum* that Vico created by turning the traditional mind-body problem into a body-language-mind problem (Book IV, § 1045). The problem is approached through a reading of *Scienza nuova 1744* that emphasizes Vico's concern with issues of equity, justice, and jurisprudence through human history, starting in the early civilizations. The “languages” (mute, epistolary, articulate) of the three “ages” that Vico delineates (the ages of “gods”, “heroes”, and “men”) are interpreted in this context. The proposed interpretation also influences how to understand Vico's references to poetry and imagination. The thesis presented concludes with identifying Vico's use of the terms mind, body, and language as symbolic and metaphorical rather than anthropologically.

**KEYWORDS**

Giambattista Vico; Mind-body problem; Language; Ideology; Early civilizations

**SOMMARIO**

*Mente, corpo e linguaggio nella Scienza nuova di Vico.* Questo saggio esplora il modo in cui Vico impiega i termini mente, corpo e linguaggio nella sua opera maggiore, sulla base della *crux interpretandum* che egli creò trasformando il tradizionale problema mente-corpo in un problema corpo-linguaggio-mente (Libro IV, § 1045). Il problema viene affrontato attraverso una lettura della *Scienza nuova 1744* che sottolinea la preoccupazione di Vico per le questioni di equità, giustizia e giurisprudenza attraverso la storia umana, a partire dalle prime civiltà. In questo contesto vengono interpretati i “linguaggi” (muto, epistolare, articolato) delle tre “età” (età degli “dei”, degli “eroi” e degli “uomini”). L'interpretazione proposta si riverbera anche sul modo di comprendere i riferimenti di Vico alla poesia e all'immaginazione. La tesi si conclude con l'identificazione dell'uso dei termini mente, corpo e linguaggio da parte di Vico come un uso simbolico e metaforico piuttosto che antropologico.

**PAROLE CHIAVE**

Giambattista Vico; Problema mente-corpo; Linguaggio; Ideologia; Prime civiltà

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