The present study of Giambattista Vico's defining work, *La Scienza nuova*, is concerned with an approach to the work that pays requisite attention not only to the *content* but also to its *form*. To that end, Horst Steinke proposes that *Scienza nuova* possesses the structure of a ring composition by which individual parts of the work relate to each other in complex but identifiable ways. This approach, which is developed through a discussion of all five Books that make up the work, also leads to, or implies, certain constraints on the interpretation of Vico's thought, resulting from an interplay of form and content. Since Vico made Homer the centerpiece of his own work, Vico's hermeneutics are discussed in the context of his underlying philosophy of language, and both are compared with Spinoza's thought. Finally, the so-called "Homeric question", in Vico's view, is addressed in an original way.

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HORST STEINKE

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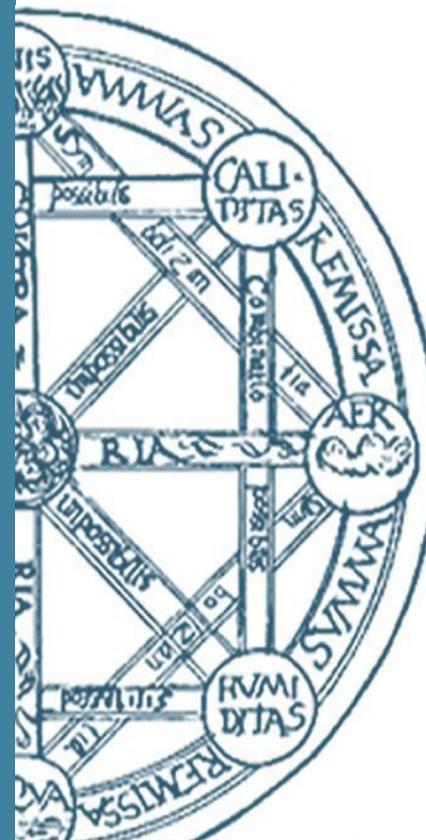
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Horst Steinke

Vico's Ring
Notes on the *Scienza nuova*, its Structure, and the Hermeneutics of Homer's Works

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Horst Steinke

Vico's Ring
Notes on the *Scienza nuova*,
its Structure, and the
Hermeneutics of Homer's Works

Contents

Introduction

This book is conceived as "notes" on *Scienza nuova* for a variety of reasons. First of all, it is in recognition of a century of modern Vico scholarship that has investigated in depth the vast range of topics contained in his *magnus opus*[1]. Against the background of this rich heritage, the objective here is limited to developing certain nuances and accents on a few selected aspects of Vico's body of thought represented in *Scienza nuova*. A further reason for keeping this book at the level of "notes" is the chosen focus on certain specific subject matters to the neglect of other Vichian topics in *Scienza nuova* of greater philosophical significance. Furthermore, these subjects are dealt with from a particular point of view or perspective which consequently casts light on some facets to the exclusion of others. The principal motive for following this approach is to throw aspects of Vico's thought into sharper relief, and to give them a more clearly delineated profile.

The following three subjects will be the main focus:

1.   *Vico's employment of the axiomatic method on Book I.* Vico's emulation of the language of Euclid's *Elements of Geometry* with its axioms, postulates, proofs, corollaries, and so forth, has elicited a variety of explanatory attempts. On the one hand, we are faced with Vico's high regard for Euclidean geometry, but on the other hand, Vico was adamant that «things that are not lines or numbers will not support the method at all», as he said in his *Second Response* in the debate with the reviewer(s) of *Liber metaphysicus* (*Metaphysics*)*,* the first volume of the projected, but not produced, three-volume *De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia* (*On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*)[2]. The subject matter of *Scienza nuova* certainly falls into the category of «things that are not lines or numbers». So why would Vico violate his own maxim that plays a key role in his repudiation of Cartesianism? There is the well-known early modern tradition of framing arguments in Euclide-

an terminology, for example, by Bacon, Descartes, and Spinoza, however, it has not been possible to make the case that Vico followed in their steps[3]. And it is this difference, this divergence, which may provide a mode of access to Vico's choice of Euclidean language. Of special interest in this regard is Spinoza's *Ethics* due to its tightly managed axiomatic development. It is hoped that a characterization of Spinoza's work will provide the requisite means of comparing and/or contrasting Vico's handling of the axiomatic method.

2.   *The terminology of "philosophy" and "philology" as used in Scienza nuova.* One of the key statements is without doubt that «the philosophers failed […] in not giving certainty to their reasonings by appeal to the authority of the philologians, and likewise […] the latter failed […] in not taking care to give their authority the sanction of the truth by appeal to the reasoning of the philosophers» (§ 140). Apart from ascertaining Vico's intended meaning of each term, this raises the question of their relationship. It has been variously described as «unidad (unity)», «allianza (alliance)», «*ricongiunzione* (re-conjunction)», «*circolarità* virtuosa (virtuous *circularity*)», «reciproco (reciprocal)», and as «*rapprochement*»[4]. In these notes, an attempt will be made to place these two key approaches in Vico's overall epistemological framework, in fact, within the formal (i.e. the tripartite) framework that he already developed in *Liber metaphysicus*. In other words, do "philosophy" and "philology" have analogous counterparts (to "metaphysics" – "mathematics" – "physics") in the earlier work, and if so, in what respect?

3.   *Vico's hermeneutics of the Homeric texts in Book III of Scienza nuova.* It has been a staple of Vichian scholarship – with notable exceptions, of course – to hold that Vico emulated Spinoza in his approach to, and investigative methodology of, ancient texts, in Spinoza's case the text being the Hebrew Bible, and particularly the Pentateuch[5]. The point of view that we will pursue here relates to this question only tangentially, not directly. Our main in-

terest lies in grasping Vico's idiosyncratic approach to the Homeric writings, and in this respect, it will be examined how specific aspects of Spinoza's hermeneutics might be related to Vico's own practice, and be relevant to casting it into more pronounced relief. Thus, the question of Vico's overt or covert[6] "Spinozism"[7] *per se* will essentially be sidestepped in the present discussion.

No discussion of Vico's treatment of Homer in Book III can leave out of consideration the status itself that it occupies and commands in the entire work. For Vico, the Homeric poems «provide the supreme testing ground for his theory of poetry and, consequently, for the entire movement of *Scienza nuova*»[8]. To call Book III *central* to *Scienza nuova* can be said in two senses, first in the sense of being fundamental[9] and secondly, by virtue of being placed precisely midway through the book[10]. It remains to be seen whether, and how, the contents of the other Books dialectically relate to Book III, and how Book III radiates back into the rest of the work.

The recognition of Vico's deliberate choice of locating the material on Homer at a particular point in his grand narrative now cannot but beg the question whether this may just be part of an overall compositional framework. If there is a "center", it follows that there be, at least in a simple formalistic sense, a first half of the work preceding the center, and a second half following it. But, since one is dealing with a literary giant like Vico, one would be compelled to infer that there are deep connections underlying the order in which the material is organized. A case could therefore be made that the first order of the day be an examination of the compositional structure of *Scienza nuova*. We will make an initial attempt at doing so[11], and propose to proceed on the basis of a particular working hypothesis that is (initially) intuitively inspired by the *centrality* – in the literal sense – of the Book on Homer. Stated directly, the hypothesis is that *Scienza nuova* is designed as "ring structure". Since the exposition of the

literary structure encompasses the entire work, it will provide the necessary opportunities to address the three major topics outlined above at the points they make their appearance in the work.

Notes to the Introduction

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the 1744 edition is meant, in particular the English translation as *The New Science of Giambattista Vico,* trans. by Th. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1948; second printing 1986). References will be shown by their paragraph numbers in the body of the text rather than in the endnotes; as the translators explain in their Preface, they follow Fausto Nicolini's numbering of paragraphs (*ibid.*, pp. V-VIII, p. V). A more recent translation is *New Science. Principles of the New Science concerning the Common Nature of Nations*, trans. by D. Marsh, London, Penguin Books, 1999. See the review by D. Ph. Verene, *On Translating Vico: The Penguin Classics Edition of the New Science*, in «New Vico Studies» (henceforth referred to as «NVS»), 17, 1999, pp. 85-107.

[2] G. Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians, Including the Disputation with the Giornale de' letterati d'Italia*, trans. by L. M. Palmer, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 181.

[3] See J. R. Goetsch Jr., *Vico's Axioms: The Geometry of the Human World,* New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1995, to which more specific reference will be made later. As A. Battistini pointed out: «Vico means by the geometric method something completely different from that of Descartes and Spinoza» (Id., *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, in «NVS», 12, 1994, pp. 16-31, p. 22).

[4] In order of appearance: S. Otto, *"Contextualidad" científica y "convertibilidad" filosófica. La respuesta de la Scienza Nuova a la crisis epistemológica de la primera modernidad*, trans. by L. Ch. Caballero, in «Cuadernos sobre Vico» (henceforth referred to as «CsV», online at <http://institucional.us.es/cuadernosvico>), 15-16, 2003, pp. 163-177, p. 165; G. Cacciatore, *Vico: Narración histórica y narración fantástica*, trans. by J. Sánchez Espillaque, in «CsV», 23-24, 2009-2010, pp. 15-31, p. 26; F. Botturi, *Ermeneutica del mito ed esperienza etica in Giambattista Vico*, in *Pensar para el nuevo siglo. Giambattista Vico y la cultura europea*, vol. II, ed. by E. Hidalgo-Serna, M. Marassi, J.M. Sevilla, J. Villalobos, Naples, La Città del Sole, 2001, pp. 275-294, pp. 275-276; B. A. Haddock, *Heroes and the Law: Vico on the Foundations of Political Order*, in «NVS», 19, 2001, pp. 29-41, p. 32.

[5] Mazzotta's comments about Benedetto Croce's views in this matter basically might also apply to other students of the question: «In placing Vico's re-

ligious thoughts in the domain of immanence Croce follows the principles of critical rationalism articulated by Spinoza. In the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*Theological-Political Treatise*), Spinoza gives a rigorous critique of the structure and composition of the Pentateuch and reaches skeptical conclusions about its religious claims and foundations. Vico – and this is Croce's suggestion – follows Spinoza's inquiry in his redescription of the "Homeric question"» (G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World: The Poetic Philosophy of Giambattista Vico,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 235; also published in Italian as *La nuova mappa del mondo. La filosofia poetica di Giambattista Vico,* tr. it. by M. Simonetta, Turin, Einaudi, 1999). G. Costa observed: «Rudolf Pfeiffer lamentava la barriera che aveva separato gli studi biblici dagli studi classici, perché si ignorava che Vico l'aveva superata e che proprio in ciò consisteva il suo principale merito (Rudolf Pfeiffer bemoaned the barrier that separated biblical from classical studies as he was not aware that Vico had removed the barrier, which in itself constituted his principal achievement)» (Id., *Religione, filosofia e modernità in Vico. Con un'appendice su "Vico, Thomas Gataker e la filologia protestante"*), in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, ed. by M. Vanzulli, Milan, Mimesis, 2012, pp. 179-195, p. 185).

⁶ For a discussion of Vico's facing the Inquisition and Index of Prohibited Books, see G. Costa, *Religione, filosofia e modernità in Vico,* cit., and his contribution *Vico e la Sacra Scrittura alla luce di un fascicolo dell'Inquisizione*, in *Pensar para un nuevo siglo,* cit., vol. I, pp. 253-273. This was clearly a complex situation, including the changing climate in which the authorities started to feel the need for a degree of discretion and caution rather than acting with the accustomed peremptoriness. See also F. Nicolini, *Saggi Vichiani,* Naples, Giannini, 1955, pp. 283-295; D. Ph. Verene, *Vico's Reply to the False Book Notice – The Vici Vindiciae. Translation and Commentary,* in *Giambattista Vico: Keys to the* New Science. *Translations. Commentaries, and Essays,* ed. by Th. Ilin Bayer and D. Ph. Verene, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 2009, pp. 85-135, pp. 101-104; M. Lollini, *Natura, ragione e modernità nella Scienza nuova di Vico*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 219-243, pp. 225-226. For further historical background, see F. Barbierato, *The Inquisitor in the Hat Shop: Inquisition, Forbidden Books and Unbelief in Early Modern Venice,* Burlington, Ashgate Publishing, 2012.

⁷ References to comparisons of Vico with Spinoza can be found in D. Ph. Verene, *Vico's Reprehension of the Metaphysics of René Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, and John Locke. Translation and Commentary,* in *Giambattista Vico: Keys to the* New Science, cit., pp. 179-198, and in «NVS», 8, 1990, pp. 2-18. See also M. Sanna, *La "fantasia che è l'occhio dell'ingegno". La questione della verità e della sua rappresentazione in Vico,* Naples, Alfredo Guida, 2001, pp. 91-126. The following, among others, could be added: A. Funkenstein, *Natural Science and Social Theory: Hobbes,*

Spinoza, and Vico, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity,* ed. by G. Tagliacozzo and D. Ph. Verene, Baltimore-London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. 187-212; G. Bedani, *Vico Revisited: Orthodoxy, Naturalism and Science in the "Scienza nuova"*, Oxford-Hamburg-Munich, Berg, 1989, p. 88; A. Tucker, *Platone e Vico. Una reinterpretazione platonica di Vico*, tr. it. di D. Rotoli, in «Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani» (henceforth referred to as «BCSV»), XXIV-XXV, 1994-1995, pp. 97-115 (online at *Portale Vico*, <www.giambattistavico.it>, under tab *Riviste*); E. Nuzzo, *I caratteri dei popoli nella nuova scienza delle nazioni di Vico. Tra causalità sacra, causalità storica, causalità naturale,* in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 129-178, pp. 141-144; O. Remaud, *Vico lector de Espinosa (Sobre la reprensión de la Etica, II, 7 en la Scienza nuova [1744], § 238)*, trans. by M. F. Pérez-Alors and J. A. Martin-Casanova, in «CsV», 7-8, 1997, pp. 191-206; S. Otto, *Vico versus Spinoza. Zwei Typen von Metaphysik vor dem Problem "zeitlicher Kontingenz"*, in *Pensar para un nuevo siglo*, vol. II, cit., pp. 497-512; V. Vitiello, *Vico nel suo tempo*, saggio introduttivo in G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni del 1725, 1730 e 1744*, ed. by M. Sanna and V. Vitiello, Milan, Bompiani, 2012-2013, pp. V-CLXXII, pp. LIX-CXVIII.

[8] A. R. Caponigri, *Time and Idea: The Theory of History in Giambattista Vico,* Notre Dame, Indiana-London, University of Notre Dame Press, 1953, p. 191.

[9] As P. Cristofolini wrote that «da questione è stata a un certo punto posta da Vico come fondamentale, e dunque collocata al centro dell'opera (the question [of Homer] is posed by Vico at a certain point as fundamental and therefore placed in the middle of the work)» (Id., *La Scienza nuova di Vico: introduzione alla lettura*, Rome, La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1995, p. 135).

[10] Since it is the third out of five books, Mazzotta calls it «literally the numerical centerpiece» (Id., *The New Map of the World,* cit., p. 140). While our essay examines *Scienza nuova* mainly from the perspective of classical *literary technique*, to put it mundanely, A. Fletcher has called attention to a different source of inspiration – not that these two aspects were mutually exclusive – , namely ancient «numerology». He observed: «Thus, while the infrastructure of the *New Science* is based on an ordering of numerous "sets" or "cells" of triadic cultural development, the whole Book is given its "external" form by the number 5. […] The pentad is often modulated, in number symbolism, into what might be called "the beginnings of a circle" – […] the pentad is conceived as "perfectly" closing off an extended action. Vico achieves this same "five-act" closure by dividing his 1744 *New Science* into a pentad of triads, all of which reflect or interact with various initial binary oppositions» (Id., *On the Syncretic Allegory of the* New Science, in «NVS», 4, 1986, pp. 25-42, p. 32). See also A. Battistini, *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, cit., p. 21. While the context is not directly related to the present subject, Sanna's comment on

Vico's grouping of five thinkers (Epicurus, Macchiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle), on the one hand, and three (Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle), on the other hand, is still of interest: «Le triadi e i quintetti sono funzionali nel discorso vichiano perchè rappresentano uno schema concettuale che permette di mettere insieme sotto un unico concetto pensieri differenti, anche se in qualche misura appartenenti alla medesima scuola o tendenza (The triads and quintets serve a function in the Vichian discourse since they constitute a conceptual scheme that allows bringing together under a single concept thinking that differs, even if it belongs in some sense to the same school or tendency)» (Id., *La "fantasia che è l'occhio del ingegno"*, cit., p. 96).

[11] Likely it would take a book-length monograph to explore and argue the thesis in full; the goal at present is more modest, consisting of an attempt to raise merely the plausibility of a particular literary form of *Scienza nuova*.

1.

AN OUTLINE OF *SCIENZA NUOVA* AS
RING COMPOSITION

In an earlier essay appearing in «Laboratorio dell'ISPF»[12], we argued that *Liber metaphysicus* had a ring or concentric structure. *Liber metaphysicus* is a very thin volume compared to *Scienza nuova*; if establishing ring structure in *Liber metaphysicus* is challenging, this is all the more so the case with *Scienza nuova* whose sheer size differs by an order of magnitude, leaving aside for a moment the sweep of its contents. But it is actually the very substance or essence of Vico's grand view of the driving forces of history and civilization that provide a basis for bringing "circular" literary structure into the picture. The most obvious pertinent Vichian proposition is of course the idea of *corso* and *ricorso* of Book V[13]. Whether understood as a closed "circular"[14] or open-ended "spiraling" phenomenon[15], speaking metaphorically, it referred to actual history, culture, civilization, and «not merely [to] a formal question of narrative coherence or stylized scheme of dramatic unity»[16]. The literary structure under consideration here does fall into the category of "stylized scheme", and is best seen in this perspective. Nevertheless, it is considered worthwhile to explore certain hermeneutical implications that can be derived from determining apparently deliberate choices on Vico's part in structuring his work[17]. Without justifying the task undertaken here further, we will start with presenting the end result upfront, as this will facilitate, and put some structure around, the exposition of the detailed discussion to follow. To that end, *Scienza nuova* will be summarized according to the individual segments of the work that are being identified as forming the basis for its puta-

tive ring structure. As can be readily seen, the selection of the highlights of each segment already reflects the theorized symmetric arrangement[18]. While the *Scienza nuova* is divided into five Books[19], the proposed subdivision does not strictly adhere to this numerical template but endeavors to be guided and determined rather by the contents of individual parts of the work, regardless of where the dividing line between them may be situated in the text[20].

The result is the following layout:

A: Book I, §§ 43-118: Discussion of the Chronological Table[21] (a synoptic listing of notable developments among the Hebrews, Chaldeans, Scythians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans). Vico's central aim is to identify «the proper starting point for universal history, which all scholars say is defective in its beginnings» (§ 51). He presents Egyptian civilization in terms of the trifold partition into «the three ages of gods, heroes and men» (§ 68), and then deals with selective Greek and Roman history as they exemplify these "macro" tendencies. Rome, in particular, is portrayed in terms of its laws and forms of governance, and as «an instance of an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the histories of all nations» (§ 114).

B: Book I, §§ 119-360: This part of Book I is divided in three sections, entitled "Elements", "Principles", and "Method", respectively. In the "Elements", one of the key programmatic "axioms" is: «Doctrines must take their beginning from that of the matters of which they treat» (§ 314); another is the need for both "philosophy" and "philology" (§ 140) to become a «new art of criticism» (§ 143), and the existence of a «common sense of men with respect to human needs or utilities, which are the two sources of the natural law» (§§ 141-145). Vico correlates the three "ages" with three types of "languages", human behavior, and governance, with the most extensive treatment of the "childhood"[22] of human civilization, and Roman political history, especially, at its inception. In the "Principles", referring back to

§§ 141-145, shining a light on the «earliest antiquity» (§ 331), he highlights three universal constants: religion, marriage, death rites. In the "Method" section, he reiterates the absolute need to go back to the beginnings of civilization (§§ 338, 347), something that took him twenty years to achieve (§ 338).

C: Book II, §§ 361-779: Vico presents the results of his investigation of archaic origins, which he terms "poetic", first of all, with respect to language/semiotics, then to forms of governance, with special attention to Roman political history, and finally to the sciences. It is the longest Book in the work.

D: Book III, §§ 780-914: The Book is about «the discovery of the true Homer», providing (finally) the crucial methodological underpinnings for his research into archaic times. He examines the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from the specific perspective of what they reveal about different epochs of early Greek history, as previously overlooked or misunderstood. Vico includes a reminder of the light it throws on the «history of the natural law» (§ 904).

C': Book IV, §§ 915-979: Vico implies a caesura with the previous material («In virtue of […] Book One, and […] Book Two, and […] Book Three […], we shall now […] discuss in Book Four the course nations run»), (§ 915) in terms of the three "ages" (the ages of gods, heroes, and men). The initial point of reference is always the "poetic" or "divine" phase, be it with respect to mentality, culture expressed in customs, language, and especially the rule of law, justice, and governance, again with particular focus on Roman jurisprudence.

B': Book IV, §§ 980-1045: In the final part of Book IV, he refers back to the "principles" of Book I, and «in order to leave no room for doubt» of their truth, announces detailed supporting information. (§ 940) This historical information is almost exclusively taken from Roman legal and political history, providing confirmation of the particular sequence of legal and political systems he argued in the "Elements", and here, too, the focus is on beginnings as "heroic/aristocratic commonwealths/republics".

A': Book V, §§ 1046-1112: With this Book, entitled "*The Recourse of Human Institutions* […]", *Scienza nuova* comes full circle. Whereas the first part of Book I concluded with the history of Rome, describing it tentalizingly as «an instance of an ideal eternal history», now the final Book resumes the narrative with late antiquity, the Middle Ages, the early modern age. But, most significantly, it is done from the perspective of the three "ages" that run through the entire work, thus bringing to a close cyclical movement at multiple levels. The greatest amount of space is devoted to "the Recourse […] of Ancient Roman Law in Feudal Law" (Heading of Chapter II; §§ 1057-1087). Strictly speaking, §§ 1097-1112 belong to brief concluding remarks.

The "concentric" nature of *Scienza nuova* as outlined above, can be illustrated in the following figure:

A: Book 1, §§ 43-118   A': Book 5, §§ 1046-1112

B: Book 1, §§ 119-360   B': Book 4, §§ 980-1045

C: Book 2, §§ 361-779   C': Book 4, §§ 915-979

D: Book 3, §§ 780-914
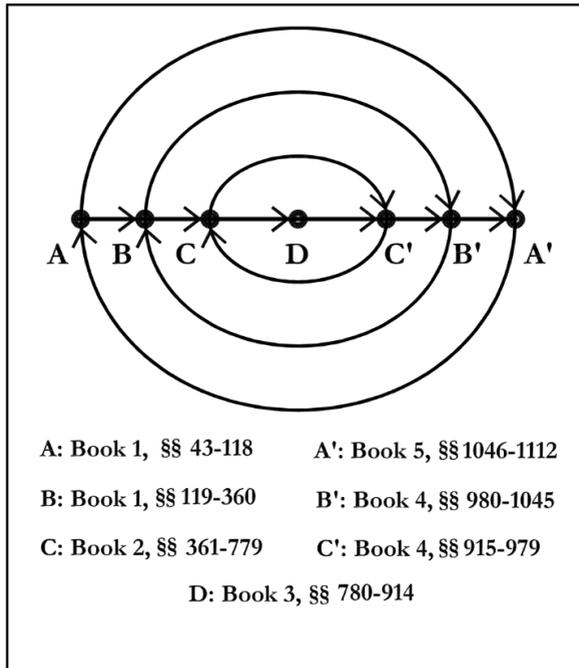
Fig. 1 Concentric View of *Scienza nuova*.

This figure serves also the purpose of illustrating the narrative approach that will mainly be taken in the discussion to follow; rather than proceeding thematically, or sequentially, "horizontally," so to speak, that is, segment by segment as they follow each other, the segments connected by concentric arrows will be considered together, especially their relation to each other[23]

Notes to Chapter 1

[12] H. Steinke, *Vico's Liber metaphysicus: An Inquiry into its Literary Structure,* in «Laboratorio dell'ISPF», XI, 2014, pp. 1-58, online at <www.ispf-lab.cnr.it>. This essay includes a general description and discussion of ring structure (chiasmus, concentric structure, circularity), which will therefore not be represented in the current paper, except in the form of brief observations.

[13] The establishment of relationships of "circularity" between conceptual domains in Vico's thought was already noted by B. Croce, as indicated by a comment on *Liber metaphysicus*: «Vico seems to be involved in a kind of circle between geometry and metaphysics, of which the former, according to him, owes its truth to the latter, and after receiving it gives back again to metaphysics, thus in turn supporting the human science by the divine» (Id., *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, trans. by R. G. Collingwood, New York, Macmillan Company, 1913, pp. 12-13; the Italian original can be found at *La Filosofia di Giambattista Vico,* Bari, Laterza, 6th edition, 1962, p. 12). Vico scholars regularly use the term "circular" with respect to relationships that Vico depicts as intertwined in some sense. The following are just few examples about various works of Vico: A. Battistini: «Vico's axioms, definitions, and postulates […] are not part of a rectilinear deductive chain. Rather, their intermittent appearance is controlled by the circular conception of time» (Id., *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, cit., p. 22); M. Sanna: «Il *De antiquissima* mostra senza maschere una circolarità non occasionale nella scelta dei temi proposti (*De antiquissima* openly displays a circularity that is not an incidental byproduct of the choice of subjects put forward)» (Id., *Introduzione*, in *De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia: con traduzione italiana a fronte*, ed. by M. Sanna, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2005, pp. XVII-XXXV, p. XXXII); J. D. Schaeffer: «The *De constantia*, like the *De uno*, concludes with the image of the circle: *The Divine Circle of the Law: From God and to God*» (Id., *Vico's Il diritto universale and Roman Law*, in «NVS», 19, 2001, pp. 45-60, p. 59); P. Girard: «La *Scienza nuova* constituye pues una especie de círculo, una ida y vuelta en la que la investigacíon

epistemológica se ve enmarcada por la finalidad práctica (*Scienza nuova* constitutes thus a type of circle, a round trip in which the epistemological investigation sees itself circumscribed by the practical ends)» (Id., *Las Condiciones y los Límites de la Racionalidad en la Scienza Nuova. Las Metaformosis de la Razón*, in «CsV», 13-14, 2001-2002, pp. 127-137, p. 131); A. M. Damiani, without using the term: «Que la Ciencia Nueva sea una metafísica de la mente significa que al conocer el mundo civil el hombre se conoce a sí mismo; y que para conocerse a sí mismo debe mirarse en el espejo de su propria obra (That *Scienza nuova* is a metaphysics of the mind means that in knowing the world of civilization, man knows himself, and that to know himself, he needs to look into the mirror of his own creation)» (Id., *Hermenéutica y Metafísica en la Scienza Nuova*, in «CsV», 5-6, 1995-1996, pp. 51-65, p. 64). None of these instances of "circularity", of course, have anything to do with what is commonly called "circular reasoning", where conclusions from premises or assumptions are used to establish these premises in the first place.

[14] M. Lilla referred to it as «the fatalistic theory of historical *ricorsi*». See Id., *G. B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 227.

[15] All things considered, this represents the majority view.

[16] G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 210.

[17] At this point, this is of course merely an unsupported assertion, not unlike Mazzotta's view to the contrary when he speaks of «the haphazard, disjointed arrangement of hybrid fragments making up the body of the *New Science*» (*ibid.*, p. 210). Other readers of *Scienza nuova*, too, have sought to detect the presence of an overarching compositional principle, although in different ways from the proposal outlined here; D. Ph. Verene, for example, proposes an underlying classical rhetorical structure: «invention (chronological table), disposition (elements, principles, method), exordium (on wisdom), narration (poetic wisdom), digression (the true Homer), proposition ("course of the nations" paragraph), division (series of threes), confirmation and amplification (proofs at the end of Book 4), confutation (recourse of the nations), and peroration (conclusion of the work)» (Id., *Philosophy as Eloquence*, in «Lo Sguardo. Rivista di filosofia», 17, 2015, 1, pp. 35-49, pp. 44-45, online at <www.losguardo.net>).

[18] This becomes apparent by comparing it, for example, with L. Pompa's Book-by-Book summary that makes no reference to the subjects of law and governance, unlike the synopsis that follows. See Id., *Vico: A Study of the "New Science"*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 1-6. Another comparison could be made with Battistini's overview of the individual Books of *Scienza nuova* in Id., *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, cit., pp. 21-

24. Battistini examines the material in terms of an «organistic epistemology», and as a result, the socio-political content "falls through the cracks", so to speak (*ibid.*, p. 22). Compare also Sanna's summary of *Scienza nuova,* entitled *La Scienza Nuova nelle edizioni del 1730 e del 1744*, in *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., pp. 329-345.

[19] According to C. Lucci, «[l]a tesi generale delle tre età, dei loro corsi e dei loro ricorsi, permette di comprendere la partizione della *Scienza nuova* (1744) […] (The general thesis of the three ages, of their course and recourse, allows us to understand the division of *Scienza nuova* (1744) [in Books I to V])» (Id., *Vico lettore e interprete dei poemi omerici nella* Scienza nuova (1744): *fra storia, antropologia e antiquaria*, in «BCSV», XLIII, 2013, 1-2 pp. 35-73, p. 38, footnote 3). Lucci thus seems to imply, if we read her correctly, a ring structure with the individual Books as such constituting the corresponding segments.

[20] See the Appendix for a Table of Contents, adapted from the Begin-Fisch's translation, showing paragraph (i.e. §) numeration of major sections. Vico's introductory essay, "Idea of the Work", concerning the frontispiece, thus, is not included in our examination. This part of the work is highly important in its own right, but discussion of it is outside the scope chosen for this essay. According to V. Placella, «si tratta di elementi estranei, o, almeno […] esterni al testo, sicché un confronto tra *SN* 1725 e *SN* 1730 non poteva che farsi prescindendo da essi (it consists of elements that are extraneous, or, at least […] external to the text so that a comparison between *SN* 1725 and *SN* 1730 cannot be made without taking it into consideration)» (Id., *La mancata edizione veneziana della* Scienza Nuova, in *Vico e Venezia,* ed. by C. de Michelis and G. Pizzamiglio, Florence, Leo S. Olschki, 1982, pp. 143-182, p. 158).

[21] Shown in *The New Science*, cit., p. 28.

[22] On Vico's metaphorical use of "childhood", see L. Pompa, *Vico and the Presuppositions of Historical Knowledge,* in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, cit., pp. 125-140, p. 137.

[23] The "classical", and indispensable, method of exposition of Vico's overall thought is the thematic approach, as witnessed by such works as R. Flint, *Vico*; B. Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*; G. Gentile, *Studi Vichiani*; F. Amerio, *Introduzione allo Studio di G. B. Vico*; N. Badaloni, *Introduzione a G. B. Vico*; A. R. Caponigri, *Time and Idea: The Theory of History in Giambattista Vico*; P. Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico. Introduzione alla lettura*; S. Otto, *Giambattista Vico. Lineamenti della sua filosofia*; G. Cacciatore, *Metaphysik, Poesie und Geschichte. Über die Philosophie von Giambattista Vico*; L. Pompa, *Vico: A Study of the "New Science"*.

On the other hand, a book-by-book discussion of *Scienza nuova* is relatively uncommon, among which the following two works should be highlighted: (1)

G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World,* cit., pp. 95-130, on Vico's comments on the chronological table in Book I, pp. 130-139, on Book II, pp. 140-161, on "the Homeric question", Book III, pp. 162-181, on Book IV, pp. 183-205, on topics in Book II, pp. 206-233, on Book V; (2) V. Hösle, *Einleitung: Vico und die Idee der Kulturwissenschaft. Genese, Themen und Wirkungsgeschichte der «Scienza nuova»*, in G. B. Vico, *Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft über die gemeinsame Natur der Völker*, trans. by V. Hösle and Ch. Jermann, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990, vol. 1, pp. XXXI-CCXCIII: broadly speaking, sections 2.4-2.8 on Book I; 2.9-2.18 on Book II; 2.19 on Book III; 2.20 on Book IV; 2.21-2.22 on Book V. Most recently, D. Ph. Verene produced a book-by-book discussion in Id., *Vico's New Science: A Philosophical Commentary*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 2015.

The consecutive Book discussion allows for consideration of the connection and relationship between successive Books, and thus helps to shed light on Vico's movement of thought that is usually not made explicit by him, as well as providing opportunities of indirectly showing connections between certain Books by cross-references.

The present book thus means to add another heuristic approach by finding or bringing to the fore, correspondences and complementarities between distantly located material in the work.

2.

"CORSO" AND "RICORSO" OF NATIONS/CULTURES: SEGMENTS *A* AND *A'*

The very beginning of *Scienza nuova* is likely one of the reasons why its readers have found it so difficult to come to grips with[24]. In the first place, from a purely literary standpoint, it is unconventional, to put it mildly, placing a table and accompanying explanation at the most exposed place in a book, supporting material that normally would be relegated to an appendix. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, it contrasts sharply with the placement of similar material, although expanded, in *Scienza nuova* of 1725[25]. In the latter, a chronology-based exposition occupies the very opposite place, namely the end of the book, more in line with common expectations of where such subject matter would fit naturally[26]. Our working assumption is, therefore, that the Chronological Table and Notes on the Table at the beginning of *Scienza nuova* of 1730 and 1744[27] represent a radical decision on the part of Vico, a kind of "symmetry-breaking". In our view, it is grounded in, and justified by, the overall ring-like framework of *Scienza nuova*. In this framework, the *inclusio* formed by the beginning and conclusion propound the key theme(s) of the work[28]. This entails that the beginning, in the case of *Scienza nuova,* the Chronology and Notes, need to be examined in conjunction with the concluding segment of the work, which is claimed to be Book V. Book V then serves as a prism through which to examine the first part of *Scienza nuova.*

Vico's idea of *ricorso* with respect to the proclivities and tendencies of human culture that is the subject of Book V, likely has received more attention and treatment than any other part of his *oeuvre*, and therefore will not be recapitulated here[29].

To begin with an overall description, it is expressed succinctly by Mazzotta:

Within the narrative economy of Book V the account of the *ricorso* symmetrically reenacts and mirrors the general design of the whole of the *New Science*. […] Book V starts with the theological age of the new Christian history; it goes through the heroic medieval times, and it ends with the modern age and the role of the *New Science* in Vico's own times[30].

However, the chapter in the middle (§§ 1057-1087), by far the longest of the three chapters, does not deal with cultural oscillations in their highest generality as the ages of "gods", "heroes", and "men", as one would expect, but, firstly, more narrowly with juridical subjects, and secondly, within this already circumscribed scope, an even more restricted legal domain, the law governing Roman "clientes" *vs.* medieval feudal law[31]. This recognition draws us immediately into the recurrent themes of *Scienza nuova*, the history of Rome and the history of law and the rule of law, both on their own, and as inextricably intertwined. As is well known, Vico was not interested in Roman history for its own sake, but because he saw in it an actual historical instantiation of his philosophy of history[32]. This is not the full story, however, behind the pervasive presence of Rome, its body of law, its forms of governance, in every one of the "books" that make up *Scienza nuova*. It was Vico's reflections on law, not in its positivistic sense, to begin with, but rather in its reflection of equity and justice[33], that in the first place led him to the need to unearth its origins in remote times, and with these sources of law, concomitantly the sources of civilization itself in its fundamental structures and achievements[34]. Or, as has been put even more pointedly:

El Derecho como expresión de la naturaleza humana, es uno de los más elaborados [puntos], sin duda por los profundos y profusos conocimientos que el italiano tenía del Derecho (*Law as an expression of*

human nature, is one of the [points] discussed most extensively, undoubtedly due to the breadth and depth of knowledge that the Italian had of law writ large)[35].

No discussion of Vico's philosophy of law in *Scienza nuova* can do without placing it within the arc of Vico's entire life's work[36]. In this connection, his *Diritto universale* presents a milestone[37]. While juridical themes were part of several of his earlier inaugural addresses to faculty and students at the beginning of the academic year at his university, and in particular of his 1708 oration, published as *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*[38], *Diritto universale* written in its major parts from 1720 to 1722 represented a new level of Vichian reflection, and contains the expression "Nova scientia tentatur" (New science is assayed [attempted]) as a chapter heading[39]. For our purposes of pinpointing the literary structure of *Scienza nuova*, *Diritto universale* also provides another building block that is directly relevant to the beginning of *Scienza nuova*. This particular chapter contains a "chronological table" and accompanying notes, material that is missing in the *Scienza nuova 1725*[40]. In terms of format, it is a straightforward consecutive chronological listing of events after "the Flood," with respect to the Hebrews, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans, unlike the 1730/1744 *Scienza nuova* Chronological Table that has designated side-by-side columns for these nations[41]. But it is not merely the format in *Scienza nuova* that is somewhat different, the real difference lies in the material about the legal history of Rome. Examining the new chronology and notes through the lens of Book V[42], namely its focus on the history and development of legal structures, both in form and content, it becomes quickly apparent that the new chronology is put in service of Vico's philosophy of universally valid law, the principles of which can be glimpsed in Roman law. In the chronology of *Diritto universale*, the only direct reference to Roman law is the matter-of-fact statement under the date of 303 A.U.C. [451 B.C.]: the Law of the XII Tables is enacted in Rome»[43]. The note in *Sci*

enza nuova is not much more extensive – quantatively - but significantly more ideological: «At this time there is brought from Athens to Rome the Law of the Twelve Tables, just as uncivil, rude, inhuman, cruel, and savage as it is shown to be in our *Principles of Universal Law* (§ 102).

This is not the place to "unpack" this condensed statement, except to take note of this Law being already accorded a determinate place or position in Vico's grand vision of evolution of law[44].

However, the most noticeable difference with the earlier chronology is the addition of the "Publilian Law" and "Petelian Law", in 416 A.U.C. and 419 A.U.C., respectively. These Laws are then commented on more extensively than any other historical event or development in the rest of the chronological table (§§ 104-115)[45]. Considering the broad sweep of types of law potentially available for discussion, it is noteworthy that both Book V and the Chronological Table and Notes have in common essentially the same special interest which, broadly speaking, is lawful governance and early forms of "constitutionalism"[46].

Seen in this light, the Chronological Table and Notes are intimately connected with Book V, and, in any "standard" manner of organizing and presenting material that belongs together, the Table and Notes could have served as the first part of Book V. If Vico had done so – without any loss of content –, the next part of Book I, consisting of the "Elements", "Principles", and "Method", would have constituted the beginning of the book. While these sections are not entirely congruent with Book I of *Scienza nuova* of 1725, they share methodological reflections; thus, *Scienza nuova* of 1725 provided a template for the type of material to be presented at the beginning. We surmise therefore that Vico deliberately, and audaciously, took the chronology out of its context and transposed it in order to create an *inclusio*, as an essential part of an overall concentric structure of the work[47].

Notes to Chapter 2

[24] Flint described this initial reaction: «The "Scienza Nuova" […] is a work which is exceedingly difficult to analyse; for its main argument is complicated with innumerable details, and it is not always easy to trace the guiding thread which leads through the windings of its accessory ideas» (Id., *Vico*, cit., p. 189).

[25] *Vico: The First New Science*, ed. and trans. by L. Pompa, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[26] *Ibid.*, ch. V-X of Book V, pp. 238-270.

[27] The Tables are identical in both works, see G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., pp. 400-407, 816-823.

[28] The opposite view is taken by Hösle who ascribed circular structure ("Kreisstruktur") to Vico's earlier work *Diritto universale* (*Universal Law*), but denied it to *Scienza nuova* of 1730 (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. LXXIX, footnote 102). By extension this assessment would apply also to the 1744 edition which Hösle observes is equivalent to the 1730 edition in terms of structure (*ibid.*, p. LXXXV). Hösle also commented: «Erstens ist darauf hinzuweisen, dass für Vico als objectiven Idealisten die Kreisstruktur begründungstheoretisch ausgezeichnet ist (First of all it needs to be pointed out that for Vico as objective idealist, circularity is crucial to his epistemology)» (*ibid.*, p. CCXXIV).

[29] The literature is vast, and no attempt will be made here to supply even a selective cross-section of scholarship, beyond the commentaries referred to already in footnote 20.

[30] G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 210.

[31] This summary statement, in this condensed form for the sake of the argument developed here, should be understand in the light of the more fine-grained commentary in Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., pp. CCLIII-CCLVII, where "feudalism" is portrayed as a certain type of social, economic, political organization, not just or primarily as a legal system, although the legal system incorporated the societal structure, and thus serves as its proxy. See also D. R. Kelley, *Vico's Road: From Philology to Jurisprudence and Back*, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, cit., pp. 15-29, p. 25.

[32] With respect to the importance of Roman history, Hösle attributed it to Vico's conviction that the "storia ideale eterna" had been realized in it paradigmatically (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CCXXXIX). Similarly also J. D. Schaeffer, *Introduction*, in *A Translation from Latin into English of Giambattista Vico's Il Diritto Universale/Universal Law*, trans. by J. D. Schaeffer, with Introduction and Notes by J. D. Schaeffer, Foreward and Translation of Vico's *Synopsis* by D. Ph. Verene, 2 volumes, New York, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, 2011, Book 1, p. XII: «Vico believed the Roman experience was paradigmatic be-

cause the Romans alone […] had the opportunity to recognize the many principles and customs that were shared throughout Europe and the Near East». A complete translation of *Diritto universale* has also been published in «NVS», 21, 2003; 23, 2005 and 24, 2006.

[33] According to A. C. 't Hart «il diritto, il modo in cui gli uomini concepiscono la giustizia (law, the vehicle by means of which humans implement justice)» (Id., *La metodologia giuridica vichiana*, in «BCSV», XII-XIII, 1982-1983, pp. 5-28, p. 6). We would be remiss in not quoting in this connection P. Piovani: «la *giuridicità* è la premessa di ogni *policità* e *socialità*, ed è aspetto che non va mai dimenticato (the *rule of law* is the condition of possibility of all *social* and *political* values, and is the feature that is never ignored)» (quoted in R. Ruggiero, *Il sistema delle leggi e la finzione poetica nel Diritto Universale*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, ed. by A. Battistini and P. Guaragnella, Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia, 2007, pp. 181-205, pp. 204-205; italics original).

[34] This follows G. Fassò, who wrote: «[T]he original impulse which led Vico to the conceptualization of his definitive philosophy was not an interest in the problem of history. He came to the problem of history while meditating on another problem, which provided him […] with the key with which to then penetrate the larger problem of history; this original problem was that of law» (Id., *The Problem of Law and the Historical Origin of the New Science*, trans. by M. Brose, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, cit., pp. 3-14 p. 9). See also E. Nuzzo's comment on Fassò who, among others, «hanno sottolineato la centralità e crucialità nella meditazione di Vico del confronto con le problematiche giuridiche (has underlined the central and crucial role that coming to grips with the issues pertaining to law played in Vico's reflections)» (Id., *I caratteri dei popoli nella nuova scienza delle nazioni di Vico. Tra causalità sacra, causalità storica, causalità naturale*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 128-178, p. 137, footnote 13).

[35] Italics in the original; M. A. Pastor Pérez, *Vico o la Metafísica como Método de Fundamentación de la Naturaleza Humana*, in «CsV», 2, 1992, pp. 193-206, p. 203. See also A. R. Caponigri, *Time and Idea,* cit., p. 116: «[W]hat is true in the area of law, is true also […] in the whole process of culture». We will return to this subject in the discussion below on Books II and IV.

[36] In Vico's biography, his intellectual interest in law and legal studies, ("jurisprudence" understood as an encompassing term), go all the way back to his youth. See L. R. Vedovato, *O Jus Cogens do direito internacional sob a luz do pensamento de Giambattista Vico. Um novo olhar para o direito natural*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 307-316, p. 311.

[37] An indispensable work in approaching *Dirittto universale* is R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur. Introduzione al* Diritto Universale *di Giambattista Vico,*

Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2010. In so far as so much specific material in *Diritto Universale* flowed into *Scienza nuova*, Ruggiero's commentary is also highly valuable for the understanding of the latter. See also Id., *Il sistema delle leggi e la finzione poetica nel* Diritto Universale, cit., pp. 181-205. A. R. Caponigri commented: «The "Nova Scientia Tentatur" clearly contains, in a favorite phrase of Croce's, the *Scienza Nuova* and particularly the "nuova arte critica" "*in nuce*" ("in a nutshell")» (Id., *Philosophy and Philology: The "New Art of Criticism" of Giam Battista Vico*, in «The Modern Schoolman», 59, 1982, 2, pp. 81-116, p. 85; also published as *Filosofia e filologia. La «nuova arte della critica» di Giambattista Vico*, trans. by M. P. Fimiani, in «BCSV», XII-XIII, 1982-1983, pp. 29-61, p. 32).

[38] In English as *On the Study Methods of our Time*, trans. by E. Gianturco, preface by D. Ph. Verene, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1990. However, the inaugural oration of 1719 which in its original form has been lost, should not be overlooked; see R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 10.

[39] As M. Sanna explained, Vico envisioned grounding historiography ("philology") in first principles ("philosophy"), and by doing so, making it a "science" (Id., *Le epistole vichiane e la nascita dell'idea di scienza nuova*, in «BCSV», XXIV-XXV, 1994-1995, pp. 119-129, p. 123). It is the title of Chapter 1 of the Second Part, "On the Constancy of Philology", in Book II, *On the Constancy of the Jurisprudent* (The First Part is "On the Constancy of Philosophy"). See «NVS», 23, 2005, pp. 31-41.

[40] It is also reproduced in *Keys to the* New Science, cit., pp. 47-50. J. D. Schaeffer calls it «a first sketch of the chronological table in book 1 of the *New Science* (1730/1744)» (*ibid,* p. 45). We are arguing for a more fundamental and deliberate process of transformation. Ruggiero also observed: «La tavola cronologica vichiana mostra assonanze con quelle tentate dagli altri cronografi sei-settecenteschi (Vico's chronological table shows discrepancies with those proposed by other 17th/18th century historians)» (Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur,* cit., p. 151, footnote 1). See also V. Placella, *La mancata edizione veneziana della* Scienza Nuova, cit., p. 175, footnote 42. Chronological tables, of course, were not an invention of the early modern age, witness the late classical chronicles of Eusebius and Jerome.

[41] *Scienza nuova* 1730/1744 includes also a column for "Scythians", and see §§ 99-100 for an inkling regarding reasons for their insertion and inclusion by virtue of their "esoteric wisdom", which is to play a key part in the cultural scheme laid out later in Book II.

[42] An analogous dialectic, at a different heuristic level, is described by M. Lollini: «Certo è vero che il feudalesimo meridionale influenza la sua inter-

pretazione della storia Romana, così come inversamente rimane vero che la sua lettura della storia Romana influenza la sua analisi della società feudale (It is certainly true that the southern [Italian] feudalism influences his interpretation of Roman history, just as vice versa it remains true that his reading of Roman history influences his analysis of feudal society)» (Id., *Il mito come precomprensione storica aperta nella Scienza nuova di Giambattista Vico*, in «BCSV», XXVI-XXVII, 1996-1997, pp. 29-53, p. 41). See also J. Nagy, *Aspetti linguistici della "barbarie della riflessione"*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, cit., pp. 429-444, pp. 434-435.

[43] «NVS», 23, 2005, p. 34.

[44] This emphasis is not disconnected from other aspects of the Chronology and Notes. By means of them, right from the start, Vico argues for and establishes the historical priority of the Hebrews and their law rather than its derivation from Egypt (e.g. § 54), and lays the basis for compartmentalizing "sacred" and "profane" history (see B. de Giovanni, *Sul cominciamento della storia in Vico*, in *L'enciclopedia dei saperi*, cit., pp. 65-88, pp. 69-73; F. R. Marcus, *Vico and the Hebrews*, in «NVS», 13, 1995, pp. 14-32). The chronological material, in actuality, is a shortened version of Vico's entire theoretical project, as A. Pons pointed out: «Ma i fatti e le date della storia […] sono unicamente quelli sui quali Vico si baserà, nel resto dell'opera, per fondare i propri ragionamenti (But the historical events and dates […] are solely those that Vico will use in the rest of the work as a basis for his argumentation)» (Id., *Una storia senza "nomi propri"*, in *Il sapere poetico e gli universali fantastici. La presenza di Vico nella riflessione filosofica contemporanea. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Napoli, 23-25 Maggio 2002*, ed. by G. Cacciatore, V. Gessa Kurotschka, E. Nuzzo, M. Sanna, Naples, Alfredo Guida, 2004, pp. 275-286, pp. 284-285). It is no exaggeration to say that the Table presented as a presumable initial collection of data at the outset of the work, actually represents the *résumé* of Vico's reflections and theorizing. This determined even the order of columns, so that Eqypt is shown in the fifth column since it is, in Vico's nomenclature, the fifth oldest culture (§ 58). Compare also M. Sanna: «La *Tavola cronologica* ha a sua volta il compito di attirare l'attenzione del lettore, per tutto il movimento dell'opera, sulla perfetta corrispondenza tra gli eventi della storia sacra e quelli della storia profana, e di ricordare al contempo le origini antichissime della storia degli Ebrei e dei Caldei rispetto a quella dei Greci e dei Romani (The *Chronological Table*, on its part, has the purpose of drawing the attention of the reader, on behalf of the entire movement of the work, to the perfect correspondence between the events of sacred history and those of profane history, and to remind his contemporaries of the extremely ancient historical origins of the Hebrews and Chaldeans compared to the Greeks and Romans)». (Id.,

La Scienza Nuova nelle edizioni del 1730 e del 1744, cit., p. 335). There are other aspects to the Chronological Table not mentioned here, see, for example, P. Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., pp. 51-57.

To further underline the programmatic nature of Vico's Chronological Table/Notes, it may be instructive to compare them to the "tables" that the much admired Francis Bacon promoted in scientific research. See *The Novum Organum, or A True Guide To The Interpretation Of Nature*, trans. by G. W. Kitchin, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1855, pp. 125-165. According to P. Rossi, «the tables must order and classify instances so that we may master and control them» (Id., *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, trans. by S. Rabinovitch, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 202; originally appeared in Italian as *Francesco Bacone: Dalla magia alla scienza,* Bari, Laterza, 1957). Compared to Bacon's tables that function as databases of essentially (at least presumably) "raw" data, Vico's table depicts the mastery and control achieved by the end of the process.

[45] This might also be a good time to refer to the efforts of depicting *Scienza nuova* of 1730/1744 as a more or less seamless culmination of Vico's prior work, published, unpublished, or missing/lost. See, for example, G. Gentile, *Studi Vichiani*, ed. by V. A. Belleza, Florence, Sansoni, 3rd edition, 1968, pp. 167-188. Within the well-established framework of this account, however, the subtle and not so subtle shifts, not to say leaps, in Vico's thought beg for recognition. As Placella wrote with respect to *Scienza nuova* 1730: «La mancata edizione veneziana della *Scienza nuova* c'interessa sopratutto perché in essa era gran parte del segreto del "salto" dalla prima alla seconda *Scienza nuova,* salto che […] ha conferito al capolavoro vichiano il suo aspetto definitivo sul piano metodologico e della disposizione della material. (The missing Venetian edition of the *Scienza nuova* is above all of interest because in it lies to a large extent the secret of the 'leap' from the first to the second *Scienza nuova,* a leap that […] has conferred on his greatest work its definitive form on the methodological level as well as in the organization of the material)» (Id., *La mancata edizione veneziana della Scienza Nuova*, cit., pp. 147-148). So the unresolved question is not the fact itself of a conceptual "leap" on Vico's part, but only when exactly it may have occurred. See also P. Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., pp. 25-34, where the ontogenesis of the 1744 edition is presented in terms of compositional "strata" *("strati" compositivi).*

[46] Without wanting to overstretch affinities, it is as though at the end of the Notes, one could skip to Book V and read it as their continuation. For example, § 115 in the Notes says, under the heading of Petelian Laws: «This second law, "on slavery for debt" (*de nexu*), was enacted in the year of Rome 419 (and thus three years after the Publilian Law)»; and reference is made to it

again in Book V, joining *corso,* and *ricorso* (in the Middle Ages): «These *nexi* freed by the Petelian Law correspond exactly to the vassals, who must at first have been called liege men as being bound (*legati*) by this knot» (§ 1066). However, it is not in the *Scienza nuova* of 1730/1744 where Vico draws these historical parallels for the first time; it is actually already in *Diritto universale* where he points them out, see Book I (*On the One Principle and One End of Universal Law*), Chapter 129, on which Ruggiero comments: «Dunque la teoria del ricorso […] è presente qui, nel suo fondamento storico-giuridico, con uno stupefacente ribaltamento di prospettiva (The theory of the *ricorso* is therefore present here, in its historical-juridical foundation, with an astounding reversal of point of view)» (Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur,* cit., pp. 93-95). For aspects of (late) medieval law, see M. Ascheri, *The Laws of Late Medieval Italy* (1000-1500): *Foundations for a European Legal System,* Leiden, Brill, 2013; R. W. Kaeuper (ed. by), *Law, Governance, and Justice: New Views on Medieval Constitutionalism,* Leiden, Brill, 2013. For an interpretation of the Chronological Table/Notes from a different point of view (and therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive), see V. Vitiello, *Saggio introduttivo,* cit., pp. CXX-CXXV.

[47] To conclude this section, we would like to cite some Vico scholars who have drawn attention to the symmetry or circularity of the beginning and conclusion of *Scienza nuova* although not necessarily in the same way or for the same reasons as adduced here: Battistini, for example, wrote: «The structure of the *New Science* imitates the circularity of events and draws its own circumference, in that the "conclusion of the work" is symmetrical with the "picture" of the beginning» (Id., *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the* New Science, cit., p. 24); similarly, Marcus: «Vico opens and closes the *New Science* with concentric themes: piety, providence, and religion» (Id., *Vico and the Hebrews*, cit., p. 14); Lollini perhaps comes closest to our accentuation: «Vico tende a stabilire analogia tra istituti Romani e istituti medievali, stabilendo così una certa continuità circolare tra i diversi cicli (Vico intends to establish an analogy between Roman and medieval institutions, thus establishing a certain circular continuity between the different cycles)» (Id., *Il mito come precomprensione storica*, cit., p. 40).

3.

AXIOMS, PRINCIPLES, AND ROMAN HISTORY: SEGMENTS *B* AND *B'*

This section of the *New Science* will provide the opportunity to address in detail the first two major topics chosen for this book, relating to the "axiomatic" material in Book I, on the one hand, and Vico's distinction between "philosophic" and "philological" approaches, on the other hand. First, however, it is necessary to sketch out our rationale for considering these segments as chiastically related.

3.1 Relationship of segments B and B'

These are widely separated parts of the work, found in Book I and Book IV, respectively[48]. To explore the validity of our assumption, we will proceed similarly to the previous exercise, that is, using the second "block" of material in Book IV to probe the "Elements; Principles; Method" in Book I.

The segment can be subdivided in three parts: (1) §§ 980-1008, about the legal order in the "aristocratic/heroic" form of governance; (2) §§ 1009-1019, about refuting the theory of the priority of "monarchical" rule, attributed to Jean Bodin; and (3) §§ 1020-1045, about the penal function of law as it evolved from appalling cruelty to more humane treatment, ending with an excursus on "Ancient Roman Law".

The subject of the first part is «the necessary establishment of boundaries between conflicting parties»[49], and the establishment of legitimate judicial/law enforcement authorities at various historical stages. However, this is done in the context of Roman history, with particular attention to the Law of the Twelve Tables. Vico clearly identifies ever-present social and political insta-

bility in human society, in respect to which the Romans were a case-in-point, as breathlessly narrated in paragraph § 1006:

The commonwealth remained aristocratic as long as the fathers preserved the authority of ownership within their reigning orders, and until the plebs […] had obtained from the fathers themselves laws extending to them the certain ownership of the fields, the right to solemn nuptials, the sovereign powers, the priesthoods, and thereby the science of the laws. But as soon as the plebs […] became numerous and inured to war, and with force on their side […] began to enact laws […], then the commonwealth changed from aristocratic to popular. […] In this revolution, in order that the authority of ownership might retain what it could […], it naturally became the authority of wardship. […] In virtue of this authority, the free peoples […] submitted to administration by their guardians, the senates. But when […] the free peoples […] let themselves be seduced by the powerful […], then factions, seditions, and civil wars […] brought on the monarchical form.

It is at this point that Vico breaks off his reflections on Roman law and governance. What follows is uncharacteristic, a lengthy polemic against Jean Bodin's (1530-1596) political theory[50]. It is true, of course, that throughout *Scienza nuova*, Vico periodically contrasts his views with that of other early modern thinkers, in particular Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf[51], but never to the extent to which he goes here (§§ 1009-1019). And what is his main issue and controversy with Bodin? In the very first paragraph of the section, Vico pinpoints it: «the political theory of Jean Bodin, which places the successive forms of civil constitutions in this order: they were first monarchies, then […] became free and popular, and finally became aristocratic». This does not simply represent a disagreement about a secondary aspect of speculative historiography, but, in Vico's view, strikes at the heart of his overall theoretical edifice, and, if left unaddressed, places his entire "new science" in doubt; hence his unusually strong wording: «We might here content ourselves

with having refuted him completely in the natural succession of political forms […]. But it pleases us to add […] a refutation based on the impossibilities and absurdities of his own position»[52]. Vico's placement of this topic in the center of the material serves to draw attention to it.

The third section switches back to the topic of Roman jurisprudence, but in unexpected ways. Rather than elaborating further on the achievements of Roman legal thinking and practice, and its associated forms of state that he discussed in the first section, Vico reverses course and returns (once more) to the very beginnings, described in the subheading: "[*T*]*he Ancient Roman Law Was a Serious Poem, and the Ancient Jurisprudence a Severe Kind of Poetry, within Which Are Found the First Outlines of Legal Metaphysics in the Rough, and How, among the Greeks, Philosophy Was Born of the Laws*". The "chapter" begins and ends on the same note: § 1027 recalls the "axiom" that «as men are naturally drawn to the pursuit of the *true*, […] when they cannot attain it, causes them to cling to the *certain*» (italics added), and § 1045 brings closure: «Hence, with regard to what is just, the *certain* began in mute times with the body. […] 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» (italics added). The material enclosed by these bracketing statements makes it clear that the topic is not the distinction of *true* and *certain* as philosophical concepts in isolation but the nature of law in its two aspects, although they are intimately related, «the true [being] the universal idea, the perfect form of equity and justice», and «the certain embrac[ing] the set of heterogeneous, empirical facts»[53]. Vico brings to bear on this distinction the historical reality of the early days of the Greek and Roman peoples: «Because they did not understand abstract forms, they imagined corporeal forms. […] If they did not understand, they at least sensed in a rough way that rights were indivisible» (§ 1035). However, in a reversal of the traditional elevation of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, he por-

trays key elements of their philosophies as being inspired and prompted by reflection on Athenian legal discourse and thought (§§ 1041-1042). He boldly sums up: «From all the above we conclude that these principles of metaphysics, logic, and morals issued from the market place of Athens» (§ 1043)[54].

This brief sketch will have to suffice as a basis for arguing the postulated connection with the "Elements, Principles, Method". We begin with the observation on how the third section of segment *B'* makes explicit reference to segment *B*, § 137 that reads: «Men who do not know what is *true* of things take care to hold fast to what is *certain*» (italics added). This statement is found in the first part of the "Elements" which introduces Vico's concepts of "philosophy" and "philology". "Philosophy" and "philology" are actually the disciplines that concern themselves with the *true* and the *certain*: «Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the *true*; philology observes that of which human choice is author, whence comes consciousness of the *certain*» (§ 138; italics added)[55]. We thus encounter the first of several tie-ins between these segments of the work. The contrast and interplay between "philosophy" and "philology" is not limited to the "Elements", but also permeates the subsequent "Principles" and "Method" (e.g. §§ 330, 338, 351, 359). Vico devoted more than half of the "Elements" to specifying the content and scope of both "philosophy" and "philology". In the "Principles", he identifies three invariants across civilizations and throughout history: religion, marriage, and funerals, and explores their origins in "Method", as an example of the need, and challenge, of going back to the beginnings of civilization (§ 338).

The second major area of contact becomes visible when the first segment is examined through the eyes of the first part of segment *B'* which comprises §§ 980-1008. As stated above, it deals with the development of legal protections of "rights" in the "heroic"/aristocratic Greek and Roman societies. Forms of governance are also a key theme of the "Elements", and in fact oc-

cupy the middle part of the section (§§ 246-294), with detailed discussion of the conditions of possibility of aristocratically-governed polities, including Rome.

This brings us to the third highlight of the second part of Book IV, designated *B'*, consisting of Vico's refutation of Bodin's theory of the historical priority of monarchic rule[56]. This provides a direct link to the "Elements", § 255: «It is a vulgar tradition that the first form of government in the world was monarchical». In the next few paragraphs of the "Elements" Vico explains that to the contrary, the first type of rule was patriarchal[57]. The "Elements"[58] were not the time or place to engage with the mistaken view polemically, but Vico evidently came to feel strongly about this particular issue so as to digress from the existing subject, and "shoehorn" into it a rebuttal of Bodin, in a mode of discourse that might have been more suitable for the lost so-called *Scienza nuova in forma negativa.* The reason is not difficult to see: the forms of justice (and all that revolves around them), as well as socio-political structures in given eras are inextricably intertwined with cultural conditions and mentalities. As Vico states in another pithy axiom: «Governments must conform to the nature of the men governed» (§ 246). This thrusts us into the thicket of Vico's anthropology and the history-dependence ("historicity") of human mentality and attitude, and vice versa. And more than any other era in history, it is the earliest, most remote times and the people of those times that garner most of Vico's attention in the "Elements", "Principles", and "Method". If, following Bodin, it were allowed to adhere to the priority of monarchical rule which is incompatible with the earliest state of affairs, then Vico's conceptualization of history could be in danger of collapsing like a house of cards[59].

In view of the aforesaid, it is not difficult to read the final part of Book II as a continuation of Book I. The specifics in Book IV, furthermore, we surmise, are used by Vico to cast a spotlight on certain parts of Book I. In § 980, he identified his topic as the

«heroic commonwealths (repubbliche eroiche)»[60]. This serves to direct our attention to §§ 246-294 on how forms of rule/governance/states historically have been aligned with certain cultural-anthropological conditions, with respect to which Rome was no exception. Conversely, actual Roman legal history is illuminated by the overarching principles set forth in Book I; the segment is therefore not simply supporting material but presents us with the kind of nexus of "philosophy" and "philology" that Vico promised in Book I.

3.2 *Vico's "axiomatic method"*

In view of the juridical and governance-related background and thematic weighting of *Scienza nuova*, the presentation of the guiding principles in the language of Euclidean geometry is surprising, and *prima facie* arbitrary[61]. One way to make Vico's choice intelligible is to see it in a historical context. In this connection, without going back further than the Italian Renaissance[62], mathematics took on a "game-changing" role, irrespective of whether historically it is entirely correct to speak of a "revival" of mathematics or not[63]. In the 16th century, Tartaglia and Benedetti relied heavily on Euclidean terminology (axioms, definitions, postulates, etc.) in explicating physical phenomena. And, of course, in the 17th century, the greatest scientist of them all was Galileo who put "mathematical physics" on a more solid footing than any of his predecessors. In addition to the increased technical proficiencies in mathematics[64], however, what is more relevant to the present discussion is the aura of intellectual rigor and certainty given the Euclidean axiomatic system and the power of deduction. Did Vico therefore join in the *Zeitgeist* and conceive of his own "Elements" as a logically sound and unassailable set of propositions? Our answer to this question will have to wait until later in this section. Let us nevertheless acknowledge from the outset that Vico scholarship has seen the "Elements" more in

terms of stylistic rather than formal logical features[65]. Goetsch went even further and saw it as «witty conceit»[66].

Despite the plausibility of these assessments that seem to complement rather conflict with each other, we will attempt to approach the matter from a different angle, more obliquely if you will. As noted above in the introduction, Spinoza's own master-piece, *Ethics*[67], will serve as the means of comparison and contrast[68]. By way of clarification, it needs to be added that this discussion of Spinoza's greatest work is not for its own sake, but rather only to the extent that it serves to bring Vico's *Scienza nuova*, more specifically, the "Elements", into sharper focus[69]. To that end, our main interest will be in its formal structure rather than its philosophical propositions. The presentation of philosophy in the axiomatic manner pioneered by Euclid for geometry[70] – for which we will use the term "geometric method" for convenience, and by convention –, of course, was not Spinoza's invention, and it seems that Spinoza was particularly impressed by Hobbes and his works *De Cive* (*On the citizen*) and *De Corpore* (*On the body*)[71].

In Spinoza studies, there is a considerable degree of ambivalence about the purpose and meaning of the geometric method in *Ethics*. Some readers have focused on the fact that the book title says *ordine geometrico* rather than *more geometrico*. They argue that geometric "order" is to be distinguished from geometric "method", in the sense that "order" denotes just the manner of presentation and thus lacks deeper philosophical significance[72]. Undoubtedly, the *material in Ethics is arranged in an orderly and progressive sequence, from ontology to ethics*[73], beginning with Part I, concerning "God"[74], followed by Part II, concerning the origin and nature of "Mind/Thinking", both on the part of "God" and humans; Part III and IV, concerning human "emotions"; and Part V, concerning human "freedom". Another reason why the paradigm of "order" is preferred is that if the geometric/axiomatic method is taken to consist of «linear deduction

from premise to conclusion»[75], it is difficult to see how *Ethics* could measure up to this standard. We will just give the following example, on Spinoza's characterization of "good"[76]. As can be seen, the individual statements that need to be related are scattered across Parts IV and V in different contexts, and thus fail, on the face of it, to constitute a "linear" step-by-step deductive chain[77]:

1.   Part IV, Definition 1: «By *good* I mean that which we certainly know to be useful to us»;

2.   Part IV, Proposition VIII, Proof: «We call a thing good or evil, when it is of service or the reverse in preserving our being, that is, when it increases or diminishes, helps of hinders, our power of activity»;

3.   Part IV, Proposition XXXVIII: «*Whatsoever disposes the human body, so as to render it capable of being affected in an increased number of ways, or of affecting external bodies in an increased number of ways, is useful to man*»;

4.   Part IV, Proposition XX: «*The more every man endeavors, and is able to seek what is useful to him – in other words, to preserve his own being – the more is he endowed with virtue*»;

5.   Part IV, Definition VIII: «By *virtue* (*virtus*) and *power* I mean the same thing; […] in so far as it has the power of effecting what can only be understood by the laws of that nature»;

6.   Part V, Definition II: «I say that we *act* when anything takes place, either within us or externally to us, whereof we are the adequate cause».

Upon closer scrutiny, it cannot escape that in addition to the use of elementary logic – *if* something increases our power of acting, *then* it is good, *else* it is evil –, a wealth of new factors and concepts is injected into the exposition of what is *good*: *useful, power, acting, virtue, laws, nature, adequate, cause*, to name a few. These are all highly complex concepts in their own right, and their introduction in the line of reasoning bursts the confines of a purely deductive system[78]. So, on this way of reading, *Ethics* should not

be studied as a work that compels by its logic but impresses by its composition and organization like a well thought out and cogently presented treatise on geometry.

Another "school of thought" in Spinoza commentary, not necessarily unrelated to the above, is that *Ethics*, similar to other Spinoza works, has a didactic, pedagogic aim[79]. As in the case of the previously described reaction, this view, too, is based on considerable evidence. The main reason, however, is the fact that another Spinoza book, *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, is written in the axiomatic style and intended for an educational setting:

The close form of propositions and demonstrations served not the purpose of establishing the truth of the conclusions but was intended for the pupil whom he was instructing. In short, Spinoza put Descartes' *Principles* in geometrical form because he believed that this was the form best adapted to educational requirements[80].

In view of the undeniable difficulties and challenges of arguing a rigid axiomatic/deductive methodology in *Ethics*, the alternative view, that *Ethics* is merely as practical and pragmatic as *Descartes' Philosophy*, is by no means unattractive or unfounded.

Both these ways of responding to *Ethics* have in common that its axiomatic/geometric style is considered *extrinsic* to its content, a «scaffolding [...] external to the completed structure»[81]. According to these views, *Ethics* simply conforms to a prestigious literary genre. This begs the question whether, alternatively, the geometric order/method (and not just as well-organized material) possibly is *intrinsic* to the work. An indication of this being the case, or at least being suggestive of it, can be found in Spinoza's own words: «I shall consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner, as though I were concerned with lines, planes, and solids»[82].

We need to reflect, therefore, however briefly, on what it is in the geometric method that would have such a strong appeal to this great thinker. As was already pointed out, it would be more

correct to speak of the "axiomatic method" as it is not at all uniquely followed only in "geometry". And even the term "axiomatic" has reference only to a moment of the total process. The more comprehensive and accurate terms would be "deductive", "deduction", or even more descriptively, "deductive logic". Now, the most fundamental property or characteristic of deductive logic is that it is "truth-preserving". When the rules of logical inference are followed, they guarantee that the conclusions drawn from certain premises are correct[83]. So the only other key requirement is the provision of acceptable premises; they may be provided by explicit definition for the subject matter at hand, or ideas that are taken for granted in the circumstances, or, often, a mixture of both. The truth-preserving quality of deductive logic had a powerful hold on early modern thinkers[84]. Spinoza was no exception when he wrote that «a doctrine [that God's judgments far transcend human understanding] might well have sufficed to conceal the truth from the human race for all eternity, if mathematics had not furnished another standard of verity»[85]. In Spinoza's philosophy, this can be said to have been true in two ways: first, in the sense of providing "cognitive certitude", and secondly, mirroring the essence and deepest structure of reality[86]. It is of course true that modern students of Spinoza, including those who find his philosophy persuasive and congenial, have taken exception to the validity of his "logico-geometrical" reasoning in *Ethics*. As one scholar stated: «It is generally acknowledged that it is impossible in the *Ethics* to deduce geometrically any of the particular beings of the natural world»[87]. It is often apparent that important steps in the chain of deduction are absent; in Spinoza's defense, however, on this level, it could be pointed out that it is not uncommon in mathematics either to leave out many intermediate steps in proofs[88], and it is possible often to add to the logical coherence of Spinoza's line of reasoning through auxiliary constructions[89].

From our point of view, in any case, the key point is Spinoza's own motivation and conviction in casting his most important work in *mos geometrico*, which was his belief in the truthfulness and truth-generating power of deductive logic. Today his success in carrying out his project may be a subject for debate but he personally was absolutely convinced of its supreme epistemological status[90].

It is therefore not surprising that the *tool* of correct, truth-preserving reason(ing) itself became an *object*[91] of concern when varying conceptions of the stock-in-trade of the geometric method came into use. A case in point is Spinoza's friend, Lodewijk Meyer, who wrote the Preface to Spinoza's *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*[92]. In it Meyer outlines his views of the key parts of the geometric method, namely, definitions, postulates, and axioms. A comparison with Spinoza's own exposition and use of these concepts, however, indicates differences of understanding, and Spinoza was drawn into defending his propositions at a meta-level, as obviously truth-preservation would be in jeopardy if the meaning and function of definitions, axioms, and postulates were to become indeterminate[93].

As stated above, a second essential part of deductive logic are the premises or initial assumptions on the basis of which deductive reasoning can do its work[94]. How does *Ethics* deal with this requirement? The surprising answer – considering the philosophical stature of *Ethics* – is that the establishment of such first principles is not found in the work. Spinoza studies have examined this lacuna from different points of view. According to one view, an explicit exposition of such underlying principles was unnecessary since *Ethics* as a whole makes clear how the most fundamental terms need to be understood[95]. Others, however, find this explanation problematic as it could be branded as circularity[96]. It is far more in keeping with Spinoza's grand philosophical project to view the absence and omission of a fully-developed rationale

for the fundamental terms introduced as deliberate. In the words of Mark,

Spinoza's purpose in the *Ethics* is not to discover new facts, but to present conclusions which he believes to follow from general principles. […] For if the premises are granted and if the axiomatic method is correctly applied, then Spinoza is perfectly right that one cannot rationally refuse to grant the conclusions as well[97].

Spinoza, it seems, had in mind expounding on foundational matters in another work, entitled *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (*TdIE*)[98].

Despite the fact that this description of the formal character of Spinoza's *Ethics* is broad-brushed, it should provide a sense of its overriding characteristic which is its deductive logic. This then will be our conceptual "template" against which to compare Vico's "Elements"; in other words, do the "Elements" with their language of axioms[99], definitions, propositions, postulates, principles, corollaries, constitute such a deductive system also, as one might reasonably expect by this terminology? In Vico studies, this is anything but a new question, and we will simply draw on some of the results that seem to be most pertinent, rather than examine the question anew[100]. E. McMullin, for example, subjected Vico's "Elements" to tests in terms of various types of reasoning and logic ("axiomatic", "inductive", "retroductive")[101] by themselves, and in combination. Leaving aside all complexities and subtleties, the fundamental insight is unavoidable: «Though Vico uses deductivist language constantly, the inferences he makes are not really deductive most of the time. When he says "from this axiom it follows […]", or "this axiom proves […]", the inference is usually far from a straight-line deductive one»[102]. To illustrate, Axioms LVIII (§ 228) and LIX (§§ 229-230) read:

Mutes utter formless sounds by singing and stammerers by singing teach their tongues to pronounce. Men vent great passions by breaking into song [...]. From [these] axioms [...] *it follows* that the founders of the gentile nations, [...] were inexpressive save under the impulse of violent passions, and formed their first languages by singing (italics added).

If one considers these statements in the light of stringent deductive rules, as suggested by the phrase "it follows", they become problematic, as there is, on the one hand, no logical connection between mutes, stammerers, and men in general who want to vent their reactions, as well as sound, emotion, and speech, aside from leaving open the possibility of alternative explanations. At best, Vico's theory is not without a certain plausibility that makes it worth considering, as its status as *degnità* calls for[103].

The view entertained here, that Vico's "Elements" are neither intended nor conceived in terms of strict, compelling deductive logic as is the case with Spinoza's *Ethics,* may seem not to take into account a key statement in the "Method" section of Book I, which is the frequently quoted § 349, reading in part:

Now, as geometry, when it constructs the world of quantity out of its elements, or contemplates that world, is creating it for itself, just so does our Science [create for itself the world of nations], but with a reality greater by just so much as the institutions having to do with human affairs are more real than points, lines, surfaces, and figures are[104].

In speaking of "geometry", what in fact is Vico referring to? Or, more specifically, is he referring to the "geometric method", which, as we have seen, is deductive logic by another name? This cannot be answered adequately without taking into account what Vico had to say elsewhere, in more detail, about *points, line, surfaces, and figures.* The best source for his thinking on this subject is undoubtedly *Liber metaphysicus* in which the epistemological status

of geometry and arithmetic (mathematics) is at the center of the debate (and polemic with Cartesianism). In referring to *geometry*, Vico introduces a key distinction between two kinds, or levels, of geometry: «Permit me to conclude with the following: not the geometrical *method*, but the geometrical *demonstration* should be imported into physics»[105] (italics added). Throughout *Liber metaphysicus*, Vico, as well as his *Responses* to reviews, leaves no ambiguity about what he means by *demonstration*; it is not the inferential or deductive procedure terminologically denoted by the *geometric method*. Immediately after the above programmatic statement, Vico added a brief example of what he meant: «Galileo […] consider[s] *first principles* of physics in terms of mathematical *first principles*» (italics added). Geometrical *demonstration* thus has a foundational role in geometry. It is, in fact, a paradigmatic exemplification of the very *verum-factum* principle, as Vico himself stated earlier in *Liber metaphysicus*: «In my treatise *On the Study Methods of Our time*, I said this as well: *the reason that we demonstrate things in geometry is that we make them; if we were able to demonstrate things in physics, we would have to make them too*»[106] (italics in the original). Among the entities thus brought about are the primitives of geometry: point, line, surface, and higher-dimensional elements:

[M]an […], like God, […] creates point, line, and surface out of no substrate, as if out of nothing; by the name point, he understands something which has no parts; by […] line, […] the extension of a point or length without width or depth; by […] surface, […] the joining of two separate lines at one point or length with width, but without depth[107].

Geometrical *demonstration*, therefore, refers to original, fundamental geometrical/mathematical thinking that precedes the practice of geometry as commonly understood, and which – notwithstanding required ingenuity – takes such primitives as given, and turns them into geometrical constructions[108]. The fundamental difference between geometry as *method* and *demon-*

stration[109] can be better appreciated when seen in the light of modern mathematical thinking. As seen above, Vico was focused on geometrical/mathematical entities by their *dimensionality*. This seemingly self-evident and self-explanatory concept, however, is highly complex in itself, and it is only recently that it received mathematically rigorous formulation[110].

In connection with describing geometrical demonstration, Vico used terminology common to geometrical method such as "elements" and "postulates"[111]. It might even be justified to say that he had more grounds to use such terminology in connection with geometric demonstration than those that reserve it for the geometric method since it involves the initial, crucial moment(s) of establishing the terms of reference for any subsequent exercise of deductive logic, in other words, ontology comes first, epistemology second[112].

It has been said that Vico «had little use and less aptitude for the niceties of geometry»[113]. It is true, Vico made a number of references to the commonplace staples of geometry, circle, triangle, angle, among which the circle, as noted above, became a favorite symbol of closure and completeness. However, he was never tempted to violate his own dictum: «The geometrical method applies only to measures and numbers. All other topics are quite incapable of it»[114]. In this particular respect, it would appear very difficult to find common ground between Vico's attitude with Spinoza's, of which Shmueli said: «The whole thrust of Spinoza's epistemological endeavors is to show that the science of mathematics is able to arrive at a certitude in all spheres of reality»[115]. Vico's use of the triangle as an example is a case in point: «Now, every triangle has angles equal to two right angles. [...] because I recognize this property of it, it can also be the archetype of other triangles for me»[116]. While Vico derives the concept of invariance (that is, 180° as the sum of the angles), the discussion does not venture beyond the ambit of geometry *sui generis*[117]. On the other hand, Spinoza takes a deeply philosophical

approach to geometrical manipulations. With respect to the triangle, *Ethics* says, for example: «The affects [emotions like dejection, pride, envy] follow as necessarily from the said emotions, as it follows from the nature of a triangle, that the three angles are equal to two right angles»[118].

To briefly summarize the above discussion, there are then two different aspects to the use of "geometry" in both Spinoza and Vico. To restate the aspect that was just pointed out, for Spinoza, geometrical constructions and the way such constructions are arrived at, were imbued with metaphysical significance. Far from being an idiosyncratic, mystical view of phenomena, the interconnections between geometry and higher level structures were for Spinoza part and parcel of a single and unified (monist) reality. The same cannot be said for Vico who accorded geometry, together with "arithmetic" forming mathematics, a key position in his theory of knowledge, but also insisting on its conditions of possibility, boundaries, and epistemological separateness, both with respect to metaphysics and physical reality[119].

The other aspect which has been dealt with in greater detail above because it bears a more direct relationship to the literary structure of Vico's "Elements", is the *geometric method / deductive logic*. Spinoza's *Ethics* can be seen as having, by design, as points of departure, terms of reference in vogue at the time; the work is not devoted to re-invent these concepts in a fresh foundational framework, but rather, for argument's sake assume them as given[120], and take them to their logical conclusion[121]. Set against this structural characteristic of *Ethics*, the contrast with Vico's "Elements" becomes evident: it is not inferences from already known first principles that Vico is preoccupied with, but the discovery and enunciation of such first principles in the first place[122]. These "axioms" or *degnità*, in fact, have every right to be called "elements" in the formal sense of fundamental constituents rather than merely derived, subordinate components, perhaps even more so than the products of deductive logic[123].

This brings us to the question of where and how Vico obtained his axioms, particularly since Vico did not address this question directly[124]. The next section will revolve around this question in connection with Vico's reflection on "philosophy" and "philology" in an indirect approach to answering the question.

Notes to Chapter 3

[48] As indicated above (as shown in Fig. 1), neither segment *B* or *B'* falls neatly within the confines of an entire Book but is comprised of certain portions only, more specifically, the second halves of Book I and IV, resp. The rationale or justification for our subdivision can be stated in uncomplicated terms: both segments differ sharply in content from the rest of their respective chapters. The Axioms, Principles, and Method sections follow the Chronological Table/Notes, and obviously represent a change of subject. Segment *B'* also marks a caesura in Book IV. It concentrates on the historical development of Roman law and governance whereas the preceding material of Book IV, famously, delves into «the course [all] the nations run» (§ 915), covering a wide range of social/cultural indications, and in terms of the tripartite historical scheme of predominantly "divine", "heroic", and "human" characteristics. By folding this material into Books I and IV, rather than turning it into separate Books, Vico is able to maintain a five-part subdivision of the work.

Our emphasis on discontinuities in, or isolation of, successive segments, be it in the form of separate Books or parts of Books, is not incompatible with the presence of certain connections between them, as illustrated by the horizontal arrows in Fig. 1; both types of interrelationships contribute to the complexity of *Scienza nuova*. See, for example, Vitiello's comment on how the "Elements" relate to the Chronological Table/Notes: «La sezione successiva è infatti dedicata alle *degnità*, ovvero ai principi che debbono "dar forma" al materiale esposto nella Tavola cronologica e delle successive Annotazioni (The next section is in fact dedicated to the *axioms,* that is, the principles that should "give form" to the material laid out in the Chronological Table and the Notes that follow)» (Id., *Saggio introduttivo*, cit., pp. CXXI-CXXII). Vico himself at times, toward the ending of one section, points forward to the following section, as he did at the close of our segment *C'*, in preparation of segment *B'*, saying in § 973: «All that we have so far set forth, and all that we shall have to say later, springs from the definition of the *true* and the *certain* in

laws and pacts» (italics added). This distinction that is so fundamental to Vico, is also the way with which he brings segment *B'* to a close (in reverse order): «Hence, with regard to what is just, the *certain* began in mute times with the body. […] 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» (§ 1045; italics added).

[49] G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 165; a discussion of the entire section at *ibid.*, pp. 165-173; see also V. Hösle, *Einleitung,* cit., pp. CCIV-CCXIX.

[50] «Vico […] devote[s] a substantial portion of his discussion to Jean Bodin's theory that monarchy is the government institution best suited to human nature in the reflective third age» (G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 168). Hösle's overall view on the polemic is: «Auch wenn seine Polemik gegen Bodin auf verworrenen Erinnerungen und Missverständnissen beruht und als verfehlt abzuweisen ist, ändert das nichts an dem Wert seiner Erkenntnis, dass die Monarchien dem Prinzip der Rechtsgleichheit günstiger gesinnt seien als die Aristokratien, in denen es zwei Klassen von Bürgern gibt (Even though his polemic against Bodin rests on confused recall and misunderstandings and thus needs to be rejected, this does invalidate his insight that the monarchies are more favorably disposed toward the principle of equal treatment under the law than the aristocracies which are based on two classes of citizens)» (V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., p. CCXIV).

[51] E.g. §§ 394-398; according to M. Scalercio: «A Grozio rimprovera di aver concepito un sistema professandone l'efficacia anche in assenza di ogni cognizione di Dio, ossia senza alcuna cognizione della divinità provvedente; a Selden contesta la supposizione che tutte le norme morali siano state trasmessi dai gentili; a Pufendorf contesta l'assenza del principio di provvedenza (He criticizes Grotius for having articulated a system claiming validity even in the absence of any recognition of God, that is, without any recognition of provident divinity; he disagrees with Selden regarding the assumption that all moral norms are transmitted by the gentile peoples; he disagrees with Pufendorf regarding the absence of the principle of providence)» (Id., *La teologia politica vichiana. La figura della divinizione nella teologia civile della Scienza nuova*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 197-217, p. 216).

[52] The vehemence of his characterization is conspicuous when compared with his earlier expressed appreciation for Bodin («equally learned as jurist and as statesman», § 952). See S. Caramella, *Vico, Tacitus, and Reason of State*, trans. by A. W. Salomone, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, ed. by G. Tagliacozzo and H. V. White, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, pp. 29-37, p. 31; also G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 177-178. On

other aspects of the Vico-Bodin divide, see M. Vanzulli, *La presenza intermittente della ragion di stato nel pensiero politico vichiano*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico,* cit., pp. 287-305, p. 292, footnote 21.

[53] G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 169.

[54] For a further discussion, see *ibid.*, pp. 170-173. It may be instructive to compare this part of *Scienza nuova* 1744 (G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., pp. 1226-1228) with the earlier 1730 edition (*ibid.*, p. 733). In 1730, Vico relates the "Platonic idea" to the abstract (non-corporeal) notion of "law" developed by Athenian citizen-legislators, and this genetic insight is considerably expanded in 1744. The significance of this "improvement/refinement" is also indicated by the fact that the 1744 chapter heading adds the phrase "How, among the Greeks, Philosophy Was Born of the Laws".

It is a different matter, and story, how Greek philosophy escaped the gravitational pull of its juridical origins and took off on a trajectory all its own, not entirely unanalogous to Vico's own philosophical journey, or, for that matter, modern Vico studies going off in various directions that are outside and beyond theories of justice, and political science. The richness of disciplines involved can only be acknowledged here, as our focus will stay fairly narrow, and thus unavoidably will keep "out of focus" most of the larger panorama of Vichian thought.

[55] Vico's intended meaning of "philosophy" and "philology" will be discussed below.

[56] As with other attributions that Vico makes in his work, their absolute accuracy (if such accuracy can even be achieved by anyone) is not at issue, rather the substance of the argument. For simplicity, we will continue using Bodin's name.

It should be noted that the "Bodin material" is not found in the 1730 edition. Here is a comparative table of contents of the corresponding parts of Book IV that shows that the Bodin material is the most significant difference, highlighted in italics together with the immediately preceding paragraphs, §§ 1004-1008, which constitute the "set-up piece" for the polemic that follows:

1730 edition: Three types of guarding of the aristocratic republics (of the confines, institutions, laws). Corollary: That the ancient Roman law was a serious poem, etc. Final proofs of the truth of these principles

1744 edition: Proofs from the properties of the heroic aristocracies. Guarding of the confines, institutions, laws. *Other proofs taken from the tempering of a succeeding commonwealth by the preceding one. An eternal natural royal law. Refutation of the political theory of Bodin.* Final proofs to confirm the course of nations. Corollary: That the Roman law was a serious poem, etc.

The insertion of this Bodin-related material at this particular place in the work is also noteworthy in view of the fact that a previous point in the work might be considered as presenting a natural opportunity for doing so, namely § 663, that asserts that «Jean Bodin […] too falls into the common vulgar error […] that monarchies came first […]». The 1730 edition reads the same way, see G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 623.

[57] Pompa calls the father the «quasi-monarchical leader of a primitive tribe or "family"» (Id., *Vico: A Study of the "New Science"*, cit., p. 26), since patriarchies and monarchies have in common the rule by a single individual, at least nominally.

[58] In the 1730 edition, it is Axiom ("Degnità") LXXII (not LXXVI, as in 1744), see G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., p. 466.

[59] As B. A. Haddock stated: «Bodin's mistake is conceptual rather than empirical. Given the nature of the first men, it is inconceivable "that the family fathers […] would have allowed themselves" to submit to the inequality inherent in a monarchical arrangement» (Id., *Vico and the Methodology of the History of Ideas*, in *Vico: Past and Present*, ed. by G. Tagliacozzo, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1981, pp. 227-239, p. 237). This specific issue needs to be kept separate from other aspects of Bodin's and Vico's political philosophies, and their possible affinities, such as their views of "hybrid" forms of states. See R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur,* cit., p. 63; N. Bobbio, *Vico e la teoria delle forme di governo*, in «BCSV», VIII, 1978, pp. 5-27; A. Del Prete, *Vico et Bodin*, in «Historia philosophica», 1, 2003, pp. 43-53 (online at *Portale Vico*, <www.giambattistavico.it>, under tab *Biblioteca digitale*); S. Caramella, *Vico, Tacitus, and Reason of State,* cit., p. 31; D. R. Kelley*, Vico's Road: From Philology to Jurisprudence and Back*, cit., pp. 15-29, p. 24; *ibid.*, footnote 30, includes references to further studies on Vico and Bodin. Vico's debt to Bodin was recognized even earlier, see Flint, *Vico*, cit., p. 186 (published 1884).

[60] G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 716 (1730 edition), p. 1194 (1744 edition).

[61] «No less important, though less obvious, was Vico's reliance upon the hermeneutics developed within the legal tradition»: D. R. Kelley, *Vico's Road*, cit., p. 20. Kelley also spoke of «geometrical affectations» of Vico's thought (*ibid.*, p. 27).

[62] For our purposes, there does not seem to be a need to go as far back as Nicolas of Cusa, and his ground-breaking philosophy of mathematics, which in any case Vico likely had not read. (V. Hösle, *God as Reason: Essays in Philosophical Theology,* Notre Dame, Notre Dame University Press, 2013, p. 271; see also G. Santinello, *Cusano e Vico: A proposito di una tesi di K. O. Apel*, in «BCSV», VII (1977), pp. 141-150, p. 143).

[63] As is done by Goetsch, on whose account our brief comments are based. See his *Vico's Axioms*, cit., pp. 88-90.

[64] E.g. the discovery of the general formula for solving cubic equations, attributed to Tartaglia and Cardano.

[65] See J. R. Goetsch, *Vico's Axioms*, cit., pp. 113-115.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 116. In leading up to this conclusion, Goetsch explained: «So not only does Vico say one thing and mean another in the use of geometric nomenclature […]. He also means to mock the pretensions of Cartesian science in pointing to a realm where he thinks a real scienza can be found: the world of human things» (*ibid.*, 115). In contrast to this view according to which Vico ironically appropriated the method of geometry only to show up its inadequacies, Hösle sees the problem in more straightforward terms: «Vico zeigt, dass er nicht einmal die formale Natur eines Axiomensystems begriffen hat […] (Vico shows that he did not even grasp the formal nature of an axiomatic system […])» (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CXIII).

[67] The original Latin full book title is *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata.*

[68] Battistini made it clear: «Vico means by the geometric method something completely different from that of Descartes and Spinoza» (Id., *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, cit., p. 22). At the same time, he could not ignore the precedents set by some of the greatest minds of the early modern age, who themselves were participants in, and of, the cultural currents of their day: «Chi, come il Vico, mirava […] alla fondazione di una "scienza nuova" (ed aveva, come termine di confronto, opere quali l'*Ethica* spinoziana, la *Recherche* di Malebranche e, forse, le proposte leibniziane per l'elaborazione assiomatica dei «principia» del diritto universale) non poteva davvero evitare la costruzione di un «modello» sistematico (Who, just as Vico looked for the foundation of a «new science» (confronted with works like Spinoza's *Ethics*, Malebranche's *Recherche* as well as perhaps Leibniz's propositions for an axiomatic formulation of the «principles» of universal law), could not have avoided building a systematic «model»)». While C. Vasoli made the preceding observation in the context of a discussion of the *Scienza nuova* of 1725, its main point applies also to the subsequent (radically reworked) editions (Id., *Note sul "metodo" e la "struttura" della Scienza nuova prima*, in «BCSV», XIV-XV (1984-1985), pp. 21-37, p. 24). Cristofolini also drew a connection between Vico's "Elements" and Spinoza's *Ethics*: «una serie di […] "assiomi o degnità" […] in qualche modo discendente dagli *Elementi* di Euclide, o dall'*Ethica* di Spinoza» (a series of […] «axioms or degnità» […] that descended somehow from Euclid's *Elements* or Spinoza's *Ethics*)» (Id., *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 30).

[69] I am taking a page out of D. R. Lachterman's book, in his discussion of Spinoza's critique of Descartes' physics, in Id., *The Physics of Spinoza's ETH-*

ICS, in R. W. Shahan and J. I. Biro (ed. by), *Spinoza: New Perspectives*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1978, pp. 71-111. Lachterman described his approach as follows: «The contours of Spinoza's project stand out more sharply when set alongside those works of his most prominent contemporaries or near-predecessors» (*ibid.*, p. 74). Our goal is therefore strictly limited, namely, only to make the "contours" of Vico's geometrical method in the "Elements" stand out, rather than to do full justice to one of the major works of philosophy in history.

[70] Historically, geometry of a fairly sophisticated kind was practiced long before Euclid, but it were Greek philosopher-mathematicians who started to cast it in a logico-deductive system, using such concepts as definitions, postulates, axioms, theorems, corollaries, conclusions, proofs, etc. (For ancient mathematics, see, for example, V. Katz (ed. by), *The Mathematics of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India, and Islam: A Sourcebook*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2007; on the Greek achievement, see C. A. Wilson, *On the Discovery of Deductive Science*, in «The St. John's Review»*, XXXI, 1980, 2, pp. 21-31; for example, comparison of Babylonian and Greek mathematics motivated the conclusion: «While Greek geometry was *abstract and reasoning*, Babylonian geometry was *concrete and numerical*", (J. Friberg, *A Remarkable Collection of Babylonian Mathematical Texts*, in «Notices of the AMS [American Mathematical Society]», 55, 2008, 9 pp. 1076-1086, p. 1079; italics original). Thus, when referring to the "geometric method", it is not geometry *per se* that is in view but the logico-deductive approach in general; see also the same distinction made in Th. C. Mark, *"Ordine Geometrica Demonstrata": Spinoza's Use of the Axiomatic Method,* in «The Review of Metaphysics», 29, 1975, 2, pp. 263-286, pp. 264-265).

While this is not the place for a closer look at the indispensable role that logic and deduction play in mathematics, it still deserves mention that mathematics cannot be absolutely equated to, or exhausted by, the application of logic and deduction alone. See E. N. Giovannini, *Intuición y Método Axiomático en la Concepción de la Geometría de David Hilbert*, in «Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía», XXXVII, 2011, 1, pp. 35-65; D. Babbitt - J. Goodstein, *Guido Castelnuovo and Francesco Severi: Two Personalities, Two Letters*, in «Notices of the AMS», 56, 2009, 7, pp. 800-808; referring to two leading contributors of the Italian school of algebraic geometry in the late 1800's and early 1900's, stating: «Castelnuovo was an unabashed champion of the role of intuition in the success of the Italian school» (p. 801). More recently, the mathematician I. Stewart wrote: «Proofs are discovered by people, and research in mathematics is not just a matter of step-by-step logic» (Id., *Visions of Infinity: The Great Mathematical Problems,* New York, Basic Books, 2013, p. 10).

[71] See A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 103-109; on Hobbes' philosophy of the geometric method, see R. Miner, *Truth in the Making: Creative knowledge in theology and philosophy*, New York-London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 78-95, and A. Bird, *Squaring the Circle: Hobbes on Philosophy and Geometry*, in «Journal of the History of Ideas», 57, 1996, 2, pp. 217-231. While this article does not refer to Spinoza, various aspects hightlighted are echoed in Spinozan themes, such as epistemic hierarchy, true reasoning as purely deductive, human happiness by following geometry in moral philosophy, opposition to authority by theologians. A brief overview of other early modern thinkers who employed the geometric method (in the logico-deductive sense) in at least some parts of their works is provided in A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method,* cit., pp. 9-11, making reference also to Pufendorf, Descartes, Cumberland, Geulincx, Morin, Weigel, and, of course, Bacon. Since our essay mainly ignores historical background, we will let Garrett throw some light on the historical situation by characterizing it as «the chaos of early modern Europe». In these dire conditions, Hobbes proposed that «philosophy […] be geometrized like physics and natural reason […] demonstrate necessary and unshakeable truths about metaphysics, morals, and politics, as certain as the truths of mathematics» (*ibid.*, p. 11) On the factors involved in the ravages of the 17th century, see also G. Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change & Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2013. With respect to such reference to historical background, we do well noting, however, Lachterman's caution against «vulgar historicism, […] that a text is in some sense the unselfconscious and inevitable product of its historical circumstances» (Id., *The Physics of Spinoza's ETHICS*, cit., p. 72). This is especially true for the great minds, including Spinoza and Vico.

[72] A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza' Method*, cit., p. 8.

[73] V. Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 149. Mark (in *Ordine Geometrica Demonstrata*, cit., p. 269) called it «an extraordinary piece of organization, meticulously arranged».

[74] Quotation marks around terms from *Ethics* are meant to indicate that they are to be understood in terms of Spinoza's own philosophy, not according to common usage, or, for that matter, use by other philosophers.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 8, footnote 14.

[76] Taken from D. R. Lachterman, *The Physics of Spinoza's ETHICS,* cit., p. 93.

[77] Quoted from B. de Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence*, trans. and with an introduction by R. H. M. Elwes (1883), reprint: New York, Dover Publications, 1955; italics original.

[78] The overall sense is expressed by A. V. Garrett: «[I]f the *Ethics* presents the necessity of nature, why so many alternative proofs, scholia, and digressions? […] [W]hy so much in addition to definitions, axioms, propositions, and demonstrations?» (Id., *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 15).

[79] This approach is commonly attributed to two leading Spinoza scholars, H. Joachim and H. Wolfson, writing in 1901 and 1934, resp.; see A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., pp. 99-100; Th. C. Mark, *Ordine Gemetrica Demonstrata*, cit., pp. 265-270.

[80] E. Shmueli, *The Geometrical Method, Personal Caution, and the Idea of Tolerance*, in *Spinoza: New Perspectives*, cit., pp. 197-215, p. 200, stating the view of another Spinoza scholar, H. H. Britan; on Wolfson's "pedagogical" explanation of the geometrical/axiomatic format, see *ibid.*, 201-203. Some of Wolfson's views can be found in Id., *Behind the Geometrical Method*, in *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. by M. Grene, Garden City, New York Anchor Books, 1973, pp. 3-24; Id., *The Geometrical Method*, in *Spinoza*, ed. by M. Schewe and A. Engstler, Frankfurt-New York, Peter Lang, 1990, pp. 87-103.

[81] D. R. Lachterman, *The Physics of Spinoza's Ethics*, cit., p. 73

[82] *Ethics*, Part III, Preface; see also D. R.Lachterman, *The Physics of Spinoza's Ethics*, cit., p. 73; A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 8; V. Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power,* cit., p. 52.

[83] J. Hintikka - J. Bachman, *What If…? Toward Excellence in Reasoning*, Mountain View, Mayfield Publishing, 1991, p. 85

[84] Th. C. Mark, *Ordine Geometrica Demonstrata*, cit., pp. 270-272.

[85] *Ethics*, Part I, Appendix; see V. Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*, cit., p. 1.

[86] E. Shmueli, *The Geometrical Method, Personal Caution, and the Idea of Tolerance*, cit., p. 203; other commentators made similar assessments, including S. B. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish identity*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 58: «Only what derives from the immutable structure of reason can be called true in the highest sense of the term»; Ch. Norris, *Spinoza & the Origins of Modern Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Basil Blackwell, 1991, pp. 29-30: «It is the model of Euclidean geometry that Spinoza takes as his ideal case of a knowledge exempt from all accidents of time and place»; V. Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power,* cit., p. 44: «Spinoza regards the mathematical standard as the correct one, because through it the true formal character of the world can be pinned down».

[87] R. Kennington, *Analytic and Synthetic Methods in Spinoza's* Ethics*,* in R. Kennington (ed. by), *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1980, pp. 293-318, p. 301.

[88] A significant recent example of such a state of affairs is the proof of the Poincaré Conjecture by G. Perelman (2002), about which I. Stewart observed: «The preprints […] did not include full details […]. So the experts had to reconstruct a certain amount of Perelman's thinking» (Id., *Visions of Infinity*, cit., p. 199).

[89] As has been demonstrated by M. Hooker, *The Deductive Character of Spinoza's Metaphysics*, in *Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, cit., pp. 17-34.

[90] This is also shown by the fact of the utmost sincerity of his belief in the logico-geometric method as a panacea for both social issues and human psychology. As Shmueli, *The Geometrical Method, Personal Caution, and the Idea of Tolerance*, cit., p. 209, wrote, «the geometrical method served for Spinoza […] as a device for restraining his strong temper when dealing with views whose treatment by him might have annoyed the public». According to Shmueli, *Ethics* itself provides an example of Spinoza's internal struggles when he lets come to the surface barely controlled animus (at the end of the work, in *Ethics,* Part V, Proposition XLI, Note), by describing «the general belief of the multitude» as «their feeble and infirm spirit» dominated chiefly by «the fear of being horribly punished after death» (*ibid.*, p. 212). With respect to its role in the socio-political realm, see Ch. Norris' comment about it being above «all the strife of competing creeds and ideologies» (Id., *Spinoza & the Origins of Modern Critical Theory*, cit., p. 31) Spinoza expected the geometrical method to be the incontrovertible means of resolving disagreements; as Wolfson, *The Geometrical Method*, cit., p. 99, wrote: «It was in order to avoid the need of arguing against opponents». Our portrayal of Spinoza's absolute commitment to the geometrical method is at variance with the view espoused by Y.Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 139: «The geometrical model […] is not as sacrosanct to Spinoza as is sometimes supposed, for it neither guarantees nor is indispensable to the attainment of truth». Of course, the second part of the statement is true by itself, but the argument presented here (and by other Spinoza readers) is that Spinoza took deductive logic, and only deductive logic, correctly exercised, to be truth-preserving. The following comment by Mark is pertinent here: «There is no need, then, to think that attributing to Spinoza a recognition of the truth-preserving character of the axiomatic method involves attributing to him the (false) belief that whatever is presented in axiomatic form is thereby true» (Id., *Ordine Geometrica Demonstrata,* cit., p. 273).

[91] For a historical perspective, see A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., pp. 74-76.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 15, footnote 25; pp. 115-117.

[93] A detailed discussion can be found in E. M. Curley, *Spinoza's Geometric Method*, in «Studia Spinozana», 2, 1986, pp. 151-169.

[94] A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 14: «The definitions with which one begins a deduction, though, are the crucial support and warrant of the deduction».

[95] This is E. Curley's view, in *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's* Ethics, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 52: «It is not true that we must first have a firm grasp of Spinoza's initial assumptions before we can understand what follows them. Often we can get more of the sense of a formula by seeing what follows from it […], than we can by focussing all of our attention on the formula itself».

[96] A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 15: «One might hope to justify the definitions through the propositions that arise from them. This approach would be circular though, and to justify a cause through its effects would be invalid for Spinoza».

[97] Th. C. Mark, *Ordine Geometrica Demonstrata*, cit., pp. 278-279.

[98] Commonly referred to, according to a fairly "literal" translation or rather transliteration, as *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (henceforth referred to as *TdIE),* whereas the Elwes translation uses the title *On the Improvement of the Understanding* as semantically equivalent. For a discussion of *TdIE*, see I. Franck, *Spinoza's Logic of Inquiry: Rationalist of Experientialist?*, in *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, cit., pp. 247-272, pp. 255-261; A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., pp. 73-96.

[99] Vico used the term "degnità" instead of "assioma"; according to P. Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico,* cit., p. 77: «Vico ha voluto latinizzare il più corrente "assioma", di origine greca (Vico wanted to Latinize the more common "axioms" of Greek origin)». Further illuminating background on Vico's word choice can be found in J. R. Goetsch, *Vico's Axioms*, cit., pp. 109-111. In the 1730 edition, this particular section of Book I has a lengthy subtitle that includes all three terms "axioms", "*degnità*", and "elements": «Assiomi, o Degnità […], Diffinizioni, […] che devon'essere gli Elementi di questa Scienza dell'Umanità», whereas the 1744 edition simply has: «Degli Elementi» (G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., pp. 446, 857). If the wording in 1730 to some degree betrays a preoccupation with the validity of the process followed itself, in the 1744 heading, the focus is entirely on the subject matter itself.

[100] The three main sources referred to are A. Fáj, *Vico as Philosopher of* Metabasis, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, cit., pp. 87-109; Id., *The Unorthodox Logic of Scientific Discovery,* in *Vico: Past and Present,* cit., pp. 199-205; E. McMullin, *Vico's Theory of Science*, in G. Tagliacozzo, M. Mooney, D. Ph. Verene (ed. by), *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities

Press, 1979, Part 1, pp. 60-90. For a more detailed discussion than can be presented here, please consult these papers.

[101] «*Axiomatic:* where the axiom is directly certified on the basis of an immediate intuitive grasp; […] *inductive*, where the assertion rests upon the perception of similarity in a group of particulars; […] *retroductive*, where the assertion is a hypothetical one, and where its warrant lies in the number and variety of verified consequences drawn from it » (E. McMullin, *Vico's Theory of Science,* cit., pp. 73-74).

[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82. Fàj adheres to the terms "axioms" and "inferences" in the deductive logic sense in commenting on several Axioms of Vico dealing with human nature, language and customs (Axioms XIV, XV, LXIII, CVI, LXIV, LXV; §§ 147-148, 236-239, 314), by the aid of which «we are able to explain […] particular usages and customs of a country and also particular linguistic facts» (Id., *Vico as Philosopher of Metabasis*, cit., p. 101). In his *The Unorthodox Logic of Scientific Discovery,* cit., Fàj shows that the "Elements" are not to be interpreted in terms of the "hypothetical-deductive" method, since «Vichian axioms are never stated as hypotheses, but as universal affirmative propositions», and that «[h]is postulates are not deduced from his axioms, but that his axioms *are made* by means of the postulates» (italics in the original). For an engagement by Goetsch with Fàj, see J. R.. Goetsch, *Vico's Axioms*, cit., pp. 104-107.

[103] E. McMullin, *Vico's Theory of Science*, cit., p. 82, added: «Instances of this sort could be multiplied, but perhaps this one will suffice to make the point that the logical connection in Vico's argument are much looser than the terminology of axiom and consequence would lead one to expect».

[104] The translation by Marsh reads: «In this way, my Science proceeds like geometry which, by constructing and contemplating its basic elements, creates its own world of measurable quantities. So does my Science, but with greater reality, just as the orders of human affairs are more real than points, lines, surfaces, and figures».

It should be recognized here that readers of this passage have connected it with Spinozan expressions, such as the ending of *Ethics*, Part III, Introduction: «I shall consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner, as though I were concerned with lines, planes, and solids» (see O. Remaud, *Vico lector de Espinosa,* cit., p. 199). Also, § 349 ends with the endorsement «that these proofs are of a kind divine and should give thee a divine pleasure", with respect to which M. Agrimi commented: «E non si può non percipire in questo "entusiasmo" di Vico la forza insinuante dei temi spinoziani, […] della contemplazione *sub specie aeternitatis* e dell'*amor Dei intellectualis* (One cannot help but perceive in this 'enthusiasm' of Vico the suggestive power of Spinozan

themes, […] of contemplation *sub specie aeternitatis,* and *amor Dei intellectualis*)».
(Id., *Vico e la tradizione "platonica". "La filosofia dell'umanità e la storia universale delle nazioni"*, in «BCSV», XXII-XXIII, 1992-1993, pp. 65-102, p. 102).

[105] G. Vico, *Liber metaphysicus*, Chapter VII, § IV, according to *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, trans. by J. Taylor, with an introduction by R. Miner, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2010, p. 121.

[106] *Ibid.*, chapter III, p. 53. The reference is to Section IV of *De ratione*, found in *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, cit., p. 23, which reads: «We are able to demonstrate geometrical propositions because we create them; were it possible for us to supply demonstrations of propositions of physics, we would be capable of creating them *ex nihilo* as well».

[107] *Liber metaphysicus*, Chapter I, § I, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, cit., p. 25. The originality of defining the *point* as an entitity that is "simple" in that it has no parts can be seen by remembering that it was not considered the only definition possible. Vico himself referred to the competing view that «even the smallest particles […] are infinitely divisible", and of «a geometry which defines the point as a minimal particle divided endlessly» (*ibid.*, pp. 61, 63).

[108] An important means of devising such constructions are so-called "auxiliary constructions", such as bisecting an angle, bisecting a line, drawing a line at a right angle from a given point, and drawing a straight line perpendicular to another line, as outlined in Book I, Propositions 9-12, of Euclid's *Elements*. See Euclid, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, trans. by T. L. Heath, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1908, vol. 1, pp. 264-275. A specific example of an important auxiliary construction, to prove the Triangle Sum Conjecture, can be found in M. Serra, *Discovering Geometry: An Investigative Approach*, Emeryville, Key Curriculum Press, 3rd edition, 2003, p. 200. On the crucial heuristic role of auxiliary constructions, see also J. Hintikka - U. Remes, *The Method of Analysis: Its Geometrical Origin and Its General Significance*, Dordrecht-Boston, D. Reidel, 1974, pp. 41-48.

[109] § 349 is discussed in some detail by Remaud (*Vico lector de Espinosa*, cit., pp. 198-201), and Otto (*"Contextualidad" científica y "convertibilidad" filosófica*, cit., p. 173), but without drawing a distinction between geometrical method and demonstration.

[110] See T. Crilly with D. Johnson, *The Emergence of Topological Dimension Theory*, in *History of Topology*, ed. by I. M. James, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1999, pp. 1-24, pp. 1, 20-22. Actually, there are several "dimension theories" which underlines the "creative" rather than "constructive" nature of the process of *demonstration*. Each "dimension theory" has been "composed", to use a Vichian term, in a different way, according to its own logic.

[111] For example, at the beginning of *Liber metaphysicus*, Chapter II, he points out that «the synthetic method (that is, by means for forms) […] proceeds from the smallest elements to the infinite by means of its own postulates, and in doing so, it shows the mode of composing the elements in accordance with which the truths which it demonstrates are formed; and the reason that it shows the mode of composing elements is that man has within himself the elements which it shows» (G. Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians,* cit., p. 39).

[112] The distinction made here between geometric method and demonstration may be helpful in reconciling the views of E. McMullin (*Vico's Theory of Science,* cit.) and L. Pompa in his comment (*Comment on Professor McMullin's Paper*, in *Vico and Contemporary Thought,* cit., pp. 90-93). As noted above, McMullin could not find strict deductive logic in a geometric mold in Vico's "Elements"; on the other hand, Pompa insisted that «[i]t is important, […] to look not at the validity of the arguments, but at the intended form, and here, […] all Vico's terminology would go to suggest that he thought of them as deductive». In a certain way, both McMullin and Pompa are correct: from a formal deductive logic point of view modelled after common geometrical practice, the arguments do not seem to be valid, but at the same time, Vico's choice of form or terminology is on target when seen at operating at the deeper level of *demonstration*. The distinction may also be expressed in another way. Vico's "Elements" could be understood as a kind of "primary" axiomatics in that they aim at elucidating the theoretical foundations, in contrast to "secondary" axiomatics that take their fundamental constituents as already present and accepted (this distinction is adapted from E. Kleinert, *Studien zu Struktur und Methode der Mathematik*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2012, p. 46). Seen in this light, Vico's "Elements" deserve to be treated as something more than «witty conceit».

[113] D. R. Kelley, *Vico's Road*, cit., p. 16.

[114] Statement in the *Second Response*, see *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, cit., p. 181. Vico made the same point already in *De ratione*: «But, whenever the subject matter is unsuited to deductive treatment, the geometrical procedure may be a faulty and captious way of reasoning» (G. Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, cit., p. 22). C. Vasoli's comments are pertinent here: «[I]l Vico poteva negare che il metodo geometrico […] si estendesse ad ogni ambito e dominio del sapere e potesse valere fuori di quel mondo di «linee» e di «numeri» per il quale era stato costruito; e, soprattutto, che potesse aver presa sulla realtà concreta degli eventi e della storia umana, sempre dominio del «probabile» (Vico could deny that the geometrical method […] extended to every area and domain of knowledge, and could be valid beyond the

world of «lines» and «numbers» for which it was constructed; and, above all, that it could be imposed on the concrete reality of events and human history which are always the domain of «the probable»)» (Id., *Note sul "metodo" e la "struttura" della Scienza nuova prima*, cit., p. 26).

[115] E. Shmueli, *The Geometrical Method, Personal Caution, and the Idea of Tolerance*, cit., p. 204; Viljanen agrees with this assessment: «[T]his, […] strongly suggests that Spinoza regards the mathematical standard as the correct one, because through it the true formal character of the world can be pinned down. Given Spinoza's tendency to think about *all* things through the model provided by geometrical objects, it is quite understandable that his doctrine of causality has much in common with the idea of the formal cause» (italics in the original) (Id., *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*, cit., p. 44).

[116] *Liber metaphysicus*, Chapter II; *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, cit., p. 49.

[117] At other times, Vico uses geometrical terms, such as "line" and "acute" (angle) in a metaphorical way, but does go no further (G. Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, cit., p. 24; see commentary in D. De Cesare, *Sul concetto di metafora in G. B. Vico*, in «BCSV», XVI, 1986, pp. 325-334, pp. 329-330.

[118] *Ibid.*, Part IV, Proposition LVII, Note. A detailed discussion of various forms of triangles in terms of Spinoza's theory of emotions can be found in V. Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*, cit., pp. 151-155, which includes several drawings of triangles to illustrate Spinoza's concepts. In Part II, Proposition VIII, Note, Spinoza uses the circle and intersecting lines to «illustrate» the Proposition regarding «the ideas of particular things, or of modes». His philosophical concepts relating to attributes, laws, formal essence, and modes find their counterparts in this geometrical construction. See St. Büttner, *Ein "Kreis" voller Missverständnisse. Philologische Miszelle zu einem geometrischen Beispiel in Spinozas Ethik*, in «Studia Spinozana», 12, 1996, pp. 185-194, p. 189.

[119] As is well-known, this is the major topic of *Liber metaphysicus*.

[120] According to E. M. Curley: «[I]t is not true that we must first have a firm grasp of Spinoza's initial assumptions before we can understand what follows them» (Id., *Behind the Geometrical Method*, cit., p. 52).

[121] As A. V. Garrett observed: «There is a kind of bootstrapping going on throughout the *Ethics*» (Id., *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 116, footnote 45).

[122] See a detailed discussion of Vico's "axioms" in P. Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico,* cit., pp. 77-109.

[123] Parenthetically, the difference that is being argued can also be given expression in terms of aspects of their "logic". In the case of Spinoza, the issue is the consistency and completeness of deductive logic employed in Eu-

clidean geometry, and other comparable forms of mathematical reasoning. Interestingly, Fletcher, in his review of J. R. Goetsch, *Vico's Axioms,* brought a modern result into the discussion, namely K. Gödel's *incompleteness theorem* (1931) (A. Fletcher, *Book Reviews*, in «NVS», 14 (1996), pp. 86-90, p. 89). It stunned the mathematical community by showing that the deductive system is unable to produce every true statement, or viewed vice versa, that not every true statement could be proved within the system (see D. R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, New York, Vintage Books, 1980, pp. 15-24, 82-102). This observation is of course anachronistic, in a strict sense; however, it is not without basis altogether as far as the early modern era is concerned. As the philosopher of logic, J. Hintikka, remarked: «This kind of reaction [divorcing logic from mathematics] to Gödel's incompleteness result is not a peculiarity of twentieth-century philosophers. It is in reality part and parcel of a long tradition which goes back at least to Descartes» (Id., *The Principles of Mathematics Revisited*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 89). As Spinoza studies have suggested, Spinoza presupposed *deductive (self-)completeness,* as a result of which «it turns out that his *Ethics* exhibits the defining properties of the universe it describes. That is to say, the *Ethics* is «that the conception of which does not need the conception of another thing from which it must be formed» (E-I, def. 3. Th. C. Mark, *Ordine Geometrica Demonstrata,* cit., pp. 283-284; see also M. Hooker, *Deductive Character of Spinoza's Metaphysics*, cit., pp. 30, 301, on "incompleteness" in *Ethics*). For further philosophical implications of Gödel's incompleteness theorem, see e.g. E. Moriconi, *Il mito del sistema completo,* in «Teoria», 2005, 2, pp. 183-190.

In Vico's case, the question of completeness/incompleteness is of another sort. To follow Hintikka's terminology, it has to do with so-called *descriptive completeness* (Id., *Principles of Mathematics*, cit., pp. 91-95), of which Hintikka said: «This notion is definable completely independently of any axiomatization of the underlying logic, and hence independently of all questions of deductive completeness» (*ibid.*, p. 95). An echo of Vico's aspiration of descriptive completeness (whether fully realized or not) is detectable in statements of readers such as: «the penchant for generalizing and turning every insight into a "principle"» (D. R. Kelley, *Vico's Road*, cit., p. 17), and: «Vico reverses Occam's sense of the economy of thought. We find not Occam's razor, but Vico's magnet. Principles are multiplied and as many as possible are drawn into the presentation of a given point» (D. Ph. Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 106).

[124] As V. Hösle remarked: «Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Axiome hat Vico nicht beantwortet (Vico did not answer the question of the origin of the axioms)» (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CXIII).

4.

THE DIALECTIC OF VICHIAN "PHILOSOPHY" AND "PHILOLOGY"

Benedetto Croce, a century ago, with commendable candor put into words what any reader of *Scienza nuova* might be forgiven for feeling about Vico's use of the terms "philosophy" and "philology"[125], writing in the classic *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*: «The lack of clearness on the relation of philosophy to philology, and the failure to distinguish between the two quite different ways of conceiving the reduction of philology to a science, are at once the consequences and the causes of the obscurity which prevails in the "New Science"»[126]. Croce here, in fact, does us the service of pinpointing the two challenges we are facing: (1) understanding how Vico conceived the relationship between "philosophy" and "philology", and (2) the distinction between them, or what different types of knowledge fall under each of them. While Croce chose to raise the question of their relationship first, it is obvious that an answer to that question needs to be deferred until it is more clearly seen what "philosophy" and "philology" actually mean in Vico's discourse. We will therefore make an attempt at examining the latter first.

In Axiom X (§§ 138-140), Vico provided one of the more explicit circumlocutions of both disciplines:

Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true; *philology* observes that of which human choice is author, whence comes consciousness of the certain.
This axiom by its second part [i. e. *philology*] includes among the philologists all the grammarians, historians, critics, who have occupied themselves with the study of the languages and deeds of peoples: [...] their

customs and laws, […] their wars, peaces, alliances, travels, and commerce (italics added).

In order to remain consistent with the recognition of the deep juridical roots of Vico's thought, it behooves us to again bring *Diritto universale* into the discussion, especially since the two Parts of Book II, entitled *De constantia iurisprudentiae* (*On the Constancy of the Jurisprudent*)[127] prominently feature the two expressions, both in their titles and contents: the First Part, *De Constantia philosophiae* (*On the Constancy of Philosophy*; *Philosophy* for short)[128], and the Second Part, *De Constantia philologiae* (*On the Constancy of Philology*; *Philology* for short)[129].

In the broadest terms, *Philosophy* lays down "theological" and philosophical foundations for the rule of law, but it is incumbent to note the specific ways(s) in which Vico does so in order to trace, and keep track of, the "red thread"[130] that runs from *Diritto universale* to *Scienza nuova*. It is actually the very first chapter, in fact, even the chapter heading, that declares the parameters of his "philosophical" agenda: «a correct consciousness of one's own nature», which is then further described (Chapter 1, § 1) as «knowledge of our nature, that is, to know, to will, and to be able to do»[131]. Thus Vico is highly selective in his anthropology; in the ensuing multifaceted discussion, he never strays far from these three basic constituents, «to know» (i.e. the human mind), «to will» (i.e. free will), and «to be able to do» (i.e. through the body). As point of departure for grasping the full meaning of these essential human characteristics, Vico holds up «Adam before the fall» attributing to him the possession of «a pure mind» (Chapter 4, §§ 3-6). Such purity of mind included being free from the errors induced by the senses and passions, on the one hand, and displaying true piety («love toward God»), on the other hand, expressed in a life devoted to truth and love of all people, treating the elderly as one would treat one's parents, peers as one's own siblings, younger ones as one's own children. For Vico, the state of the human mind was not merely intellectuality but directly as-

sociated with intersubjectivity, and social relations. Against this "gold standard" of human nature, Vico then holds up the changed situation «when nature was corrupted by fall of Adam» and «man lost [..] the pure mind» (Chapter 4, §§ 7-12). It is at this juncture that Vico introduces the dichotomy of *true* and *certain*, to wit: «But when man lost through sin the pure mind by which he had knowledge of truth in conducting his life, the *certain* had to be substituted for the *true*» (italics added). While it may need no further explanation as to what Vico meant by *true* in view of his foregoing account of «unfallen nature», the introduction of the new term «certain» requires clarification, and Vico provides clarification of sorts immediately: «*Certain* gods, *certain* ceremonies, *certain* verbal formulas were instituted by laws so that the religion might be as eternal as humanly possible» (italics added). Set against the standard of truth that Vico had earlier established, by stating, for example, that «God alone is true and truth itself» (Chapter 4, § 1), the *certain* falls short of that standard, but is the next best thing[132]. It gives structure to human society, and ideally a significant measure of stability and permanence. This passage is also noteworthy for the fact that it is at this point in *Philosophy* that Vico associates (positive) law with the *certain*[133]. But the concept of *certain* in this context mainly serves to cast the *true* into relief as the proper subject and substance of "philosophy", whereas the *certain* belongs to the sphere of "philology".

Having established the platform, Vico delineates[134] his notions of human nature and the human mind, free will, and the human actions by relatively extensive engagement, and polemics, with classical philosophical currents that he associates with, or attributes to, Platonism, the Stoics, Epicurus, and Aristotle (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19). He finds common ground with Plato especially in the recognition that «there is the class of things beyond the body and thus eternal which are not perceived by the senses but the intellect, or the doctrine of ideas, insofar as ideas bring eternal truths to the mind», and that «the human

mind is the seat and home of eternal truths» (Chapter 5, §§ 2, 3). He rejects Stoicism on the basis of its refusal to recognize human free will, as well as Epicurus' teaching that «there is only one category of things, namely body, and whatever is not corporeal is void, or nothing» (Chapters 6, 7).

Epicurus comes in for more reproach since as a logical result of his metaphysics, «[he] did not recognize that the choice of pleasures must be performed by the mind and cannot be performed by the senses. The choice and comparison of bodies cannot be an attribute of nothing, since nothingness has no attributes» (Chapter 14, § 2). In contrast to these «gentile/pagan philosophers», but excepting Plato, Vico holds up «Christian metaphysics» and «Christian morality» (Chapters 3, 8) as being «in conformity to truth and reason» since «Christian wisdom […] commands love for God and charity because of God toward everyone, whether they are strangers, […] deserving or undeserving, or even enemies» (Chapter 12, §§ 1-3; Chapter 15, § 5)[135]. It is hard to improve on Vico's own succinct summary of his anthropology that registers his key determinants of human nature, «to know, to will, and to be able to do» (Chapter 1, § 1). «As we meditate on eternal truths with our corrupt mind as much as our fallen nature permits, we might be able to act in accordance with eternal truth» (Chapter 15, § 4).

This brief synopsis started with pointing out Vico's concern with the philosophical underpinnings of intersubjectivity and humans as members of community; in the last chapters of *Philology* (Chapters 16-20)*,* he comes back full circle to the subject and question of the rule of law[136], which after all is the title and subject of the Book as a whole. Here we choose to highlight only the following invariants in Vico's anthropology having a direct bearing on matters of law and jurisprudence. The first is Vico's assertion, right at the beginning of this section, that «human beings are naturally social and that this natural disposition for society was planted in us by God through the eternal idea of equity

in law» (Chapter 16, § 1). Another nonnegotiable Vichian tenet is human free will: «The principles of law […] are […] the light of the divine countenance whose mark all humans have, and they immutably protect the freedom of the human will» (Chapter 17, § 4).

In addition to these anthropological constants that are at the root of «natural law»[137], Vico classifies the concept of law as belonging to the sphere of "philosophy". In Chapter 19 (consisting of a single paragraph), Vico concurs with Plato[138] that «laws must be classified as eternal things because they are not bodies nor do they belong to bodies. The metaphysics of universal law rests on this distinction […] the noncorporeal is perceived by the intellect». In other words, «[l]aws are spiritual entities or have the mode of a spiritual entity» (Chapter 20).

This reading of *Philosophy* enables us to get a firmer grip on Vico's terminology of "philosophy" as intended in *Scienza nuova*. Without exhausting its scope and depth, "philosopy" is Vico's view of human nature, the workings of the human mind directed toward eternal truth and reason, its finiteness (Chapter 4, § 11), the «natural disposition for society», and an innate sense of justice. Among eternal truths, the concept of (universally valid) law is singled out by Vico by virtue of its direct relationship to the social nature of humans (Chapter 20).

Thus, Vico's discursing on "philosophy" in *Philosophy* (and, of course, read in conjunction with *De uno*, Book I of *Diritto universale*) provides the expanded and more fully articulated version of Axiom X («Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true»). It supplies a lens through which to peruse the Axioms with a view to identifying them in terms of their "philosophical" or "philological" character. While Vico's meaning of the latter remains to be dealt with, what we already understand regarding his "philosophy" can be useful in singling out "philosophical" Axioms. The following represents a short cross section[139]:

I (§ 120); XXXII (§ 181): «Because of the indefinite nature of the human mind, wherever it is lost in ignorance man makes himself the measure of all things».

V (§ 129): «To be useful to the human race, philosophy must raise and direct weak and fallen man».

VI (§ 131): «Philosophy considers man as he should be and so can be of service to but very few».

VIII (§§134, 135): «Things do not settle or endure out of their natural state. [T]his axiom […] decides the great dispute […] whether law exists by nature, or whether man is naturally sociable, which comes to the same thing» (Similarly Axiom CIV, §§ 308-310, which reads in part: «This axiom […] shows that man is not unjust by nature in the absolute sense, but by nature fallen and weak)».

X (§ 138a): «Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true; philology observes that of which human choice is author, whence comes consciousness of the certain»[140].

XI (§ 141): «Human choice, by its nature most uncertain, is made certain […] by the common sense of men with respect to human needs or utilities».

XXXIV (§ 183): «That is a true property of the human mind which Tacitus points out where he says "minds once cowed are prone to superstition"».

XXXVI (§ 185): «Imagination is more robust in proportion as reasoning power is weak».

XXXIX (§ 189): «Curiosity – than inborn property of man, daughter of ignorance and mother of knowledge – […], has the habit, […] of asking straightaway what it means».

XLVII (§ 204): «The human mind is naturally impelled to take delight in uniformity».

LXIII (§ 236): «The human mind is naturally inclined by the senses to see itself externally in the body, and only with great difficulty does it come to understand itself by means of reflection».

CXIII (§ 324): «The true in the laws is a certain light and splendor with which natural reason illuminates them».

Our next task revolves around getting close to Vico's usage of the term "philology," the declared subject of the Second Part of

Book II. As quoted above, Axiom X of *Scienza nuova* includes in "philology" first of all everything that is language-related, but secondly also, non-linguistic "material", namely the full sweep of history and culture of individual population groups, on the one hand, and the relations and interactions between them, both positive (through travel and commerce) and negative (through war, requiring peace treaties to end). The introductory description in *Philology* is more expansive but agrees with the later *Scienza nuova* on radically redefining philology as a discipline[141] (Chapter 1, §§ 1-2).

This sweeping redefinition of the scope of philology, however, is just one aspect of Vico's project. Another key aspect is expressed in the title of the first chapter, "*Nova scientia tentatur* (*A New Science is Assayed*)"[142]. From a certain point of view, Vico's "philology" can be considered an «encyclopedic and ordering science»[143]. The encyclopedic scope is evident from Vico's enumeration in Chapter 1, § 2: «Thus philologists follow their calling when they write commentaries on commonwealths, the customs, laws, institutions, branches of learning, and artifacts of nations and peoples. They attend with great care to epigraphy, numismatics, and chronology». At the same time, *Philology* opens a window on the way in which Vico transforms philology – even in its already more generalized practice of his day – into a "science" that is able to hold its own even against modern demands of "scientificity", when he concludes the chapter with the programmatic statement: «Therefore, we have decided in this book to discuss the *principles* of humanity» (Chapter 1, § 27; italics added). In terms of scope of inquiry, Vico may not be much different or more path-breaking than his contemporaneous researchers, but his real focus and interest is in explaining these cultural and historical phenomena by means of underlying, and generally valid, «principles». In other words, he promises a *theory* of human society, with priority given to the development of the rule of law, and forms of governance as determining the conditions for all

other expressions of culture[144]. For heuristic purposes, the term "theory" is employed here in the restricted technical sense of scientific theory, as a system of conceptual instruments for understanding and explaining a particular set of phenomena. One of the purposes of this particular semantic markedness opted for in the present context is to make the proposed distinction between "philosophy" and "philology" as pronounced as possible. If "philology" constitutes "theory", then "philosophy" is "pre-theoretic"[145]. The "qualitative" difference between the content of "philosophy" as sketched above, and "philology" becomes evident by what Vico included in *Philology*. The issues and subject matters with which he concerns himself are, first of all, the social[146]. The other major topics are language[147], especially the origin of the so-called «heroic» and «vulgar» languages; forms of governance («theocratic», «aristocratic», «monarchies»), and, finally, the origins of Roman law[148].

This rich material, however, is not presented as merely historical data, but as occurring in accordance with theoretical constructs, or, at least, that is Vico's declared intent, as he made clear at one point:

What would be the principles of profane history? That we might know on what grounds this civil authority developed from the lawlessness of the human race in its first ages to these commonwealths in which we now live, it is necessary to reconstruct the history of the dark time *according to our principles* (Chapter 6, § 4; italics added).

In effect, Vico developed a "model"[149] of the diachronic development of spheres of greatest importance to him, as seen time and again, including social and cultural anthropology, principles of law and justice (up to the inter-national level), and forms of governance. The term Vico himself employs in *Scienza nuova* is of course «ideal eternal history». (§§ 145, 245, 294, 349)[150] Statements of a "philological" rather than "philosophical" nature, in fact, comprise by far the great majority of the "Ele-

ments" in *Scienza nuova*[151]. They include the following Axioms, without necessarily representing equal space or attention actually accorded by Vico to each subject:

XVI (§ 149): «Vulgar traditions must have had public grounds of truth, by virtue of which they came into being and were preserved by entire peoples over long periods of time».

XVII (§ 151): «The vulgar tongues should be the most weighty witnesses concerning those ancient customs of the peoples that were in use at the time the languages were formed».

XVIII (§§ 152, 153): «A language of an ancient nation […] should be a great witness to the customs of the early days of the world. This axiom assures us that the weightiest philological proofs of the natural law of the gentes […] can be drawn from Latin speech».

XX (§ 156): «if the poems of Homer are civil histories of ancient Greek customs, they will be two great treasure houses of the natural law of the gentes of Greece».

XXII (§ 161): «There must in the nature of human institutions be a mental language common to all nations, which uniformity grasps the substance of things feasible in human social life and expresses it with as many diverse modifications as these same things may have diverse aspects»[152].

XXX (§ 176): «Axioms XXVIII-XXX establish the fact that the world of peoples began everywhere with religion. This will be the first of the three principles of this Science».

XLV (§ 201): «Men are naturally impelled to preserve the memories of the laws and institutions that bind them in their societies».

LIII (§ 218): «Men at first feel without perceiving, then they perceive with a troubled and agitated spirit, finally they reflect with a clear mind».

LXVI (§ 241): «Men first feel necessity, then look for utility, next attend to comfort, still later amuse themselves with pleasure, thence grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad and waste their substance» (Similarly Axiom LXVII, § 242).

LXIX (§ 246) «Governments must conform to the nature of the men governed».

LXXX (§ 260): «Men come naturally to the feudal system wherever they see a possibility of retaining in it or gaining from it a good and great share of utility».

XCI (§ 280): «The contests waged by the orders in the cities for equality of rights are the most powerful means of making the commonwealths great».

CVI (§ 314): «Doctrines must take their beginning from that of the matters of which they treat»[153].

CXII (§ 323): «Intelligent men take for law whatever impartial utility dictates in each case».

CXIV (§ 326): «The natural equity of fully developed human reason is a practice of wisdom in affairs of utility, since wisdom in its broad sense is nothing but the science of making such use of things as their nature dictates».

It is of course anachronistic[154] to use such terms as "theory" and "pre-theoretic" in connection with Vico and his time. Rather, as already noted, Vico spoke of «philology (that is, the doctrine of all the institutions that depend on human choice; for example, all histories of the languages, customs, and deeds of peoples in war and peace)»[155] (§ 7). While it cannot be assumed *ab ovo* that Vico's term «doctrine» is synonymous with the technical, restricted meaning of «theory» as employed at present[156], they intersect to a significant degree, as can be read into § 357, which was classified as «philological» in the preceding introductory statement (§ 351): «The great fragments of antiquity, hitherto useless to science because they lay begrimed, broken, and scattered, shed great light when cleaned, pieced together, and restored». Vico's «philology» thus has the same function as "scientific theory" in placing piecemeal and seemingly disparate, unrelated factual information into a coherent framework[157].

§ 357 is of special interest at the present time also for another reason. Besides aiding in clarifying Vico's sense of «philology», it makes reference to a sphere that is outside of both «philosophy» and «philology»: «the […] fragments of antiquity», that is, actual human history (preserved incompletely)[158]. By the spotlight being

cast on «philosophy» and «philology», this sphere seems to stay in the shadows, at least on the rhetorical stage. It is, nonetheless, just as essential a part of Vico's overall philosophical reflection as «philosophy» and «philology»[159]. Let us label these two disciplines together as "epistemology", and it becomes immediately clear that what is missing is "ontology", entities that provide the subject matter for epistemology. This ontology is constituted by the real world of humans in its historical and cultural dimensions. The upshot is that Vico's reflections have the structural property of a trichotomy[160], to wit, (1) "philosophy", (2) "philology", and (3) historical reality[161].

In the preceding discussion, not only was it argued that Vico's framework of socio-political and historical reflection involved, and consisted of, three spheres, but also emphasized their idiosyncrasies and incommensurability. This stance would seem to fly in the face of both Vico's own stated views and Vico studies. As already quoted in the introduction, Vico insisted that "philosophy" needed to give due consideration to «the authority of ["philology"]» in order not to lose touch with reality, the realm of the *certain*, while "philology" should avail itself of «the reasoning of ["philosophy"]», as a means of assuring concurrence with the *true* (Axiom X, §§ 138, 140). This intended intimate bond between "philosophy" and "philology" has been described in various ways. In addition to the characterizations already referred to, Vico is said to «to marry philosophy with philology»[162], and «to demand collaboration between philosophy and philology»[163], «manifestation of the fusion of philology and philosophy»[164], and there are various other ways the relationship may be viewed. While the (metaphorical) terms used originate in widely varying semantic (and conceptual) domains, they all have their own complexity, and by virtue of this complexity, they nicely mirror the complexity of Vico's own thinking. On the other hand, if we are concerned with exploring the nature and inner dynamics of

the trichotomy, the inherent complexity of such descriptors may not necessarily be conducive to that end. We are proposing, therefore, an alternative approach to "untieing the trefoil knot" that Vico has wrought. This will be the first topic to be taken up in the next section.

Notes to Chapter 4

[125] We are placing quotation marks around the two terms in order to indicate that they refer to their occurrence in Vico, rather than to the modern sense and current common usage.

[126] B. Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 36; similarly on p. 39. Croce, of course, approached Vico with his own philosophical presuppositions (i.e. Hegelian idealism), but other readers analogously are not presupposition-free either, even if not sharing Croce's particular stance.

[127] J. D. Schaeffer gives the alternative translation *On the integrity of jurisprudence,* in Id., *Vico's Il Diritto universale and Roman Law*, in «NVS», 19, 2001, pp. 45-62, p. 56.

[128] It is important to note that this Part recapitulates, in brief, the essentials of Book I, commonly, and conveniently, referred to as *De uno* (See, for example, R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur,* cit., p. 128, footnote 1).

[129] For discussions of additional aspects of Book II that are not touched on here, see J. D. Schaeffer, *Introduction*, in *Vico's Il Diritto universale and Roman Law*, cit., pp. XV-XLI, 45-62; R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., pp. 128-151. We will refer to the First Part as *Philosophy,* to the Second Part, as *Philology*.

[130] R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 129.

[131] Quotations are from the translation by J. D. Schaeffer published in «NVS», 24, 2005, pp. 45-62.

[132] See also G. Vico, *Glossary* in *Vico: The First New Science*, ed. and trans. by L. Pompa, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. LVII.

[133] See also the earlier references to positive «laws» in Chapter 4, §§ 5, 6.

[134] Since *Philosophy* consists of "chapters" that are merely short sections, some of which are even single paragraphs, it cannot be taken as more than a schematic outline, but as a result it acquired a density that makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to do it justice by any attempt to "boil it down " any further, including the present effort.

[135] Although these reflections take place at the philosophical level, thus removed from actual historical reality, Vico does not fail to acknowledge the –

often horrendous – gap between profession and practice in Christianity (Chapter 16, § 3).

[136] R. Ruggiero commented: «Gli ultimi due *capitoli* del *De constantia philoso-phiae* sono quelli con un più spiccato orientamento giuridico (The last two *chapters* of *On the Constancy of Philosophy* are those with a stronger juridical orien-tation)» (Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 139). In our review, the expressly juridical topicality at the end of *Philosophy* encompasses Chapters 16 to 20, not only Chapters 19 and 20.

Overall, *Philosophy* can be subdivided into three distinct, but interconnect-ed sections: (1) "Metaphysical Doctrine" (Chapters 3-7); (2) "Moral Doctrine" (Chapters 8-15); (3) "Civil Doctrine/Jurisprudence" (Chapters 16-20). In each section, Vico methodically goes about making his case with respect to, and in the order of, (a) the «Christian religion», (b) Plato, (c) the Stoics, and (d) Epi-curus, resp. The only obvious departure from this pattern is the lack of explic-it mention of the Stoics in the final section. Vico's glowing portrayal of the «Christian religion» has much of the hallmarks of a projection of his own cherished ideas, which is apparent when he quotes from Scripture out of con-text.

[137] Term used in Chapter 17, § 3.

[138] Indirectly, by way of reference to A. Vinnius (1588-1657), see R. Rug-giero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 139.

[139] There are 114 Axioms in total, but obviously they cannot be dealt with here *in toto*.

[140] While the Axiom refers to "philology", it is made at a meta-level, which can be seen also in the case of other Axioms, such as Axiom VII (§ 132): «Legislation considers man as he is in order to turn him to good use in human society». Such meta-level statements properly belong to the sphere of "philos-ophy". In fact, in Axiom XXII (§ 163), Vico explains that the first 15 Axioms «give us the foundations of the true», using the term *true*, as usual, for the sub-ject and content of his "philosophy".

[141] Ruggiero places Vico's staking out of the territory of his "philology" in the context of the intellectual ferment of the 17th and 18th centuries; see Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., pp. 147-151. He commented: «Nell'età di Vico, dunque […] siamo di fronte ad un momento di passaggio epocale nello sviluppo del metodo filologico e di ciò che più in generale voglia dire "filolo-gia"» (In Vico's age, we are therefore confronted with a time of sea change in the development of the philological method and of what more generally is meant by "philology")» (*ibid.*, p. 147). This agrees with A. Battistini who ob-served: «The Vichian definition of philology infinitely expands the meaning it

had for the humanists» (Id., *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, cit., p. 29).

[142] In the Schaeffer translation. Ruggiero helpfully points out that «tentatur» has the sense of "experimental" (Id., *Nova Scietia Tentatur*, cit., p. 148).

[143] As termed by Ruggiero: «La filologia come scienza enciclopedica e ordinatrice (e non come mera tecnica di lettura) [philology as an encyclopedic and ordering science (and not as mere technique of studying texts)]» (*ibid.*, p. 148).

[144] We concur therefore with Haddock, *Vico's Theory of Science*, cit., p. 79: «Vico *did* search through masses of ancient literature. He *did* find regular recurrences of theme and idea. But it is correct to say that he went at the search with an already fairly well articulated theory in mind, one which told him where to look, and what to look for» (italics in the original).

[145] This is not to say, therefore, that in a different context, the terms "theory" and "theoretical" are not appropriate in a less formal sense. For example, Pompa chose to use these terms in a more extended, unmarked, sense: «The word "philosophical" will be used to refer to his [Vico's] *a priori* theories in general, i.e. to his metaphysical and epistemological theories together» (Id., *Vico: A Study of the New Science*, cit., p. 15, footnote 1). Also, more recently, Pompa spoke of Vico's «metaphysical theory of human nature» (Id., *Reflections on the Ideal Eternal History*, in «BCSV», XLI, 2011, 2, pp. 15-32, p. 29, footnote 16).

Croce, also, applied the term "theory" loosely as well-organized disciplines: «The New Science […] consists of three groups of investigations, philosophical, historical and empirical. […] Now if these three classes of inquiry and theory had been logically distinct in Vico's mind and […] compressed within the limits of a single book for literary reasons alone, the result might have been confused» (Id., *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, cit., pp. 16, 17).

[146] In Chapter 2 (*Concerning the Principle of Humanity*), § 1, he asserts that «[h]umanity is the affection that inclines man to help man», which is further elucidated in Chapters 3 to 6 in terms of the judicious exercise of «liberty» pursuant to God-given free will, including economic activity («commerce»), land ownership and/or control, and the right to defense of self and property.

[147] At the beginning of Chapter 2, Vico emphasizes the social function of language: «Help is provided mostly through speech, such as counsel, admonitions, exhortations, consolations, criticisms. For this reason, I think, the study of languages was called "humanities"».

[148] The importance of juridical thought to Vico's "philology" is pointed out in R. Ruggiero, *La "volgar tradizione". Prove di critica testuale in Giambattista Vico*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2003, pp. 13-14.

[149] The term «model» is used by W. H. Walsh, *The Logical Status of Vico's Ideal Eternal History,* in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, cit., pp. 141-153, p. 147.

[150] In § 294, appended to Axiom XCVI, Vico himself denotes the block of material of Axiom LXVI (§ 241) to Axiom XCVI, as «the principles of the ideal eternal history», one of the most significant assertions of which is of the birth, growth, maturity, decline, and fall of every nation (§ 245, Marsh translation). As an aside, it should be mentioned that various Vico readers consider Axiom LXV (§§ 239-240) as the first in the series, including the Bergin-Fisch translation, adhering to Nicolini's edition, as seen in their annotation of § 245 by specifying Vico's reference to «the preceding axioms» as being Axioms LXV-LXVII, although this is not expressly stated in the original (see *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., p. 877). This editorial choice is not without exegetical consequences, as is shown in Cristofolini's Vico commentary (Id., *La Scienza nuova di Vico,* cit., pp. 105-109). Axiom LXV reads, in part: «This was the order of human institutions: first the forests, after that the huts, then the villages, next the cities, and finally, the academies» (§ 239). Cristofolini characterizes this series of developments as indicating a «linearly ascending» order or rhythm. On the other hand, the next three Axioms in the group (LXVI-LXVIII) present a rather different picture, namely of both progression and *decline* which Cristofolini memorably compares to a «parabola» that is not only rising but also «descending». In order to resolve the tension between these two conceptions, Cristofolini argues for restricting the "ascending" realm of Axiom LXV to the evolution of language: «La degnità XLV dunque, al di là di ogni apparenza, non concerne le forme di vita materiale umana se non mediatamente: il suo oggetto specifico è l'evoluzione del linguaggio, che fa da sostrato alla storia delle istituzioni e delle forme di vita, ma non si identifica con essa (Axiom LXV, therefore, by all appearances, does not concern the forms of material human life save in a mediated way: its specific subject is the evolution of language which forms the substrate of the history of the institutions and forms of life but is not identical with them)». This interpretation also provides a basis for Cristofolini to add Axiom LIII («Men at first feel without perceiving, then they perceive with a troubled and agitated spirit, finally they reflect with a clear mind», § 218) to this block or grouping of material on «the ideal eternal history», although it appears in a different context.

See also S. Caianiello's concurring comments in Id., *Filologia ed epoca in Vico*, in *Vico nella storia della filologia. Atti del Seminario Internazionale, Napoli, 21 novembre 2003,* ed. by S. Caianiello and A. Viana, Naples, Alfredo Guida, 2004, pp. 139-175, p. 158, footnote 60; p. 162, footnote 71.

While Vico's reference, in § 245, to axioms about the ideal eternal history that preceded Axiom LXVIII did not specify which Axioms he had in mind, in the subsequent statement about Axioms applicable to the ideal eternal history, in § 294, appended to Axiom XCVI, he specifically names Axiom LXVI as marking the beginning of principles. We opt therefore to exclude Axiom LXV from consideration, and thus, to sidestep the issue of tension that otherwise ensues.

[151] S. Otto commented: «Ma la sua assiomatica distingue chiaramente proposizioni scientifiche, filosofiche e filologiche, separa nettamente gli asserti sul "certo" da quelli sul "vero"» (But his [Vico's] axiom system clearly distinguishes between scientific, philosophical, and philological propositions, and in an orderly way separates the statements about "the certain" from those about "the true")» (Id., *Un assioma* (*Grundsatz*) *della Scienza nuova come principio-guida* (*Leitsatz*) *per la "critica della ragione storica"*, trans. by B. Giordano, in «BCSV», XXII-XXIII, 1992-1993, pp. 103-117, pp. 116-117.

[152] Under this Axiom, in § 163, he makes the epexegetical statement, noted in footnote 140 above, about Axioms V-XV as belonging to the *true,* i.e. "philosophy"; he then characterizes Axioms XV[I]-XXII as «the foundations of the certain»; by using the contrasting term *certain*, he identifies them as part of what he considers "philology". He further draws this distinction by adding: «By their use we shall be able to see *in fact* this world of nations which we have studies *in idea*» (italics added, but the original Italian «*in fatti*» and «*in idea*» are in italics. See *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 865). The Marsh translation of *Scienza nuova* paraphrases this passage as follows: «Axioms 16-22 […] we shall use to interpret the world of nations in its historical reality, just as we have contemplated it in its ideal form».

It is at this point, in connection with the topic of the *certain*, that Vico credits Bacon with «the best ascertained method of philosophizing (giusta il *metodo di filosofare* più accertato)», with specific reference to Bacon's methodological treatise *Cogitata et visa*. We will leave aside the possible word play on *certain/ascertained* (*certo/accertato*). According to Rossi (*Francis Bacon*, cit., pp. 205-207), Bacon proposed, and developed (in his entire *oeuvre*), a «theory of natural classifications for the organization and ordering of instances to enable the intellect to find its way through nature's chaos and profusion». Vico clearly had such a «natural classification» in mind when he contrasted Bacon's «institutions of nature» with his own «civil institutions of mankind».

Furthermore, there is another important aspect or feature of Bacon's philosophy of science that has a bearing on Vico's approach, as explained by Rossi: «The traditional method, writes Bacon, skips from a smattering of sensually perceived particulars to the most generalized conclusions and then in-

geniously fits all particular instances to the demands of typically speculative constructions» (*ibid.*, p. 206). Vico, too, eschews such simplistic "inductive" procedure, and instead has a truly "theoretic" way of mining the data (of Roman history), as described by S. Mazzarino: «Il Sistema generale della storia Romana secondo Vico deriva da un'applicazione coerente e rigida di questo presupposto evolutivo. Come già in parte abbiamo visto, esso pone, al centro, la storia della plebità (The general framework of Roman history according to Vico is the result of a coherent and rigid application of this evolutionary presupposition. As we already have seen in part, it places the history of the plebeians at the center)» (Id., *Vico, l'annalistica e il diritto*, Naples, Alfredo Guida, 1971, p. 72). The term «plebeians» itself is theory-laden. Mazzarino's work has a wealth of information on Roman history as it relates to Vico's own account.

[153] «Le *dottrine* debbono *cominciare*, da quando cominciano le *materie*, che trattano» (*La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 891; italics original). The term «doctrine» conveys well the explanatory intent of "philology", rather than compilation of data and sources. Walsh commented on the epistemological status of Vico's «ideal eternal history», as follows: «Was Vico justified in displaying such confidence in the ideal eternal history? As was pointed out at the beginning, his approach to the explanation of social phenomena is a highly theoretical one» (Id., *The Logical Status of Vico's Ideal Eternal History*, cit., p. 149). Walsh also addresses the question of its historical validity by proposing that Vico intended it to be accurate only under assumed «ideal conditions», and thus not necessarily be falsified under divergent, contingent circumstances (*ibid.*, pp. 147-149).

[154] The issue of anachronism, beyond the obviously fairly trivial terminological case, in discourse about early modernity will be acknowledged and taken up in Part II, however briefly. Without such clarification, certain theses proposed here might be problematic from a methodological standpoint.

[155] «La *Filologia,* o sia la *Dottrina di tutte le cose* […]»(italics original). *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 789.

[156] For example, Vico entitled Chapter 5 of *Philosophy* as «Which Metaphysical Doctrines of Plato Should Be Accepted?».

[157] In other words, «[a] conception of human nature is being used to regulate the range of historical interpretations» (B. A. Haddock, *Vico and the Methodology of the History of Ideas,* in *Vico: Past and Present*, cit., pp. 227-239, p. 229).

[158] As already quoted above, § 140 is more specific in identifying languages, deeds of peoples, customs and laws, wars, peaces, alliances, travels, commerce, in other words, the whole gamut of human civilization realized throughout history.

[159] *Pace* R. Miner who stated: «"Things" [in the real historical world] for Vico are ultimately epiphenomena, the effects of divine mind and its human participation» (Id., *Vico: Genealogist of Modernity*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2002, p. 90).

[160] Interestingly, Cristofolini also sees a threefold structure in Vico's methodology: «Al principio di tutto vi è il nesso non duplice (tra idee e cose), ma triplice, tra cose, idee e parole, e l'idea di una filologia, già dichiarata nel *De Constantia*, come scienza delle parole che è scienza di idea e dunque di cose» (At the very beginning there is not a twofold (between ideas and institutions) but threefold nexus, between institutions (*cose*), ideas, and language (*parole*), and the concept of a philology, already made clear in *De Constantia*, as the science of language which is a science of the ideas and thus of institutions (*cose*)» (Id., *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 81). Since the thesis about the relationship among the triple has not yet been developed, we will here not comment further on Cristofolini's exposition, except noting possible agreement on the correspondence of *institutions/socio-political world*, *ideas/"philosophy"*, and *language/"philology"*. On the threefold complex of "ideas", "words", and "things", see also V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., p. CXV, footnote 148; S. Caianiello, *Filologia ed epoca in Vico*, cit., p. 150, footnote 35, commented: «si ha l'impressione che si stabilisca tra i tre ordini un rapporto transitivo di sincronia (it gives the impression that a transitive, synchronous relationship is established between the three orders)».

It should be added that the translation above of «*cose*» by «institutions», for the sake of brevity, is less than satisfactory; the Vichian term entails what E. Nuzzo called «la totalità dei fenomeni que vanno a costituire le formazioni socioculturali umane (the totality of phenomena that make up the forms of human societies and cultures)» (Id., *I carattteri dei popoli nella nuova scienza delle nazioni di Vico*, cit., p. 173).

[161] The proposed trichotomy might seem to be at odds with statements that have a clearly "dualistic" tenor, such as § 163 (appended to Axiom XXII; see footnote 152 above), which only speaks of seeing «in fact (*in fatti*) this world of nations», on the one hand, and having «studied [it] in idea (*in idea*)», on the other hand. The "factual" in this instance thus does not make a distinction between "theory" and underlying "data", but instead conflates them. Rather than necessarily conflicting, however, effectively this amounts to an imposition of additional structure on the initial underlying trichotomous "scheme". This additional structure results from setting up an equivalence relation with respect to "philology", as a discipline, and the actual historical world. Equivalence does not mean equality, but only certain commonality at the chosen level of abstraction while ignoring other distinctions. Since it re-

duces the cardinality from three to two, the language of "dualism", understood in this particular structural sense, arises naturally. Thus, it is our view that "collapsing", so to speak, the two distinct spheres of "philology" (i.e. the theoretical apparatus) and the objective reality of human history in all its manifestations, into one (the "factual"), serves heuristic purposes, namely, to accentuate the "ideal". (Conversely, the equivalence relation of "epistemology", mentioned above, subsuming "philosophy" and "philology", tends to shift heuristic attention to the ontological realm).

In an in-depth discussion of the "factual", however, the distinction we have insisted on, will arise inevitably. In this connection, M. Vanzulli's article, *Sulla relazione di ideale e fattuale, di metafisica e storia nel passaggio dal De uno alla* Scienza nuova, in «BCSV», XXXIV, 2004, pp. 199-219, is relevant. While Vanzulli, as the title proclaims, maintains a "dualistic" perspective, with respect to "factuality" the exposition takes place in terms of both spheres: on the one hand, there is «il processo civilizzatore (the civilizing process)» (*ibid.*, p. 203), «il mondo civile con la sua lotta socio-politica (the civic world with it social-political struggle)» (*ibid.*, p. 215), «de istituzioni positive, i governi reali (the actual institutions, the real governments)» (*ibid.*, p. 216). Vanzulli also quotes approvingly D. Pasini, who stated that «[p]er il Vico […] la forza del vero […] deve dirigersi ad un mondo reale, concreto, corporeo, qual è, appunto, il mondo della realtà storico-sociale (that for Vico […] the force of the true should be aimed at a world that is real, concrete, corporeal, which is, precisely, the world of historical-social reality)» (*ibid.*, p. 203, footnote 22). On the other hand, Vico is also said to advance «[la] *spiegazione logico-storico* che dispone una costellazione di fattori in una relazione causale di valore generale (the *logico-historical explanation* which casts a network of factors in a causal relationship of general validity)» (*ibid.*, p. 209; italics original). A concrete example of such theorizing is Vico's Roman historiography: «La lotta per l'estensione dei diritti civili e politici costituisce infatti il filo unitario su cui si snoda la narrazione vichiana della storia Romana fino al principato (The struggle to expand the civic and political rights constitutes in fact the single thread that unravels Vico's narrative of Roman history up to the Principate)» (*ibid.*, p. 205).

Vanzulli is not alone in approaching Vico's framework in terms of a dualistic structure. For instance, Otto adopted the converse, but analogous, perspective: «La *Scienza nuova* non separa il "mondo delle menti umane", il "mondo metafisico" dal "mondo della volontà umana", il "mondo civile"; questi due mondi non possono assolutamente venir separati l'uno dall'altro, poiché l'uno deve essere ritrovato nelle modificazioni dell'altro (*Scienza nuova* does not separate the "world of the human minds", the "metaphysical world" from the "world of human will", the "civic world"; these two worlds absolutely cannot

appear separately from each other, since the one must be retrieved from the modifications of the other one)» (Id., *Un assioma della* Scienza nuova, cit., p. 115). Thus, Otto, also, subsumes "philosophy" and "philology" into one «world», considered in contrast to the actual social and political reality, but also dialectically.

[162] W. H. Walsh, *The Logical Status of Vico's Ideal Eternal History*, cit., p. 143.

[163] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[164] D. R. Kelley, *Vico's Road*, cit., p. 20.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "PHILOSOPHY", "PHILOLOGY", AND THE ACTUAL WORLD OF HUMANS

The preceding section raised questions about ways to characterize the complex relationship among this "trichotomy". While there may be a heuristic basis for turning the trichotomy into a "dualistic" structure, our working thesis necessitates distinguishing between all three spheres. However, the relationship between the postulated trichotomy and dualism[165] can be summarized in the following table:

Scienza nuova	*Vanzulli's dualism*	*Otto's dualism*
"Philosophy"	the *ideal*	mental constructs, metaphysics
"Philology"	the *factual*	
Historical reality		civic world

Certain metaphors have proved to be helpful and insightful, particularly in providing a vivid sense of their interconnectedness. However, such metaphors suffer from a limitation, in that they were not chosen, or for that matter intended, to specify particular aspects or features of their relationship. To describe these relationships in a systematic way – on the assumption of being able to count Vico among the great systematic thinkers of the modern age – we will avail ourselves of conceptual tools that have been forged only relatively recently[166].

5.1 *The "mathematics of relationships"*

The conceptual tool that would seem to offer itself in meeting our needs of untangling the trichotomous nexus, at least in theory, can be found in the "mathematics of relationships"[167]. Although, strictly speaking, it is not the only branch of mathematics that describes and systematizes relationships, for our present purposes the branch of *category theory* will play the most important role[168]. This role, however, needs to be qualified and circumscribed right from the beginning: we are not interested in the mathematical formalisms themselves but rather in their underlying general conceptual insights that allow making distinctions between different types of relations. In a way, the epistemic movement pursued here is thus in the opposite direction of the original intent of category theory which put mathematical structure around the informal notion of relations between entities of different kinds. We are, in effect, taking certain mathematical processes that are part of the theory, strip them of their formalism, and keep only their essential "logic". As a result, what we are left with are new tools to probe the problematic of Vico's trichotomy, in order to supplement and complement metaphorical descriptions[169].

Unlike categories in earlier philosophical inquiry[170], at least to a relative degree, in the current incarnation categories consist not only of "entities", understood in the broadest of senses[171], but also of particular types of relationships. These special kinds of relations take the form of *transformations* or *morphisms*. As the term implies, the relations in view are not static or simply fixed in time but amenable to variation and being acting upon, and acted with. The standard definition of a category, therefore, typically begins with a statement like: «A category consists of objects A, B, […] and morphisms f, g, […]»[172]. An intuitive example of an elementary category – however only when viewed in isolation – is the temperature scale on a thermometer: its *objects* are numbers, its

morphisms are the *changes* or *transitions* in temperature readings[173]. Such complexes of entities/objects with their capacity or affinity of being altered, metamorphosed in some way function thus as the "primitives" of category theory. In this language, the three spheres of Vico's grand explanatory project, the trichotomy of "philosophy", "philology", and the actual historical world, are epistemologically equivalent to three categories *sui generis,* and any of the descriptions made regarding them so far pertained only to their internal structure, considered individually. However, this aspect of category theory obviously does not go far enough to throw light on the crucial question of the relationships *between* them, separately from the morphisms *within* them.

Conceptually, this necessitates moving the category concept to the next higher level: taking individual categories themselves as the objects, and allowing for morphisms between them also. These higher-level morphisms have been given the special nomenclature of *functors*[174]. This is, in fact, the level at which Vico's trichotomy is being considered. However, merely exchanging nomenclature, that is, *functors* for different metaphors, accomplishes little, if anything. The value of functors stems from the fact that they come, and act, in multiple forms and ways, and thus enable bringing to the surface features that would not come into view otherwise. For our present purposes, two types of functors are particularly relevant: (1) the "forgetful functor", and (2) the "contravariant functor".

In mathematics, the somewhat quaint term "forgetful functor" describes a specific process of abstraction, as when a "set with structure" of group theory is subsequently viewed without the "structural" properties, the formalized group-theoretic operations and relationships, resulting in a mere underlying unstructured "set"[175]. Usually, in mathematics, "forgetting" certain important properties of complex entities has far-reaching implications, such as turning geometry into topology by factoring out metrics (distance, angle). The example of a temperature scale,

above, is a concrete, real world, case of the outcome of a forget-
ful functor in the form of the thermometer: the temperature
readings produced by the thermometer are mere *numbers*,
stripped of the physical content with which the thermometer in-
teracted[176]. Nevertheless, the purely numerical entities constitute
a new epistemic domain (category) of undeniable value and
meaningfulness.

In certain ways, "contravariant functors" are the opposite of
forgetful functors[177]. They take the entities of a category and
"use" them as the starting point for a process of transformation
such that the resultant target category acquires "richer" cardinali-
ty, properties, and structure[178]. Appropriately, the contravariant
functor can also be termed "enriched functor"[179]. However, re-
versing the "direction" of functors is not the same, or as simple,
as a reciprocal operation like multiplication and division (in
standard algebra)[180].

With these brief comments on category theory, and before
proceeding with the narrative, we will attempt to depict Vico's
trichotomy in relationship to each other by means of following
schematic:
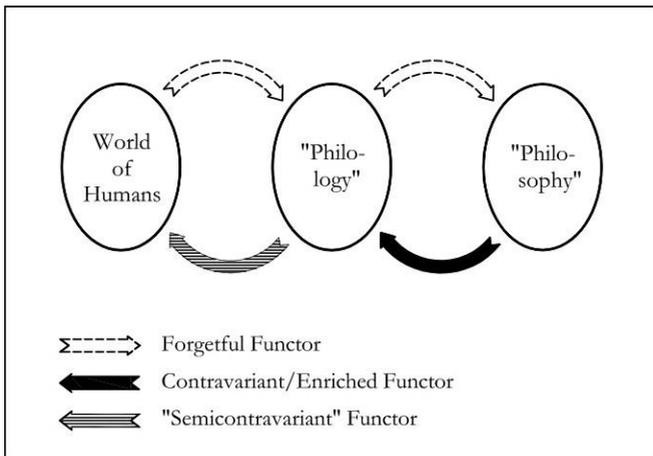
Fig. 2. Vico's Trichotomy with its Interactions.

Before examining the meaning of the "functorial" relationships within this tripartite scheme, it is important, as well as necessary, to consider the "system" as a whole, at the metalevel. There are a number of perspectives that offer themselves, without being mutually exclusive. First of all, in essential agreement with a dualistic perspective, the world of "reason" and "the true" under the rubric of "philosophy" is as integral to Vico's overall epistemology as the empirical, historical, socio-political-cultural world[181]. It remains therefore unproblematic to refer to the category of "philosophy" as the *a priori*, which takes its place as source of the contravariant functor(s)[182] from "philosophy" to the empirical world, so that indeed it can be justifiably said that it all starts with fundamental philosophical reflection, and with the conceptual entities that are generated by such reflection. Then the empirical world functions as the foil against which the ideas of the *a priori* need to be concretely validated or invalidated[183].

On the face of it, this account, at least in terms of its most fundamental aspects and implications, seems to comprehensively depict Vico's knowledge-theoretic undertaking. However, in the functorial or category-theoretic perspective, this portrayal, while remaining essential, becomes only one side of a complex equation. As the above figure illustrates, the relationship between the *a priori* of Vichian "philosophy" and the real «world of nations, or civil world» (§ 331) also involves connections in the opposite "direction", which, for lack of a better term, can be referred to as forgetful functors. When we, again, for the sake of argument, avail ourselves of a dualistic view of matters, in the cognitive movement from phenomena in the real world (of humans) to the world of "ideas", it is obvious that an enormous amount, quantitatively and qualitatively, of substance, information, properties, structures, interactions, must be filtered and factored out[184]. It is only at the culmination of a complex transformative process that Vico, therefore, was in a position to say, for example, «that human beings are naturally social and that this natural disposition

for society was planted in us by God through the eternal idea of equity in law»[185]. This result may be comparable to the "reduction" of a complex physical (thermodynamic) state to a mere number on a temperature scale, if not even more so.

To complicate matters even further, in addition to the relationships between the categories themselves (considered dualistically or not), another thorny question arises, namely, how to account also for the relation between these *functors*. In category theory, there is explicit, and formal, recognition that the forgetful and contravariant functors between two categories operate in tandem, or as a pair, and that one cannot be understood in isolation from, or without reference to, the other: the concept is *adjunction* of functors, or, adjectivally, *adjoint functors*[186]. The cognitive process involved can and has been described in other – nonfunctorial – ways, too, for instance, by the felicitous term «oscillatory»[187]. At the same time, the introduction of category-theoretical concepts is not a matter of novelty or updating of terminology; rather, it introduces epistemic distinctions, such as between *forgetful* and *contravariant* that help to identify subtle features that otherwise could go unnoticed, while *adjunction* calls for ever-present reflexivity.

For the purpose of outlining the overall functorial scheme, the dualistic paradigm was entirely suitable. For expository purposes, it was assumed to consist of the dichotomy of the *ideal* and the *factual*. As noted above, this dichotomy would be epistemologically justified if either the category of the *ideal* or the *factual* represents an equivalence class that incorporates the category of Vichian "philology"[188]. On the other hand, without the acknowledgment of the inclusion of "philology", explicitly or implicitly, a dualistic framework might be compared to an open-mesh net with openings so large that most "objects" of interest would simply slip through unnoticed and unexamined[189], a net in which the *ideas* are the mesh and reality furnishes the objects. So, when for Vico "human nature", on a philosophical level, is «to

know, to will, and to be able to do»[190], is «to live in conformity with eternal reason»[191], is «naturally social and that this natural disposition […] was planted in us […] through the […] idea of equity in law»[192], the matrix of these fundamental insights is able to "catch" in its mesh a certain part or level of lived reality which we might term "gross" of "large-scale", by its generality. This is why Vico could say immediately following the preceding state-ment: «In pursuit of this equity human beings joined together in communities and founded commonwealths»[193]. In other words, from human nature, properly understood as inherently sociable, it could be explained why humans formed communities. And the God-given innate sense of justice can also more-or-less unmedi-atedly be related to the rule of law[194]. To this degree the *ideal* can be said to be at the root of the *factua*[195]. However, this is essen-tially the limit to which the *ideas* can take us; when it comes to the "finer", more detailed forms of social organization, govern-ance, positive legislation, synchronically, and furthermore, dia-chronically, the dynamics of their development over time, which is actually one of Vico's main preoccupations, the *ideal*, strictly understood as a "class" by itself[196], has reached its level of com-petence. In the realm of ideas, of concepts belonging to "philos-ophy", one would be mistaken in attempting to look for insights regarding the universal practice of religion, burial of the dead, marriage or patriarchal, aristocratic/democratic, monarchic forms of governance, or even the "ages" of the "gods", "he-roes", and "men"[197].

5.2 *The mediating role of "philology"*

Vico expressed this state of affairs by saying that «the philos-ophers failed by half (*per metà*) in not giving certainty to their rea-sonings by appeal to the authority of the philologians» (Axiom X, § 140)[198]. This peremptory statement can be pressed into ser-vice of our thesis at two levels. The first level is Vico's insistence on the epistemic insufficiency of "philosophy", on the one hand,

and the indispensability of "philology", on the other hand. It becomes particularly poignant when it is compared with a similar statement in *Philology*, that is, the Second Part of Book II of *De uno*. In the introductory paragraph, it says: «Philosophy establishes the constancy of reason: let us attempt to make philology establish the constancy of authority». While both "disciplines" are given their due, no nexus is articulated, much less a relativization of "philosophy"[199]. Seen in this context, "philology" assumes a middle position between "philosophy" and the actual human historical world; its theoretical constructs, "models", are essential, epistemically, in mediating[200] between the "naked" or "brute" facts of human culture, history and socio-political reality, on the one hand, and the most fundamental constants at a philosophical level[201]. With reference to the juridical realm, "philosophy" articulates the fundamental idea of justice and fairness, while positive law/public policy is part of the real world, but to transform the ideal of justice into law, first a *theory* of justice must be developed or be available[202].

The second level made explicit in Axiom X addresses one type of tie between "philosophy" and "philology": "philosophy" *appeals* to "philology", it benefits from the authority of "philology". The epistemic "direction" is therefore from "philology" to "philosophy", and it is by its character, a forgetful functor[203]. In a transformative process, the specificity of theoretical, conceptual insights is purposely "forgotten" in the movement to capture the underlying "truths". This "functorial" movement can be noted throughout *Philosophy,* beginning with Vico's reflections on human nature. After acknowledging the ultimate source of truth[204], he delves into an interpretation, rather than merely an account of the facts, of ethics and law before and after «the fall of Adam», including the Roman, Hebrew and Christian worlds. Vico also credits the theoretical thinking of jurisconsults with leading to the discovery of philosophical truths[205].

As the above figure illustrates, this is not the only forgetful functor that is involved; the other functor of this type, *from* the actual world of humans *to* "philology", implies that any theoretical constructs/interpretations/concepts have a source outside, in the real world, and have entered the theoretical realm through a complex transformative process. Vico pointed to this ultimate ground of all philosophical reflection in Axiom LXIV (§ 238): «The order of ideas must follow the order of institutions»[206]. The human "institutions" (in the sense of Vico's all-inclusive term «*cose*») make up the very first sphere in our trichotomous scheme, and while, for heuristic reasons, the emphasis thus far – hopefully without doing violence to Vico's own intent – has been on the topos of "philology", equal accentuation and space must be accorded the "category" of the world of humans, and whose autonomous status must be preserved epistemologically[207]. As stated before, epistemic access for "philosophical" reflection to the sphere of actual human history is never direct but mediated by a theoretical, conceptual framework. So, it is actually the "philological" discipline that avails itself of a forgetful functor to make sense, however tentatively, of the confusing and fragmentary trove of phenomena in the real world, and information about it. This is indeed the subject and thrust of *Philology*, forming the second part of Book II of *De uno*, featuring the propaedeutic, as well as programmatic, subtitle *"Nova scientia tentatur"*. In view of the transitivity of these two functors, Axiom LXIV, seemingly connecting the sphere of "philosophy" and actual historical reality in a direct manner, more than anything else highlights the true starting point of the cognitive enterprise[208]. As Vico declared in § 368 (Book II, Chapter II): «Thus our Science come to be at once a history of the ideas, the customs, and the deeds of mankind. From these three we shall derive the principles of the history of human nature [...]»[209]. As always, the field of juridical notions (in particular Roman law in historical perspective) is paradigmatic in Vico's epistemology. It contains and involves all three spheres

that we have stressed, (1) the (initial) world of actual custom preserved through tradition (powerfully present in traditional societies/communities to this day), (2) an evolving body of legal principles mediating between the real world, and (3) the ideal of true equity[210]. This is also reflected in the block of material on the *ideal eternal history* of Axioms LXVI to XCVI (§§ 241-294) where the mostly socio-political theoretical constructs, the *principles*[211], are shown to receive their inspiration from actual historical developments[212].

From the category-theoretic perspective, nonetheless, this portrayal, however complex it appears in itself, tells only half the story, at best, since the epistemic state of affairs is not simply a matter of addition or sums of parts, lacking interaction, but rather of mutual dependence and productive engagement. Our piecemeal approach of exposition is therefore intrinsically inadequate to properly convey the dynamic interactions that take place at different levels, and different cycles and directions, just as an anatomical investigation cannot come close to capturing a living organism[213]. This fundamental shortcoming becomes highly acute in bringing into the picture the other type of functor involved, *contravariant functors*, going from right-to-left. In contrast to the forgetful functors that have their ultimate source in the phenomena of the real world, embracing all human culture, but in which the socio-political sphere is Vico's particular focus, the starting point of contravariant functors is the realm/category of "philosophy". This is the point reached, therefore, at which to quote the rest of § 140 of Axiom X: «This same axiom shows […] likewise how the latter [the philologians] failed by half in not taking care to give their authority the sanction of truth (*averrare*) by appeal to the reasoning (*Ragion*) of the philosophers»[214]. The *truth* and *reasoning* are of course the province of "philosophy", and, among other *truths*, contain Vico's conclusions about man's ultimate nature, such as his sociability, sense of and desire for justice, willfulness and ability or propensity to act, his finite mind

but endowed with a capacity to think the infinite, and so on. As claimed above, the forgetful functors resulted, in Vico's hands, in «discovering the idea hidden in the real», and now the *idea*, the *truth* (the *vero*) become the source of a contravariant functor that "enriches", transforms these universal, undefined entities back into "philological" propositions. Indeed, the deep and radical "philosophical" reflections have the potential of casting earlier "philological" theorems in a new light, as well as leading to entirely new propositions. The influence, so to speak, that "philosophy" exerts on "philology" is alluded to by the Vichian phrase in the prologue, entitled *Idea of the Work,* of *Scienza nuova*: «philosophy undertakes to examine philology […] and reduces it to the form of a science (*e la riduce in forma di* Scienza) by discovering in it the design of an ideal eternal history»[215]. The term «reduce» occurs a number of times in *Scienza nuova*[216], and important aspects of its import in the present context, has been succinctly brought by both G. Cacciatore and A. Battistini, respectively: «La ragione filosofica con le sue "pruove" aiuta a distinguere e a chiarire le prove filologiche, così da poter "ridurre a certezza l'umano arbitrio" (Philosophical reason with its "proofs" aids in distinguishing and clarifying the philological proofs, thus being able to "reduce the human will to certainty")», and «[…] Vico afferma di volere "ridurre" la filologia "in forma di scienza", nel senso che il momento analitico che raccoglie i dati è poi sottoposto a un vaglio che con una drastica sintesi ne restringe la mole (Vico affirms wanting to "reduce" philology "in form of a science" in the sense that the analytical moment that gathers the data is then subjected to an examination that by a drastic synthesis restricts the massive amount of material)»[217]. The process of developing "philological" constructs motivated by, and imbued with, historical reality, must at the same time be fully cognizant of the fundamental *truths* coming out of "philosophy", and ensure that these are embedded in its theoretical framework[218]. The desired final outcome is described in Axiom CXIII (§ 324): «The

true in the laws (Il *Vero delle Leggi*) is a certain light and splendor with which natural reason (la *Ragion Naturale*) illuminates them»[219]. But Vico also was conscious of the aporetic potential: «To be useful to the human race, philosophy must raise and direct weak and fallen man, not rend his nature or abandon him in his corruption» (Axiom V, § 129); «Philosophy considers man as he should be and so can be of service to but very few […]» (Axiom VI, § 131).

In certain ways, it might be tempting to simply speak of "induction" and "deduction", but that would miss the complexity of the process which needs to be seen as synchronous[220]. It is not the case that propositions in "philology" can be, and are, "deduced" from fundamental ideas in "philosophy", as can been seen in trying to relate the (selective) listings of the contents of both spheres above (see Part I). Rather, "philosophical" ideas undergo a transformation – as if caught in a pincer movement – as they are turned into theoretical constructs under the sway of both already established constructs, in the right-to-left direction, and, just as importantly, under the constantly corrective pressure of the facts of the real world, in the left-to-right direction. This latter phenomenon comes into play by way of the forgetful functor from the world of humans to the sphere of "philology"; in the development of theoretical concepts that respect fundamental "philosophical" insights, and are thus truth-preserving, still, any number of notions, regardless of how rational they appear, will need to be discarded in the harsh light, not of historical realities *per se*[221], but of concepts that have been derived from them[222]. In this manner, the potential for the kind of aporia that Vico referred to might be substantially lessened. The systematic inclusion of this functor in the epistemic process also helps to put Vico's polemic with some of the great theorists of early modernity in perspective, including socio-political thinkers (Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle), but most importantly juridical theorists (Grotius, Pufendorf, Selden[223]). In effect, he subjects their theories to this

functor, and finds them to be in non-compliance, or stated differently, these theories did not "behave" correctly when tested by insights arrived at from actual history[224].

This brings us to the final element of our trichotomous framework, the semicontravariant functor that engages "philology" with the sphere of the actual human social and cultural domain. The prefix "semi" is simply meant to alert us to the fact that this epistemic step can be only partly effective or successful[225]. It is just as much an informal figure of speech as Vico's expression «by half (*per metà*)» in Axiom X (§ 140)[226]. This is the stage of the overall epistemic process at which the theoretical, in form of "philology", meets historical and human reality most directly. And, without downplaying the successful formulation of "philological" Axioms that Vico felt he had achieved, it is incumbent to give an account of the ways that theoretical constructs, in and of themselves, inherently can never fully capture reality. Vico himself speaks of «encounter[ing] exasperating difficulties which have cost [him] the research of a good twenty years» (§ 338) in understanding something of the lost archaic world[227]. However, he obviously considered his undertaking a (qualified) success[228]. Another challenge is the fragmentary, incomplete record of past ages and their cultures; nevertheless he expressed confidence in having been able to integrate them in this theoretical framework (§ 357)[229]. The real problem lies somewhere else: intellectual entities by themselves can never encompass or exhaust the full scope of reality and experienced history[230]. Vico's brilliantly succinct statement that «its [the world of civil society's] principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind» (§ 331) might appear at first glance to buttress the claim to the wholly commensurate (philosophical/theoretical) power of the mind. As one reads on, however, it becomes clearer where the relatively most pronounced accent falls, which is not on *the modifications* or on the *mind*, but on *human*[231]. In terms of such lived humanity, Vico goes

on to singling out three concrete human "institutions": religion, marriage, and burial of the dead. In §§ 333 to 337, which are part of the section on "Principles", provides a justification for what he calls «these three eternal and universal customs as three first principles of this Science».

(§ 332) Vico does not leave it at this ethnographical account[232]; in the section on "Method" that immediately follows, he endeavors to show what went on in the minds of men to make them subject themselves to the countervailing institutions of religion, marriage, family life, and ultimately human society at large (§§ 338-341), all the more remarkable in view of the premise stated in § 340: «But these first men, who later became the princes of the gentile nations, must have done their thinking under the strong impulses of violent passions, as beasts do».

From an epistemological standpoint, these three «principles»[233] occupy a peculiar position; rather than arising "logically", necessarily, by inference from the theoretic framework of "philology", they are ontologically independent of its theorizing. Without using the term, Vico took them to be the *constants* of human life: «For these institutions […] give us the universal and eternal principles […] on which all nations were founded and still preserve themselves» (§ 332)[234]. In that respect, they are not unlike the physical constants that must be incorporated in mathematical physics to yield correct results. Such constants are evidence of the irreducible incommensurateness of constructs that are purely theoretical.

In the same section on "Method", Vico goes on to discuss another "factor", if that is the right term, that militates against any theoretical constructs perfectly depicting and explaining (socio-political) reality, namely, what he calls «divine providence» (§§ 342-345). Stripped to its most basic connotation, Vico sees it as an outworking «without human discernment or counsel, and often against the designs of men» (§ 342)[235]. How ironic and counterintuitive, that public *virtues* arise out of private *passions*:

«For out of the passions of men each bent on his private ad-
vantage, for the sake of which they would live like wild beasts in
the wilderness, it has made the civil institutions by which they
may live in human society» (§ 133)[236].

There is more to the "semicontravariant" functor than these
three constants and "providence", but they may suffice to pro-
vide evidence of its presence in his epistemology; while our lan-
guage is anachronistic, the concept and reality underlying it, is
not. Rather than considering these non-theoretical factors as het-
erogeneous, or *ad hoc*, to the theoretical framework, their inclu-
sion is a signal achievement[237], and as we labored to argue, rather
the final essential epistemic piece according to our functorially-
oriented framework[238]. It also leads us to observe that, in effect,
we are dealing with two distinct "circular" processes, one of
which entangles – productively – "philosophy" and "philology",
and the other, "philology" and the historical human world in its
cultural and socio-political dimensions[239]. And when speaking of
circularity, a distinction needs to be made between the "left-to-
right arrows" and "right-to-left arrows" that taken together make
up a "circle", since forgetful and (semi)contravariant functors are
not simply reciprocal[240]. It does not preclude the use of tradition-
al and time-tested approaches in scientific inquiry, such as induc-
tion, deduction, hypothetico-deductive method, theory and con-
firmation, *a priori, a posteriori*, and variants and combinations
thereof; however, they are best seen, and incorporated, as mere
moments of the overall gnoseological movement, without pre-
tension of standing for the whole. If the question is raised
whether Vico's tendency is toward the empirical or the ration-
al/ideal, it would need to be modified to include also the theoret-
ical. If he is labelled at all, one would therefore have to allow
"theorist" in addition to "empiricist" and "rationalist", but any
of these labels lose their meaning in the context of the insepara-
ble interactions of all three spheres[241]. The resultant inherent ep-
istemic instability and tension reflect the reality, and actual pro-

cess, of the epistemic enterprise, and is ontologically irreducible. This essentially pessimistic view[242] of the state of affairs, however, is not the only, nor necessarily the most important, ramification: with equal justification, it can be valued as a recipe for openness to alternatives, and as the condition of possibility of constantly new ways of seeing and understanding.

5.3 *Trichotomy in "Scienza nuova" vs. trichotomy in "De antiquissima"*

At several places above, analogies were drawn between Vico's assignment of theoretical burden to "philology" and the role of mathematics in science. Mathematics, of course, is the main topic – considered from an epistemological point of view – of Vico's *De antiquissima*[243]. But mathematics is not considered in isolation, rather in relation to metaphysics, on the one hand, and the actual physical realm ("physics"), on the other hand, assigning it a mediating function[244]. In Vico studies, a number of deeply-running connections between *De antiquissima* and *Scienza nuova* have been elucidated, some of which interpret them cautiously in a propaedeutic sense, whereas others discern a substantial degree of continuity, *modulo* the distinct subject matters, which in the former work concern the physical world, and in the latter, the socio-historical realm[245]. A measure of caution in relating both works certainly is indicated, in the first place, by their radically different character. *De antiquissima*, aside from the fact that its length is a fraction of the length of *Scienza nuova,* is part polemic against, part exposé of, Cartesianism, but above all a fully-developed counterphilosophy of science, and of its conditions of possibility, at the core of which lies the *verum-factum* nexus. Against this backdrop, Vico's strenuous effort in *Scienza nuova* to work out a sound methodology of unearthing the origins, and thus the invariants, of human affairs seem not remotely amenable to being cross-referenced with the physico-mathematical inquiry of *De antiquissima*. However, upon closer scrutiny, certain common underlying thinking patterns between the younger and

mature Vico are recognizable, to quote M. Lollini: «In questa ricerca di una dimensione umana universale nella *Scienza nuova* Vico non abbandona completamente le origini metafisiche del suo pensiero e la distinzione tra la creazione divina e la creazione umana del mondo che era al centro del *De antiquissima* (In this inquiry into a universal human dimension in *Scienza nuova*, Vico does not completely give up the metaphysical origins of his thought and the distinction at the center of *De antiquissima* between the divine creation and the human creation of the world)»[246]. It is therefore with respect to the structure – rather than the subject itself – of his epistemology with which our present inquiry concern itself. More specifically, it revolves around the functorial trichotomous framework that we have posited for *Scienza nuova.*

In the earlier essay, a trichotomous epistemology was attributed to *De antiquissima*[247], consisting of (1) "metaphysics", (2) mathematics, and (3) "physics". Furthermore, the relationships among these three "realms" or spheres were portrayed in category-theoretic/ functorial terms[248]. Our thesis is therefore that on this structural level, a certain correspondence can be established between the two works, as summarized in the following table:

De antiquissima	*Scienza nuova*
"Metaphysical points", *conatus*	"Philosophy"
Mathematics	"Philology"
"Physics"	Human world

Such imputed "correspondence" needs to be understood, clearly, in a most general sense; it would, for example, not do to go a step further and imply that "philology" has the same logic[249] properties as mathematics[250]. The principal insight gathered from such juxtaposition is Vico's adherence to a complex, but nevertheless coherent, view of the epistemic enterprise throughout his life, initially devised to solve and resolve the incongruities that he (and others) found in influential early modern theories of

knowledge, and then effectively applied to the task of giving structure to knowledge-acquisition in the world of humans and history[251]. As the fundamental, intuitive – though not *ex nihilo* – notion of the "metaphysical point" in *De antiquissima* was behind the correct mathematical definition of the geometric point, thus forestalling major conceptual errors, so Vico's "philosophy" in *Scienza nuova* with its fundamental notions about human nature, in particular its irreducible social dimension, guided his social and historical theorizing in "philology", and enabled him to cast alternative proposals in a critical light. Among the key results of seeing mathematics in terms of a mediating role was the refutation of the Cartesian "mathematization" of nature, of the isomorphism between nature and geometry. Analogously, with respect to "philology" in *Scienza nuova*, no totalizing claim is made, all pretension to full congruence of theoretical description and historical reality is abjured by making the three great constants of human life, and uncontrollable "providence", as integral to the overall cognitive framework as the purely theoretical propositions.

Notes to Chapter 5

[165] Referred to in footnote 160 above.
[166] This approach raises the issue of anachronism, all the more so since Vico himself made anachronism a fundamental point of argument against various important social theorists of the early modern era, including Grotius, Selden, Pufendorf, Spinoza, and Hobbes. According to B. A. Haddock, Vico maintained that their «misadventures in historical reconstruction are each attributable to a predilection for using the present as a criterion to evaluate the past» (Id., *Vico and Anachronism*, in «Political Studies», 24, 1976, 4, pp. 483-487, p. 483). Therefore, a brief account of the kinds of anachronisms employed in the present exposition, as well as in common academic practice, is called for. One type is more or less terminological. As pointed out above, Vico uses the terms "philosophy" and "philology" in idiosyncretic ways, and while our suggested terms "pre-theoretic" and "theory" capture the distinction, they are by no means entirely congruent with the original terms. Similar observations

could be made about a host of current language in relation to original early modern usage; whereas the early moderns spoke of "natural philosophy", to-day "science" is the accepted term despite the anachronism of projecting the modern scientific outlook and mentality back to the earlier age in every re-spect. There is virtually no term that is immune to anachronistic usage, includ-ing, for example" "intuition" and "imagination". It took up an entire mono-graph to elucidate the multifaceted history of the idea of "imagination" (see M. Sanna, *Immaginazione*, Naples, Alfredo Guida, 2007). However, the prob-lem has proved to be "manageable", even as perfect solutions remain elusive.

A more complex, even contentious, though not unrelated, problem arises when entirely new terminology is introduced for which no reference to specif-ic original language can be found. This issue is brought to the fore in the fol-lowing contributions in *The Philosophy of Jaakko Hintikka*, ed. by R. E. Auxier and L. E. Hahn, Chicago-LaSalle, Illinois, Open Court, 2006: S. Knuuttila, *Hintikka's View of the History of Philosophy*, pp. 87-105; J. Hintikka, *Reply to Simo Knuuttila*, pp. 106-112; G. Motzkin, *Hintikka's Ideas about the History of Ideas*, pp. 113-131; J. Hintikka, *Reply to Gabriel Motzkin*, pp. 132-135. Specifically, the is-sue is whether it is legitimate to «notice that the arguments [in historical texts] include assumptions that are not explicitly formulated and that the author takes for granted» (Knuuttila, p. 98). Hintikka's response is affirmative: «By identifying other philosophers' presuppositions, we can in fact sometimes as-cribe to them views that they themselves did not express and sometimes would have denied if they had been proposed to them» (Hintikka, p. 109). With respect to the early modern era, it could be argued that key thinkers could not be properly understood without recognizing and articulating their unexpressed presuppositions; as A. Funkenstein pointed out, for example, such unstated metaphysical assumptions included so-called "univocity" and "homogeneity" (Id., *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 25-31; see also D. R. Lachterman, *The Physics of Spinoza's ETHICS*, cit., pp. 82-83, with respect to assumed "homogeneity" in Spinoza's thought). The anachronistic – but not ahistorical – introduction of the univocity concept proves to be indispensable, for example, in pinpointing Vico's position of the fundamental *non*-univocity of *physics* and *metaphysics* in *Liber metaphysicus*, as P. Fabiani insisted on: «Fisico e metafisico devono quindi essere tenuti ben dis-tinti (Therefore, physics and metaphysics need to be kept clearly separate)» (Id., *Classificazione delle scienze e principio dell'errore*, in *Studi sul "De antiquissima Italorum sapientia" di Vico*, ed. by G. Matteucci, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2002, p. 41).

It is in this intended sense of anachronism that both in section, as well as in subsequent material, certain more recently articulated interpretive "tools" will be brought to bear on the questions raised. Successfully carried out or not, «[the] underlying fact is that conceptual and other topical assumptions are needed by a historian for the very first purpose of understanding what earlier thinkers said in the sense of what their views actually amounted to» (Hintikka, p. 134).

On the inevitable comparison and contrast with Gadamer's hermeneutical outlook (in his *Wahrheit und Methode*), see S. Knuuttila, pp. 96-98, and J. Hintikka, p. 108; for a more general assessment of Gadamer's hermeneutics, see also V. Hösle, *God as Reason: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2013, pp. 179-182.

[167] This is the term coined by E. Kleinert (in German «Mathematik der Relationen»), *Studien zur Mathematik und Philosophie*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2012, p. 23.

[168] With respect to the literature on category theory, we would like to highlight particularly E. Kleinert's work since it places the mathematics of category theory within a broader, non-mathematical, philosophical framework which we find congenial to our own approach: *ibid.*, pp. 23-24; Id., *Mathematik für Philosophen*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2004, pp. 65-83; Id., *Categories in Philosophy and Mathematics*, in *Gibt es sicheres Wissen? Aktuelle Beiträge zur Erkenntnistheorie*, ed. by M. Rahnfeld, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2006, pp. 242-262, also in *Hamburger Beiträge zur Mathematik*, 199, 2004, online at <www.math.uni-hamburg.de/research/papers/hbm/hbm2004199.ps.gz>. Also to be recommended is D. I. Spivak, *Category Theory for the Sciences*, Cambridge-London, MIT Press, 2014, for its expository use of accessible examples to illustrate category-theoretic concepts; see also *What is Category Theory?*, ed. by G. Sica, Monza, Polimetrica, 2006. With respect to the history of the idea of category theory, see R. Krömer, *Tool and Object: A History and Philosophy of Category Theory*, Basel-Boston-Berlin, Birkhäuser, 2007, pp. 61-75. For all intents and purposes, it saw the light of day in 1945 with a seminal paper by mathematicians S. Eilenberg and S. Mac Lane.

[169] It has been shown «that categorical structures are already inherent in the basic elements of our language and thinking» («dass kategoriale Strukturen bereits den Elementen unseres Sprechens und Denkens innewohnen»): E. Kleinert, *Mathematik für Philosophen,* cit., p. 82. For examples from various areas such as cognitive development in small children, human cognition in general, language, basic intellectual abilities, music, see also my essay *Vico's Three Realms. From "Liber metaphysicus" to Category Theory*, in «Laboratorio dell'ISPF», IX, 2012, 1/2, pp. 51-88, p. 72, footnote 129; online at <www.ispf-lab.cnr.it>.

[170] Kleinert reviews Aristotelian and Kantian categories in *Categories in Philosophy and Mathematics,* cit., pp. 242-249.

[171] They encompass both physical as well as non-physical "objects", such as physical states, mental states, ideas, theoretical constructs, situations, states of affair, ergo any type of identifiable complex. The term "objects" commonly used in category-theoretic exposition out of convenience, and habit, does not intend to imply reification.

[172] E. Kleinert, *Categories in Philosophy and Mathematics*, cit., p. 249.

[173] The example is more fully worked out in my essay *Vico's Three Realms*, cit., pp. 73-74.

[174] Kleinert explains: «Die raison d'etre des Kategorienbegriffs ist der Vorrang der Morphismen vor den Objekten. Wendet man dieses Prinzip auf die Kategorien selbst an, gelangt man zu den Morphismen zwischen Kategorien, den *Funktoren* (The raison d'être of the category concept is the precedence of morphisms over objects. By applying this principle to the categories themselves, one arrives at morphisms between categories, i.e. *functors*)» (italics original) (Id., *Mathematik für Philosophen*, cit., p. 72). While the term *morphism* is a synonym for all kinds of transformations, just for expository purposes, we are reserving the term for those within a category, and the term *functor* for those that involve passing from one category to another. The process of categorical generalization does not stop here; the next higher level of morphisms leads to *natural transformations* (of functors themselves), but these do not play an explicit role in the present exploration of Vico.

[175] E. Kleinert, *Mathematik für Philosophen*, cit., p. 73.

[176] «Broadly speaking, measurement theories attempt to specify the conditions under which empirical objects can be represented with numbers or other mathematical entities. This task is complicated by the fact that mathematical relations among numbers do not always correspond to empirical relations among measured objects. For example, 60 is twice 30, but one would be mistaken in thinking that an object measured at 60^0C is twice as hot as an object at 30^0C»: E. Tal, *Old and New Problems in Philosophy of Measurement*, in «Philosophy Compass», 8, 2013, 12, pp. 1159-1173, p. 1163.

[177] In a mathematical context, it often involves constructions and other complex operations. See E. Kleinert, *Mathematik für Philosophen*, cit., pp. 73-74.

[178] Again, in the mathematical setting, this is exemplified by *equivalence classes* and *power sets*, to mention elementary cases. As Kleinert observed: «[E]s ist heute selbstverständlich geworden, jede mathematische Konstruktion nach ihrer Funktorialität zu befragen (Today it has become a matter of course to examine every mathematical construction as to its functoriality)» (*ibid.*, pp. 73-74).

[179] See the description of a mundane physical system in category-theoretic terms in my *Vico's Three Realms*, cit., pp. 73-74.

[180] The potentially vast difference between these two kinds of functors is evident in the physical illustration referred to above, in which the forgetful functor was embodied in the *thermometer* whereas the contravariant functor was made up by the far more massive and complex *heating/cooling system*.

[181] Hösle raised the inevitable question whether Vico should be seen as an empiricist or a rationalist, and comes down in favor of labeling Vico as the latter (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., pp. CXIII-CXVII, specifically p. CXIV, footnote 146).

[182] The significance of the "*semi*contravariant" functor will be commented on further below.

[183] Hösle distinguished between two types of *a priori*, i.e. between the «hypothetical", and its opposite or "dual", the «apodictic» *a priori*. The apodictic *a priori,* which is favored by Hösle in Vico's case, is seen as possessing affinities with Hegel's philosophy of reality («Realphilosophie»). However, despite being arrived at in different cognitive ways, both kinds of *a priori* are in need of, and depend on, confirmation and validation in the real (historical) world. «Aber die begrifflichen Strukturen müssen *empirisch interpretiert* werden, weil sie sich im Bereich der Realphilosophie aus begrifflichen Gründen empirisch manifestieren müssen (But the conceptual structures must be *interpreted empirically* since in the sphere of the philosophy of reality, they must necessarily manifest themselves empirically)» (italics original) (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., pp. CXIV-CXVI). Already Flint had referred to this state of affairs by speaking of «the tracing and testing of the ideas» (Id., *Vico*, cit., p. 193).

[184] G. Capograssi captured this cognitive direction by describing it as «il tormento di Vico […] di scoprire l'idea nascosta nel reale (the strenuous effort by Vico […] to discover the idea hidden in reality)» (As quoted in F. Lomonaco, *Ragione e diritto prima delle Scienze nuove*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 79-95, p. 83, footnote 13).

[185] *Philosophy*, Chapter 16, § 1; similarly Chapter 17, § 1. This is of course not the only fundamental insight that Vico arrived at and built into his philosophical edifice. This is also not to claim originality or uniqueness when the history of ideas clearly indicates otherwise, and as was acknowledged by Vico himself. We are concerned mainly with Vico's own (theorized) mode of thought without dwelling on his indebtedness to other (Renaissance and early modern) thinkers, which has been, and continues to be, fruitfully explored by intellectual historians. This is true also with respect to the historical developments in the field of philology. Its historically changing conception and practice that were in the background of Vico's reflections, are traced, for example

in *Vico nella storia della filologia,* cit., particularly the contributions of C. Asso, *"Erasmus redivivus". Alcune osservazione sulla filologia neotestamentaria di Jean Le Clerc*, pp. 79-115; A. Viana, *A los pies de gigantes. Notes sobre la emergencia del "ars critica"*, pp. 17-51. Viana, for instance, quotes a passage on philology by Juan Luís Vives (1531) in which Viana sees «the absolute similarity» with § 139 of the *Scienza nuova* (1744) with respect to the encyclopedic, "hyper"-textual, scope of philology; Viana at the same time acknowledges that Vives' definition remains «sin desarrollar como propuesta metodológica (without developing it as a methodological proposition)» (*ibid.*, pp. 26-27, and footnote 22). The crux of the matter, from our vantage point, is of course precisely the theoretical, propositional core of Vichian "philology".

[186] See again my *Vico's Three Realms*, cit., for further explanation and illustration.

[187] See A. Caponigri, *Time and Idea*, cit., pp. 65-66. Caponigri explains: «The movement of this science would be oscillatory. The terms of its movement would be, on the one hand, the idea; specifically, the idea of that humanity which is realized in the relations of community; on the other, the concrete forms of sociality. […] The primary orientation of the science of humanity *must be toward the idea*. […] The path of the science *leads back from the idea* to the concreteness of social process not as something extraneous to that idea but as to another dimension of it» (italics added).

[188] G. Cacciatore made it clear that when speaking of the *factual*, it must be bound up with the theoretical: «Nel *fatto* si concretizza (assume "corporeità") il *vero*, ma il fatto se non fa riferimento a una tavola di principi – […] alle strutture mentale costanti, agli *eide* della mente – resta insignificante (In the *factual,* the *true* becomes concrete (takes on "corporeity"), but the factual that fails to make reference to a set of principles – to the mental structures that remain constant, to the *eide* of the mind – remains insignificant)» (Id., *Un'idea moderna di certezza: la filologia di Vico tra ermeneutica e filosofia*, in *Vico nella storia della filologia*, cit., pp. 177-197, p. 177). Throughout his contribution, Cacciatore highlights the propositional, systematic framework of Vico's philology, contradistinguishing it both from the baldly empirical, on the one hand, and abstract philosophical "reason", on the other hand. Without claiming necessarily congruence in all respects, of his views with the thesis expressed at present, the following two excerpts can be read to be in basic agreement on the epistemic status of "philology": «[I]nteressa evidenziare la struttura "teoretica" dell'argomento vichiano, impegnato […] a ritrovare i nessi tra verità e certezza, tra universalità "filosofica" delle idee e storicità "ermeneutico-filologica" dei costume umani e delle istituzioni civili (It is of interest to explicate the "theoretical" structure of the Vichian reasoning which is committed to bringing to

light the nexus between truth and certainty, between the "philosophical" universality of the ideas and the "hermeneutic-philological" historicity of the human customs, and the institutions)» (p.180); «Attraverso questo concetto [la *storia ideale eterna*], si manifesta in modo esplicito il tentativo sistematico vichiano di fondare, di sviluppare nelle sue articolazioni teoretico-conoscitive e storico-filologiche, il nesso *verum-factum* (Through this concept [the *ideal eternal history*], Vico's systematic endeavor manifests itself in explicit manner, that of founding, of developing in the theoretical-cognitive and historical-philological articulations [of the *ideal eternal history*], the nexus of *verum-factum*)» (p. 182). See also Cacciatore's similar statements in his contribution *Vico: narrazione storica e narrazione fantastica*, in *Il sapere poetico e gli universali fantastici*, cit., pp.117-139, such as: «Essa è scienza storica nel senso moderno, è analisi e comprensione dei fatti e dei fenomeni […] che formano il diritto, la società, la poesia, la religione, anche quando e proprio quando questo bagaglio di tradizioni sembra essere letteralmente esploso in un pulviscolo di insignificanti frammenti (This [philology] is a historical science in the modern sense, is analysis and understanding of the facts and phenomena […] which constitute law, society, poetry, literature, religion, furthermore and precisely when all this baggage of traditions seems to have been pulverized literally into tiny fragments by an explosion)» (p. 136). This contribution also appeared in Spanish as *Vico: Narración Histórica y Narración Fantástica*, trans. by J. Sánchez Espillaque, in «CsV», 23-24, 2009-2010, pp. 15-31.

[189] The net metaphor is borrowed from V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., p. CXIV.

[190] *Philosophy,* Chapter 1, § 1.

[191] *Ibid.*, Chapter 12, § 3.

[192] *Ibid.*, Chapter 16, § 1.

[193] *Ibid.*, Chapter 16, § 1.

[194] *Ibid.*, Chapter 20: «[T]hey [the jurists] respond that the laws are social in some sense, either in regard to the community or to the individual as part of a community».

[195] As Lomonaco wrote: «Il *verum* per l'uomo ha bisogno di verifiche e di confronti con le circostanze reali (For humans, the *true* requires verification by, and confrontation with, the actual circumstances)» (Id., *Ragione e diritto prima delle Scienze Nuove*, cit., p. 82).

[196] Akin to its place in Vanzulli's dichotomy.

[197] Cfr. L. Pompa: «[…] neo Hegelian[s], among whom Croce was preeminent, […] attributed to him the view that the content of history was wholly necessary, our knowledge of it wholly a priori» (Id., *Vico and the Presuppositions of Historical Knowledge*, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, cit., pp. 125-140, p. 126). Pompa proceeds to present an interpretation that is neither empiri-

cist/positivist nor idealist/wholly a priori. While he does not expressly associate or identify it with the sphere of Vichian "philology", much of what is elucidated quite clearly relates to it and deals with it, thus preserving the distinction Vico himself drew, and that we have insisted on. As noted above, the issue of seeing Vico as an empiricist or rationalist/idealist was also raised by Hösle who takes the idealist position (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CXIV, footnote 146).

[198] For certain philosophers that are in the background, see W. H. Walsh, *The Logical Status of Vico's Ideal Eternal History*, cit., p. 150. The original expression «*per metà*» is from *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 860.

[199] A statement closer to the spirit of Axiom X can be found in the prologue of *De uno*, Book II (*On the Constancy of the Jurisprudent*): «[…] we will not allow philology to be separated from philosophy […]. Rather we will let philosophy follow as a necessary consequence from philology». Still, this mild-mannered programmatic statement does not rise to the level of adamance on the place of "philology" negatively expressed in *Scienza nuova*.

[200] The role that *mediation* plays in Vico's systematic thought as indispensable linkage, intermediate agency, interposition, in various contexts, has been noted by Vico students, for example by A. Damiani, *Poesía y política en Giambattista Vico*, in *Arte y poder*, Buenos Aires, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1993, pp. 392-395, p. 395: «El hombre puede conocer lo que él mismo ha hecho: el mundo civil, las instituciones sociales, el estado. Pero para ello, nos dice Vico, no debemos aplicar directamente nuestra razón sobre la praxis […] («Man is able to know what he has made himself: the civic world, the social institutions, the state. But to do so, Vico tells us, we should not apply our reason directly to actual praxis)»; D. Di Cesare, *Parola, logos, dabar: Linguaggio e verità nella filosofia di Vico*, in «BCSV», XXII-XXIII (1992-1993), pp. 251-287, p. 262: «Nell'introdurre qui il linguaggio come termine di mediazione tra *verum* e *factum,* non si pretende in nessun modo di esaurire il significato di questo principio (By introducing here language as mediating term between *verum* and *factum,* it is by no means intended to exhaust the meaning of this principle)»; G. Cacciatore, *Un'idea moderna di certezza*, cit., p. 189: «il ruolo dell'interpretazione coinvolge […] sopratutto quello di una possibilità di mediazione, affidata appunto all parola, tra soggetto e mondo (the role of interpretation involves […] above all [the level] of the possibility of mediation, entrusted precisely to language, between subject and world)».

[201] Without the interposition of "philology" between "philosophy" and historical reality, the place of "philosophy" in Vico has been thought to be highly problematic: «What I am arguing is that there is a certain incoherence in Vico's conception of the imaginative universal. For Vico requires of it that,

on the one hand, it be premetaphorical and preconceptual in a way that deprives it of any determinateness which could point forward in any one particular direction of historical development rather than in some other alternative direction; but he also requires of it that it be sufficiently determinate to function as the specific precursor of what actually occurred in the unfolding of what he took, not always correctly, to be actual history». (A. Macintyre, *Imaginative Universals and Historical Falsification: A Rejoinder to Professor Verene*, in «NVS», 6 (1988), pp. 21-30, p. 29) These comments identify two spheres, "philosophy", the realm of imaginative universals, preconceptual thinking, and the sphere of actual history, but omit "philology", which is the sphere that is, epistemically, «the precursor of what actually occurred in […] history», rather than "philosophy". With this modification, the perceived incoherence disappears.

The failure of making the intermediary function of "philology" explicit, and thus conflating "philology" (the ideal eternal history) and "philosophy" (the metaphysical), seems also to be behind the problems that L. Pompa more recently saw in Vico's explanations: «And so, in turn must the ideal eternal history [be rejected], understood as a metaphysical pattern underlying and determining the outline and shape of human history. Hence, in effect, Vico's attempt to present empirical history *sub specie aeternitatis* must be seen as a heroic but misguided vision» (Id., *Reflections on the Ideal Eternal History*, in «BCSV», XLI, 2011, 2, pp. 15-32, p. 25).

[202] Just by way of illustration, a modern, anachronistic, example is J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass. , Harvard University Press, 1971. A nonanachronistic example would be, of course, Grotius' theory of international law.

[203] Cristofolini captured aspects of this difference: «Il versante filologico è più esplicito […]. Il procedimento filosofico, più implicito, è diverso, per non dire opposto (The philological side is more explicit […]. The philosophical procedure, more implicit, is different, not to say opposite)» (Id., *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 96).

[204] See *Philosophy*, Chapter 3, Introduction: «We have seen that human beings know the principles of the sciences in God by means of the idea of eternal order, and thus it follows that the principles of things themselves are from God. […] He is truth». Also Chapter 4, § 1: «Since God alone is true and truth itself, […] we have confirmed that the cult of the one God, who is known by the mind, is the true religion». Regardless of whether considered from this perspective or the functorial point of view, the entities belonging to the "philosophical" sphere do not arise *ex nihilo*. This is not unrelated (although this is not the place to explore this point further) to M. Lollini's disagreement with S.

Luft on the *verum-factum* principle which in Luft's interpretation concerns originary socio-linguistic creativity *ex nihilo*. Lollini's rejoinder is: «Il racconto vichiano delle origini dell'umanità gentile non si basa sull'idea di una creazione dal nulla, ma sulle concrete pratiche linguistiche e sociali dei proto-umani che vivono in un particolare e specifico contesto naturale loro dato (Vico's account of the origins of gentile [non-Hebrew] humanity is not based on a creation out of nothing, but on the concrete linguistic and social practices of the proto-humans that lived in a particular and specific natural environment available to them)» (Id., *Natura, ragione e modernità nella Scienza nuova di Vico*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., p. 230; S. Luft's work is *Uncanny Humanism: Reading the "New Science" between Modern and Postmodern*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003).

[205] *Philosophy*, Chapter 20: «The jurisconsults surpass the philosophers because […] by the power of truth itself they approached Platonism quite unawares while doing something else, namely, interpreting the laws». As already quoted above, Vico went as far as saying that «philosophy follow[s] as a necessary consequence from philology». Cfr. D. Di Cesare, *Parola, logos, dabar*, cit., p. 262: «Alla filologia viene attribuito un ruolo fondamentale; essa diviene la condizione stessa della filosofia. Sulla base della filologia quest'ultima può ergersi a «scienza del vero» (A fundamental role is attributed to philology; it becomes the condition of possibility itself of philosophy. On the basis of philology, the latter can raise itself to «science/knowledge of the true»)».

It is of interest to note that the problematic that Vico grappled with, still occupies social thinkers today, evidenced by the statement: «I am afraid that this [using only conceptual analysis and intuition] would condemn philosophers to focus on only half of the story (or maybe even less). […] What philosophers need is a combination of these tools with the methods provided by the sciences, especially the empirical ones. The alternative is to quickly reach the limits of what can be achieved by a priori reasoning […]» (F. Guala, *The Philosophy of Social Science: Metaphysical* and *Empirical*, in «Philosophy Compass», 2, 2007, 6, pp. 954-980, p. 975-976).

[206] Cristofolini compares the Axiom with a putatively identical statement by Spinoza (*Ethics*, II, 7) and observes: «In Vico però non si tratta di un principio descrittivo del corso delle cose, ma di un principio prescrittivo per il corso della scienza (In Vico, however, it does not have to do with a descriptive principle of the course of institutions, but a prescriptive principle for the course of knowledge acquisition)» (Id., *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 81). V. Vitiello also makes reference to Spinoza, in a discussion of E. Paci's philosophy, and quotes Paci as pointing out another difference: «Vico differisce da Spinoza in quanto le idee vichiane sono modi dell'uomo e non di Dio (Vico

differs from Spinoza in the sense that the Vichian ideas are modes of man and not of God)» (Id., *Vico. Storia, linguaggio, natura*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2008, p. 110).

[207] This is correctly asserted by U. Galeazzi, *Ermeneutica e storia in Vico. Morale, diritto e società nella "Scienza nuova"*, L'Aquila-Rome, Japadre, 1993, p. 35: «Infatti [la metafisica della mente] procede dall'accertamento filologico, storico-empirico dei fatti umani, che il soggetto conoscente, non produce […] (In fact, [the metaphysics of the mind] begins, and continues with, the philological, historical-empirical establishment of the man-made facts that the knowledge-capable subject does not produce […])».

[208] To quote Galeazzi again: «Un metodo unico che si adottasse *a priori*, indipendentemente dalla peculiarità di ciò che è oggetto di indagine, sarebbe di ostacolo all'impresa conoscitiva, pretendendo di predeterminare che cosa debba essere la realtà che, invece, si tratta di scoprire (A single method adopted *a priori*, independently of the specific nature of the object of inquiry, would be an obstacle to the epistemic endeavor, presuming to predetermine what should be the reality which, rather, is what is to be discovered)» (*ibid.*, p. 42).

[209] «Sicché la nuova scienza non procede deduttivamente dai principi agli effetti, ma al contrario dai fatti si impegna a risalire ai principi (Thus the new science does not proceed deductively from principles to effects, but to the contrary, from the facts it strives to ascend to principles)» (*ibid.*, p. 180).

[210] This is succinctly elucidated by Schaeffer, *Vico's Il diritto universale and Roman Law*, cit., pp. 45-62; relative to the argument we are developing at this point — the "left-to-right" direction of forgetful functors, transitively from the prevailing, real-life human situation to the articulation of certain legal standards, and ultimately to the ideal of equity — some of Schaeffer's insights on Vico are pertinent: «When society becomes sufficiently complex, tensions between established custom (the c*ertum*) and new situations and problems come into play. At this point, says Vico, humans begin to seek the truth that lies within or behind the certain. That truth is the last of Vico's key terms: the *verum*. The truth that is sought is equity: how new situations can be accommodated equitably. […] What has been established (*certum*) must become an object of speculation; the principles implicated in custom must be exposed so that they may be altered or reaffirmed in a new praxis or in a code. […] By searching for its principles […] the lineaments of the natural law begin to appear. Hence the natural law is not deduced from reason but induced from history. […] Vico's account of a historical development of Roman law has important implications. First, the law is not founded in some originating rational act» (*ibid.*, pp. 50-51).

[211] For instance, Axiom LXIX (§ 246): «Governments must conform to the nature of the men governed»; Axiom XCII (§ 283): «The weak want laws; the powerful withhold them; the ambitious […] advocate them; princes […] protect them»; Axiom XCIV (§ 290): «Natural liberty is fiercer in proportion as property attaches more closely to the persons of its owners […]».

[212] Cfr. a reconstruction of Vico's «theory of humanization» in A. Blasi, *Vico, Developmental Psychology, and Human Nature,* in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, cit., Part 2, pp. 14-39, pp. 22-24.

[213] We are echoing Vico's concerns, in a different context, expressed in *De antiquissima*: «But the same thing comes to pass in this anatomy of things as does in the ordinary anatomy of the human body: in the latter, even the more keen-sighted physicists wonder about the condition, structure and function of the parts of the body, wonder whether because of death […] both the condition and structure of the living body have perished so that it is impossible to determine what the function of these parts is» (Chapter 1, § 1; as quoted from *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians,* cit., p. 21). And we must at least in passing give recognition that in Vico's seemingly convoluted style of exposition, a heroic effort – "heroic" in the usual sense of the word, not in the technical Vichian sense, either of the age of the "heroes", or of the lecture *De mente eroica* (*On the heroic mind*) – is evident of mimicking performatively the no less convoluted epistemic process(es); it is an heroic attempt as no degree of literary ingenuity can ever hope to attain to the level of gnoseological ingenuity that is involved.

[214] Original Italian terms found in *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., p. 860

[215] § 7, p. 6 of the Bergin/Fisch translation. The original Italian is from *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 789, where «Scienza» is highlighted typographically by both italics and capital initial.

[216] According to P. Giraud, in forms of the verb «ridurre», in §§ 3, 4, 14, 17, 248, 486, 539, 734. See Id., *La difficulté de la philologie dans la pensée de Vico*, in *Vico nella storia della filologia*, cit., pp. 117-138, p. 138, footnote 57. As Girard points out, it refers there to (the arduous work of) turning wilderness into cultivated land; the idea is not of making something less quantitively or qualitatively, but of mastery. If mastery is understood in a broad, even metaphorical sense, it might also be applicable to the two contexts of the verb in § 734 that are non-agricultural: (1) «thus give some certainty to the chronology of poetic history (*da redurvi a certezza de' tempi la Storia Poetica*)»; (2) «reduces them [the plebs] to obedience (*reduce in ufizio*)» (For the original Italian, see *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., pp. 1115, 1116). In both instances, «reducing» involves types of mastery, be they intellectual or spiritual, in bringing about a

desired state. For further lexical information on the verb, see R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 141, footnote 1.

[217] G. Cacciatore, *Un' idea moderna di certezza*, cit., p. 195; A. Battistini, *Note conclusive*, in *Vico nella storia della filologia*, cit., pp. 199-208, p. 206.

[218] D. Ph. Verene summeds it up well: «What has been originally made by human choice, a custom, a word, a law in the particular life of a people, must be remade by an act of philosophical thought that shows how it embodies in itself not just the conditions or history of that people but the universal principles of humanity» (Id., *Imaginative Universals and Narrative Truth*, cit., p. 9).

[219] For the original Italian see G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 893; italics and capitalization in the original.

[220] As already stated above, both functors are a *pair*, and in category-theoretic language, they are *left-adjoint* and *right-adjoint*, according to their respective direction. The sense of pairing is captured by N. Struever's compound expression of «philosophicalised philology and historicized philosophy» (Id., *Collingwood's Vichianism*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico,* cit., pp. 317-333, p. 331). Struever associates the first approach with Vico, the second with Collingwood, while we find both approaches present in Vico.

We are therefore only in partial, qualified agreement with L. Pompa who described Vico's "logic" as follows: «The "ideal eternal history" is therefore a theory about the nature and history of a possible society, deduced from a network of mutually consistent, universal, and necessary synthetic propositions. The formulation of the categorical relationships which is assumed in the statements of these propositions is the first part of the work of the philosopher. This adducing of actual propositions, and the deduction of the theory from them, is the second part of the work of the philosopher, i.e., the work of the philosopher understood as a theoretical sociologist» (Id., *Vico's Science*, in «History and Theory», 10, 1971, 1, pp. 49-83, p. 67; also appeared in Italian as *La scienza di Vico*, trans. by M. Donzelli, in «BCSV», II, 1972, pp. 13-51). We can agree to denoting the *ideal eternal history* as a «theory», as the work of a «theoretical sociologist», as well to the «formulation of the categorical relationships […] of the philosophers», however, the "adjunction" of mutually interacting functors between "philosophy" and "philology" precludes any type of straightforwardly "deductive" nexus. Pompa develops his thesis also in his *Vico: A Study of the "New Science"*, cit., pp. 73-111; Id., *Hermenéutica Metafísica y Metafísica Hermenéutica*, trans. by J. A. Marín-Casanova, in «CsV», 7-8, 1997, pp. 141-165.

[221] According to Schaeffer, «the principle implicated in custom must be exposed so that they may be altered or reaffirmed in a new praxis or in a code» (Id., *Vico's Il diritto universale and Roman Law*, cit., p. 50). «The principles

implicated in custom», in fact, are precisely what is generated by the forgetful functor, and are then made part of "philology".

[222] The need of having a means of factoring out invalid or spurious theoretical propositions is implied in Pompa's statement: «Given, however, the theoretical possibility of an infinite number of such hypotheses, it would always be possible, with enough ingenuity, to find some hypothesis to support any given account, no matter how improbable the latter might seem» (Id., *Vico and the Presuppositions of Historical Knowledge*, cit., p. 139).

[223] M. Scalercio sums up Vico's objections as follows: «A Grozio rimprovera di aver concepito un sistema professandone l'efficacia anche in assenza di ogni cognizione di Dio, ossia senza alcuna cognizione della divinità provvedente; a Selden contesta la supposizione che tutte le norme morali siano state trasmesse dai gentili; a Pufendorf contesta l'assenza del principio di provvedenza (He reproaches Grotius for having developed a system that presumes validity even in the absence of any recognition of God, that is, without any recognition of divine providence; he challenges Selden's assumption that all moral norms have come down to us from gentile peoples; in the case of Pufendorf, he questions the absence of the principle of providence)» (Id., *La teologia politica vichiana. La figura della divinazione nella teologia civile della Scienza nuova*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 197-217, p. 216).

[224] The essential idea behind this methodology, that of factoring out unwanted, because inapplicable, information, is also important in other fields; in mathematics it has been developed into specific (algebraic) techniques for correctly determining structural "invariants", inspired by the initial success in algebraic topology. For an elementary example, see I. Stewart, *Visions of Infinity*, cit., pp. 271-272; in the field of "homology", the fundamental idea is that of "cycles", but there are cycles that are not of right kind (termed "boundaries") which must be eliminated from consideration, in short, cycles *modulo* boundaries.

[225] More nuanced qualifications are certainly possible, and necessary in certain contexts, but we will for our purposes stay at the most elemental, or more literally radical, level. It is a different way of stating F. Tessitore's insight: «La ragione di Vico […] non è assoluta e totalizzante […] (Vico's reason […] is not absolute and totalizing […])» (Id., *Prefazione*, in V. Vitiello, *Vico. Storia, linguaggio, natura*, cit., pp. 5-10, p. 9).

[226] The metaphorical sense is reflected in the Hösle/Jermann translation as «auf halbem Wege (halfway)».

[227] Vico's problematic is well described in P. Girard, *Le difficulté de la philologie dans la pensée de Vico*, cit., pp. 131-134.

[228] Cfr. U. Galeazzi, *Ermeneutica e storia in Vico*, cit., p. 43.

[229] *Ibid.*, p. 179

[230] The following comments by other Vico readers are pertinent here: «Deja así un suplemento de realidad que no puede reducirse a su aprehensión por el entendimiento (It [§ 349] leaves a remainder of reality that cannot be reduced to its being apprehended by the intellect)» (O. Remaud, *Vico lector de Espinosa*, cit., p. 203); «[…] il persistere nel certo vichiano di un elemento empirico non metabolizzabile nella trasparenza ultima della ragione, e per questo destinato a sussistere in un ordine distinto (the persisting of an empirical element in the Vichian certain that is not fully dissolvable in the ultimate clarity of reason, and therefore destined to live on in a different sphere)» (S. Caianiello, *Filologia ed epoca in Vico*, cit., p. 154).

[231] In §§ 341, 347, the relative markedness of *human* is more pronounced in the original text, see G. Vico, *La Scienza Nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., pp. 894-895, 902-903.

[232] It begs the question how Vico arrived at this particular threefold determination which is introduced quite abruptly in § 333; after all, there are a myriad «human customs», as evidenced by cultural anthropology — synchronically, diachronically — that must come under purview, and surely did enter his reflection. For example. T. Brennan points out, «[i]n many cultures, after all, people do not bury their dead. They set them afloat on rafts, cremate them, leave them to rest atop ritual platforms, or place them in sacred chambers open to the sky to be devoured by birds». It takes the principle of charity to conclude that «his point is not literal burial but the ritual commemoration of mortal remains» (Id., *Borrowed Light*, vol. I: *Vico, Hegel and the Colonies*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2014, p. 34). An example of alternative proposals of universal anthropology is cited by J. Mali – birth, death, sexual relations – in Id., *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico's New Science*, Cambridge-New York , Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 57. Mali plays down the importance of such disagreements, in favor of the need of assessing Vico's anthropology at a higer level: «What is really novel and important in Vico's theory of the "principles of humanity", then, is not its actual choice of these three particular institutions […]; it is rather the very conception of how "understanding in principle" is possible in and indispensable to the human sciences» (*ibid.*, p. 56). However, this approach does not seem to take into consideration the possibility that the three specific constants of civilization that Vico featured so prominently might be integrally related to the nature and substance of his "philosophy" and "philology", and thus structurally necessary in the overall conceptual framework.

It would, of course, have been informative if Vico had made reference to some other putative cultural commonalities, along with his reasons for ulti-

mately eliminating them from consideration in favor of the three he settled on in particular. He provided an example of such engagement, in fact, in support of the place of religion in § 334, in interaction with Peter Bayle who had claimed that there were human societies without any religion (*ibid.*, p. 55). If an (anachronistic) side glance may be permitted here, other investigators have proposed very different primeval origins of civilization, such as *cities, music, metals,* on the one hand, and *money, religion, empire*, on the other hand. (For the first triple, see D. D. Lowery, *Toward a Poetics of Genesis 1-11: Reading Genesis 4:17-22 in Its Ancient Near Eastern Background*, Winona Lake, Indiana, Eisenbrauns, 2013; for the second triple, Y. N. Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, trans. by the author with help of J. Purcell and H. Watzman, New York, HarperCollins, 2015; first published in Hebrew by Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, Israel, 2011).

[233] G. Mazzotta commented: «The "principles" are in fact origins, beginnings, foundations, causes, or true criteria of the historical science, as Vico's self-reflection make clear» (Id., *Universal History: The New Science between Antiquarians and Ethnographers,* in *Reason and Its Others: Italy, Spain, and the New World*, ed. by D. Castillo and M. Lollini, Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2006, pp. 316-330, p. 316).

[234] Our view has certain affinities with G. Bedani, *Vico Revisited: Orthodoxy, Naturalism and Science in the Scienza nuova*, Oxford-Hamburg-Munich, Berg, 1989, who highlights Vico's "naturalism" (*ibid.*, pp. 255-259).

[235] «Providence» plays a key role in Vico's account. In Vico studies, two main "schools of thought" on Vico's meaning are to be noted, the "transcendentalist" and "immanentist" understanding; see E. L. Paparella, *The Paradox of Transcendence and Immanence in Vico's Concept of Providence,* in «Metanexus*»* (<http://metanexus.net>), February 18, 2008; Id., *Hermeneutics in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, San Francisco, Mellen Research University Press/EMText, 1993, pp. 153-159. For instance, the transcendentalist view is ascribed to Vico in Galeazzi, *Hermeneutica e storia in Vico,* cit., pp. 35-37; on the other hand, taking a historical/historicist position, P. J. FitzPatrick contends: «[…] Vico spoke within a tradition of thought for which some kind of theodicy was inevitable» (Id., *Vieni, Vedi, Vico,* in «Journal for Eigtheenth-Century Studies», 7, 1984, 1, pp. 77-85, p. 79). See also the discussion in V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., pp. CXXIV-CXXX, including the observation: «Vico ist zu recht von der Überzeugung durchdrungen, dass eine Kenntnis der Intentionen der handelnden Subjekte nicht ausreichend ist, um den Lauf der Geschichte zu verstehen (Vico, rightly, is deeply convinced that knowledge of the intentions of the acting subjects is not sufficient in order to understand the course of history)» (p. CXXV). A survey of the debate can be found in E.

Pascucci, *G. B. Vico: el establecimiento del orden natural a través de la noción de providencia*, dissertation, Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1994, online at *Portale Vico*, <www.giambattistavico.it>, under tab *Biblioteca digitale*. See also R. Mazzola, *Religione e provvidenza in Vico*, in «BCSV», XXVI-XXVII, 1996-1997, pp. 101-126; G. Bedani, *Vico Revisited*, cit., pp. 215-230. Vico scholarship on this extremely important topic is extensive; however, our consideration of «providence» is limited to its epistemological role which does not require commitment (at least as best as we can determine at present) to a particular substantive interpretation.

[236] In §§ 343-345, providence is described as the personification of «omnipotence», «infinite/eternal wisdom», and «immeasurable/eternal goodness». We may note in passing that the ideal of equity/justice that animates much of Vico's reflections is not expressly referred to as part of, or alternatively, in relation to, providence.

[237] It is the epistemic analogue, structurally, to "rationality" vis-vis "social life": «[…] il *perché* e il *come* della razionalità e della socialità sembrano non coincidere integralmente ([…] the *why* and the *how* of rationality and social life do not seem to fully coincide)» (M. Vanzulli, *Sulla relazione di ideale e fattuale di metafisica e storia*, cit., p. 203).

As alluded to above, Vico's incorporation of non-theoretical factors into his framework can be seen in the context of science in general, that is, in its practice of divising mathematical descriptions augmented by physical parameters, coefficients, and constants not inherent in the mathematics. This is not limited to the physical sciences; in the biosciences a similar melding of mathematics and biological parameters is the norm. See, e.g., A. Friedman, *What is Mathematical Biology and How Useful is it?*, in «Notices of the AMS», 57, 2010, 7, pp. 851-857; M. C. Mackey - M. Santillán, *Mathematics, Biology, and Physics: Interactions and Interdependence*, in «Notices of the AMS», 52, 2005, 8, pp. 832-840.

[238] On «providence», Otto stated: «Sea lo que sea lo que Vico entiende bajo esta "providencia", la *provvedenza* viquiana no es desde luego una vestidura de fe que se le hubiera colocado por encima apresuradamente a la "Ciencia Nueva" (Regardless of what Vico understood under "providence", the Vichian *provvedenza*, of course, is not a cloak of faith that had been hastily thrown upon the "New Science")» (Id.,*"Contextualidad" científica y "convertibilidad" filosófica*, cit., p. 171).

[239] The following comments are perceptive, but do not acknowledge the existence of a second circularity: «Philosophy cannot, for Vico, transpire outside of philology, no more than philology, without the inception within it of the movement of philosophy, can advance one step toward its term. Their circularity is complete even though, in the expository scheme of the "New

Science", they may appear as successive, philosophy preceding philology in the determination of the elements, the principles and the method» (A. Caponigri, *Time and Idea*, cit., pp. 160-161). With similar focus on this circularity only, F. Botturi calls it «il loro reciproco rapporto (their reciprocal relationship)», and explains: «Ed è precisamente a questo livello che si istituisce la relazione ermeneutica: la verità del "vero metafisico" è *interpretativa* del significato teorico-pratico del certo fattuale, mentre questo a sua volta *interpreta*, in ordine all'ambito della finitezza umana, il significato del vero (And it is precisely at this level that the hermeneutical process takes place: the truth of the "metaphysical true" is *the interpretation* of the theoretical-practical meaning of the factual certain, while this, in turn, *interprets*, within the constraints of human finiteness, the meaning of the true)» (Id., *Ermeneutica del mito ed esperienza etica in Giambattista Vico*, in *Pensar para un nuevo siglo*, vol. I, cit., pp. 275-293, p. 276; italics original). Since the second circularity does not come into view, Botturi states matters in terms of a dualism (absent equivalence relations) that has been shown to be problematic: «In definitiva, ogni sapere fa riferimento a una forma ideale che […] è un Giano bifronte volto insieme all'eterno metafisico, in cui si fonda, e al temporale empirico, in cui si manifesta (All sorts of knowledge definitely make reference to an ideal form which […] is Janus-faced, turned both to the metaphysical eternal which is its grounds, and to the temporal empirical in which it manifests itself)» (*ibid.*, p. 281).

[240] Instead of circularity, it would be more proper to speak of "adjunction". Interestingly, V. Vitiello sees a bidirectional movement in the allegorical frontispiece (*dipintura*) of *Scienza nuova* (reproduced on p. 2 of the Bergin/Fisch translation). The first movement – from the upper left to the lower right – consists of the ray of light from God's eye to the concave mirror on the chest of Metaphysics, being reflected onto the statue of Homer, and then illuminating the human condition and history (depicted by means of an altar displaying a lituus, a water jar, a torch, and on the ground, a cinerary urn, a plow, a rudder, a tablet with a Latin alphabet, Roman fasces, a sword, a purse, a balance, and the caduceus of Mercury. For a more detailed description of the frontispiece, see M. Papini, *A Graph for the* Dipintura, in «NVS», 9, 1991, pp. 138-141; Id., *Il geroglifico della storia. Significato e funzione della dipintura nella "Scienza nuova" di G. B. Vico*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1984, pp. 61-106; J. E. Domínguez Moros, *Ideas centrales de la Ciencia Nueva de Vico expresadas a partir del grabado alegórico del frontispicio en la "Introducción" de su magna obra*, in «CsV», 27, 2013, pp. 117-127. Vitielli says: «Si è giustamente osservato che la dipintura va "letta" non solo scorrendola dall'alto verso il basso, sì anche nel senso opposto dal basso verso l'alto, dall'*ingens sylva* abitata dai *gegeneîs*, dai *Terrae filii*, sino alla Metafisica, il cui occhio mira il divino triangolo. Ma bisogna dire di più: I

due movimenti – dall'alto verso il basso, e dal basso verso l'alto – sono e vanno letti come un unico e medesimo movimento. […] Il movimento dal basso è sì il movimento dal certo al vero, dall'*auctoritas* alla *ratio*, dall'equità civile alla naturale, ma visto alla luce dello sguardo divino, dell'*ordo rerum* (It has been rightly observed that the frontispiece is to be "read" by traversing it not only from the top to the bottom, but also in the opposite direction from the bottom to the top, from the *ingens sylva* inhabited by the *gegeneîs*, from the *Terrae filii* to Metaphysics, whose eye looks at the divine triangle. But more needs to be said: the two movements – from the top to the bottom, and from the bottom to the top – are and need to be read as a single and same movement. […] The movement from the bottom is then the movement from the certain to the true, from *auctoritas* to *ratio*, from civic equity to natural equity, but seen in the light of the divine gaze, of the *ordo rerum*)» (Id., *Vico. Storia, linguaggio, natura*, cit., p. 26, see also p. 74). In terms of our thesis, with its trichotomous framework, "philosophy" is embodied in the figure of Metaphysics, "philology" in the figure of Homer, and the world of humans in the altar, its appurtenances, as well as the articles placed around the altar on the ground; the movement from the top to the bottom ("top-down") can be interpreted as analogous to the (semi)contravariant functors, the movement from the bottom to the top ("bottom-up"), to the forgetful functors.

[241] As already mentioned above, Hösle views Vico as a clear rationalist (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CXIV, footnote 146), and concludes that Vico did not possess an adequate method of providing ultimate grounds for his rationalistically conceived theory («über keine ausreichende Methode verfügt, um seine rationalistisch konzipierte Theorie zu begründen»). However, Hösle, in the context of Croce's Vico interpretation, also implicitly acknowledged a trichotomy: «Denn dies ist gerade Vicos eigenste Pointe, dass *Philosophie, Sozialwissenschaft* und *Historie* nicht zu trennen sind und dass nur aus ihrer Verbindung eine neue Wissenscnaft hervorgehen kann (For it is precisely Vico's unique key claim that *philosopy, social sciences,* and *history* cannot be separated, and that a new science can only arise out of their combination)» (*ibid.*, p. CIX; italics added).

A similarly nuanced epistemology is evident in N. Badaloni. On the one hand, there is clear emphasis on duality, as in the title *Ideality and Factuality in Vico's Thought*, trans. by H. V. White, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, cit., pp. 391-400; however, a trichotomous conception is implied by statements as: «The science of history ["philology"] is the human recognition of the possible relations between the *ideal* ["philosophy"] and the *fact*» (p. 398; italics original), and: «[…] truth ["philosophy"] is strictly bound to fact through the mediation of the utilities ["philology"]» (p. 399).

In view of all that has been said above on behalf of the thesis of Vico's trichotomous epistemological framework, the ultimate grounds of his reflections in "philosophy" are not separate or independent but rather emerge from the complex functorial interaction of all three spheres. From this vantage point, there is no need, or, indeed, the possibility, of another sphere of putatively more fundamental or superior philosophical standing. We can therefore concur with P. Girard: «[…] la modernità vichiana si definisce come la volontà, non di sfumare la ragione, ma di offrirne una definizione allargata e più ampia ([…] Vico's modernity is defined by its determination, not to water down reason, but to offer up an enlarged and more complete definition)» (Id., *Modernità e "ragione tutto spegata" in Vico*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 245-261, p. 261).

[242] In Bedani's words: « […] it is not possible for the "verum factum" and the "vero"/"certo" perspectives to co-exist as epistemological foundations of the same science. *They pull in opposing theoretical and methodological directions.* […] The coexistence within the same work of a normative intention with the elaboration of an empirical method is necessarily an uneasy one» (Id., *Vico Revisited*, cit., pp. 198, 211; italics original).

[243] Maybe more correctly, the main topic of *Liber metaphysicus*, since *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia* (*On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*) was planned to consist of three books, *Liber metaphysicus* being the first book only, the other two books never having materialized as originally proposed. Therefore, we will continue to refer to it as *De antiquissima,* as being synonymous with *Liber metaphysicus.*

[244] D. R. Lachterman, *Mathematics and Nominalism in Vico's Liber Metaphysicus*, in *Sachkommentar zu Giambattista Vicos "Liber metaphysicus"*, ed. by S. Otto and H. Viechtbauser, Munich, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1985, pp. 47-85, p. 63.

[245] G. Cerchiai, *Il "padre divino di ogni ritrovato". Aspetti dell'idea vichiani di ingegno,* in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico,* cit., pp. 33-49, pp. 46-47; M. Lollini, *Natura, ragione e modernità nella* Scienza nuova *di Vico*, *ibid.*, pp. 219-243, pp. 226-227; see also Id., *On Becoming Human: The Verum Factum Principle and Giambattista Vico's Humanism*, in «MLN» (formerly «Modern Language Notes»), 127, 2012, 1, pp. S21-S31, p. S26.

[246] Id., *Natura, ragione e modernità nella* Scienza nuova *di Vico*, cit., p. 226.

[247] H. Steinke, *Vico's Three Realms*, cit.

[248] In fact, Fig. 2 above is adapted from Fig. 2, *ibid.*, p. 75.

[249] Such caution is especially appropriate when the theory and practice of mathematics, both ancient and modern, is naively understood, or rather, misunderstood.

[250] M. Agrimi's protest is correct: «È questa [I principi dentro le modificazioni della medesima mente umana] la "continuità" più significativa tra *De antiquissima* e *Scienza nuova*, ma non è tale da autorizzare un'interpretazione netta della filosofia vichiana fondata su un metodo geometrico-trascendentale […] (This [the principles within the modifications of the human mind itself] is the most significant "continuity" between *De antiquissima* and *Scienza nuova*, but not to the extent of authorizing a straightforward interpretation of Vico's philosophy based on a geometric-transcendental method)» (Id., *Vico e la tradizione "platonica". "La filosofia dell'umanità e la storia universal delle nazioni"*, in «BCSV», XXII-XXIII, 1992-1993, pp. 65-102, p. 101, footnote 103.

[251] According to Lollini: «[…] nella *Scienza Nuova* Vico non abbandona completamente le origini metafisiche del suo pensiero […]. […] Il carattere problematico della modernità vichiana emerge con forza in questo paragrafo [§ 376] della *Scienza Nuova*, dove riemergono considerazioni metafisiche elaborate nel giovanile *De antiquissima italorum sapientia* a proposito del principio epistemologico del *verum factum convertuntur* ([…] in the *Scienza Nuova* Vico does not completely give up the metaphysical origins of his thought […]. […] The problematic character of Vico's modernity emerges forcefully in this paragraph [§ 376] of the *Scienza Nuova* where metaphysical reflections re-emerge that were elaborated in the early *De antiquissima italorum sapientia* with respect to the epistemological principle of *verum factum convertuntur*)» (Id., *Natura, ragione e modernità nella* Scienza Nuova *di Vico*, cit., p. 226-227).

6.

THE ORIGINS OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION: SEGMENTS *C* AND *C'*

As discussed above, the Vichian «principles» (religion, matrimony, funerary rites) in Book I are not only fundamental constituents of human civilization but also its beginnings[252]. Vico's preoccupation with unearthing origins, and by means of them the true forces propelling the large-scale trajectory of civilizations, «the course the nations run» (Book IV) reaches its most comprehensive expression in Book II, understandably giving rise to talk of «Vico's obsession with origins»[253]. In any kind of theory, in general, as well as any philosophical system, for that matter, the most crucial elements are the fundamental premises and first principles, and while the main body of work that flows, or is claimed to derive from them, may be of great interest and shows indications of being valid, the most important, indeed decisive, part, epistemologically, is the initial premises. It is only after such premises "pass muster" that an inquiry can properly be taken to the next step or level. Therefore, from an epistemological standpoint, Vico's seemingly interminable exploration of origins in Book II which in itself takes up as much as half of the entire *Scienza nuova*, plays an absolutely essential role. Rather than engaging with the full scope of Book II, and its hypothesized counterpart in Book IV, our aim is more restricted and focused; first of all, in the context of the larger structural proposal of ring composition in *Scienza nuova*, Book II will be viewed through the lens of Book IV in order to determine whether it is possible to cast into relief any particular theme(s) out of the overwhelming richness of the material. A second area of concentration will be related to Vico's philosophy of language, but restricted also to cer-

tain aspects. As shown above, a juxtaposition[254] with Spinozan thought can serve to bring Vichian thought into sharper focus.

6.1 *Relationship of segments C and C'* [255]

Book II of *Scienza nuova,* entitled «Poetic Wisdom» («*Della SAPIENZA POETICA*»)[256], is routinely described as "encyclopedic", a term that fits the contents in more than one sense. Following the Prolegomena, the eleven major subdivisions of the Book in terms of "sections"[257] – judging purely by their titles – indeed are encyclopedic in the modern sense of a wide and diverse range of subjects[258]. However, Vico's work, and especially Book II, is encyclopedic primarily in the non-anachronistic sense of the early modern period, or, more precisely, by the standard of the "baroque encyclopedia". Its aim was not mere comprehensive coverage but far more ambitious, namely, to put structure around knowledge, to organize it systematically[259]. The "encyclopedic" scope of Book II can therefore be seen in this light. It is evident not only in the subjects or areas of inquiry that Vico chose to make part of the Book, but also, tellingly, what he failed to include or pass over lightly. There are two areas, in particular, that seem to fall into the latter category: (1) art, and (2) economics.

With respect to art, an important clarification and qualification is called for: our subject is not aesthetics in general, nor aesthetics with respect to language in the form of poetry or other literary genres[260]. Rather, we are concerned with the so-called "visual arts" under which Giorgio Vasari, in the late Renaissance, subsumed painting, sculpture, and architecture[261]. Apart from a few scattered references to the visual or plastic arts elsewhere in *Scienza nuova* (§ 45, Egyptian pyramids, sculpture, casting; Greek painting, sculpture, casting, engraving; § 99, Chinese painting, porcelain; § 794, archaic Greek casting, engraving)[262], in Book II itself there is no "section" or even a short "chapter" devoted to these arts. This is all the more noteworthy since in his observa-

tions above on the arts in various cultures, their characterizations are related to, and integrated into, his overall scheme of cultural development[263]. In Vico studies, it is at times observed that all of human cultural activities came under his purview[264]. Thus, the (unexpected) omission of the visual arts in Book II may suggest a measure of caution in any summary evaluation of Book II. Before drawing any specific conclusions, however, it could be useful to examine the role that "economics" plays in Vico's sweeping account of «poetic wisdom».

Above it was suggested that economics was an area that Vico either failed to include in Book II, or only treated lightly. This claim seems to be in direct contradiction of Section IV, entitled «Poetic Economy»[265]. However, a few brief excerpts from the beginning of the section provide an idea of the direction or thrust of Vico's "economic" terminology:

The heroes apprehended with human senses those two truths which make up the whole of economic doctrine (la *dottrina Iconomica*[266]), which were preserved in the two Latin verbs *educere* and *educare*. […] the first of these applies to the education of the spirit and the second to that of the body (§ 520). […] As for the other part of household discipline (*Disciplina Iconomica*[267]), the education of bodies, the fathers with their frightful religions, their cyclopean authority, and their sacred ablutions began to educe, or bring forth, from the giant bodies of their sons the proper human form (§ 524). […] In the very birth of [domestic] economy (*Iconomica*[268]), they fulfilled it in its best idea, which is that the fathers by labor and industry should leave a patrimony to their sons, so that they may have an easy and comfortable and secure subsistence, even if foreign commerce should fail, or even all the fruits of civil life, or even the cities themselves, so that in such last emergencies the families at least may be preserved, from which there is hope that the nations may rise again (§ 525)[269].

The focus is thus on the identification of the family unit, both in its nuclear and extended forms, as the fundamental entity of

civic life and institutions up to the large-scale level, rather than on its economic role in the usual sense of the word[270].

Nevertheless, there are definitely various references or discussions of matters of an economic nature proper in *Scienza nuova*, although mainly outside this particular Section. They deal with matters such as *physical needs and desires, wealth, commerce, labor and industriousness, property/land ownership, fiefs, land cultivation and land rent*[271]. While these complex aspects and relationships cannot be elucidated here to any satisfactory degree, it can be stated that such matters of "economics" are discussed in the context(s) of sociopolitical developments, not the reverse situation of economic imperatives being depicted as the driving force behind the course that societies take[272]. It was only in the second half of the 18th century that the study of the economy came into its own[273], but, like all major new developments in the history of ideas, it did not sprout and blossom all of a sudden on entirely unprepared ground[274]. Furthermore, ancient Greece, Rome, and the classical thinkers and writers served as inspiration for the categories or concerns through the lens of which to explore early modern economic realities[275], classical sources with which Vico was no less familiar than the new breed of social historians. Although Vico's historical "untimeliness" cannot be ruled out as the most significant factor in the lack of a more systematic treatment of economic relations over time than he provided in «Poetic Economy» and in connection with other topics in *Scienza nuova*, a different reason may be more weighty, namely, his strict concern with unearthing the complex of "forces" that are most "radical", most determinative, in both genesis and ontogenesis of human society. The fact that the economy (in todays's sense) is missing from the repertoire of Book II can then be taken as an indication that Vico did not judge economic matters, all things considered, as primordial to the same degree as any of those factors that made it into his *tour d'horizon*[276]. And the same implication can now be stated about art (visual/plastic). As referred to above, he

commented on archaic art in certain contexts, but did not raise art to the level of primordial status. From Vico's perspective of primacy in the development of human society, art as well as the economic sphere are epiphenomena[277].

This brief digression on art and economy was meant to cast the "encyclopedic" scope of Book II[278] into a certain light, to put the spotlight on its "poetic" intent, where "poetic" is a Vichian technical term only tangentially related, albeit not absolutely unrelated, to literary genre and styles of expression. "Poetic", simply put, is Vico's "codeword" for two notions rolled into one, first, diachronically, how things had to have been at the very beginning of human civilization, and secondly, ontologically, as P. Fabiani put it succinctly, «[p]oetry is the creation of meaning»[279].

The encyclopedic range of Book II is thus consciously and deliberately circumscribed and tightly controlled by Vico's criterium of such forces as were truly «originary»[280], non-derivative, in shaping human civilization. And, within the seeming plethora of constitutive civilizing elements presented *seriatim*, an apposite question might be whether there could be present any kind of further structure, weighting, or clustering of elements that might shed light on the Book's inherent characteristics, its *eigenvalue*, so to speak. This is where regarding Book II through the lens of Book IV (that is, the part of Book IV that we consider to be segment *C'*) becomes pertinent. Vico himself projected an arc from Book II to Book IV: «Wherever, […] men begin to domesticate themselves by religion, they begin, proceed, and end by those stages which are investigated here in Book Two, to be encountered again in Book Four, where we shall treat of the course the nations run […]» (§ 393). Toward the end of Book II, we come across another explicit proleptic reference to the title of Book IV, viz., «the uniform course run by all the nations» (§ 737). And at various places in Book II, the next stage of theoretical grasp of the course of civilization, once the groundwork has been laid, is adumbrated, as in the central case of language; rather

than staying strictly on the subject of the genesis of language in Section II, "Poetic Logic", Vico already addresses his schema of «three kinds of languages» (§§ 432-446) that is formally the subject of Section V of Book IV[281]. An examination of the surface structure of the two Books also makes it immediately apparent that the last sections of Book II are missing in Book IV, on *physics, cosmography, astronomy, chronology, geography*[282]. While Book IV is silent about possible reasons for the exclusion, in Book II, Vico, however, himself provides a basis for differential treatment, or, equivalently, non-treatment, in Book IV of the various individual areas or aspects that in totality make up "Poetic Wisdom". In § 367, he writes:

From this [a crude metaphysics], as from a trunk, there branch out from one limb logic, morals, economics, and politics, all poetic; and from another, physics, the mother of cosmography and astronomy, the latter of which gives their certainty to the two daughters, chronology and geography – all likewise poetic.

What matters to us most in this statement, in our argumentative context, is the grouping of the various "poetic" disciplines and their underlying areas of human life, by means of the simile of a tree and branches[283]. The last five "poetic" factors are separated out from the rest and assigned to a different subdivision of the "tree", a caesura that follows a certain taxonomic logic, if the first grouping or branch is seen as "cultural" factors vs. the second group, as "physical/naturalistic" elements originating in the biophysical world[284]. Against this background, the omission in Book IV of the last few sections of Book II is not necessarily *ad hoc* but has a systematic aspect to it in that it involves precisely those factors, and only those factors, that are not strictly "cultural"[285].

There are a total of eleven[286] sections in segment C'; they, too, like the sections of Book II, range over a broad array of matters[287]. The headings of the sections, on their own, would seem

to speak of diversity and even heterogeneity. A close reading of each section, on the other hand, shows that there is a common thread to all of them: each factor, in its eventual long-drawn-out historical working out («the course the nations run»), is associated with the sociopolitical-governmental framework of human civilization, if not to an exclusive degree, then predominantly at their core[288]. Through a prism thus faceted, certain parts of Book II stand out particularly; their inordinate extensiveness relative to the whole of Book II, and to the surrounding parts, can be recognized as being a function of their centrality. This is the case most directly for Section V of Book II, "Poetic Politics", that discurses about many of the topics taken up in Book IV. However, the backward-looking references of Book IV are not restricted to the section on "Poetic Politics" but encompass also the immediately preceding section on "Poetic Economy" which deals with the structure and order of the archaic household as the first civic institution[289]. In this perspective, the encyclopedic breadth of Book II reveals itself as possessing more structure and intentionality than may be apparent at first[290].

The only other subject matter of comparable breadth and depth in Book II is language, found in Section II, entitled "Poetic Logic" (§§ 400-501). However, also in connection with this fundamental characteristic of human civilization, Vico does not lose sight of its relation to, and role in, creating institutions of a civic nature, as the conditions of possibility of other cultural achievements[291]. An exposition of Vico's philosophy of language has to be cognizant of the nexus of language and sociopolitical world, even if *prima facie* philosophy of language is studied *sui generis*[292]. Due to the position of language at the core of Vico's reflections, both ontologically and on the basis of its (literary) artifacts, certain aspects of his philosophy of language merit closer attention, particularly since they seem to be associated with some ambiguity in Vico studies. This will therefore be taken up in the next section.

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Notes to Chapter 6

252 G. Mazzotta, *Universal History,* cit., p. 316.

253 B. A. Haddock, *Heroes and the Law: Vico on the Foundation of Political Order*, cit., pp. 29-41, p. 41.

254 The type of juxtaposition chosen here, of course, does not preclude other ways of bringing Spinoza and Vico into contact.

255 As outlined above, segment *C* comprises all of Book II (§§ 361-779), while segment *C'* consists of Book IV, §§ 915-979. The remaining part of Book IV, §§ 980-1045, has been argued as constituting segment *B'*.

256 Found on pp. 907-1134 of G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit.

257 The Bergin-Fisch translation duplicates the numeration of "sections" introduced by F. Nicolini, as well as the numeration as "chapters", of any subsections. Vico's original text, of course, does not have any numeration, but both "sections" and "chapters" are easily distinguishable in the original even if they are not labelled as such.

258 Preceded always by the term «poetic», they are named (I) *metaphysics*, (II) *logic*, (III) *morals*, (IV) *economy*, (V) *politics*, (VI) *history*, (VII) *physics*, (VIII) *cosmography*, (IX) *astronomy*, (X) *chronology*, (XI) *geography*. G. Mazzotta went a step further and termed the entire *Scienza nuova* "encyclopedic" in this broadest sense: «This same insight [of the discontinuity between poetic and critical knowledge] shapes the imaginative structure and the style of the *New Science,* which is an encyclopedic totality of disjointed parts – not as a rational scientific method […], but as a critical and poetic rethinking of history's memories and shadows. More precisely, the *New Science* is written in the mixed mode of brief essays, maxims, fables, and sentences» (Id., *Vico's Encyclopedia*, in «The Yale Journal of Criticism», 1, 1988, pp. 65-79, p. 76).

259 Ruggiero quotes the following historical assessment by A. Battistini: «L'enciclopedia barocca non si limita quindi a conservare il sapere, ma lo organizza per renderlo più funzionale, con l'intenzione de trasmetterlo, giovandosi dell'intervento dell'*ars memoriae* (The baroque encyclopedia does not limit itself therefore to preserving knowledge, but it organizes it in order to render it more useful, for the purpose of passing it on with the support of the *ars memoriae*)» (Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 144, footnote 8). C. Vasoli took a similar view: «Si tratta di concezioni che il Vico ha in comune con tutta la tradizione "enciclopedica" seicentesca, sempre così preoccupata di dedurre il sistema dell'universo e la totalità delle scienze dal concetto primo ed essenziale dell'"ordine"» (It has to do with concepts that Vico shares with the entire 17th century "encyclopedic" tradition, always in this way preoccupied with deducing the system of the universe and the totality of the sciences from the

first and essential concept of the "order")» (Id., *Topica, retorica e argomentazione nella «prima filosofia» del Vico*, in «Revue Internationale de Philosophie», 33, 1979, pp. 188-201, p. 199; on the intellectual climate underlying "encyclopedism" in the 17th century, see especially Vasoli's *L'enciclopedismo del Seicento,* Naples, Bibliopolis, 2005, online at <www.iisf.it>, under tab *Edizione online*). This view is shared by J. Loveland, *Encyclopedias and Genre, 1670-1750*, in «Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies», 36, 2013, 2, pp. 159-175, p. 173, footnote 1: «In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the word "encyclopedia" was used as a title for systematic, non-alphabetical summaries of knowledge and disciplines, but this usage faded in the eighteenth century». See also E. Nuzzo, *I caratteri dei popoli nella nuova scienza delle nazione di Vico. Tra causalità sacra, causalità storica, causalità naturale*, cit., pp. 129-178, p. 132. G. Mazzotta highlights a different possible connotation of "baroque encyclopedia": «Its eccentric and elliptical style and its fascination with monsters of the imagination and asymmetrical shapes […] eschews classical forms of representation» (Id., *The New Map of the World,* cit., p. 97).

[260] Unlike B. Croce who asserted that «[a]esthetic may in fact be considered as a discovery of Vico's […]» (Id., *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 46). The statement is followed by an excursus on "poetry" (pp. 47-61). At the same time, Croce acknowledged that «he [Vico] did not deal with it in a separate treatise […]» (p. 46). See also A. Caponigri, *Time and Idea*, cit., p. 83: «[…] Croce is most correct in characterizing Vico as the founder of the science of aesthetics». For Caponigri, also, "art" is synonomous with "poetry"; however, Caponigri gives "poetry" the wider, and deeper, Vichian application to «their [the people's] laws, their wisdom, their religious rites, their sacred formulas of birth, marriage and death, of initiation, of war and peace, and their rude speculation on the cosmos» (*ibid.*, p. 83). More often than not, when the topic of aesthetics is dealt with in Vico studies, it remains focused on, or is limited to, its role in literature; see, for example, A. Zacarés, *La Scienza Nuova y el gusto estético*, in «CsV», 13-14, 2001-2002, pp. 253-273; G. Dorfles, *Myth and Metaphor in Vico and in Contemporary Aesthetics*, trans. by E. Gianturco, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, cit., pp. 577-590; G. Patella, *Senso, corpo, poesia. Giambattista Vico e l'origine dell'estetica moderna,* Milan, Guerini, 1995, pp. 95-130; V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., pp. CLXXXVI-CXCIV; L. Amoroso, *Vico e la "nascita" dell'estetica*, in *Pensar para un nuevo siglo*, vol. I, cit., pp. 23-36. H. A. de Oliveira Guido includes painting in his discussion of art in *Vico e l'emancipazione delle belle arti: L'arte come creazione ed espressione della mente humana*, in *Pensar para un nuevo siglo*, vol. I, cit., pp. 175-188, pp. 180-186, but in the context of opposition between «reason» and «imagination».

261 V. Hösle, *The Historical Evolution of Aesthetic Theories*, in *The Many Faces of Beauty*, ed. by V. Hösle, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2013, pp. 277-301, p. 287.

262 Hösle summarized the state of matters as follows: «Vicos Ästhetik ist im wesentlichen Poetik. Freilich finden sich einige Gedanken zu den bildenden Künsten […] (Vico's aesthetics is essentially poetics. To be sure, there are some thoughts about the plastic arts […])» (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CLXXXVIII).

263 It is therefore not entirely surprising that Vico's basic ideas have been taken in the philosophy of art to the next level by Vico students, as in G. Tagliacozzo - M. Frankel, *Progress in Art? A Vichian Answer,* in *Vico: Past and Present*, cit., vol. II, pp. 239-251, pp. 249-251; M. Piccolomini, *Vico, Sorel, and Modern Artistic Primitivism*, in «NVS», 4, 1986, pp. 123-130.

264 See e.g. V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., p. CLX: «Die Methode des Vergleichs hat Vico auf alle Sphären menschlicher Kultur angewandt – Religionen, Rechtssysteme, Sprachen, Symbole, Sitten (Vico applied the comparative method to all spheres of human culture – religions, systems of law, languages, symbols, customs)»; M. A. Pastor Pérez, *Vico o la metafísica como método de fundamentación de la naturaleza humana*, in «CsV», 2, 1992, pp. 193-206, p. 198: «Principios epistemológicos y prácticos, operantes y operativos, que producen economía, derecho, política, arte, ciencia, filosofía […] (Epistemological and practical principles, both operating and operative, which generate the economy, law, political order, art, science, philosophy […])».

265 The full title is «Of Poetic Economy, and Here of the Families Which at First Included Only Children [and *Not Famuli*]»; in the original: «DELL'ICONOMICA POETICA, E quì delle Famiglie, che prima furono de' Figliuoli». See G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., p. 995. In the Bergin/Fisch translation, Section IV comprises §§ 520-581.

266 *Ibidem.*

267 *Ibid.*, p. 997.

268 *Ibidem.*

269 The Marsh translation avoids "economic" language in these paragraphs altogether, using the terms «household management» and «household teaching» instead.

270 Hösle explained: «Unter "Ökonomie" ist die Lehre von der Ordnung der Familie verstanden als der Institution, die zwischen dem einzelnen und dem Staat vermittelt – "(politische) Ökonomie" im Sinne von Wirtschaftswissenschaft wird erst im Laufe des 18. Jahrhunderts gebräuchlich (Under "economy" is understood the doctrine on the family arrangement as the institution that mediates between the individual and the state – [the term] "(politi-

cal) economy" in the sense of the discipline of economics came into use only in the course of the 18th century)» (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. XCIV). The Hösle/Jermann translation uses the expressions «Lehre von der Ordnung der Familie (doctrine on the family arrangement)», «familiäre Zucht (order/rule in the family)», and «Familienordnung (family arrangement/structure)», respectively.

The Spanish translation says «De la economía poética», but adds in a footnote: «Es la doctrina del gobierno de la familia (It is the doctrine of ruling the family)» (see *Ciencia nueva*, trans. by R. de la Villa, prologue by J. M. Romey Beccaria, intro. by L. Pompa, trans. of intro. by S. Diaz Sepulveda, Madrid, Editorial Tecnos, 2006, p. 337; the French translation says «Économique poétique» (see *Principes d'une Science Nouvelle relative à la Nature Commune des Nations*, trans. by A. Pons, Paris, Fayard, 2001, p. 241).

Cristofolini also highlights the archaic sense of Vico's language: «Il passaggio dalla morale all'iconomica – e preferiamo andare avanti con la parola arcaica del linguaggio vichiano, a scanso di ogni equivoco e sovrapposizione con l'economia politica, scienza di lì a poco fiorente, dalla quale Vico è però lontano anni luce – […] (The passage from morals to «iconomica» – and we prefer to continue using the archaic word of Vico's language, for the sake of avoiding any misunderstanding and overlapping [of meaning] with the political economy, a discipline then already flourishing a little, of which Vico however was lightyears away – […])» (Id., *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 121). See also Cristofolini's further comments on this Section *ibid.*, pp. 121-124.

L. Haddad aptly observed: «There is a small section (IV) in *The New Science* entitled "Poetic Economy" which deals with the evolution of a primitive economy, but it contains very little that may be explicitly termed pure economic analysis» (Id., *The Evolutionary Economics of Giambattista Vico*, in *Altro Polo: Italian Economics Past and Present*, ed. by P. Groenewegen and J. Halevi, Sydney, University of Sydney, 1983, pp. 17-30, p. 19).

The "Poetic Economy" is also discussed in G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 185-187, and termed «the politics of the household» (p. 185).

[271] Vico's lifelong precarious financial circumstances and struggle to raise and support a large family cannot but have made him only too acutely aware of economic imperatives (see M. Sanna, *Le epistole vichiane e la nascita dell'idea di scienza nuova*, in «BCSV», XXIV-XXV, 1994-1995, pp. 119-129, p. 129).

[272] An opposite view is taken by A. Pipa, *Economy in Vico's System*, in *Vico: Past and Present*, cit., pp. 145-156. Through a close reading of these statements, Pipa comes to the view that «[a] reading of the *New Science* with particular attention of its economic element shows that it permeates Vico's theory of his-

tory, first as home economics in the state of the families, and then as political economy in aristocratic and monarchic commonwealths» (p. 153). The core of human society and culture therefore consists of the compound «economic-political power», rather than the intersection of the «social-political» dimensions. At the same time, Pipa adds an important qualification that substantially revises the earlier assessment: «This is not to say that the economic element is determinant in Vico's system. Economy is subordinated not only to politics, but also to natural law […]. Finally, religion is above (but not outside) economy […]. Vico's concept of providence as heteronomy of ends is a peremptory caveat to any reduction of his system to economic determinism» (pp. 154-155). This is not very different from the view espoused here.

Still another view is advanced by J. O'Neill, *On the History of the Human Senses in Vico and Marx,* in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, cit., Part 2, pp. 179-186): «The fundamental thesis of *poetic economics* is that man is a work of his own senses and intellect and that these are never so alien to him, even in their remote beginnings, as not to build upon them our own humanity» (p. 181). At this conceptual level, O'Neill finds certain consonances with «Marxist economics», which may be debatable.

[273] To be counted among these "economists" is a student of Vico's, A. Genovesi, and his work *Lezioni di Commercio ossia di Economia Civile* (1765). See L. Haddad, *The Evolutionary Economics of Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 18. Genovesi, in fact, assumed in 1754 in Naples, the first faculty position for economics in Europe. See V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., p. XCIV. Special mention needs to be made of F. Galiani (1728-1787) and his *Trattato della moneta* (1750) and *Dialogues sur le commerce des blés* (1770). In G. Tagliacozzo's view, «Galiani's singling out of some of the most significant principles of the *New Science* for use as foundation for his own economic thought was so skillful and faithful to its source that it made Galiani's economics a true corollary of Vico's ideas and established Galiani as the legitimate founder of economic Vichianism» (Id., *Economic Vichianism: Vico, Galiani, Croce. Economics, Economic Liberalism*, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, cit., pp. 349-368, pp. 366-367). However, most relevant for our argument is the admission: «In none of his [Vico's] works, however, did he pay specific attention to problems of economics *strictu sensu*» (p. 349).

[274] For a historical overview of economic analysis and writing essentially contemporaneous with Vico, see T. Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662-1776*, London, Basil Blackwell, 1988, pp. 107-181. Counted among these early "economists" are Pierre Boisguilbert (1646-1714), Bernard Mandeville (1671-1733), John Law (1671-1729), George Berkeley (1685-1753), Ernst Ludwig Carl (1682-1743), Richard Cantillon

(1680-1734), Daniel Bernoulli (1700-1782). Also to be included is Geminiano Montanari (1633-1687) and his main work *Della moneta: trattato mercantile* (1683-1684) (*ibid.*, pp. 254-255). Hutchison also comments that «[…] during the century and a half before our period opened (*c.* 1500-1650) probably more outstanding works on political economy came from Italian writers than from those of any other country» (*ibid.*, p. 254; see also pp. 18-20). Perhaps it is also relevant to call attention to writers on economic matters in the early 1700's in, or concerning, the Naples area, including C. A. Broggia (1698-1767), P. Contegna (1670-1745), S. Di Stefano (1665-1737), B. Intieri (1678-1757), A. Riccardi (1660-1726), F. Valignani (18th century) (see *Repertorio bio-bibliografico degli scrittori di economia in Campania. Prima parte (dal 1594 al 1861)*, ed. by L. Costabile and R. Patalano, Naples, La Città del Sole, 2000, pp. 85-89, 164-165, 255-257, 374-375, 475-477, 547).

[275] See N. Morley, *Political Economy and Classical Antiquity*, in «Journal of the History of Ideas», 59, 1988, 1, pp. 95-114. For instance, the Greek "age of reflection/intellectualism" of the (long) fourth century B. C., about Vico has much to say, was seemingly also an age of a highly developed economic system. See E. E. Cohen, *Athenian Economy and Society: A Banking Perspective*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992.

[276] One of the longest sections of Book II is on "Poetic Logic", referring to creative use of language, as Vico defines it in § 401: «"Logic" comes from *logos,* whose first and proper meaning was […] speech». In this connection, the observation of F. Rossi-Landi on priorities is apropos: «Invero, una produzione di artefatti materiali senza la concomitante produzione di artefatti linguistici, e viceversa, non è nemmeno *pensabile*. L'uomo non avrebbe potuto lavorare ad alcun oggetto se non comunicando con altri lavoratori, e sia pure con lingue rudimentali, all'inizio ai confini del gestire (Indeed, producing material artefacts without the concomitant production of linguistic artefacts, and vice versa, is not even *thinkable*. Man could not have worked on any object unless communicating with other workers, even if only with rudimentary language, limited to gestures in the beginning)» (Id., *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni. Nuovi saggi sul linguaggio e l'ideologia*, Milan, Bompiani, 1985, p. 48). The emphasis on language and rhetoric as more fundamental or constitutive than strictly economic interests and activities is echoed by modern economic historians, such as D. N. McCloskey – with particular attention to the early modern period – in *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain The Modern World*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 2010, pp. 20-30.

[277] There are thus two separate issues involved in placing art and economics in Vico's thought in *Scienza nuova*. The first, and primary, issue is their role or function in the originary sphere, and our argument has been that Vico did

not consider them part of it. The second aspect is the question of their development according to Vichian notions of broadly-understood three stages; as Vico himself implied in both cases, their trajectory of development would be subjected to the same (spiraling) cycle(s) as other cultural phenomena. It would therefore not be out-of-place to speak, however infelicitously, of "art-historical Vichianism", or "economic Vichianism", as well as, analogously of other "Vichianisms", such as, more recently, "world-historical Vichianism" (as in Brennan, *Borrowed Light*, cit.), "psychoanalytical Vichianism" (as in L. Gardner, *Rhetorical Investigations: G. B. Vico and C. G. Jung*, London-New York, Routledge, 2013), "cultural-psychological Vichianism" (as in L. Tuteo, *Giambattista Vico and the principles of cultural psychology: A programmatic retrospective*, in «History of the Human Sciences», 28, 2015, 1, pp. 44-65).

[278] In this context, it is of interest to note that there appear to be also other major subject matters to be absent from Book II, as indicated by M. Lentzen: «[…] si rimane sorpresi dal fatto che discipline come la medicina e la giurisprudenza (che Vico affronta però in particolare nel quarto libro della *Scienza nuova*) non vengono prese in considerazione ([…] one is left surprised by the fact that disciplines such as medicine and jurisprudence (which Vico however addresses specifically in the fourth book of *Scienza nuova*) are not taken into consideration)» (Id., *Il concetto di "sapienza poetica" negli scritti di Giambattista Vico*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, cit., pp. 269-281, p. 270).

[279] P. Fabiani, *The Philosophy of the Imagination in Vico and Malebranche*, trans. and ed. by G. Pinton, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2009, p. 111. Similarly A. Fletcher: «In the *New Science*, Vico creates a new paradigm […] envisioning intellectual, political, social, and religious activities and changes occurring within a general *schema* of human creativity. This creativity Vico calls "poetry"» (Id., *On the Syncretic Allegory of the New Science*, in «NVS», 4, 1986, pp. 25-42, pp. 40-41). And in primitive humanity (i.e. humanity at first), such creativity took the form of highly imaginative language, hence its labelling as "poetic" by Vico. See A. C. 't Hart, *La metodologia giuridica vichiana*, cit., pp. 5-28, p. 22.

[280] To borrow a neologism used by N. Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 48. This crucial point is developed at length in G. Cacciatore, *Vico: I saperi poetici*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, cit., pp. 257-267, with the conclusion: «[…] il sapere poetico è ciò che caratterizza l'originarietà primitiva dell'uomo e non ancora la sua dispiegata razionalità ([…] poetic thought is that which is characteristic of the originary (primitive) state of man and not yet of its fully manifested rationality)» (p. 266).

[281] Book IV, Section V, (§§ 928-931), is a single short paragraph in the original (G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., p. 1172), merely reciting

the distinctive characteristics of each "language" (divine/heroic/articulate) previously covered in Book II. Despite, or maybe because of, the brevity of Section V, it stands out that Vico devoted much more space to the first kind of language than to the rest. Since this part of Book IV does not add any new material or substance to the discussion, we surmise that it was included in order to make Book IV work or function as the counterpart of Book II in the overall ring composition. From a rhetorical point of view, it ould be read as an epigrammatic conclusion to the exposition in Book II.

An even more extreme case of brevity is Book IV, Section II, (§§ 919-921), entitled "Three Kinds of Customs" (pious/choleric/dutiful), consisting of just three short sentences. As these statement are redundant as far as their content is concerned, we are assuming that this section, too, has a raison d'être in terms of the larger compositional framework.

[282] Mazzotta provides historical context for Vico's treatment of these subjects in *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 133-139.

[283] On the "tree of poetic wisdom" see G. Tagliacozzo - M. Frankel, *Progress in Art? A Vichian Response*, cit., pp. 242-243; on the cluster of the five spheres of archaic beliefs in the second branch, see P. Cristofolini, *La Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., pp. 132-134. On "poetic astronomy", in particular, see the monograph by J. L. Cooley, *Poetic Astronomy in the Ancient Near East: The Reflexes of Celestial Science in Ancient Mesopotamian, Ugaritic, and Israelite Narrative*, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2013. The title, however, does not refer to Vico's term, but to *De Astronomia* by Gaius Julius Hyginus (c. 64 BC - AD 17), first published in 1482 as *Clarissimi uiri Hyginii Poeticon astronomicon opus utilissimum*, hence known as *Poetic Astronomy*.

[284] Lollini argues for greater cognizance of (heteronomous) nature in Vico's thought in *Natura, ragione e modernità nella Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., pp. 223-224, 230-243.

[285] Nuzzo makes a strong case for Vico's treatment of «natural causes, and more precisely "geographic" [causes] (*cause naturali, e più precisamente "geografiche"*)», in *I caratteri dei popoli nella nuova scienza delle nazioni di Vico*, cit.; Nuzzo also observes: «[…] Vico non assume il compito di effettuare una chiara trattazione dei rapporti di causalità tra fattori "naturali" e "culturali" ([…] Vico does not take on the task of a clear treatment of the relationships of causality between 'natural' and 'cultural' factors)» (*ibid.*, p. 174).

[286] Whether the same number of sections in segments *C* and *C'* is purely coincidental or by design, is impossible to say, and is in any case a negligible aspect.

[287] For quick reference, they are in each case three kinds of: *natures, customs, natural law, governments, languages, characters, jurisprudence, authority, reason, judgments, sects of time.*

[288] The relatively modest size of Book IV (as segment *C*) allows highlighting of a few relevant expressions in each section:

I. § 918: «The third was human nature […], recognizing for laws conscience, reason, and duty».

II. § 921: «The third was dutiful, taught to everyone by his own sense of civil duty».

III. §§ 922-924: «The first law was divine […]. The second was heroic law […]. The third is the human law […]».

IV. §§ 925-927: «Three kinds of governments (divine/aristocratic/human)».

V. § 929: «The first of these [languages] […], from which there survived in Roman civil law the *actus legitimi* […]».

VI. § 936: «In views of this sovereignty over languages and letters, the free peoples must also be masters of their laws, for they impose on the laws the senses in which they constrain the powerful […]».

VII. §§ 937-940: «Three kinds of jurisprudence (divine/heroic/human)».

VIII. §§ 944-946: «Three kinds of authority [legitimization] (by property ownership/guardianship/credit or reputation for wisdom)».

IX. §§ 947-951: «Three kinds of reason [governance] (divine [theocracy]/aristocratic/free popular states or monarchies)».

X. §§ 955, 965, 974: «Three kinds of judgments [legal system/law enforcement] (family fathers [patriarchal]/law of the heroic gentes/human, i.e. governed by the facts, equal utility of causes)».

XI. §§ 976-979: «Three sects of times (under divine governments/the punctilious [honor bound]/civil); these sects are the proper sects of Roman jurisprudence». The Marsh translation uses the expression «schools of thought», while Hösle/Jermann employ the term «Epochen des Zeitgeistes (epochs of *Zeitgeist*)». De la Villa renders it as «Tres períodos de tiempo», stating in a footnote: «Estas *sètte,* como aclara después Vico, son las *costumbres,* usanzas o características; a lo que también se alude, a veces, como la mentalidad de una época, el "espíritu del tiempo", o período (These *sètte*, as Vico later makes clear, are the *customs*, habits or characteristics; there are also allusions to it, at times, as the mentality of an era, the "spirit of the times", or period)» (*Ciencia nueva*, cit., p. 643, footnote 64). The Pons translation reads: «Trois sectes des temps», and in the Glossary explains: «On a rapproché la notion vichienne de «secte des temps» de celle d'"esprit général d'une nation", chez Montesquieu, ou d'"esprit du temps" (*Zeitgeist*) et de "vision du monde" (*Welt-*

anschauung) dans la philosophie allemande (One has to regard the Vichian notion of "sects of times" as the "general spirit of a people", in Montesquieu, or as "spirit of the times" (*Zeitgeist*) and "world view" (*Weltanschauung*) in German philosophy)» (*Principes d'une Science Nouvelle*, cit., p. XXXIX).

[289] Cfr. V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., pp. CCVII-CCXII, for moving back-and-forth between Book II and IV in elucidating Vico's thoughts on law and the history of law.

[290] In this connection, reference should be made to the emphasis placed by A. M. Damiani on reading *Scienza nuova* in terms of its sociopolitical dimension, for which see the chapter entitled «La dimensión política de la *Scienza Nuova*» in Id., *La dimensión política de la Scienza Nuova y otros estudios sobre Giambattista Vico,* Buenos Aires, Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1998, pp. 35-74. According to Damiani, «[u]no de los aspectos de la *Scienza Nuova* más descuidados en la historia de los estudios viquianos es la teoría política que reconoce al hombre como autor del mundo civil ([o]ne of the most neglected aspects of the *Scienza nuova* in the history of Vico studies is the political theory that recognizes man as the author of the civic world)» (p. 35). See also his view on "poetic wisdom" i.e. Book II (pp. 48-51), which revolves around «the civic world».

[291] Particularly relevant in this regard is Chapter VI (§§ 473-493), introduced, and summarized, by the statement: «Along with this first birth of characters [the alphabet] and language was also born law […]». The three major sections (on the constitutive nature of language, the civic role of households, governance of communities) are two-thirds of Book II, which is thus (indirectly) suggestive of topic prominence.

[292] F. Ratto, in his review of A. M. Damiani, *La dimensión política de la Scienza nuova*, pleaded for a broader approach: «Sin embargo, la lectura propuesta por Damiani […] parece caracterizarse por una unilateralidad. […] Se debe recorder que la *Scienza nuova* es también una obra teórica que enfrenta otras problemáticas significativas, como por ejemplo, el análisis del lenguaje, la atención por el derecho, la epistemología, la importancia del mito […] (However, the reading proposed by Damiani […] appears characterized by a certain one-sidedness. […] one should recall that the *Scienza nuova* is also a theoretical work that addresses other significant issues, such as, for example, analysis of language, the study of law, epistemology, the importance of myth […])» (Id., review in «Educação e Filosofia*, 15, 2001, 29, pp. 297-302, p. 302). Similarly, Caianiello states: «Ciò che le età contengono, nelle versioni successive della *Scienza nuova* si amplia a coinvolgere contemporaneamente tutti gli aspetti della cultura, molto oltre la sola caratterizzazione delle forme di governo […] (With respect to what the ages comprise, in the successive versions of *Scienza nuova*

this is expanded to include concurrently all aspects of culture, going far beyond solely analyzing and describing the distinctive nature of the various types of governance)» (Id., *Filologia ed epoca in Vico*, cit., pp. 166-167). Siding with Damiani, however, a specialized treatment of any of these disciplines stands to benefit from, and be enriched by, mindfulness of their ultimate integration into Vico's sociopolitically-oriented framework.

7.

LANGUAGE IN VICO:
"TOOL" OR "UNIVERSAL MEDIUM"?

As referred to above, Vico devoted a major section of Book II (Section II, §§ 400-501) to "poetic logic [language]", but a number of Axioms of the "Elements" in Book I (clustered among Axioms XLVIII-LXII, §§ 206-237) also deal with the same subject, and the two treatments thus can be considered as mutually complementary. In speaking of Vico's philosophy of language[293], "Poetic Logic" allows us, and indeed requires, delineating and delimiting the conceptual scope that Vico intended in his reflections in *Scienza nuova*. Viewed against the background of what may be taken as the general scope of "linguistics"[294], it is evident that he is highly selective in his treatment. One fails to find theorizing on the obvious structural aspects of language, well-known since antiquity, such as grammar, syntax, semantics[295], and pragmatics[296]. A close reading of "Poetic Logic" shows that his theorizing is restricted to two specific areas: (1) the "rhetorical" use of language, and (2) the origin of language itself. In the first three "chapters" (§§ 402-427), the rhetorical quality of language at the beginning is evidenced by «fables», «mythologies», and «allegories». In chapter II, devoted to *tropes*, the use of figurative language, Vico singles out "metaphor" for special attention: «The most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent is metaphor» (§§ 404, 405)[297]. Far from being concerned with matters of philology (in the technical sense), for Vico this language has "originary" power, as he points out in the final chapter VII (§§ 494-498), where he speaks of the «first creators», «first founders of humanity», «first peoples, who […] founded first the world of the arts», doing so by the inven-

tion of *topics*. These topics, as Vico implies through the various
"digressions" across his essay, primarily concern the founding
and development of human communal life at different stages
and scales of organization ("human institutions", §§ 408 412). In
Chapter III (*Corollaries concerning Speech by Poetic Characters among the
First Nations*), language in ancient Greece and Rome is about dy-
namically defining the terms of law, civic rights, and power
among constituencies in their societies. The sociopolitical thrust
is also ever-present in Chapter VI ([…] *concerning the Origins of
Languages and Letters,* […] *Laws,* […] *the First Language and Litera-
ture of the Natural Law of the Gentes*), as in the description of the
beginnings of Greek and Roman property rights (§§ 433,434).
Chapter VI in particular – and largely – deals with the fundamen-
tal, and perennial, issue of property rights, culminating in the
statement: «The need for certainty of ownership was a large part
of the necessity for the invention of characters and names […].
Thus Thrice-great Mercury, a poetic character of the first found-
er of the Egyptians, was their inventor of laws and letters»
(§ 483). The concluding Chapter VII ends on a note that is con-
sistent with, and indicative of, this common thread, even when it
is not expressly exposed in the surface structure, running
through Vico's ostensibly purely "linguistic" theorizing: the ma-
turing of (Roman) law, from the handling of cases as isolated sit-
uations, to according them «exemplary» status, and finally, to the
concept of law as «universal» (§§ 500-501)[298]. This part of "Poetic
Logic", therefore, describes language in its highest and finest ex-
ercise and form, as "rhetoric" of primordial conditions of
posssibility[299].

The other part of Vico's reflections on language can be situat-
ed at the polar opposite of the phenomenon of language. They
concern the rudiments of language: right at the start of "Poetic
Logic", he identifies physical «gestures» as playing a key role (§
401; see also § 434); subsequently, he highlights «onomatopoeia»
(§ 447). This is followed by comments on the primordial func-

tions of pronouns, particles, nouns, and verbs (§§ 450-453), as well as on morpholinguistic aspects of vowels, consonants, and singing (§§ 461-462). The contrast between this material and the *rhetorical* use of languages is not only one of different levels in a hierarchy of competence, but also of ontological status. In the case of rhetorical language, its position is that of source or fountainhead of civilization[300], that is, "origin-ary", the suffix alluding to its causative role. On the other hand, in the case of the morphological/lexical parts of language, they are described as results or effects rather than as causes; instead of being *originary*, they *originated*. And from the standpoint of Vico's development of his theory of the "poetic" beginnings of human societies, these speculations, if they are only taken at their strictly "linguistic" face value, actually would not appear to be particularly pertinent.

This evident incongruity[301], and resultant tension, calls for an explanation, or, at least, further comment. A suggested, and suggestive, explanation can be glimpsed in Vico's recurrent theme of "childhood" in "Poetic Logic". This trope appears both in its literal as well as metaphorical guises, and by this twofold functioning brings the two widely distanced levels of language under one umbrella. So, concerning child psychology, he speaks of «the simplicity of children, who are truthful by nature» (§ 408), «that children […] apprehend and name all the men, women and things that bear any resemblance or relation to the first [those they have seen first]» (§ 412), «the nature of children» (§ 413), «the crying of children» (§ 449), «children expressing nouns and particles but leaving the verbs to be understood» (§ 453), «children […] begin with monosyllables» (§ 454), «children […] pronounce consonants only with the greatest difficulty» (§ 462), «children learned the Law of the Twelve Tables by singing it» (§ 469), «children are extraordinarily gifted in imitation» (§ 498)[302]. Also relevant to the question of the "production" of language as a system of communication are the statements about non-verbal means of communication, employed both by young

children and those suffering from temporary or permanent speech impairment[303]: «Thus the first language […] must have begun with signs, whether gestures or physical objects»[304] (§ 401).

And, in a daring theorizing move, Vico turns archaic civilization into the "childhood" of human society: «This philological-philosophical axiom proves to us that in the world's childhood (*Mondo fanciullo*)[305] men were by nature sublime poets» (Axiom XXXVII, § 187). Thus, having argued – standing in a long tradition from the Renaissance – the originary power of metaphor, he practiced himself what he advocated. The hallmark of this figurative childhood is its

poetic style, which are vivid representations, images, similes, comparisons, metaphors, circumlocutions, phrases explaining things by their natural properties, descriptions gathered from their minuter or their more sensible effects, and, finally, emphatic and even superfluous adjuncts (§ 456).

Vico goes about methodically, relating literal childhood (and speech production) to the metaphorical "childhood" that he postulates as characteristic of people and communities in archaic times. Point-by-point, he employs psychological-physiological phenomena heuristically to shed light on the archaic *milieu*[306]. It is not the intent here to exhaustively trace the parallels proffered by Vico, except what appears to be a major aspect of Vico's heuristics, namely *iconicity*[307]. Iconicity is the common aspect that characterizes both the very basics of communication, on the one hand, and the originary cultural effect of language in the archaic world, on the other hand. Iconicity in the first sense, without which children would not be able to acquire language ability, is evidenced by «gestures or physical objects»[308] and «mutely pointing» (§§ 401-402)[309]. And iconicity, a proclivity for imagery, is also typical of the language of the first civilization(s), as stated in § 456[310]. Iconicity is then precisely the original, and originary, metaphorical language[311], but raised to the level of «imaginative

universals»[312] (§ 460). One of the historical examples Vico cites for this "imaginative", because image-based, display is the Athenian statesman Solon who took up the cause of «the plebeians», and was made into an icon of their push for civic rights and a new identity: «[…] Solon was [a poetic character for] the Athenian plebeians themselves, considered under this aspect [of knowing themselves and demanding their rights]» (§ 414). Because Solon became an iconic figure in the sociopolitical imagination, Vico could then say something otherwise anachronistic: «The ancient Romans must also have had such a Solon among them», referring to the pleibeians in their power struggles with the ruling elite (§ 415). These examples by Vico immediately follow a reference to «the nature of children» (of a certain age, to be sure) as to their propensity, as well as ability, to engage also in a form of iconicity that transcends the level of the purely gestural. Reprising Axiom XLVIII (§ 206), he attributes to children the tendency to find «resemblances» or «relations» between objects and people they «see», or visually interact with (§ 412). Such equivalence relations are visual, literally iconic, in the case of children, and part of their cognitive psychology. But what follows, not only literally in the text, but by an implication explicitly made by Vico («Now in view of the nature of children […] we assert that poetic speech, in virtue of the poetic characters it employs, can yield many important discoveries concerning antiquity», § 413), takes a giant leap from cognitive psychology to the realm of social and political *issues* and discourse[313]. And yet, despite this unbridgeable gulf, by this juxtaposition we are forced to draw the conclusion that, in his view, sociopolitical activism can be better, or rather must be, understood against the backdrop of anthropology. Thus, in the realm of social/political actors, forms of (lowly) iconicity have the potential of becoming "sublimated"[314], raised to their highest level of expression in societal values.

These aspects of Vico's thoughts on language are relevant in addressing the question that is highlighted in the section heading

above. The "tool" metaphor, and its allied "instrument" metaphor, seem to be a fixture in the study of language and linguistics, and the resultant debates[315]. Tool and instrument, of course, are by no means synonymous, but they significantly overlap in meaning, specifically in terms of conveying the basic thought of means or agency in contradistinction to subject or object. And, for our purposes, we need to add the term "calculus"[316] as another alternative designation by picking out of its complex connotations (semantic domains), the notion of method or system of manipulation. By using these terms interchangeably or equivalently, we are deliberately disregarding a variety of attributes that underlie their individual semantics, such as the fact that proceeding, conceptually, from tool to instrument to calculus, entails, among other factors, recognition of increasing investment of intellectual capital. In Vico's case, there have been objections raised, for various reasons, to interpreting his attitude toward language as being a mere "tool". It has been pointed out, for example, that for Vico, social, communicative, and cognitive needs always go together, and that it is impossible therefore to establish any precedence of the process of making sense of the world, on the one hand, over language, on the other hand[317]. A similar conclusion of the non-instrumental status of language – while coming at the issue from a different direction – has been considered an unavoidable consequence of recognizing the «autonomy» of language in all human culture and activity[318]. The autonomous status of language has also been asserted from a cognitive point of view, in that language is considered to constitute itself a certain form of thinking rather than merely an external expression of thought or its instrument[319].

This brief selection of views on the privileged place which Vico accorded to language in his philosophy shows remarkable agreement, albeit of a negative kind, on one point, namely, that language is not a tool, an instrument, or a calculus. It is remarkable in view of the fact that the same conclusion is reached from

very different premises, or rather different types of premises. We might also note that the rejection of the tool analogy seems to rely more on a tacit, intuitive response to its potential implications than on a more systematic examination, not to suggest that the end result would have turned out differently. Clearly, the most fundamental implication allowed, although not forced upon us, by pursuing the tool metaphor would downgrade language to being a mere implement, utensil, a view that clearly flies in the face of everything Vico held dear, and had to say. There is a way, nonetheless, to address this question more systematically. It consists of positing the language question against the framework of two fundamentally alternative conceptions, for the first of which we will refer to language as "universal medium", and for the second, language as "calculus".

Both in using this terminology and the conceptual framework it relates to, we follow the work of J. Hintikka in the philosophy of language and logic[320]. *Ab initio,* it must be admitted that these terms are framed in ways that are far from obvious or transparent. This is especially true for the notion of language as universal medium; in this compound, and therefore already complex expression, language, on the one hand, is taken as a medium of communication and thought, however, the more highly operative term is "universal".

"Universal" in this context does not refer to the now trivial fact that language is spoken (and also usually written) by all humans, diachronically and synchronically[321]. In the realm of philosophy, however, it is necessary to point out the difference with Leibniz's vision and project of a "universal language" (*lingua universalis, lingua rationalis, lingua philosophica*[322]), a formal, symbolic language capable of expressing all knowledge, be it philosophical, mathematical, or scientific[323]. The difference does not lie in a different choice of language, but in understanding the nature or ontology of language itself. Rather than speaking of "universality" of language, it may be more accurate (and less polysemous) to

speak of the "totality"[324] of language: under this conception, it is not possible, as it were, to step outside (one's working, or "home") language, study it, and say something about the language in a *meta*-language. It is as though we were "prisoners of our own language"[325], or inextricably bound up with, and embedded in, a force field, or sustained in a life-supporting element as fish in water. Whatever the (inadequate) metaphor, the crucial presupposition is that in attempting to step back and reflect on language, one is always forced to fall back, circularly, on the very same meaning relations (semantics) in the "home" language that are the object of examination to begin with[326]. At best, one can hope to have *unspoken* ideas with respect to how reality is encoded in language[327].

It seems relatively straightforward to turn now to the alternative conception, language as calculus, and simply define it *via negationis*[328]. However, it is useful to briefly sketch out the chief assumptions and claims of the calculus paradigm[329]. First of all, the term "calculus" in this context is nothing more than a *terminus technicus*; it is not intended to imply a formal/formalistic view and usage, nor does it try to draw attention to issues involved in making use of language, and thus actual manipulations[330]. Nevertheless, the basic connotation of calculus does not have to be abandoned entirely in our particular field of discourse. Inherent in the notion of method or system of manipulation is the idea of choices, not to say freedom of choice, alternatives, and *ipso facto,* relations between alternatives[331]. In this conception, language is a «tool» if the connotation is that it «can be reinterpreted, changed and replaced, at least step by step»[332]. Thus the relation of language to reality is not considered to be unquestionable, inexpressible, ineffable; in fact, the calculus approach assumes the possibility of thinking in terms of "models", aspects, or smaller parts, of reality, as something that can be purposely selected, as well as the possibility of varying the relation of language to such

"model(s)", and even of discussion at the next higher level, the variation in alternative (representational) relations[333].

By referring to the notion of language as "universal medium" as «an ultimate presupposition of twentieth-century philosophy»[334], the issue of anachronism presents itself anew, this time with reference to Vico's philosophy of language. It is therefore important to look back to the early modern age with this problematic in mind. Although the historiography of language philosophies typically does not include this criterion in its expositions, evidence is not missing of the presence of these presuppositions[335]. And of more than ordinary interest and relevance are the ideas of Spinoza with respect to language, in themselves, but also for the purpose of juxtaposing them to Vico's treatment of, and attitude toward, language, thus putting us in a position to give the Vichian view a more highly marked character, analogously to the comparison/contrast between Spinoza and Vico explored earlier in a different context.

Spinoza's reflections and treatment of language are found in a number of his works, but despite the very different "genres" and contexts involved, they are consistent with each other, and complement and elucidate each other, which is nothing less than one would expect from «one of the greatest philosophers of the seventeenth century, or of any time»[336]. The first observation to be made is that Spinoza does not accord language an ontological status of its own, or independently of any other entities of his philosophical system. Rather, language makes its appearance as an adjunct to, or within, his theory of knowledge which stipulates a «first kind», a «second kind», and a «third kind» of knowledge, arranged in ascending hierarchical order. Language, denoted by Spinoza as «words», belongs to the first kind, stated in a key text in *Ethics*, along with its fundamental differences with the other two kinds of knowledge; although this is stated extremely succinctly, all the essential characteristics of each type of

knowledge are present, and thus it is worthwhile to be quoted in full:

From all that has been said above it is clear, that we, in many cases, perceive and form our general notions:

(1) From particular things represented to our intellect fragmentarily, confusedly, and without order through our senses; I have settled to call such perceptions by the name of knowledge from the mere suggestions of experience[337]. (2) From symbols, e.g. from the fact of having read or heard certain words we remember things and form certain ideas concerning them, similar to those through which we imagine things. I shall call both these ways of regarding things *knowledge of the first kind (cognitionem primi generis), opinion,* or *imagination*[338].
(3) From the fact that we have notions common to all men, and adequate ideas of the properties of things; this I call *reason* and *knowledge of the second kind (secondi generis cognitionem).*
Besides these two kinds of knowledge (*duo cognitionis genera*), there is, as I will hereafter show, a third kind of knowledge, which we will call intuition (*aliud tertium quod scientiam intuitivam vocabimus*). This kind of knowledge (*hoc cognoscendi genus*) proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things[339].

Much of Spinoza studies has concerned itself with elucidating Spinoza's epistemology, a remotely adequate treatment of which is beyond the scope of these notes; nevertheless, a few salient points need to be brought out, primarily to locate language («words») in Spinoza's system. Proposition XL associated language to, and classified it together with, a highly unsatisfactory epistemc state of affairs, marked by confusion, disconnection, incompleteness, mere opinion, casual, unreflected experience, or just imagining things. In the same Proposition, in the preceding Note I, Spinoza had already explained the underlying reason, or rather the «causes», of this problematic situation which consists of the fact that knowledge of the first kind is tied to

the human body, being limited, is only capable of distinctly forming a certain number of images within itself at the same time; […] the images will begin to be confused; […] all will become entirely confused one with another. […] When the images become quite confused in the body, the mind also imagines all bodies confusedly without any distinction, and will comprehend them, as it were, under one arttribute, namely under the attribute of Being, Thing, &c. [terms styled *transcendental*]. […] All may be reduced to this, that these terms represent ideas in the highest degree confused. From similar causes arise those notions, which we call *general,* such as man, horse, dog, & c.

In order to contrast the first kind of knowledge with the second and third kinds, it is heuristically helpful to "leapfrog" directly to the third kind for which Spinoza reserves the special term «intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*)»[340]. It is no exaggeration to say that the core of Spinoza's philosophy is encapsulated in "intuitive knowledge", a body of knowledge that is not intuitive in a psychological sense, at least not primarlily so, but "intuiting", possessing the deepest kind of insight and comprehension of the very essence and nature of reality in all its manifestations[341] which, for Spinoza, meant the one substance (sometimes paraphrased by commentators as "God-Nature" *sans* a transcendental God), all else being merely *attributes* or *modes* of the substance, including especially the human mind. This third kind of knowledge is therefore the depository of pure thought and true ideas in a strict sense, produced by an unencumbered mind, unsullied by images formed by the body[342].

The second kind of knowledge is the province of *reason*, encompassing general reasoning ability, but especially scientific reasoning and methodology. Whereas the first kind of knowledge is entirely contingent and unsystematic, reason is able to discern what is invariant and not subject to vicissitudes[343]. Although Spinoza did not engage in scientific work extensively, his correspondence[344] bears testimony to his keen interest in scientific research, not shying away from performing actual experiments.

However, there is a transcending dimension to reason that needs to be brought to the fore, namely, the ability to derive truthful insights from a realization of the essence(s) of reality through intuitive knowledge. This type of reason is applying the power of deduction in bringing a true understanding of ultimate reality and causality to bear on matters of science. The following two instances from Spinoza's own scientific research may serve to demonstrate this point. In his review of essays by Boyle on experimental issues, Spinoza questioned Boyle's concern with experimentally determining the smallest possible size of bodies (particles) on which to exert a force; his rationale was that «it is by reason and calculation that we divide bodies to infinity, and consequently also the forces required to move them. We never confirm this by experiments»[345]. The «reasoning» employed here is inference from the notion of «infinity» in the realm of intuitive knowledge[346]. The second example can be found in another letter taking issue with Boyle who was not convinced of the impossibility of creating a vacuum, in which letter Spinoza explained his certainty of such impossibility as follows: «But I do not know why he calls the impossibility of a vacuum a hypothesis, since it clearly follows from the fact that nothing has no properties»[347]. In this instance, Spinoza seems to equate a physical state of affairs (the vacuum) with the metaphysical concept of «nothing» that is part of the third kind of knowledge, and then arrive at a conclusion by reasoning from that premise[348].

In Spinoza's further expositions of his epistemology, it is noteworthy that the juxtapositions, comparisons, and contrasts seem to gravitate to the polarity of the first vs. third kind of knowledge rather than to the first vs. the second, or second vs. the third kind, respectively. Since we are here concerned primarily with Spinoza's philosophy of language, we are limiting ourselves to statements that expressly deal with language-related terms. In *Ethics*, many references to language are subtle, embedded in the narrative flow, but stand out in being used to point

out errors on the part of dissenting speakers; in other words, it is not just the substantive views that are critiqued, but indirectly language itself by association. It shows up in locutions such as:

for a person to say that […]; if anyone affirmed […]; would be the same as saying that a false idea was true […][349]; [b]ut, it is said, supposing that […] But persons who say this must admit that […] But it will be said, there is […] What is such an assertion, but […] the height of absurdity[350]; we do not apply names to things rightly […] men do not rightly explain their meanings or do not rightly interpret the meaning of others[351]; [i]t is further necessary that they should distinguish between ideas and words, […] These three – namely, images, words, and ideas – are by many persons either entirely confused together, or not distinguisged with sufficient accuracy and care […] The essence of words and images is put together by bodily motions, which in no wise involve the conception of thought[352]; they say that Nature has fallen short […] from their own prejudices […] of what they pronounce upon […]. As for the terms *good* and *bad,* they*,* […] are merely modes of thinking […], useful for us to retain […] in the sense I have indicated[353].

In the more freewheeling, less guarded, setting of personal correspondence, Spinoza's attitude toward language finds more explicit expression. In *Letter 17*, in order to illustrate imagination, he compares it to dreaming and the vivid images that appear in dreams, but, significantly, for our point of view, describes it as «linking together and interconnecting its images and *words*» (Italics added). This is consistent with how he had defined the scope of the first kind of knowledge as including body-bound imagination and language. In *Letter 19* he refers to «speaking improperly or in merely human fashion», adding that «Scripture, […] adapted to […] the common people, continually speaks in merely human fashion, for the common people are incapable of understanding higher things», and that the «Prophets […] made up a whole parable, […] constantly depicted God in human form; […] [s]o philosophers […] should not find such words a stumbling block»[354]; in *Letter 23*, Spinoza further repudiates all lan-

guage other than (his own) «language of philosophy»: «[…] while we are speaking philosophically, we ought not to use the language of theology […] these and similar words have no place, and we cannot use them without utterly confusing our concepts».

Turning now to *TdIE* (*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*)[355], Spinoza elaborates on his reasons for considering imagination and language («words») as belonging together in the first kind of knowledge:

Then again, since words are a part of the imagination – that is, since many of our concepts are formed according to the haphazard composition of words in memory from some disposition of the body – there can be no doubt that words no less than imagination can bring about many grave errors unless we exercise great caution in that respect. Add to this that words owe their formation to the whim and understanding of the common people, so that they are merely symbols of things as they are in the imagination, not in the intellect[356].

It is no wonder that students of Spinoza felt justified in speaking of «Spinoza's deep suspicion of language»[357]. At first glance, this considers Spinoza's view as a matter of propositional attitude, or, expressed differently, viewing the inclusion of language in the first kind of knowledge as resulting from such «suspicious» attitude; the alternative perspective is to reverse cause-and-effect in this case, that is, understanding his attitude, not as cause but rather as the result of language, ontologically, being integrally associated with the lowest form of knowledge. This latter approach also would be more in harmony with what we would expect from someone who is to be counted among the great systematic thinkers. More significant, however, is a question or problematic that follows from Spinoza's positioning of language: if language belongs to the first kind of knowledge, how could language possibly be capable of expressing the higher kinds of knowledge? This issue has preoccupied Spinoza studies for decades[358]. This question is not the same as asking whether Spinoza

considered language as universal medium or as calculus, but Spinoza's handling of language may serve as a stepping stone to answering our initial question. Savan forcefully argues from Spinoza's definition of the first kind of knowledge that words being nothing more than bodily motions, makes them fundamentally inadequate as a vehicle for philosophical truths[359]. However, since *Ethics* obviously is all about philosophical truths, Savan argues also that Spinoza may have been fully aware of the problematic, and gave, indirectly, expression to it by engaging in contradictory assertions on a number of key concepts[360], however, without addressing the issue explicitly. To use words/language is like dreaming in which what is relatively real or pure fantasy is mixed together, and from which dream-like state[361] one has be awakened by philosophical truth. In Parkinson's interpretation, on the other hand, the nexus of body, imagination, and words in the first kind of knowledge is anything but "iron-clad", in manner of speaking, but that imagination and language are simply context-dependent, so that Spinoza's criticism of language does not have to do with language *per se*, or is applicable in principle, but concerns itself with certain (isolated) misuses only[362]. Parkinson then proposes that *Ethics* is primarily an exposition of the second kind of knowledge[363] since it is defined as «reason»[364], and «reason», strictly speaking, consists of deductive logic and its results[365]. At the same time, Parkinson allows for some examples of «intuitive knowledge», the third kind of knowledge, to be present in the work[366]. Fløistad engages less with Savan's exposition of language within the framework of the first kind of knowledge than with Parkinson's counterargument, agreeing with the latter, *contra* Savan, on the key point that «language may adequately express true knowledge»[367]. Fløistad's starting point, and guiding premise, is that given that both the second and third kinds of knowledge are unquestionably found in *Ethics*, this fact presupposes that such elevated forms of knowledge, including ultimate levels of insight[368], be expressible in words, or, stated differently,

arguing the issue performatively, that is, since Spinoza dealt with the highest levels of philosophical ideas in the work, perforce he must have believed in the power of language to express these ideas. Consistent with this premise, Fløistad detaches language from the environment of the first kind of knowledge, and makes it attachable to the two high forms of knowledge[369]. Thus, the putative polarity between «words» at one end of the spectrum[370], and «ideas, the mind, intellect» at the opposite end that Spinoza's texts seem to convey, fades away.

Instead of strictly choosing between the Savan and Parkinson/Fløistad positions, it is possible to acknowledge merits as well as problems in each interpretation. Savan's interpretation has the merit of taking seriously Spinoza's explicit excoriation of language, but then has to take recourse to internal textual «contradictions» as support that are only assumed, that is, not explicitly identified as such[371]; furthermore, Savan does not provide an account of how we can have access to knowledge (of the second and third kinds) if not by language[372]. The opposite stance approaches *Ethics* without reservations about its semantic and philosophical integrity, and is able to claim that nowhere does Spinoza himself cast doubt on his own use of language[373]. The price paid for this neat account, however, is the dissolution, disintegration of the delineations explicitly drawn by Spinoza himself, as exemplified in the excerpts quoted above.

It seems therefore that we are at an impasse with respect to a coherent perspective on Spinoza's language philosophy, at least based on the evidence considered thus far. However, Spinoza himself may point out the direction in which to pursue an explanation, starting with the programmatic title of his magnum opus, *Ethica, ordine geometrico demonstrata*. In preceding sections of this work, the focus was concentrated on the problem of the nature of the "geometric method", generalized as deductive logic, and Spinoza's non-negotiable commitment to it as truth-preserving. However, the «ordine geometrico», the geometry-like method of

presentation of *Ethics* – marking it as a work of rare genius per-haps more so than any other aspect – can also be seen in a dif-ferent light, namely, intended as a way of presenting the logic of his system without recourse to language. The operative term here is «intended», so the issue at this time is not whether the objec-tive was actually achieved or even achievable. Spinoza himself made a distinction between Euclid's writings on geometry, and language:

Euclid, whose writings are concerned only with things exceedingly simple and perfectly intelligible, is easily made clear by anyone in any language, for in order to grasp his thought and to be assured of his true meaning there is no need to have a thorough knowledge of the language in which he wrote. A superficial and rudimentary knowledge is enough[374].

Euclid's *Elements*, of course, consists of text and diagrams, and so it is significant that Spinoza de-emphasizes, not the dia-grams, but the text as such, and with it language, such that even minimal knowledge of Greek, or any language, by extension, would suffice to grasp the «true meaning». Taken to its logical conclusion, the need for language, and its value, becomes vanish-ingly small, and in the limit, tends to zero[375]. Euclid's proposi-tional/logical apparatus («things exceedingly simple and perfectly intelligible») is thus taken to be categorically different from lan-guage, and not subject to or dependent on language[376]. Viewed in relation to this epistemological paradigm, the internal organiza-tion of *Ethics* takes on special meaning: its Euclidean "format"[377] is a claim to communicating the second and third kinds of knowledge in the only way commensurate with true philosophy, that is, outside language[378]. If this interpretation is correct, it adresses the problematic aspects in the opposing views outlined above. First of all, Spinoza's explicit relegation of language to the first kind of knowledge with all its limitations and inadequacies is upheld; whatever inconsistencies are present in *Ethics*, they are

not attributable to language's inadequacy; the expression of the second and third kind of knowledge does not require a reconfiguration of Spinoza's explicitly stated epistemology, nor is there a performative contradiction.

With this thesis on Spinoza's position on language in mind, some answers can be given to the issue of language as totality vs. controllable vehicle ("calculus"). First and foremost, Spinoza's choice[379] of deductive logic over "ordinary" language in expressing the sum and substance of his philosophy in *Ethics* demonstrates that language for him is constitutionally incapable of dealing with philosophical truth; it must, in a radical sense, be set aside, left behind, which is merely a different way of thinking of it as world unto itself within which no reflection on its relation to reality is possible. Thoughts and ideas relating to the ultimate reality (Spinoza's unitary "God-Nature") are ineffable, inexpressible in words[380]. There is no sense or intimation that language can be bent to our will, made to put in words any type or level of thought, and, above all, that the relation of language itself to the "world" can be redefined at will. It seems inescapable therefore to conclude that for Spinoza language was a universal medium in the sense intended here[381].

It is against this background and problematics that Vico's elaborations on language(s) will be considered, especially by reference to Section II, "Poetic Logic" of Book II, and we can do so relatively briskly since the "heavy (theoretical) lifting" has already been done in connection with Spinoza's position on language, interpreted as being by no means *ad hoc* but as integral to, and integrative of, his epistemology. We left off above with Vico's apotheosis of «imaginative universals» in the context of "iconicity", such that it can be seen as its highest form and expression. Now, in the context of the problematics before us, imaginative universals take on another significance: since they are freely invented or created, they can hardly be consigned to the kind of hermetic realm associated with language as universal me-

dium; to the contrary, they convey the notion of mastery and control over language, over the relation of language to the world, and ultimately, even the ability of varying this relation as well as alternativeness relation over "worlds"[382]. As noted above, these are the hallmarks of language as "calculus" in our sense.

For additional evidence in ascertaining Vico's presuppostions, we turn to Chapter IV of "Poetic Logic", in particular, §§ 437-446, where Vico presents his thesis of «three languages» which he closely associates to three paradigmatic successive historical "ages" (the ages of the "gods", of "heroes", and of "men")[383]. The first language rules in the realm of the sacred; the second, prevails in the world of «heroic», that is, «aristocratically» ruled, and ideologically driven, communities, whereas the third language is the language of intellectual reflection as well as the vehicle of intersubjectivity in the more «human(e)» forms of governance of «populist republics» and «monarchies». In view of Vico's sharply drawn lines between these three types of languages, his clarification in § 446 is key to solving the diachronic/functional puzzle:

To enter now upon the extremely difficult [question of the] way in which these three kinds of languages and letters were formed, we must establish this principle: that as gods, heroes, and men began at the same time (for they were, after all, men who imagined the gods and believed their own heroic nature to be a mixture of the divine and human natures), so these three languages began at the same time, each having its letters, which developed along with it.

As explained by Zagarella, taking Vico at his (above) word, the three types of languages, while always present, and present from the beginning, are extant in different proportions during different times (ages); these greatly varying proportions give a distinctive character to each age[384]. Furthermore, in each age, elements or traces of the other languages are never completely eliminated or cancelled out[385]. This is true as much for the first,

highly imaginative language as for the other two, more "articulate", non-metaphorical – up to intellectual-philosophical – languages[386]. But how can it be rightly said that the first language, and the people that spoke it, with their predilection for «imaginative characters of animate and mute substances» (§ 431) already contained latent elements or seeds of the more sophisticated languages suited to new cultural, social and political realities? Vico's "classic" example is the imaginative character of Jove, who the archaic «first founders of gentile humanity» associated with fear-inspiring thunder and lightning (§§ 377-380). It should not go unnoticed, however, that here we already have before us an exercise of fundamental principles of logic, associated most closely with the third age/language, namely "cross-identification" of entities across "possible worlds", in this instance, the "worlds" of human bodies and psyches, on the one hand, and the "world" of natural phenomena, on the other hand[387].

These crosscurrents in the three languages do not negate, nonetheless, the stark differences across them, witness the seemingly unbridgeable chasm between the sacral and imaginative aura of the first language and the predominantly critical, intellectual tendency (if often only self-styled as such) of the third language. We will cite this state of affairs as evidence for Vico's view of language as calculus[388] rather than universal medium: in the course of time, humans employed language in drastically, even radically disparate ways, showing themselves to be masters over language rather than its slaves, not to say prisoners, and employing it unrestrictedly over a range of cognitive and communicative categories. For Vico, language was the "playing field" not just in the ages of "gods" and "heroes", but also of "men", at a time of engagement in intellectual reflection at the highest level(s), which precisely is the area that Spinoza precluded in his theory of knowledge. As has been discussed above, Vico, like Spinoza, modelled key parts of his exposition after Euclid, but with a fundamental and radical difference: whereas Spinoza invested all his

intellectual genius in the logico-deductive method (i.e. deductive completeness, in modern terms), Vico took away from Euclid the primacy of premises and foundational concepts (i.e. the notion of descriptive completeness). The logico-deductive process, therefore, could never be compelling to him as a rival or replacement of natural language.

Humans are indeed able to step "outside" language, and reinvent themselves, and their language[389]. Thus, it is also possible to speak of the "relation of language to the world" in language, which becomes a meta-language[390] in the process. Perhaps, *plasticity* is a suitable graphic term to connote this potential of language to be put to use at any desired level of discourse[391].

This brings to a conclusion our notes on the segments of *Scienza nuova* that correspond to, and complement, each other, considered in a concentric manner. However, this leaves out the part of the work that Vico placed at the center – both literally and conceptually–, that is, Book III, "Discovery of the true Homer". We will now touch on certain aspects of it, among which reflections on Vico's philosophy of language will continue to play an important part.

Notes to Chapter 7

[293] We are using "philosophy of language" loosely and out of convenience; E. Coseriu stated that J. Trabant has shown that Vico's reflections on language do not constitute a philosophy of language in the strict sense but rather a general theory of semiotics (Id., *El lugar de los universales fantásticos en la filosofía de Vico*, in *Pensar para un nuevo siglo*, vol. I, cit., pp. 3-22, p. 21; for a full account of Trabant's interpretation, see Id., *Vico's New Science of Ancient Signs*, trans. by S. Ward, foreword by D. Ph. Verene, London-New York, Routledge, 2004, originally published in German as *Neue Wissenschaft von alten Zeichen*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1994; the sematological approach has been developed further into a «semiotic-pragmatic» framework in S. Marienburg, *Zeichenhandeln. Sprachdenken bei Giambattista Vico und Johann Georg Hamann,* Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 2006).

[294] For example, as described in the article entitled "Linguistics" in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Chicago-London, 2010, vol. 23, pp. 41-71.

[295] Hösle observed: «Zwar wird man nicht bestreiten können, dass Vico das semantische Problem vernachlässigt […] (Although it cannot be denied that Vico neglected the problem of semantics […])» (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CLXXX).

[296] A historical sense of the enormous range of language-related questions and issues missing in Vico's reflections can be attained by perusing L. Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, trans. by G. Poole, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2004, originally appeared in Italian as *Il linguaggio. Storia delle teorie*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2001; *Il linguaggio. Teoria e storia delle teorie. In onore di Lia Formigari*, ed. by S. Gensini and A. Martone, intro. by T. de Mauro, Naples, Liguori, 2006; E. Coseriu, *Die Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Eine Übersicht*, Part I: *Von der Antike bis Leibniz*, Tübingen, TBL, 1970.

[297] In lieu of an excursus on the significance of "metaphor" in Vico's project of securing the beginnings of human society and culture, see the incisive discussions in D. Ph. Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, cit., pp. 172-181; M. Danesi, *Language and the Origin of the Human Imagination: A Vichian Perspective*, in «NVS», 4, 1986, pp. 45-56, pp. 50-53; D. Di Cesare, *Sul concetto di metafora in G. B. Vico*, in «BCSV», XVI, 1986, pp. 325-334. As subcategories of metaphor, Vico singles out metonymy (§ 406) and synecdoche (§ 407). The terminology itself of *metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche*, and other rhetorical terms is clearly anachronistic as Vico is describing archaic times, before the advent of formalized rhetoric. However, more importantly, what these "technical" terms refer to is not anachronistic in Vico's portrayal of rhetoric's «stature of excellence and its function as the necessary foundation of politics and jurisprudence which it had had in antiquity» (G. Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric* (*Institutiones Oratoriae, 1711-1741*), trans. from Latin, commentary and intro. by G. Crifò; trans. and ed. by G. A. Pinton and A. W. Shippee, Amsterdam-Atlanta, Rodopi, 1996, p. 232).

Other elements of primordial rhetoric treated in "Poetic Logic" are «interjections» (§ 448), «digressions» (§ 457), and «inversions» (§ 458). In his handbook on rhetoric, Vico treats *interjections* under «*exclamatio*» (p. 185), and *inversions* under «*aposiopesis*» (p. 187). On the complexities of *aposiopesis*, see J. Mieszkowski, *Who's Afraid of Anacoluthon?*, in «MLN», 124, 2009, pp. 648-665. For further discussion of the role of «interjections» in Vico's theory of language origin, including a brief account of E. Cassirer's views, see A. D'Atri, *The Theory of Interjections in Vico and Rousseau*, in *Historical Roots of Linguistic Theo-*

ries, ed. by L. Formigari and D. Gambarara, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1995, pp. 115-127.

[298] Vico's concern with the nexus between language and the civic world is explicated in greater detail by L. Formigari, *Signs, Science and Politics: Philosophies of Language in Europe 1700-1830,* trans. by W. Dodd, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1993, pp. 69-78, originally appeared in Italian as *L'esperienza e il segno. La filosofia del linguaggio tra Illuminismo e Restaurazione,* Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1990, stating: «The monopoly of language […] is the principle of political power […]. It is this discovery which leads Vico to formulate a theory of language origin capable of explaining the genesis of power in pre-political societies and at the same time to put forward a theory of language evolution that accounts for the transition to institutional forms of juridical equality. It is in the context of this undertaking that he sketches out a general theory of language» (p. 69). As a matter of fact, subsequently Formigari questions whether Vico's reflections on language can be even considered «a general theory of language», since there is no unified theory of change from gestures to articulated expression; no theory of the transition to the stage of arbitrary signs; no real theory for vulgar (vernacular) tongues as such (*ibid.*, pp. 82-83).

[299] See D. Ph. Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, cit., pp. 182-183, where E. Grassi's exposition of Vichian "rhetoric" is highlighted; cfr. E. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980. Outside of Vico studies, the role of metaphor has been characterized as "strategic" in dealing with values and problems of a society (see J. Ch. Crocker, *The Social Functions of Rhetorical Forms*, in *The Social Use of Metaphor,* ed. by J. D. Sapir and J. Ch. Crocker, University Park, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977, pp. 33-66, p. 38). Even when the cognitive dimensions of metaphor are placed in the foreground, as in scientific discourse, social implications, and hence the potential for conflict and contention, are never buried very deeply beneath the surface (see e.g. Th. L. Brown, *Making Truth: Metaphor in Science,* Urbana-Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2003, pp. 49-52; E. Pauwels, *Mind the Metaphor*, in «Nature», 500, 29 August 2013, pp. 534-524).

[300] As Di Cesare stated: «Conoscenza è nella fase poetica *creazione* del mondo attraverso i tropi e in particolare attraverso la metafora (At the poetic stage, knowledge is the *creation* of the world by means of the tropes, and in particular by means of the metaphor)» (Id., *Sul concetto di metafora in G. B. Vico*, cit., p. 334; italics original). And as Battistini said: «Myth and poetry, for Vico, are not an imperfect or corrupt way of thinking. On the contrary, they are the original means of knowledge» (Id., *On the Encyclopedic Structure of the New Science*, cit., p. 30); as well as Coseriu: «Tanto la poesía (el arte) como el lenguaje, al

crear universales fantásticos, crean "mundos" (o fragmentos de mundos) solo
"posibles" […]. (Both poetry (art) as well as language, by creating imaginative
universals, create only possible "worlds" (or parts of worlds))» (Id., *El lugar de
los universales fantásticos en la filosofía de Vico,* cit., p. 20).

[301] M. Agrimi similarly noted certain dissimilarities of motives: «In Vico
comunque convergono e tendono a integrarsi motivi diversi e talvolta opposti.
La dottrina della naturalità del linguaggio muove dai "parlari muti", passa alla
teoria delle interiezioni […], cui seguono i pronomi […], per giungere […] ai
nomina […]. Una forza originaria hanno le onomatopee […], ma un ruolo fon-
damentale ha poi la teoria della metafora, […] puntando sulla capacità creativa
di immagini […] (In Vico, however, diverse and sometimes opposite motives
converge and tend to be integrated. The theory of the natural genesis of lan-
guage starts with «mute speech», moves to the theory of interjections […], fol-
lowed by the pronouns […], to be joined […] to the *nouns* […]. The onomat-
opoeic names have originary power […], but then the theory of metaphor has
a fundamental role, pointing to the creative potential of images)» (Id., *Ontologia
storica del linguaggio in Vico*, in *Teorie e pratiche linguistiche nell'Italia del Settecento*, ed.
by L. Formigari, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1984, pp. 37-60, p. 47).

In this context, the work of J. Trabant on Vico's "philosophy of language"
is directly relevant. Trabant persuasively argues for understanding Vico's
thought as explicating *semiotics/ "sematology"* rather than *linguistics* as usually un-
derstood (see Id., *Sémata: 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*, Münster, Nodus Pu-
blikationen, 1994, pp. 69-82). Trabants's key insight is that Vico was con-
cerned primarily with language as the carrier of *messages*, not linguistics by and
of itself: «But his simply means that Vico uses traditional knowledge of lin-
guistic structure to explain the *functioning* of language. The *genetic base* of words,
however, are propositions, predicatives, structure, and thus messages. Under-
lying every word is a proposition of the kind "a is b" – for example, "the fa-
ther is a parent", "the father is a poet", "the father is an arms-bearer", etc. But
since Vico equates *nature* and birth (*nascimento*), every word contains, *aufgehoben*
[subsumed] in it, the message from which it derives. Words are therefore es-
sentially – *naturaliter* – messages» (*ibid.*, p. 76; italics original). Furthermore,
verbal (phonic/written) language is only one side of the fundamental *messaging*
faculty and impulse, the other side consists of non-verbal means of communi-
cation, the "gestural-visual", with images and gestures (*ibid.*, pp. 77-78). Paren-
thetically, it could be added that in moving to the next, lower, stratum of lan-
guage, that is, individual lexical categories, Vico evinces analogous focus on
the underlying psycho-social processes, correctly understood/applied or not,

with respect to pronouns, particles, nouns, verbs, as well as structural aspects such as word order and syntax (§§ 450-454). His terminology is Latin-based, which is first of all, only one among a number of Indo-European languages, and secondly, the Indo-European language family, in turn, is only one of a multiplicity of distinct language families (see M. C. Baker, *The Atoms of Language: The Mind's Hidden Rules of Grammar*, New York, Basic Books, 2001, pp. 172, 250-251). Since Vico's reflections are not primarily linguistical, as practiced in the discipline of linguistics, they are not necessarily invalidated by the replacement of Latin-based concepts/terminology by more inclusive, and putatively more universal, language-structure parameters in modern linguistics (see *ibid.*, p. 183, Figure 6.4, including *polysynthesis, head directionality, topic prominence, verb attraction, subject placement*). The apparent "dissonance" noted above thus could be, at least partially, mitigated at the level of Trabant's "sematological" framework; we are nevertheless making use of the apparent heterogeneity, all the more to emphasize a particular moment in Vico's "poetic logic" that does not emerge saliently under Trabant's overarching perspective.

[302] Most of these statements are quotations from Axioms XLVIII-LX in the "Elements" in Book I; but, to these, Axiom XXXVII (§ 186) needs to be added: «[…] it is a characteristic of children to take inanimate things in their hands and talk to them in play as if they were living persons», as well as Axiom L (§ 211): «In children memory is most vigorous, and imagination is therefore excessively vivid […]».

[303] Aspects of speech production on the part of children and speech-impaired persons are discussed together in §§ 461- 462.

[304] Similarly Axiom LVII (§ 225): «Mutes make themselves understood by gestures or objects that have natural relations with the idea they wish to signify». See also §§ 431, 434.

[305] G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 869. This is the first explicit occurrence of the metaphor in *Scienza nuova*. See also Axioms XLIX (§ 209) and LII (§ 216), and § 498: «Thus the first peoples, who where the children of the human race, founded first the world of the arts […]».

[306] Vico is not unique in his interest in initial language acquisition; it was already studied by Augustine, for example (see G. Basile, *Acquisire parole, acquisire saperi. Riflessioni su alcune pagine di Agostino*, in *Il linguaggio. Teorie e storia delle teorie*, cit., pp. 55-70, pp. 61-66). However, in Vico, the discipline is not viewed *sui generis* but rather as a window into an otherwise inaccessible historical situation. Thus, an assumption of direct influence of Augustine on Vico in this area would need to be substantially qualified. If it is the case that the systematic study of the linguistic development of children started only at the end of the 19th century, it may be not entirely amiss to surmise that Vico may have based

his views mainly on his own observations of his children, and grandchildren (L. Formigari, *Introduzione alla filosofia delle lingue*, cit., p. 56). His own (viable) children, born in 1700, 1706, 1709, 1715, and 1720(?), resp., thus spread out over some 20 years, will have provided ample opportunity of observing child psychology (see F. Nicolini, *Giambattista Vico nella vita domestica. La moglie, i figli, la casa*, preface by R. Aufiero, Venosa, Edizioni Osanna, 1991). Aufiero speaks of Vico studying and writing at home amid «il baccano dei figli e dei nipoti (the din made by his children and grandchildren)» (*ibid.*, p. 9), and Vico himself describes his immersion in home life in his autobiography: «He had prepared his lecture […] working until five in the morning in the midst of the conversation of his friends and the cries of his children, as his custom was, whether reading, writing or thinking» (G. Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. by M. H. Fisch and Th. G. Bergin, Ithaca-New York, Cornell University Press, 1944, p. 163). And it equally stands to reason that Vico hardly would have been in a position to discern the full complexity of early language acquisition and competencies (developmental psycholinguistics), including, and certainly not limited to, intentionality, syntax, prosody, body language, mimesis, gestures, all at the same time (L. Formigari, *Introduzione alla filosofia delle lingue*, cit., p. 65). Nor can it be dismissed out of hand, that, while reflecting on the "childhood" of human society through the heuristic device of literal childhood, he may at the same time, conversely, filtered his perceptions of literal childhood through the lens of the principles laid down in the theoretical sphere of his "philology". If so, the level of intensity and intentionality itself of his observations, if not study, of child cognitive psychology takes on significance. A close reading of Vico's linguistic notions (such as found in §§ 450-454) — both in light of the history of reflection on language (e.g. in E. Coseriu, *Die Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, cit.), and, as a frame of reference, of relevant modern research (e.g. in M. C. Baker, *Lexical Categories: Verbs, Nouns, and Adjectives*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003; M. Hickmann, *Children's Discourse: Person, Space and Time Across Languages*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003) — might be able to detect the presence or absence of "ideological" presuppositions, and lay to rest their characterization as «fantasies» by I. Berlin. (Id., *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, New York, Viking Press, 1976, p. 48. It seems to be difficult to find indications of intellectual engagement with matters of developmental psychology on the part of Berlin in his biography which might throw light on Berlin's judgment, see e.g. M. Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life*, New York, Henry Holt, 1998; J. Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996).

[307] A recent definition of iconicity takes it to be «any resemblance between certain properties of linguistic/communicative form (this includes sign or spoken language phonology, sign or spoken language prosody and co-speech gestures) and certain sensori-motor and/or affective properties of corresponding referents» (P. Perniss - G. Vigliocco, *The bridge of iconicity: from a world of experience to the experience of language*, in «Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B», 369, 4 August 2014, pp. 1-11, p. 2). This article discusses not only the role of iconicity in language-acquisition on the part of infants and children, but also argues more generally that «we must focus our attention on how language unfolds in face-to-face communication. Once we take such as perspective, iconicity appears as a widespread phenomenon in language» (p. 10). The essential originary social and civic force of "face-to-face" communication in Vico's framework is emphasized in S. Fortuna, *Processi simbolici e parti (pluri)gemellari. La riflessione del linguaggio di Vico tra modello genetico e paradigma funzionale,* in *Il linguaggio. Teorie e storia delle teorie,* cit., pp. 109-130, pp. 113-115. Vico's "appreciation" for linguistic iconicity as such, in retrospect in light of recent linguistic research, may not have been too far off the mark. For example, in a new sign language of a profoundly deaf isolated population group (a Bedouin group in the Negev region of present-day Israel), reportedly a grammatical system proper emerged in a relatively short span of time. See W. Sandler et al., *The emergence of grammar: Systematic structure in a new language,* in «PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA)», 102, 2005, 7, pp. 2661-2665.

[308] Vico's cognizance of, and reflection on, gesture may have been heightened by living in a culture in which gesticulating was integral to interpersonal and social interaction, for which see A. de Jorio*, Gesture in Naples and Gesture in Classical Antiquity. A translation of "La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire Napoletano", "Gestural Expression of the Ancients in the Light of Neapolitan Gesturing",* trans., intro. and notes by A. Kendon, Bloomington-Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2000. Kendon points out that the author of *La mimica* (originally published by Fibreno, Naples, 1832) «believed that the ordinary people of Naples had preserved in their culture the traditions of their ancient Greek forebears» (*ibid.*, p. XXI), on the one hand, and that «the particular character of the urban envirionment in Naples, both social and physical, would have provided circumstances that could encourage the elaboration of gesture use» (*ibid.*, p. CVII), on the other hand.

[309] According to L. Formigari, after nine months a child «[c]omincia anche, reciprocamente, a richiamare l'attenzione degli interlocutori adulti su oggetti, aiutandosi con gesti deittici in funzione dichiarativa […] o imperativa (indicando gli oggetti di desiderio o sollecitando un'azione da parte degli astanti)

([b]egins also, reciprocally, to draw the attention of the adult interlocutors to objects, with the aid of deictic gestures for explanatory […] or imperative purposes (pointing out the objects desired or demanding an action on the part of the onlookers)» (Id., *Introduzione alla filosofia delle lingue*, Bari, Laterza, 2007, pp. 58-59). See *ibid.*, pp. 56-65 for a more detailed overview of language-acquisition by children, from the prenatal stage to a few years old. Vico expanded iconicity of this type to include coats-of-arms, medals, coins, by virtue of the fact that «they spoke forth in their very muteness» (§ 484). See also S. Fortuna, *Processi simbolici e parti (pluri)gemellari*, cit., p. 119; J. Trabant, *Sémata*, cit., p. 80.

[310] Succinctly stated (following a statement on the strength of memory and imagination of children) in Axiom L (§ 212): «This axiom is the principle of the expressiveness of the poetic images that the world formed in its first childhood».

[311] M. Danesi also spoke of the «iconicity hypothesis»: «The iconicity hypothesis proposes that iconic thinking is a more rudimentary form of cognition and that metaphors attest to the pictorial aspect of consciousness» (Id., *Language and the Origin of the Human Imagination*, cit., p. 50). While we agree with the "iconicity" designation as such, in our view it not only transcends "rudimentary" cognition, but actually is the acme of cognition. Vitiello said it best: «E qual è questo elemento comune [al linguaggio delle origini e a quello vichiano]? La loro essenziale, costitutiva "iconicità". Sono, infatti, entrambi linguaggi di "idee". Si intenda bene: il termine "idea" va qui preso nel senso suo proprio, quello che discende da *eîdos* (And what is this common element [in the language of the origins, and Vico's]? Their essential, constitutive "iconicity". In fact, both are languages of "ideas". To be clear: the term "idea" is used here in its original sense which is derived from *eîdos*)» (Id., …*quell'innata propietà della mente umana di dilettarsi dell'uniforme…*, in *Il sapere poetico e gli universali fantastici,* cit., pp. 73-95, p. 82). Modern neuroscientific research appears to support a close interplay between thinking and gestural communication (see M. B. Schippers et al., *Mapping the information flow from one brain to another during gestural communication,* in «PNAS», 107, 2010, 20, pp. 9388-9393). While Trabant coined, and preferred, the phrase "sematology", he came close to our terminology, when writing that: «the *sémata* are *messages* […]; they are *visual* (i.e. written); they are *iconic* (*somiglianze,* "resemblances")» (Id., *Sémata*, cit., pp. 80-81; italics original).

[312] Paraphrased as «universal images born from the imagination» in A. Manguel, *Homer's The Iliad and The Odyssey: A Biography*, New York, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007, p. 151. See the multifaceted exposition on «imaginative universals» in D. Ph. Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, cit., pp. 65-95.

[313] It should be noted in passing that this "leap" is not presented in terms of human cultural achievements in a general sense, such as the belleslettres, the fine arts, social mores/customs, science, technology and other forms of material culture, but rather in terms of the search for (relative) equity under law, and liberty (§ 415), which is consistent with Vico's unvarying view of the latter as conditions of possibility of all culture.

[314] To use the term coined (in a different context) by D. L. Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric in Early Modern Europe,* New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, including the topically relevant observations: «Beyond its status as cognitive achievements, however, Vico's poetic wisdom is a primary mode of connection between persons» (*ibid.*, p. 217).

[315] For instance, in L. Formigari, *Signs, Science and Politics*, cit., p. 81: «[…] we must view Vico's philosophy as anticipating that turning point in modern linguistic theory at which language is granted precedence over thought, and is seen as a tool for organising knowledge»; Id., *A History of Language Philosophies*, cit., p. 189: «Two fairly distinct […] approaches will be examined […]: one deals with language as an instrument of cognitive interaction […]».

[316] For example, in L. Formigari, *Introduzione alla filosofia delle lingue*, cit., p. 19: «Nella moderna linguistica cognitiva la nozione del linguaggio come strumento si accompagna spesso all'immagine della mente come dispositivo di calculo (In modern cognitive linguistics, the notion of language as tool is often associated to the concept of the mind as a computational apparatus (calculus))». As Formigari subsequently explains, «calculo» in this context does not refer to mathematics but to software-like mental operations on, and with, linguistic elements.

[317] See C. Muscelli, *Il segno di Giove. Essere, storia e linguaggio nella* Scienza nuova *di Vico*, in «MLN», 120, 2005, pp. 93-110; Muscelli, in fact, goes a step further, and relates Vico and Wittgenstein: «In effetti, è facile notare come Wittgenstein e Vico siano vicini in questa prospettiva: connotando antropologicamente la sua riflessione, il filosofo delle *Ricerche filosofiche* giunge ad una teoria del linguaggio che non è più calcolo ma espressione de una "forma di vita" (In effect, it is easy to note how Wittgenstein's and Vico's perspectives are close: by giving his reflections an anthropological connotation, the philosopher of the *Philosophical Investigations* arrives at a theory of language which is not calculus any more but an expression of a "form of life")» (*ibid.*, p. 105).

[318] This is argued in D. Di Cesare, *Parola, logos, dabar*, cit., p. 259: «Principio insieme constitutivo e interpretativo del "mondo civile", il linguaggio non è parte, per quanto essenziale, di questo mondo, non è istituzione accanto ad altre istituzioni. Il rischio maggiore di concepirlo così è quello di intenderlo in modo strumentale e non autonomo (As both constitutive and interpretative

principle of the "civic world", language is not a part, however essential, of this world, that is, it is not an institution alongside other institutions. The great risk of conceiving it in this way is of understanding it as being a tool, and not as autonomous)». See also *ibid.*, p. 284: «Il riconoscimento dell'autonomia del linguaggio […] non resta privo di conseguenze per la filosofia (Recognition of the autonomy of language is not without philosophical consequences)».

[319] This is E. Coseriu's view of Vico's position in Id., *Die Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Eine Übersicht. Teil* [*Part*] *II: Von Leibniz bis Rousseau*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 1972, pp. 91-97.

[320] The main references are J. Hintikka, *Lingua Universalis vs. Calculus Ratiocinator: An Ultimate Presupposition of Twentieth-Century Philosophy,* Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer Academic, 1997, and selected contributions in *The Philosophy of Jaakko Hintikka*, cit., including: S. Knuuttila, *Hintikka's View of the History of Philosophy*, pp. 87-109; J. Hintikka, *Reply to Simo Knuuttila*, pp. 106-112; G. Motzkin, *Hintikka's Ideas about the History of Ideas*, pp. 113-131; H. Sluga, *Jaakko Hintikka (And Others) on Truth*, pp. 585-614; J. Hintikka, *Reply to Hans Sluga*, pp. 615-624; M. Kusch, *Hintikka on Heidegger and the Universality of Language,* pp. 713-729; J. Hintikka, *Reply to Martin Kusch*, pp. 730-736. See also M. Kusch, *Language as Calculus vs. Language as Universal Medium: A Study in Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer*, Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer Academic, 1989, pp. 1-10.

[321] With respect to the early modern period, L. Formigari noted: «For 17th and 18th century philosophers it had not been difficult to reconcile the universality of language with the variety of languages» (Id., *A History of Language Philosophies*, cit., p. 191).

[322] According to V. Peckhaus, Leibniz does not use the term *lingua characterica* (Id., *Calculus Ratiocinator vs. Characteristica Universalis? The Two Traditions in Logic Revisited,* in *Gottlob Frege: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, vol. 1, ed. by M. Beaney and E. H. Reck, London-New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 176-190, p. 179, footnote 41).

[323] J. Hintikka, *Lingua universalis*, cit., p. IX: «Leibniz proposed […] a universal language of human thought whose symbolic structure would reflect directly the structure of the world of our concepts»; see also H. Sluga, *Jaakko Hintikka (And Others) on Truth*, cit., pp. 587-588. Needless to say, this bears no relationship to projects like the artificial language *Esperanto,* designed to replace natural languages as a common, "universal" means of communication. The term "universal medium" arises also in other contexts, such as when art is characterized, in its ubiquity, as the universal medium of personal/collective expression. These, and other context-dependent, usages have in common phenomenological approaches; we also include in this categorization Chom-

sky's theory of *universal grammar* (see L. Formigari, *A History of Language Philoso-phies*, cit., pp. 189-192).

[324] G. Motzkin, *Hintikka's Ideas about the History of Ideas*, cit., p. 123.

[325] This dated, although still resonating, metaphor is repeatedly used by Hintikka: «Language thus is, as far as our linguistic relations to the rest of the universe are concerned, between us and the world. We cannot "reach" the world linguistically except by means of our actual language. We are, in this sense, prisoners of our own language» (Id., *Lingua universalis*, cit., p. 22). In other words, since language is "totalitarian", all-inclusive, nothing can be ex-pressed outside it, and it makes no sense therefore to speak of "the relations of language and the world", as if we were able to examine the relations inde-pendently, in a detached manner (M. Kusch, *Heidegger and the Universality of Language*, cit., p. 714). As to the possible philosophical roots of this problem-atic, Hintikka observes: «For many influential [20th century] philosophers, there obtains a grand albeit hidden equivalence between thought and lan-guage, and as a consequence between what should, can or cannot be thought of the conceptual world, thought and what can or cannot be thought about our home language» (Id., *Lingua universalis*, cit., p. XIV). That this underlying assumption is not a recent phenomenon, is apparent from Kelemen's charac-terization of the Port-Royal language theory: «La grammatica è razionale nel duplice senso, che la lingue respecchia direttamente il pensare […] (grammar is rational in a twofold sense, in that language directly respects thinking […])» (Id., *Storia e lingua. Vico nella storia del pensiero linguistico*, cit., p. 143).

[326] J. Hintikka, *Lingua universalis*, cit., p. 23. In Knuuttila's words: «The ad-herents of the conception of language as the medium of understanding think that semantics is ultimately ineffable, because one cannot, as it were, look at one's language and describe it from outside; language is always presupposed in our attempts to understand it» (Id., *Hintikka's View of the History of Philosophy*, cit., pp. 98-99).

[327] M. Kusch, *Heidegger and the Universality of Language,* cit., p. 714.

[328] *Ibid.*, p. 715.

[329] It is of interest to note Hintikka's own misgivings about his terminolo-gy: «The fundamental and largely unacknowledged nature of the distinction is reflected in the difficulty of finding self-explanatory terms for the two con-trasted viewpoints. […] I have come to realize since that these terms, particu-larly the term "language as calculus", are not self-explanatory and may even be misleading» (Id., *Lingua universalis*, cit., p. 5). From the perspective of the histo-ry of ideas, one would have to agree that the term *calculus* would tend to point in a diametrically opposite direction, starting with Leibniz for whom «the *calcu-lus ratiocinator* serves for mechanically deducing all possible truths from the list

of simple truths» (V. Peckhaus, *Calculus Ratiocinator vs. Characteristica Universalis?*, cit., p. 182).

[330] J. Hintikka, *Lingua universalis*, cit., p. 5.

[331] Hintikka refers to it as «the possibility of *re*-interpreting language as freely as interpreting [associating it to a scenario, actual or hypothetical] an uninterpreted calculus» (*ibidem*).

[332] S. Knuuttila, *Hintikka's View of the History of Philosophy*, cit., p. 99; Hintikka put it more quaintly (in terms of a (bygone) historical socioeconomic setting): «[…] we are not tied to our language. Our language is our servant, we are its masters. We can tell it what to do, and we are not committed to its doing what it does in one way only. We can hire another one if one old language does not serve us satisfactorily» (Id., *Lingua universalis*, cit., p. 22).

[333] Knuutttila (following Hintikka) illustrates this state of affairs by means of Cubism: first of all, Cubism "stepped outside" thinking in terms of merely finding a different visual (both pictorial and plastic) mode of representation of reality, and re-thought, and re-discussed, the relation itself between representation and reality, thus making the language of art itself the object of language. One of the concrete ways – but by no means the only one – this turned into was a "model-theoretic" conception of perspective, that is, perspective itself became an object of meta-discourse (Id., *Hintikka's Ideas About the History of Ideas*, cit., pp. 118-119). For a multi-faceted discussion of Cubism in this context, see J. Hintikka, *The Intentions of Intentionality and Other New Models for Modality*, Dordrecht-Boston, D. Reidel, 1975, pp. 223-251. For example, Hintikka's comments on Braque's collages as confounding the relations between art and reality, in effect, creating alternative (small-scale) "models" of reality (*ibid.*, p. 246). A similar observation is made by M. Piccolomini: «While they were challenging traditional art, they also challenged the meaning of art itself» (Id., *Vico, Sorel, and Modern Artistic Primitivism*, cit., pp. 123-130, p. 129).

[334] When it comes to discussing philosophy of language, canonicity involves inclusion of Wittgenstein in any discussion, regardless of whether it is in a Vichian context or not. The former has been undertaken in E. Riverso, *Vico and Wittgenstein*, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, cit., pp. 263-273. Riverso considers as the main commonality between the two thinkers, their «reaction against abstract rationalism» (*ibid.*, pp. 264, 273). And, as noted above, both would concur on rejecting the notion of calculus when it is understood as a purely formal(istic) operation. Other possible points of contact between Vico and Wittgenstein are touched on in B. A. Haddock, *Vico and the Problem of Historical Reconstruction*, in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, cit., Part 1, pp. 122-129, p. 128, and Id., *Vico: The Problem of Interpretation*, *ibid.*, pp. 145-162, p. 153. Of further interest is Riverso's characterization of the essence of

Wittgenstein's philosophy of language: «The […] point is that a language […] is a whole world and encircles a whole culture; it involves a way of evaluating things and of coping with reality. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had suggested that […] "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" […]. A system of symbols is a world, so a language, as a system of symbols, embraces a world, and children, when they learn to use a language, learn also to think of the world. The language I learn, clasps my life and gives my world structures and determinations, because a use of language is a culture […]» (E. Riverso, *Vico and Wittgenstein*, cit., pp. 267-268). Riverso suggests that «such points in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein are comparable to some points of the philosophy of Giambattista Vico […]» (*ibid.*, p. 268). Riverso does not explicitly characterize Wittgenstein's philosophy as implying "language as universal medium"; this identification, however, has been argued by Hintikka through a close reading of the Wittgenstein *corpus* (see Id., *Lingua universalis*, cit., pp. 162-190; material reprinted from M. B. Hintikka - J. Hintikka, *Investigating Wittgenstein*, Oxford-New York, Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp. 1-29), summed up in stating that «language was for Wittgenstein almost literally a prison from which one cannot hope to escape, not merely a "false prison" like a fly-bottle» (*ibid.*, p. XI). According to Hintikka, Wittgenstein "obeys his own principles" crystallized in the "universality/totality of language" when he rejects *meta*-theoretical statements of all kinds, including philosophical metastatements, as when he said: «As there is no metaphysics, there is no metalogic, either»; «[o]ne might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word "philosophy" there must be a second-order philosophy. But it is not so […]» (quoted *ibid.*, p. 184; the first statement from *Manuscript 110*, the second from L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1953, Part I, section 121, p. 49e). Hintikka's conclusion is: «[…] Wittgenstein has a theoretical reason for trying to rule out not only all philosophical but also all other metatheoretical contexts. This reason is the universality of language, which implies that the apparently metatheoretical uses of language are not the genuine ones» (*ibid.*, p. 185).

[335] To cite just one example or current, the philosophy of Peter Ramus (1515-1572), Ramism, and Port-Royal logic, of which it has been said: «In this economy [consisting of a mechanized, diagrammatic method] where everything having to do with speech tends to be in one way or another metamorphosed in terms of structure and vision, the rhetorical approach to life […] is sealed off into a cul-de-sac. The attitude toward speech has changed. Speech is no longer a medium in which the human mind and sensibility lives. It is resented, rather, as an accretion to thought, hereupon imagined as ranging noiseless concepts or "ideas" in a silent field of mental space. Here the perfect

rhetoric would be to have no rhetoric at all. Thought becomes a private, or even an "antisocial enterprise", in W. J. Ong, *Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue. From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 291; see also M. Mooney, *The Primacy of Language in Vico*, in *Vico and Contemporary Thought,* cit., Part 1, pp. 191-210, p. 198.

[336] A.V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 1.

[337] The phrase, in the translation by S. Shirley, reads: «[…] therefore I call such perceptions "knowledge from casual experience"». See *The Essential Spinoza: Ethics and Related Writings*, ed. by M. L. Morgan, with the translations of S. Shirley, Indianapolis-Cambridge, Hackett Publishing, 2006, p. 50.

[338] Due to this subdivision, Cristofolini speaks of four kinds of knowledge in total (Id., *La scienza intuitiva di Spinoza*, Naples, Morano, 1987, p. 210).

[339] *Ethics*, Part II, Proposition XL, Note II; italics original. The Shirley translation uses quotation marks to alert the reader to Spinozan usage of terms such as "knowledge of the first kind', "opinion", "imagination", "reason", "knowledge of the second kind", "intuition".

In *TdIE*, §§ 19-29, Spinoza outlines four «modes of perceiving (*modi percipiendi*)», which can be "mapped" onto the three kinds of knowledge as follows: 1st and 2nd mode: perception from hearsay (second-hand), perception from casual experience (first-hand) = 1st kind of knowledge; 3rd mode: inference of cause from effect, without danger of error, yet not in itself means of acquiring perfection = 2nd; 4th mode: perceived through essence alone of a thing = 3rd. It seems that Spinoza intends the «modes of perceiving» to be synonymous with the «kinds of knowledge», as in § 29 he terms the fourth mode of perceiving «this kind of knowledge», and in § 30 he adds, epexegetically, with respect to the fourth mode of perceiving, «now that we know what kind of knowledge is necessary for us […]». Also, in *Ethics*, he introduces the three kinds of knowledge as forms of perception. N. Maull wrote that *TdIE* was «echoed later in the *Ethics*» (Id., *Spinoza in the Century of Science*, in *Spinoza and the Sciences*, ed. by M. Grene and D. Nails, Dordrecht-Boston-Lancaster-Tokyo, D. Reidel Publishing, 1986, pp. 3-13, p. 8). Maybe it would be more accurate to consider both passages as being apposite to each other.

[340] Among the three kinds of knowledge, intuitive knowledge, appropriately, has received the overwhelming share of attention in Spinoza studies, among which we will mention here only Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., pp. 181-223, introducing the topic, saying: «The *scientia intuitiva* has pride of place among Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge due both to its importance and difficulty» (*ibid.*, p. 181).

[341] According to W. Röd, it is «unmittelbare[r] Einsicht in das Wesen der Wirklichkeit als ganzer (unmediated insight into the nature of reality as a who-

le)» (Id., *Spinozas Idee der Scientia intuitiva und die Spinozanische Wissenschaftskonzeption*, in *Spinoza*, cit., pp. 135-150, p. 143).

[342] There is a lively debate among Spinoza scholars about his intended function(s) for «imagination (*imaginatio*)». See A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., pp. 182-186, and also more recently I. Gaspari, *Immaginazione produttiva e profezia fra Maimonide e Spinoza*, in «Teoria», 2012, 2, pp. 169-197; online at <www.rivistateoria.eu>. Gaspari sees two sides to (Spinozan) imagination: «Si tratta di due aspetti fondamentali anche per comprendere la concezione spinoziana dell'immaginazione, e per fornirne un resoconto che non appiattisca il suo carattere polisemico, variegato, sulla sola asfittica definizione di "primo genere di conoscenza" (This has to do with two fundamental aspects [i.e. receptive as well as productive modalities] needed also in order to understand Spinoza's concept of imagination, and to give an account that does not gloss over its polysemic, multifaceted character, sitting atop the merely bland definition as " first kind of knowledge")» (*ibid.*, p. 196). As Gaspari has shown in his article, Spinozan «imagination» plays a multiple role; however, this also means that it involves multiple semantic and epistemic domains which need to be kept separate heuristically. In particular, whatever aspects imagination assumes in various contexts (such as in Spinozas "psychology" or "anthropology"), *pace* Gaspari, they should not be assimilated to Spinoza's "epistemology". Polysemy, in this respect, in fact can be taken just to mean that distinct concepts happen to share the same lexical exponent, rather than ascribing many possible meanings to the same lexical term, and then composing a many-layered complex of meanings out of them.

S. Zac took the following view: «On pourrait aussi se demander si le spinozisme exclurait une imagination, qui ne serait pas subordonnée aux deuxième mais au troisième genre de connaissance, à l'amour intellectuel de Dieu. Il est tentant de soutenir que la connaissance prophétique, selon Spinoza, a des consonances avec la "science intuitive" ou, autrement dit, qu'elle en est le scheme imaginative. Mais il ne faut pas, à mon avis, céder à cette tentation (One could also ask oneself whether Spinoza's ideas excluded an imagination which would not be subsumed under the second but under the third kind of knowledge, under the intellectual love of God. It is tempting to maintain that prophetic knowledge, according to Spinoza, has affinities with the "intuitive knowledge", or, stated differently, that the latter comprises the imaginative modus. But, in my opinion, this temptation should be resisted)» (Id., *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'écriture*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1965, p. 178).

[343] See A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method,* cit., pp. 51-52. For an inquiry into the possible historical roots of Spinoza's tripartite epistemic architecture in medieval Kabbalah, see H. W. Braun, *Spinoza and the Kabbalah*, in

Spinoza: Critical Assessments, vol. I: *Context, Sources and the Early* Writings, ed. by G. Lloyd, London-New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 185-195, p. 192.

[344] His correspondent on matters of science was mainly his friend Henry Oldenburg in London, both before and after Oldenburg became the first secretary of the newly formed Royal Society in 1662.

[345] *Letter 6,* quoted from B. Spinoza, *The Letters*, trans. by S. Shirley, intro. and notes by S. Barbone, L. Rice, and J. Miller, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing, 1995; other letters will be quoted from this edition also.

The reference to infinity is reminiscent of *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition XL, and Part II, Proposition IV.

[346] *Pace* Cristofolini who considers the phenomena of nature and physical bodies as the domain of the second kind of knowledge, while the human world constitutes the proper object of intuitive knowledge (Id., *La scienza intuitiva di Spinoza*, cit., pp. 223-225). From this perspective. Cristofolini sees it as a «new science», in the exact sense expressed by Vico half a century later.

[347] *Letter 13.*

[348] In any discussion of Spinoza's philosophy, this brief, clearly oversimplified, summary of the three kinds of knowledge would not be the end of the matter but only the starting point; however, more importantly, the apparent strict segregation between the three kinds of knowledge outlined here is not merely editorial but intentional, being the result of certain presuppositions on our part. These presuppostions revolve around the term and concept of «kind, *genus*». While Spinoza studies do not seem to take up the question of this notion, at least as best as we can determine, it has been the object of extensive philosophical reflection outside of Spinoza scholarship, for which see *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), online at <http://plato.stanford.edu>, under «Natural Kinds», by A. Bird and E. Tobin, ed. by E. N. Zalta. "Kindhood" turns out to be a surprisingly complex idea, subject to inherent tensions that are stubbornly resistant to resolution. On the one hand, it is fairly straightforward to understood kindhood theoretically as recognition of definite boundaries, clustering, joints in the flux of reality, relatively, or even strongly, impervious to seamless transitions from one kind to another, but far more difficult to determine kindhood in concrete cases. It is also necessary to consider second-order kinds, that is, kinds of kinds (see T. E. Wilkerson, *Natural Kinds*, Aldershot-Brookfield, Avebury, 1995, pp. 53-59). At the same time, there is a view of kindhood that may connect with Spinoza's views, namely, the "essentialist" view of kinds, «the view that an individual must have a certain property, a certain real essence, if and only if it is to be a member of a certain natural kind» (*ibid.*, p. 141). This is, in fact, the presupposition on the basis of which we are approaching Spinoza's three

kinds of knowledge, in other words, by assuming that each kind has strict, not to say rigid, boundaries. Lack of clarification of presuppositions regarding kindhood in Spinoza can have significant exegetical consequences. For instance, I. Franck can say first, «[o]f course, Spinoza endeavors to keep clear and sharp the distinction between *Imaginatio* and *Intellectus* (or *scientia intuitiva*, i.e. the third kind of knowledge)», but then can also assert «that for Spinoza the distinctions between the three kinds of knowledge "are of a relative rather than absolute character"» (Id., *Spinoza's Logic of Inquiry: Rationalist or Experientialist?*, in *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, cit., pp. 247-272, pp. 270-271 [quoting De Deugd]). As a result, neglecting to address and examine kindhood prevents the consideration of alternative paradigms of conceiving the relationships among the three kinds of knowledge that may not entail blurring the lines between them.

[349] *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition VIII, Note II.

[350] *Ibid.*, Part I, Proposition XXXIII, Note II.

[351] *Ibid.*, Part II, Proposition XLVII, Note.

[352] *Ibid.*, Part II, Proposition XLIX, Note.

[353] *Ibid.*, Part IV, Preface.

[354] See also *Letter 21*. Spinoza has much more to say about the language of the «prophets» in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, especially in Chapters 1 and 2; in our context, a statement in Chapter 4 is particularly relevant, where he compares the «prophets» with «Christ» in terms of the first and third kind of knowledge: «For it is when a thing is perceived by pure thought, without words or images, that it is understood» (B. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (*Gebhardt Edition*), Second Edition, trans. by S. Shirley, intro. and annotation by S. Feldmann, Indianapolis-Cambridge, Hackett Publishing, 2001, p. 54; henceforth referred to as *TTP*, followed by chapter number, and page number in the Shirley translation). The context is Spinoza's critique of the Bible, and so it serves as a special case of the inadequacy of language.

[355] Quoted from *The Essential Spinoza*, cit.

[356] *TdIE*, §§ 88, 89.

[357] A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 17.

[358] In 2003, Garrett noted: «Spinoza's deep suspicion of language seems to preclude the *Ethics* being anything but the first kind of knowledge» (*ibid.*, p. 17); almost half a century earlier, D. Savan argued «that Spinoza's views on words and language make it impossible for him to hold that his writings (or anyone else's) can be a direct or literal exposition of philosophical truths», in a 1955 paper, reprinted as *Spinoza and Language*, in M. Grene (ed. by), *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, cit., pp. 60-72, pp. 60-61. The same volume contains two dissenting responses, i.e., G. H. R. Parkinson, *Language and Knowledge in*

Spinoza, pp. 73-100 (originally published in 1969), and G. Fløistad, *Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge in the Ethics,* pp. 101-127 (originally published in 1969). We will refer to these contributions simply as Savan, Parkinson, and Fløistad, respectively.

[359] «The imaginative, general, and confused character of words is, in Spinoza's view, not contingent or accidental, it is not the result of ignorance and cannot be eliminated by knowledge. It is rather the necessary consequence of the action of external bodies upon our body» (Savan, p. 62).

[360] On *substance, properties of substance, modes* (*ibid.*, pp. 64-66).

[361] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[362] Parkinson, p. 91: «What he [Spinoza] objects to […] is not the use of words as such, but the uncritical acceptance of common usage as a guide in philosophy».

[363] *Ibid.*, p. 95: «One may indeed be tempted to suppose that the whole of the *Ethics* is an expression in verbal form of knowledge of the second kind».

[364] *Ethics*, Proposition XL, Note II, as quoted above.

[365] Parkinson, p. 95: «In sum, reason is regarded by Spinoza as deductive knowledge, having as its basis propositions which every man must accept. […] It is clear that much of what is said in the *Ethics* is of this type [so called "notions" about "things which are common to all"]».

[366] *Ibid.*, p. 99-100.

[367] Fløistad, p. 111; Fløistad, at the same time, makes a case, *pace* Parkinson, for the presence not merely of a few examples of intuitive knowledge in *Ethics*, but for its pivotal role (*ibid.*, pp. 123-127).

[368] *Ibid.*, p. 124: «a process of knowing in which the mind finally comes to know ("intuit") the unity of thought and extension».

[369] *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112: «Whether or not language may adequately express knowledge by imagination [the first kind], reason [the second kind], and intuition [the third kind] depends not only on language, […] but also on the kind of knowledge or way of knowing things which one is exercising or is able to exercise».

[370] Using the term very loosely and not intending to imply gradualism from the first to the third kind of knowledge.

[371] Both Parkinson and Fløistad take issue with Savan's claims of «contradictions", and Fløistad observes that «[t]o decide exactly where incoherences in fact lie is notoriously difficult» (*ibid.*, p. 103).

[372] Fløistad, p. 101.

[373] Parkinson, p. 93: «[…] the fact that Spinoza makes no attempt to explain how words can convey true ideas is a strong argument against the thesis

that he was aware of the difficulties in which his theory of language involved him».

374 *TTP*, Chapter 7, p. 98.

375 To the above quoted statement, Spinoza added the comment: «Nor need we enquire into the author's life […], the language in which he wrote, and for whom and when, nor what happened to his book, nor its different readings […]» (*ibid.*, p. 98). He also takes the opportunity to make clear what the "geometrical method" meant to him: «For the nature and virtue of that light [of reason] consists essentially in this, that by a process of logical deduction that which is hidden is inferred and concluded from what is known, or given as known» (*ibid.*, p. 99).

376 This conclusion is the opposite of Parkinson, p. 94, referring to the same statement: «This clearly implies that propositions which are examples of the second kind of knowledge can be expressed in linguistic terms».

377 The Euclidean logic resources are fully exploited, for example, in Proposition XIII, making use of the logical tropes of *propositio, demonstratio, corollarium, axioma, lemma, definitio,* and *postulata.* But there is also a concession to "language" in the form of the «Note (*scholium*)», which by its being set apart and written in a "conversational" style, highlights the core formal exposition all the more; the same could be said, mutatis mutandis, of other "informal" parts of *Ethics*, such as the "Prefaces" and "Appendices", *pace* Vitiello: «Non sempre Spinoza appare convinto dell'adeguatezza del *mos geometricon*, se nella stessa *Ethica*, in luoghi fondamentali, abbandona "il prolisso ordine geometrico" […], come nelle Appendici delle Parti I e IV, e nelle Prefazioni delle Parti II, IV e V (Spinoza does not always appear convinced of the adequacy of the *mos geometrico*, given that in *Ethics* itself, in fundamental places, he abandons "the long-winded geometrical method" […], as in the Appendices of Parts I and IV, and in the Prefaces of Parts II, IV, and V)» (Id., *Saggio introduttivo*, cit., pp. VI-CLXXII, p. LXVII). Kennington is another reader who finds the two forms of exposition present in *Ethics* in need of assimilation: «In the *Ethics* the surface contradiction lies between the geometric form of exposition and the abandonment of the form, especially in Part II. […] Instead he [Spinoza] blurs in various ways […] the limitation of the geometric and the introduction of the new method in II» (Id., *Analytic and Synthetic Methods in Spinoza's* Ethics, in *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, cit., pp. 293-318, p. 308). However, G. Deleuze emphasizes, for different reasons from ours, the disjunction between the formal propositions of *Ethics* and the informal *scholia* ("Notes"): «En virtu de leur indépendance à l'égard des propositions qu'ils doublent, on dirait que l'*Ethique* a été simultanément écrite deux fois, sur deux tons, sur un double register (By virtue of its independence with regard to the propositions which they accom-

pany, it seems that the *Ethics,* simultaneously, has been written twice, in two styles, in dual registers)» (Id., *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1968, p. 317).

[378] Parkinson, in his rejoinder to Savan, makes reference to Wittgenstein, with respect to Wittgenstein's famous alternative to stating in language, namely, communicating by «showing» (p. 93). Our reading of Spinoza would seem to indicate that Spinoza was convinced he had devised a different solution, consisting of the expressive power of deductive logic. The fact that nowadays formal logic is spoken of as "language" is part of a separate history of ideas. Therefore, whenever the term "language" is used in the context of science, its distinction from natural, "ordinary" language needs to be kept in mind, as in Yovel's commentary on the "language" of *Ethics*: «The scientific method defines, above all, the universe of discourse of the *Ethics*. Language in this domain is to serve adequate ideas only, it takes its model from a formal deductive calculus, construed *ordine geometrico* and ideally requiring an absolute degree of transparency. […] To understand a term we are neither allowed nor required to transcend the given linguistic system to something else – natural language, the history and etymology of words, the linguistic habits of actual speakers – or to consider the role of metaphor, connotation, and other semantic inputs and accomplishments. The entire information necessary and relevant to fully understand this language is supposed to reside in the system itself, as if it were a formal-deductive calculus» (Id., *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, cit., pp. 137-138).

[379] And we are assuming that it cannot have been anything else or less than a deeply thought-out choice, the result of profound reflection within and as part of his «total world view» (Fløistad, p. 113).

[380] As a footnote in terms of the history of reception of Spinoza's philosophy of language, it would not be amiss to mention Einstein. M. Paty portrayed Einstein as a kindred spirit, fundamentally, and also found in him the same view of language: «If the model, and the manner, of certainty, is mathematics, what leads to it is a mental work, the description of which he does not insist very long on, and which, indeed, does not need words. It is work on concepts, but the latter are not necessarily expressible in words» (Id., *Einstein and Spinoza* , in *Spinoza and the Sciences*, cit., pp. 267-302, p. 293).

[381] This fundamental assessment does not preclude a nuanced Spinozan understanding of the functionality of language otherwise, as in P.-F. Moreau, *Spinoza. L'expérience et l'éternité*, Paris, Presses Universitaire de France, 1994, pp. 307-378. Nevertheless, Moreau also acknowledges, in line with our main argument, the specific status of language (as part of the first kind of knowledge, the realm of bodily experience) in Spinoza's epistemic system: «Les mots sont

des mouvements corporels. Comme il n'y a pas d'interaction entre l'âme et le corps, qui, relevant de la pensée, n'enveloppent aucunement la notion de l'étendue. […] On voit donc en quoi le langage réfère non au géométrique mais à l'expérientiel (Words are bodily motions. As there is no interaction between the soul and the body, the soul, the source of thought, at no time involves the notion of extension. […] One sees therefore how language refers not to the geometrical but the experiential)» (*ibid.*, pp. 310, 347).

[382] Coseriu concluded: «Tanto la poesía (el arte) como el lenguaje, al crear universales fantásticos, crean "mundos" (o fragmentos de mundos) solo "posibles" […] (Both poetry (art) and language, by creating imaginative universals, create "worlds" (or fragments of worlds) that are merely "possible")» (Id., *El lugar de los universales fantásticos en la filosofía de Vico*, cit., pp. 3-22, p. 20). In the same vein, M. Danesi: «Language is the result of this poetic capacity. Its words are models of the world. When they are connected together by the power of metaphor, they generate a theory of the world» (Id., *What is Language? Vichian Remarks on Recent Work on the Nature of the Capacity for Language,* in «NVS», 13, 1995, pp. 43-54, p. 51).

[383] Discussion of the three ages in detail can be found throughout Vico studies, but is not crucial for our purposes. For an excellent introduction, see R. M. Zagarella, *Le tre "spezie" di lingue nella Scienza nuova di Vico: interpretazione diacronica e funzionale*, in «Laboratorio dell'ISPF», VI, 2009, 1/2, pp. 20-36; online at <www.ispf-lab.cnr.it>. Among other things, it addresses, historically and substantively, as the article title signals, the interpretation of the three ages as chronologically following each other (diachronism), vs. the reading as the concurrent presence of their idiosyncrasies (functionalism), and proposes a reconciliation of the two views. We find ourselves in substantial agreement with Zagarella, and will therefore liberally draw on her exposition (without point-by-point specific reference either to the article or to respective relevant paragraphs in *Scienza nuova*).

[384] Zagarella thus is in accord with earlier Vico studies, such as G. Tagliacozzo-M. Frankel, *Progress in Art? A Vichian Answer*, cit., p. 241: «[…] Vico's view of mankind's history was actually diachronic and synchronic at the same time, even though he acknowledged and clearly stated, that in each age certain features are predominant». Tagliacozzo and Frankel attribute this insight originally to A. Pagliaro, *La dottrina linguistica di G. B. Vico,* Rome, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1959. Bedani characterizes Pagliaro's view as "contemporaneity", against which he posits a scheme of "overlaps" (Id., *Vico Revisited*, cit., pp. 63-65).

More recently, this interpretation has been adopted also in Muscelli, *Il segno di Giove*, cit., p. 107: «[…] ci viene detto espressamente che non ci fu su-

peramento e definitivo annullamento della lingua appartenente alle epoche precedenti ([…] it is being expressly stated that this does not constitute overcoming and definitive termination of the language belonging to the preceding eras)». Similarly, Botturi: «Ora, per Vico, il passaggio all'età della ragione riflessa non significa l'abbandono delle sorgenti mitiche della "*humanitas*" (socialità e cultura) […] (Now, for Vico, the passage to the age of reflective reason does not mean the abandonment of the mythical currents of "humanity" (social life and culture) […])» (Id., *Ermeneutica del mito ed esperienza etica in Giambattista Vico,* cit., p. 292). Outside of Vico studies, the concurrent existence of a spectrum of mentalities in ancient Greece is explored in P. Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. by P. Wissing, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

[385] As stated by M. Donzelli: «Dunque, ogni epoca storica contiene i caratteri di tutte le altre, ma, d'altra parte, ogni epoca storica ha i suoi caratteri predominanti chi gli conferiscono un'identità complessa e costantemente *in fieri* (Thus, every historical era contains features of all the others, but, on the other hand, every historical era possesses its predominant characeristics which confer on it a complex identity that is constanctly *evolving*)» (Id., *Razionalità e ricerca della phronesis nella Scienza nuova di G. B. Vico*, in *Razionalità e modernità in Vico*, cit., pp. 97-108, p. 108; italics original).

[386] «L'elemento "poetico" però rimane sempre contenuto nelle forme di linguaggio successive, sebbene in misura minore rispetto alle prime fasi dell'evoluzione della lingua. È vero che la poesia è una fase provvisoria, ma non scompare senza lasciare tracce di sé (The "poetic" element, however, always is retained in the successive forms of language, although to a lesser extent compared to the first phases of language evolution. It is true that poetic language is a provisional phase, but it does not disappear without leaving traces of itself)» (R. M. Zagarella, *Le tre "spezie" di lingue nella Scienza nuova di Vico*, cit., p. 35).

Hösle even cites Vico's (philosophical) language itself as a throwback to "poetic" rhetoric: «Doch auch in Vicos Zeit gibt es einen Denker, dessen Philosophie in poetischer Sprache abgefasst ist – ich meine natürlich Vico selbst. Sollte sich Vico dessen nicht bewusst gewesen sein? (But in Vico's time, too, there exists a thinker whose philosophy is expressed in poetic language – I am referring, of course, to Vico himself. Would Vico not have been aware of this fact?)» (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CXCIV). Vico's decision to write *Scienza nuova* in Italian rather than Latin is indicative, also, of his endeavor to express "poetic wisdom" in "poetic language" even at the surface level.

[387] For a more detailed discussion, see my article *Hintikka and Vico: An Update on Contemporary Logic*, in «NVS», III, 1985, pp. 147-155. That this process leads to anything but trivial consequences is indicated by C. Muscelli: «Un

atto, dunque, che in primo luogo istituisce la distanza fra uomo e natura, fra coscienza e mondo (An act, therefore, which in the first place institutes the distance between man and nature, between consciousness and world)» (Id., *Il segno di Giove*, cit., p. 102). The "logical" process of "cross-identification" is described as a "linguistic" process in M. Danesi, *Messages and Meanings: An Introduction to Semiotics,* Toronto, Canadian Scholars' Press, 1993. So while Vico's term of "poetic logic" has as its etymology "words", and thus language, the first, originary language was not devoid of logic in its narrow, technical sense.

G. Wohlfart observed: «[…] così fin dagli inizi della lingua, nella lingua "divina" almeno virtualmente vi è sempre stata una lingua anche "umana", ma per il momento solo *in nuce* ([…] just as from the beginning of language, in the "divine" language, at least virtually, there is always contained also a "human" language, but for the time being only *in nuce*)» (Id., *Vico e il carattere poetico del linguaggio*, trans. by G. Cacciatore, G. Cantillo and P. Pierri, in «BCSV», XI, 1981, pp. 58-95, p. 93).

Not all Vico students see matters this way, for example, G. Cantelli described the first language as follows: «Una lengua "natural", valga decir no convenida, que nace de forma completamente espontánea, sin reflexión alguna, en la mente del hombre (A "natural" language, meaning not formed by convention, that is born in a completely spontaneous manner, without any reflection, in the human mind)» (Id., *De la lengua heróica del Diritto universale a la lengua divina de la Scienza nuova*, trans. by J. M. Sevilla, in «CsV», 9-10, 1998, pp. 57-74, p. 63).

[388] We would like to emphasize again the particular (counterintuitive) meaning of "calculus" intended here since it commonly has the very opposite connotation. This is brought out clearly in A. Pennisi, *"Calcolo" versus "Ingenium" in Giambattista Vico: per una filosofia politica della lingua*, in *Prospettive di storia della linguistica. Lingua linguaggio comunicazione sociale,* ed. by L. Formigari and F. Lo Piparo, preface by T. De Mauro, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1988, pp. 191-211. Pennisi affirms Vico's conception of «la creatività dello strumento linguistico (the creativity of the linguistic tool)», as against «punti di vista […] calcolisti (points of view based on […] calculability)» (*ibid.*, p. 191). The creativity of language is intimately connected with the imagination and *ingenium*, whereas «calcolo (calculation)» is the result of *ratio* circumscribed by regularity, repetitive manipulation, and exactitude, as in arithmetic (*ibid.*, p. 193). Our usage of "calculus" in the present context obviously falls under the category of language as creative tool.

[389] *Contra* Cantelli: «En aquel primer "estado" del hombre su experiencia es la de hallarse "dentro" de una lengua, no de ser él el fundador de ésta. Existir dentro de esta lengua es para el hombre vivir en una realidad significativa,

la lengua divina, que como tal es una revelación de los dioses, en particular de Júpiter […] (In that first human "state" his experience is that of finding himself "inside" a language, he not being its originator. To exist inside this language is for the human living in a world of meanings, the divine language which as such is a revelation of the gods, in particular of Jupiter […])» (Id., *De la lengua heróica del* Diritto universale *a la lengua divina de la* Scienza nuova, cit., p. 63).

[390] Wohlfart was therefore justified in calling language «strumento di tutti gli strumenti (tool of all tools)» (Id., *Vico e il carattere poetico del linguaggio*, cit., p. 90).

[391] G. Palma employs a similar figure of speech: «Vico emphasizes the elasticity of language, equating to humanity's innate sense of adaptation. Through verbal and written communication – which also includes the poetic language of laws – humanity modifies and improves social institutions» (Id., *Utopian Worlds: Vico, La Capria and Mazzotta*, in «MLN», 127, 2012, 1, pp. S32-S41, p. S33). Kelemen agrees with this assessment: «Ma a parte la "lingua" dei miti, Vico considera anche i principali tipi delle lingue come espressioni di continuti sociali analoghi o come produtti e strumenti dei singoli gruppi sociali. […] Ciò è in stretta relazione con la tesi che la lingua è uno strumento di potere (But starting with the "language" of myths, Vico considers also the principal types of language as expressions of analogous social content or as products and tools of particular social groups. […] This is closely related to the thesis that language is an instrument of power)» (Id., *Storia e lingua*, cit., pp. 150, 153).

8.

BOOK III AS THE CENTER OF
SCIENZA NUOVA'S CONCENTRIC STRUCTURE

Readers of *Scienza nuova*[392] at times refer to Book III ("Discovery of the True Homer") as its center even without consideration or thought of its overall structure of the particular kind that is here hypothesized. The impression of centrality is based on internal evidence which we also take as its most valid and crucial justification. In fact, by virtue of its contents, the centrality of Book III would even remain the case if it had been placed somewhere else in the work. For example, by way of a "thought experiment", one could envision it even as an appendix to the work, and it would not take anything away from, or change the thrust of, the rest of the work. Considering the contents of Books I, II, IV, and V, and certain interconnections that we attempted to elucidate in our (selective) commentary, the distinctive, stand-alone nature of the material in Book III arguably might have been well suited for the appendix genre[393]. We consider it therefore significant that Vico chose to place this material in the literal or physical middle of the work, where it, in effect, interrupts the "natural" arc from Book II to Book IV; this move thus can be seen as accomplishing a twofold objective, that of finalizing the ring structure, and, at the same time, making use of the structural properties themselves to imbue this material with an aura of special importance, all the more effective because it is done indirectly[394].

The idiosyncratic nature of Book III comes to the fore also when it is compared with related material in *Scienza nuova* (1725). Throughout this so-called *First New Science*, there are not only numerous mentions of Homer, but, in fact, reflections and ar-

guments relating to Homer and his works that have much in common with the final 1744 edition (the so-called *Third New Science*)[395]. Thus, from a standpoint of substance, most of the salient later arguments are already present, and so, again, the radical change in the form of presentation and rhetoric is nothing less than startling[396]. While our focus is on the final 1744 edition, the change, or rather transformation, in the treatment of the Homeric material, actually took place already with the 1730 edition, referred to sometimes as the *Second New Science*. But Book III in the final version, like the rest of this edition, is essentially identical to the 1730 version[397].

How then can justice be done to the unique character of Book III? Perhaps by recognition that it was the culmination of two decades of reflection by the time he wrote the 1730 version[398]; this takes us back to the publication of *De antiquissima* of 1710[399]. Vico's preoccupation with Homer bore its first fruits a decade later in *Diritto universale* and the subsequent *Notae in duos libros*, and his assessment(s) became integral parts of *Scienza nuova* (1725)[400]. Taking the 1725 work as representative, we encounter a Vico who has mastered the subject matter (being largely of his own creation), and is in command of the erudition. This now set the stage for him to shift his attention to the next level of reflection that is no longer focused on the subject itself and the wealth of material, but is instead reflexive, that is, able to step back, so to speak, and reflect on the premises and presuppositions themselves underlying the results of his long-term studies. This reflexivity, therefore, necessitated an explicit study and articulation of methodology, a methodology that was always implicit in, and woven into, the fabric of his researches and writings heretofore, but never enunciated *sui generis*. Since results in any discipline or science are governed by methodology, Vico's placement of his methodological reflections on their own at the center of his greatest work becomes intelligible[401]. In order to give full due to this special valuation, the inclination to relegate methodology in

this case to something subordinate, or ancillary, to the substance of the work needs to be resisted[402]. Doing so would negate what arguably constitutes the single most significant advance over the 1725 version.

At the same time, Vico's situating of Homer and archaic Greek culture in such a prominent position seems to be at odds with the otherwise preponderant treatment of Roman civilization, its law, its socio-political development over time. Vico himself explained in the "Elements" of Book I why he was "forced" to look to Homer's works and the Greek experience to shed light on the earliest of times: according to Axiom XXI (§ 158), «when they appeared the Greeks were in a crude state of barbarism» whereas «[t]he Romans, on the other hand, proceeding at an even pace in [the development of] their customs, quite lost sight of the history of their gods (so that the age of the gods […] is called by Varro the dark age of the Romans)». In a sense, therefore, Homer became pivotal by default, given the dearth of authentic material from the earliest of Roman times: «[…] since Roman customs were developing from such beginnings at a time when the vulgar tongues of Latium were already well advanced, that Roman civil institutions, the like of which the Greeks had set forth in heroic speech, were set forth by the Romans in vulgar speech» (§ 160). The only available solution to overcome such profound absence of evidence from Rome's most ancient days was to take advantage of the fortuitous existence of extant evidence from the kindred Mediterranean Greek civilization: «Thus ancient Roman history will be found to be a perpetual mythology of the heroic history of the Greeks» (§ 160). As a result, he was able to see the Roman Law of the Twelve Tables in a new light, namely as relics of a much earlier period of Roman history than traditionally received[403]. The fact that his objective is the uncovering of the deep historical roots of Roman law is also evident by the very conclusion of the "Discovery of the True Homer" where Vico again draws a parallel («[…] the same fate

has befallen the poems of Homer as the Law of the Twelve Tables») (§ 904)[404].

As has been observed earlier, viewed on the broader canvas of the development of Roman civilization *de longue durée* as a model for Vico of the development of human civilization in general, Homer assumes a larger privotal role and function, namely, that of being a unique record of the (lost) world of humans, socially, "politically", of the worldview, the mindset, the language, and the behavioral pattern(s) prevalent in archaic times. Having devoted the bulk of *Scienza nuova* to "Poetic Wisdom", his theory of origins, Vico now in Book III lays out his methodology by which he arrived at the reconstruction of primordial culture[405]. He scrutinizes the language, personalities, manners and customs depicted in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and realizes that their characteristics cannot but have originated in the distant past of the Greek people, going so far as asserting that the *Iliad* account depicted a time and *milieu* that was very different from the world in the pages of the *Odyssey*[406]. These perceived differences lead him to "discover" in the *Iliad* the earliest stratum[407] of Greek civilization[408]. And he was proving that it was possible to find a way of accessing the archaic world, the ages of "gods" and "heroes", which is an essential condition of possibility of deciphering "Poetic Wisdom".

Rather than engaging in a further (narrative) description of Vico's hermeneutical approach in Book III, its contours may be drawn more distinctly by positing it again in relation to Spinoza's thought, all the more so as Spinoza did have his own theory of interpretation which he propounded explicitly and directly in *TTP*. As was the case in different contexts in previous parts of this work, our focus on Vico's thought necessarily places constraints on the breadth and depth of Spinoza's body of thought being considered.

Notes to Chapter 8

[392] As stated before, we are always referring to the 1744 edition, and will specifically identify the 1725 and 1730 editions as such.

[393] As a matter of fact, B. A. Haddock felt this way: «the "discovery of the true Homer" […] is best regarded as an appendix to the theses advanced in [Book II]» (Id., *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer": A Case-Study in Historical Reconstruction*, in «Journal of the History of Ideas», 40, 1979, 4, pp. 583-602, p. 588).

[394] Papini, while not advocating the same kind of ring structure presented here, places Book III at the center of a diagram of the work's five "books", explaining: «[…] cioè il *Libro terzo* rappresenta non un'appendice del *Libro secondo* dedicato all'età degli eroi, ma il punto centrale o asse portante di tutto il sistema speculativo vichiano ([…] namely, *Book III* constitutes, not an appendix to *Book II* devoted to the age of the heroes, but the central point or the underpinning of Vico's entire speculative system)» (Id., *Il geroglifico della storia*, cit., p. 312).

[395] The following are a few of the more significant references, based on *The First New Science,* ed. and trans. by L. Pompa, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000, including paragraph numbering (which follows F. Nicolini's system of numbered paragraphs, see *ibid.*, p. XLVI), namely: Book I, Chapter X, § 34; Book II, Chapter LII [LIII], § 203; Chapter LV [LVII], § 207; Chapter LX [LXI], § 221; Chapter LXIII [LXIV], §§ 236, 240; Book III, Chapter XIII, § 275; Chapter XIV, § 277; Chapter XV, §§ 282, 284; Chapter XVII [XVIII], § 288; Chapter XVIII [XIX], § 293; Chapter XX [XXI], §§ 295-297; Chapter XXV [XXVI], §§ 311, 312; Chapter XXVI [XXVII], §§ 313-315.

[396] P. Cristofolini summed up the contrast between the two editions: «Nella *Scienza nuova prima*, come i lettori di Vico sanno, la *Discoverta del vero Omero* non c'è. Quello che nelle due successive versioni sarà il terzo libro, breve, centrale, quasi nel posto del cuore, qui non si trova nemmeno in forma di capitoletto o paragrafo, l'espressione stessa, *discoverta ecc.*, che Vico ripeterà con tanta fierezza nel corso degli anni più tardi, non si è ancora affacciata. […] Ma questi elementi non fanno corpo unitario né confluiscono nel riconoscimento del carattere universale dell'autore dell'*Iliade* e dell'*Odissea*; questo accadrà solo a partire dal 1730 (In the *First New Science*, as readers of Vico know, there is no *Discovery of the True Homer*. The material that will in the two subsequent versions become the third, short, central book, in effect placed at the heart of it, cannot be found here even in the form of a short chapter or paragraph; the expression *Discovery etc.* itself that Vico will repeat with such pride during later years, is not yet introduced. […] But these elements do not make up a unified

body, nor converge on the recognition of the universal character of the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which occurs only as of 1730)» (Id., *Da Dante a Omero, da Gravina a Vico*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei sapere*, cit., pp. 375-382, p. 375; also as *Prefazione*, in G. Vico, *La discoverta del vero Omero seguita dal Giudizio sopra Dante*, ed. by P. Cristofolini, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2006, pp. 5-19, pp. 10-11). To trace Vico's evolving interest in, and recognition of, the Homeric material for his explanatory project, one has to go back further, to his *Diritto universale* of 1721/1722; see R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 153.

[397] The operative word is "essentially" since Vico carefully edited the 1730 text, with all of the corrections, refinements, additions/omissions meriting close reading (For a side-by-side comparison of Book III in the 1730 and 1744 versions, using the 1744 text as the baseline, see G. Vico, *La discoverta del vero Omero seguita dal Giudizio sopra Dante*, cit., pp. 26-125).

While a detailed discussion goes beyond our scope, a few of these changes in Book III can be singled out (based on comparison of the text in *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., pp. 666-698, 1137-1167):

1. Section I, Chapter I: Addition of § 783, in support of the concluding statement: «Here is the Homer unrivaled in creating poetic characters [...]».

2. Section I, Chapter V, Proof VII: Expansion of § 817, culminating in the statement: «And here we have a luminous proof of the fact that the first fables were histories».

3. Section I, Chapter VI, Proof XIII: Addition of § 852, containing the statement: «rhapsodes were stitchers-together (*consarcinatori*) of songs».

4. Section II, Chapter I, Proofs VI and VII: Addition of §§ 880, 881, stating: «In this fashion we show that the Homer who was the author of the *Iliad* preceded by many centuries the Homer who was the author of the *Odyssey*».

5. Section II, Chapter I, Proof XXI: Addition of § 897, stating that «neither philosophies, […] poetry, […] criticism, which came later, could create a poet […] anywhere near to rivaling Homer».

6. Section II, Chapter I, Proof XXIV: Rewording of the ending of § 901, reading: «But it was poetic wisdom itself whose fables provided occasions for the philosophers to meditate their lofty truths, and supplied them also the means for expounding them […]»; compared to the (maybe too) evocative style of 1730: «ma essa *Sapienza Poetica* contenne nelle sue *favole,* come in *embrioni,* o *matrici* le *sublimi verità* […] (but this *poetic wisdom* contains in its *fables* the *sublime truths*, like in *embryos* or *mothers' wombs*)». The same expression «come in loro *embrione,* e *matrice,* dentro la *Sapienza de' Poeti Teologi* (like in their *embryo,* and *mother's womb*, inside the *Wisdom of the Theological Poets*)» – can be found in the 1730 version, in Book I, "On Method", in the first paragraph that corresponds in its first half to § 338 in the 1744 version, but the second half of

which has not been carried over. See G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 486) So, while Vico kept to the key role of childhood, both in its actual and metaphorical states, in the 1744 version, he expunged the references to pregnancy and childbirth.

While it could not be argued that these changes (and others) materially alter the overall picture, what they have in common is their pointedness and definitiveness, and thus may reflect, among other things, Vico's growing self-confidence and self-assurance in his theoretical framework.

Ruggiero has shown how seemingly minor wording changes/edits between the 1730 and 1744 versions provide a window into Vico's thinking. His study involves the historically contentious § 873, where Vico takes «the middle ground (*per la metà*)» on the question of Homer's "existence"; while the textual changes do not revise the overall line of argumentation, and thus are not necessarily critical or radical, they are still helpful for clarification (Id., *La «volgar tradizione»,* cit., pp. 236-244). Ruggiero's conclusions will be relevant to our own discussion of § 873 below.

[398] G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., p. 486; the identical statement is also in the 1744 version, at the end of § 338.

[399] Unless Vico meant to highlight the 20-year period as such, as relative or free-floating, without relating its end point specifically to the 1730 edition, as in an absolute chronology; in that case, he could have had in mind the two decades prior to *Scienza nuova* (1725), or even prior to *Diritto universale* (1721/1722), thus taking us as far back as the time of the early *Inaugural Orations.* This latter timeline could be in line with Ruggiero's observation: «Tra il 1721 e il 1722 intanto, per la prima volta, Vico comincia a riflettere sulla figura di Omero, e il ruolo di Omero appare subito sistematicamente così rilevante da meritar chiose e incrementi tali che finirono col produrre una lunga nota […] nel terzo volume del *Diritto universale* (Meanwhile, between 1721 and 1722, Vico for the first time begins to reflect on the figure of Homer, and the role of Homer quickly appears as so relevant systematically as to merit explanations and additional comments that, in the end, resulted in a lengthy note […] in the third volume of *Diritto universale*)» (Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 153).

[400] See B. A. Haddock, *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer"*, cit., p. 588; M. H. Fisch, *Vico on Roman Law*, cit., pp. 7-8. Since the *Scienza nuova in forma negativa,* and the so-called Venetian *Scienza nuova,* are no longer extant, no other major works are available for consideration relative to his treatment of Homer prior to the 1725 version.

[401] Vico's placement of his pivotal methodological excursus only after presenting three-quarters of the entire rest of the work first (i.e. Books I, II, IV,

and V) is reminiscent of Spinoza's placement of the methodological Chapter VII of *TTP*, about which M. Walther remarked: «Damit folgt Spinoza auch hier der […] Einsicht, dass die Methode, wenn sie ihrem Gegenstand gerecht werden will, kein abstract von aussen an einen Gegenstand herangetragenes Regelwerk sein kann, sondern nur die reflexiv gewordene Einsicht in den erkannten Sachverhalt selber ist; dass die Methode als "idea ideae" immer die Einsicht in den Sachverhalt selber voraussetzt bzw. sich erst in der dem Gegenstand gewidmeten Gedankenarbeit als angemessen herausbildet und bewährt (Thus, Spinoza applies here, too, the insight that the method, if it is to do justice to its subject matter, cannot be a set of rules that is abstractly brought to bear on the subject from the outside, but is the reflexive insight in the epistemic state of affairs; that the method as "idea ideae" always presupposes insight in the subject matter itself, or, respectively, develops and proves itself as adequate and valid only in the course of the thought process devoted to the subject)» (Id., *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung. Lodewijk Meyer und Benedikt de Spinoza über Norm, Methode und Ergebnis wissenschaftlicher Bibelauslegung*, in «Studia Spinozana», 11, 1995, pp. 227-300, p. 263).

[402] *Pace* Haddock who wrote: «It must be borne in mind that Vico's Homeric studies were always subsidiary to the elaboration of the principles of interpretation which had "cost" him "the persistent research of almost all" his "literary life"» (Id., *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer"*, cit., p. 588). Our portrayal is also at variance with Caponigri: «they [the Homeric poems] provide the supreme testing ground for this theory of poetry and, consequently, for the entire movement of the "New Science"» (Id., *Time and Idea*, cit., p. 191). In our reading, instead, Homer is the source of Vico's hermeneutics, and it is historiography that is to be exercised in the light of it, not the other way around.

[403] See M. H. Fisch, *Vico on Roman Law*, cit., p. 8: «Gradually he came to see in the fragments, except for later interpolations, the vestiges of the culture of a still barbarous people».

[404] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

[405] Cacciatore expressed it succinctly: «Ed Omero rappresenta innanzitutto la "sapienza poetica", cioè la "prima sapienza del mondo per gli gentili" (And Homer represents first of all the "poetic wisdom", that is, the "first wisdom of the world for the gentiles")» (Id., *Vico: Narrazione storica e narrazione fantastica*, cit., p. 119; Id., *Vico: Narración histórica y narración fantástica*, trans. by J. Sánchez Espillaque, in «CsV», 23, 2009, pp. 15-31, p. 17; also Id., *Un'idea moderna di certezza*, cit., p. 187; quoting from § 6).

[406] § 853 (Book III, Section I, Chapter VI, Proof XIV): «[…] the difference we can observe between the styles of the two poems is infinite». See B.

A. Haddock, *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer"*, cit., pp. 593-597, for a more detailed discussion of Vico's approach to the Homeric poems.

[407] § 880 (Book III, Section II, Chapter I, Proof VI): «by many centuries».

[408] This is succinctly summarized in § 879 (Book III, Section II, Chapter I, Proof V), stating in the case of the *Iliad*: «[…] when Greece was young and consequently seething with sublime passions, such as pride, wrath, and lust for vengeance, passions which do not tolerate dissimulation but which love magnanimity; and hence Greece admired Achilles, the hero of violence. […] the peoples of Greece found pleasure in coarseness, villainy, ferocity, savagery, and cruelty», in contrast with the *Odyssey*: «when the spirits of Greece had been somewhat cooled by reflection, which is the mother of prudence, so that it admired Ulysses, the hero of wisdom. […] they found delight in […] luxury […], […] joys […], […] pleasures […], […] songs […], […] pastimes […], and […] attempts […] on […] chastity […]».

9.

SPINOZA'S BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS
AND EPISTEMOLOGY

While our approach to both thinkers is motivated heuristically, right from the beginning it needs to be acknowledged that in Vico studies, as well as other early modern studies, as a rule rather than as an exception, Vico is understood as being heavily indebted to Spinoza in this particular area of reflection[409]. Rather than engaging directly and immediately with this assessment, we will defer any conclusions until after reading and examining certain aspects of *TTP* as well as of Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer". The so-called "Homeric question", that is, whether Vico believed in the existence of Homer as an actual historical individual, and author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, will be considered only after Vico's approach to historical material has been sufficiently characterized.

Procedurally, the basis for studying Spinoza's biblical hermeneutics used here is principally Chapter 7 (*On the Interpretation of Scripture*) of *TTP*[410], although the entire *Treatise*[411] is devoted to the subject, thus necessitating some references to other chapters as well. Since it appears that Spinoza in this chapter presented his hermeneutical methodology in a certain structured manner, and carefully thought-out order, we will respect the actual compositional arrangement of the material, and proceed section by section[412].

The first section[413] sets the stage for Spinoza's entire exposition with the programmatic statement: «I hold that the method of interpreting Scripture is no different from the method of interpreting Nature, and is in fact in complete accord with it» (*TTP*, p. 87). Spinoza thus stakes a claim to following scientific principles and procedures in his treatment of the Bible (while al-

so making references to the New Testament, the main focus is on the Old Testament, the so-called Hebrew Bible). As in all matters of terminology employed by Spinoza, so the term «interpreting Nature» is to be considered in its relation to, and according to its place in, Spinoza's overall philosophical edifice, a task that will be undertaken below in more detail.

In Spinoza studies that deal with his hermeneutics of Scripture, the most common form of exposition is to delve, in a manner of speaking and at the risk of oversimplifying, into the technicalities of Spinoza's methodology[414]. On the other hand, Spinoza readers who approach the *Treatise* with Spinoza's overall philosophical outlook and project in mind, seem to be the exception[415]. The approach that we will follow here is based on the same premise held by Reventlow: «The [*TTP*], in which Spinoza described his view of the Bible, cannot be understood without referring first to the philosophy developed in the *Ethics*»[416]. Reventlow goes on to elucidate the first six chapters of *TTP* in light of *Ethics*, especially Spinoza's view of the biblical «prophets»[417] in terms of the kind of knowledge they possessed, primarily through the power of «imagination». While Spinoza concedes to «prophecy» a certain measure of knowledge, he emphasizes the superiority of «natural knowledge» and philosophical insight. Thus, without expressly stating it, «prophetic» knowledge is relegated to the lowest rank in the three-tiered epistemological hierarchy articulated in *Ethics*. Another major consequence[418] of the systematicity of *Ethics* is Spinoza's explanation of the «divine law» (*TTP*, Chapter 4). It can be succinctly summarized: «The divine law is nothing other than the order of nature, from which the equation of Spinoza's philosophy arose»[419].

It is through this lens that Spinoza's hermeneutical methodology in Chapter 7 will be read, with particular attention to the cross-identification of key concepts/terms, analeptically, between *TTP* and *Ethics,* following as much as possible the order in which Spinoza developed his argumentation. It is not only Spinoza's

views on science overall «the method of interpreting Nature» – that need to be considered as moments of the deep structure of his philosophy, but also the heuristic structure of the proposed investigatory process, which he summarized as follows (italics and labels added):

For the method of interpreting Nature consists essentially in composing a detailed study of Nature from which, as being the source of [1st kind of knowledge:] our *assured data* (*certis datis*), we can [2nd kind:] *deduce the definitions* (*definitiones concludimus*). Now in exactly the same way the task of Scriptural interpretation requires us to make a straightforward study of Scripture, and from this, as the source of [1st kind:] our *fixed data* (*certis datis*) and principles, to [2nd kind:] *deduce by logical inference* (*legitimis consequentiis concludere*) the *meaning of the authors* (*mentem autorum*) of Scripture [*TTP*, p. 87].

The inserted labeling serves to highlight the fact that his method reflects and, in fact, embodies his fundamental theory of knowledge, as it could not do otherwise, including the seemingly most basic or transparent level of heuristics, such as the term «definition(s)». To cite just one relevant place in *Ethics*, in Part I, Proposition XIX, Proof, a «definition» of a thing has for Spinoza the deep sense of its essence and very nature, the epitome of which is «God» himself, or «substance, which necessarily exists, […] or follows from its definition»[420]. This then constitutes the inherently Spinozan[421] sense of «definition» in which his further statement in the first section is to be read: «Therefore, just as definitions of the things of nature must the inferred from the various operations of Nature, in the same way definitions must be elicited from the various Biblical narratives as they touch on a particular subject» (*TTP*, p. 88).

The partitioning of knowledge-acquisition into the first and second kinds of knowledge, both for the physical sciences and the study of Scripture[422], at this incipient stage, sets up the matrix or structural pattern for the more specific, fine-grained, analysis

that follows. The section or block that immediately follows[423] is presented as an outline of three major areas of investigation that Spinoza considers absolutely essential: (1) the Hebrew language and its linguistics; (2) the semantics/pragmatics of the text; and (3) the historical background of the writers, writings, and provenance of the text(s). These three areas are the source of the voluminous data without which the interpreter would not be able to arrive through sound reasoning at a correct understanding of the teaching of Scripture; thus, these three fields of study can be seen as falling into the category of the first kind of knowledge.

With respect to the first field of study, the Hebrew language, his requirements are stated in extremely brief fashion, referring simply to its «nature and properties», to the language that «its authors were accustomed to speak», to «established linguistic usage» from which «all possible meanings» needed to be obtained (*TTP*, p. 88). Taken at their face value, without taking into account the more extensive exposition on the Hebrew language later in the chapter (*TTP*, pp. 94-96), Spinoza merely seems to be advocating linguistic competence on the part of Bible commentators, an unremarkable requisite in light of the centuries-old tradition of original language studies by the dawn of the early modern era[424]. However, when held in tension with the subsequent, extensive treatment, it can be seen as being deliberately proleptic, and the key expressions highlighted above will be seen as taking on a different connotation from their ostensible objective and ideologically neutral intentions.

The second key area of concern is the semantics/pragmatics of biblical language[425]. Spinoza devotes most of the space reserved for this rubric to the issue of how to determine literal vs. metaphorical[426] meaning in the Hebrew Bible. His paradigmatic example is the statement in the Pentateuch that «God is fire». Spinoza insists that the literal or metaphorical sense should be ascertained, not by appeal to the «natural light of reason», but only by comparison with other relevant expressions actually

found within the Scriptures themselves. And since the word «fire» happens to be used in the *Book of Job* also in the sense of anger or jealousy, the term can be safely taken in a metaphorical sense. This technical, if not trivial, semantic exercise, however, actually is not the main point of the illustration. The emphasis, rather, is on the hermetic approach to Bible language, both in form (Hebrew) and content: all "input", so to speak, from any and all "outside" sources and resources is proscribed. Although Spinoza does not say so explicitly, on a purely linguistic level presumably this would include also, for example, ancient Near East cognate languages[427] and texts that could be useful in clarifying «linguistic usage (*usu linguae*)». Whether it is the (presumed) silence about "oriental languages" that belong to the same language family as Hebrew, or the restriction to the Hebrew corpus, the justification of these constraints given by Spinoza does not have anything to do with philology, in the usual sense. In this specific illustration of literal vs. metaphorical meaning, what Spinoza emphasizes more insistently and repeapedly than any other point of argument is that «the meaning of the words» must be found without the aid of «reason»; the statement "God is fire" and "God is jealous", respectively, are unproblematic semantically, however, Spinoza highlights «their obscurity from the perspective of truth and reason» (*TTP*, p. 89). We are thus, subtly but quickly, redirected from the realm of philology (semantics/pragmatics) that was the purported topic, to an entirely different epistemic domain, the domain of *truth* and *reason,* and into the heart of Spinoza's epistemology and worldview. This becomes even more transparent at the end of this excursus, where he comes back full circle to Moses, stating that Moses «nowhere tells us that God is without passions or emotions», although «this opinion is contrary to reason» (*TTP*, pp. 89, 90). First, the reference to «opinion» vs. «reason» points us to *Ethics*, Part II, Proposition XLI, entitled «Opinion is the only source of falsity, reason and intuition are necessarily true» in the table of contents[428], but

more significantly, *Ethics*, Part V, Proposition XVII, comes to mind: «God is without passions, neither is he affected by any emotion of pleasure or pain»[429]. This insight belongs to *scientia intuitiva*, the third kind of knowledge, alone, whereas Scripture at best can aspire at gathering the first kind of knowledge in the form of data, and elucidating its «meaning» at the level of the second kind of knowledge.

In the light of this «clarification (*clarius intelligantur*)», the introductory statement takes on a particular connotation that is not expressed directly. The passage reads:

The pronouncements (*sententias*) made in each book should be assembled and listed under headings, so that we can thus have to hand all the texts that treat of the same subject. Next, we should note all those that are ambiguous or obscure, or that appear to contradict one another (*TTP*, p. 88).

Spinoza thus proposes, or rather demands, that biblical study – now dealing with the contents, rather than the language in which it is written – approach statements in Scripture analogously to phenomena in science, that is, as initial raw data; with this approach, the individual statements of Scripture become part of the first kind of knowledge, consistent with the programmatic promise made at the beginning of the chapter. From a historical point of view, the echo of, and appeal to, Bacon's scientific methodology is unmistakable[430]. However, familiarity with Bacon's theory of scientific epistemology may send up certain "red flags" with respect to the closeness or coextension of the concepts of both thinkers. Spinoza presents this step as a sort of, if not "mechanical", then relatively unchallenging task of producing a listing of individual statements, organized according to subject. Thus, in practice, the subjects become literal headings on a piece of paper, and what remains to be done is going through the biblical text, picking out statements, and classifying them under the established headings. It is conspicuous that nothing is said

about the epistemological crux: the complex and fraught process of determining the "subject(s)" (*re*) in the first place, and why and how a given statement would pertain to one subject rather than to another; *mutatis mutandis*, the same would apply to judging what is «ambiguous» or «obscure» or «appear[s] to contradict one another»[431]. Viewed from the perspective of Spinoza's taxonomy of knowledge, however, any recognition of high-level intellectual interaction as being involved already in basic data collection would have resulted in direct ontological conflict with the other two kinds of knowledge[432]. On the other hand, in Bacon's framework, there is no denial of, or silence on, the role of the intellect as early as the stage of initial data gathering, as outlined in *Novum Organum*[433]. When Bacon describes the preparing of «tables», he says that the particulars about phenomena «must be disposed and arranged», or, in keeping with his busy bee metaphor, «digested». «The tabulating activity involves a measure of construction, since order cannot simply be "read off" from the data»[434]. Thus, already Bacon clearly understood and theorized that all scientific observation, from the very initial phase, is in some way "theory-laden"[435]. In this respect, what was "modern" in the early modern period, has lost none of its modernity in the interim[436].

After thus outlining the procedure for acquiring the first kind of knowledge, Spinoza moves to the next stage, which consists of eliciting the «meaning (*sensus*)», which is the second kind of knowledge. At this place in his exposition, Spinoza does not yet go further into how this may be done, except noting that it can be elicited from the «context (*contextu*)». As he will subsequently illustrate with Moses's teaching that «God is jealous», Spinoza already here conveys that the real or main issue for him is not the inquiry into «meaning» in the usual understanding of semantics, as the very first sentence (in its Latin original) seems to propose, but the separation of «meaning» from «truth»: «[…] I term a pronouncement obscure or clear according to […] the context, and

not according to the degree of difficulty with which its truth can be perceived by reason. For the point at issue is merely the meaning of the texts, not their truth»[437] (*TTP*, p. 88). This abruptly introduces an entirely new idea in Chapter 7 up to this point, and it becomes evident only at the end of the «illustration» that follows what Spinoza meant by «truth», namely, intuitive knowledge, knowledge of the third kind.

Spinoza's distinction between «meaning» and «truth» has received much play in Spinoza studies, for good reasons. There is general agreement that «meaning» essentially has reference to the authors' intentions and significations, at least insofar as this part of his explanation suggests[438], while «truth» has been the subject of debate. On one view, «truth» is seen as akin to finding the truth-value of a proposition, in the sense of its conformity to, and with, facts[439]. However, other Spinoza readers, while still upholding the distinction, and the relational nature of «truth» in Spinoza, do not leave the matter at the more-or-less formal, largely vacuous, level, but attribute particular content to it; this content does not consist of the actual phenomena observed in the world (of nature and humans), but rather of the insights of philosophy, and only philosophy[440]. While these two points of view differ in substantial ways, they can be related nevertheless from a certain, overarching, perspective, and by doing so, cast Spinoza's notion of «truth» into higher relief. The perspective to which we are making recourse is that of "truth-in-a-model". The aim of this expression is to make explicit what is already understood or presupposed in both interpretations of Spinozan «truth», namely, that its interpretation is relative to something else, on the one hand, and imbuing it with specific meaning, on the other hand[441]. The "something else" consists of a framework, or any kind of state-of-affairs/situation/(possible) world of varying complexity; it can be, and indeed is often, spoken of as assumptions or presuppositions, however, in the model-theoretic approach, the preferred term of "theory" preserves the notion of

systematicity and explicitness, not merely isolated and/or unstated underlying propositions. It is with respect to this "theory" that the language used is "interpreted", or given particular instantiation, so that when it accords well with such a complex state of matters, it becomes a *model* of such a "world", or, stated differently, the interpretation satisfies the "theory", and makes it come "true"[442]. Considering Spinoza's pronouncement of the failure of Scripture to convey «truth», from the model-theoretic perspective, then implies that Scripture is not a *model* of something, which he at this point only identified by the circumlocution of «our reason's dictates», and illustrated by Moses' mistaken belief in a God capable of «jealousy», but which he will assert more explicitly and directly later in the same chapter. As indicated above, Spinoza did not write *TTP* in an intellectual vacuum, but, among other reasons, specifically on the occasion, and in response to, Meijer's treatise; in Meijer's hermeneutics, the Bible needed to be approached and interpreted philosophically[443], on the conviction that God as author necessarily, due to his omniscience and truthfulness, would have committed to the human writers (amanuenses) only such statements as contained entirely true knowledge[444]. It follows that, since philosophy is the source of the knowledge of truth, the issue, and at the same time the implied solution, is to read Scripture in its light. The precepts of philosophy are echoed, although imperfectly refracted or even distorted due to human limitations, in Scripture; in other words, with these qualifications, Scripture constitutes an *interpretation* or *model* of philosophy, or, stated conversely, philosophy is *true* in this *model*. Spinoza rightly argued strenuously against Meijer since their points of view, on closer inspection, were diametrically opposed[445]. Keeping Meijer's exposition in peripheral vision in reading *TTP* helps in interpreting Spinoza's language, or at least, in eliminating a range of possibilities. With respect to the question before us, of the reference of «truth», the polemic with Meijer makes it plausible, if not compelling, that Spinoza pri-

marily alluded to philosophical truth rather than ordinary factuality.

While Spinoza's distinction between «meaning» and «truth» was not necessarily non-ideological[446], it renders a noteworthy epistemological service of a general nature: it makes transparent what could, intentionally or unintentionally, be neglected in any interpretative undertaking, when it is ostensibly concerned only with the «meaning» of subject material. Spinoza was prepared to be open about his own philosophical predilections, and, in fact, candidly, to bear witness to his choice, as a general principle, of his own philosophical system over Scripture as a whole. In that sense, he called attention to the need to give consideration, first and foremost, to such underlying philosophical determinations, and only secondarily, to the actual hermeneutical task performed. As he later stated in Chapter 7, in the final analysis, (his) philosophy made the study of Scripture superfluous[447]. Spinoza's dictum can thus shed light on hermeneutics in general, and, in a way, turn hermeneutics on its head, by re-directing criticism from the biblical text or material to be studied to the body of theoretical/philosophical notions through the lens of which the material is approached. *Interpretation*, then, does not purport to say something about the text, but the ways, if they exist, in which they give substance to, or *model*, the theoretical propositions. It is Spinoza's great merit, and to his credit, as well as to his intellectual honesty, to his systematicity, to explicitly acknowledge that Scripture does not conform in fundamental ways to his own philosophy.

This brings us to his third main area of biblical studies[448], which actually consists of two categorically distinct domains of inquiry. The first concerns the historical background of the authors and their times, now commonly termed *Sitz im Leben* (real-life setting) in biblical studies[449]; the second involves the textual integrity of the works as they came down to us through time. In each case, Spinoza first presents a short catalog of relevant

type(s) of information that needed to be gathered in research. However, although he withholds his own considered judgments in these matters until later in the chapter, the brief statements under this third point, numbered by himself, already provide a preview, or rather, lay the groundwork. On the first concern, having to do with the authors, their personalities and background, as well as the historical occasion/background of their writings, his objective transcends historiography: it is «to know which pronouncements were set forth as *laws* and which as *moral teaching*», on the one hand, and «to avoid confusing teachings of *eternal significance* with those which are only of *temporary significance*»[450]. It is obvious that we are no longer in the realm of disinterested historical and linguistic studies pursued for the sake of building up as accurate and complete a picture of moments in history as the available evidence warrants, but in the realm of theology proper[451]. With respect to the second subject, the text itself as a physical object, the concern seems to be purely philological, in the academically accepted usage, such as «how many variant versions there were». However, the technical question is then transformed into the value-laden problematic of «whether or not it may have been contaminated by spurious insertions, whether errors have crept in, and whether these have been corrected by experienced and trustworthy scholars». Nothing less than «what is certain and incontrovertible (*quod certum et indubitatum est*)»[452] will suffice. Spinoza has definite views and responses on this problematic, but holds them in suspense until after he has presented the perspective under which he wants the quest for historical and linguistic understanding to be seen, as the next section of his methodological essay shows.

This section[453], of considerable length relative to the sketch of his three major hermeneutical tasks, differs from what preceded it in that it turns from the requisite first kind of knowledge in the form of 'raw' data, heretofore considered, to the task of transforming the accumulated data into the second kind of

knowledge, thus following through on the initially proposed two-fold objective, «to deduce by logical inference the meaning of the authors of Scripture»[454]. Again he reiterates the imperative of following the exemplary method of «interpreting Nature». While he had left such method unexplained in the introduction, except in terms of «deduc[ing] the definitions of things of Nature», in the present section these «definitions» are now more concretely described as «those features which are most *universal* and *common* (*res maxime universales et toti naturae communes*)»[455]. For Spinoza, *common notions* have a specified place or role in his epistemic architecture, being the subject of a number of Propositions in *Ethics*[456]. The fundamental point is that there are correct ("adequate", in Spinoza's terminology) ideas about the properties that are common to all human beings, and human minds, the paradigmatic example he gives in this connection in *TTP* is the property of motion-and-rest in Nature. Spinoza, however, places conditions on the nature and scope of the term *common* by stipulating that they «cannot be conceived except adequately»[457]. What Spinoza means by being «adequate»[458] in this context, is explained in Proposition XL: «For when we say that an idea in the human mind follows from ideas which are therein adequate, we say, in other words, that an idea is in the divine intellect, whereof God is the cause, […] in so far as he constitutes the essence of the human mind». Thus, the correct, adequate understanding of common notions is ultimately dependent on, or to be validated by, the «divine intellect» which is synonymous with intuitive knowledge, the third kind of knowledge. *Universality*, used synonymously by Spinoza for what is *common*, therefore, also cannot be isolated from idiosyncratic Spinozan nuances; it reflects infinite modes of God-Nature[459] instead of merely, or solely, denoting "garden-variety" generality and/or consistency[460].

This is the subtext according to which Spinoza's dictum to «first seek from our study of Scriptures that which is most universal and forms the basis and foundation of all Scriptures»[461]

needs to be read. Spinoza himself then identifies this «most universal» teaching, or the true «meaning», of Scripture as the following: «[…] that God exists one alone and omnipotent, who alone should be worshipped, who cares for all, who loves above all others those who worship him and love their neighbors as themselves. These and similar doctrines […], so […] that no one has ever been in any doubt as to the meaning on these points». By anyone's reckoning, this seems to constitute a modicum of significance given the synchronic and diachronic scope of Scripture[462]. However, this mere extract of «meaning» is no accident, it necessarily follows from Spinoza's three-tiered epistemic system, firstly, as the maximum value that can be derived or deduced from the available Scriptural data that forms the first kind of knowledge, and secondly, and far more importantly, as knowledge that is constitutionally, and functionally, subordinated, and inferior to the third kind of knowledge, «scientia intuitiva». His hermeneutical movement or process is governed by the insights that intuitive knowledge gave into ultimate reality, and, if it does not completely determine it, it constrains the nature and content of the second kind of knowledge[463]. The immediately following sentence in *TTP* makes explicit the distinction between «meaning» and «truth» that he alluded to earlier: «But what God is, in what way he sees and provides for all things and similar matters, Scripture does not teach formally, and as eternal doctrine»[464]. Scripture, at best, and in a elementary manner, gets it right in matters of basic human conduct and standards of behavior[465], but provides no insight into the essence and true causes of reality, «what "God" is», a quest that is accomplished only in his own philosophical inquiry in *Ethics*, beginning necessarily «[c]*oncerning God*», (Part I)[466]. As though relegating the residual «meaning» in Scripture to a subordinate role were not enough, in the remaining part of this section, Spinoza highlights that establishment itself of the «meaning» in Scripture is highly problematic to begin with. His first argument concerns «prophets/

prophecy», since they not only differed among themselves, but also were inevitably subject to «the prejudices of their particular age»; ultimately, one should «avoid confusing the minds of the prophets and [intra-biblical] historians with the mind of the Holy Spirit and with factual truth (*mente Spiritus Sancti, et rei veritate*)»[467]. Secondly, the «meaning of some passage» is liable to have been deliberately tampered with by the [Jewish] «learned», developing his case, rhetorically, by initially allowing merely the possibility that «it may occasionally have been in someone's interest to alter the meaning of some passage», then claiming definitely that «we can readily conceive that the learned may have altered or corrupted the meaning of some passage», and finally alleging that «there may frequently have been an intention to corrupt the meaning of a writer by altering what he wrote or by giving it a wrong interpretation»[468]. In the space of a few sentences, one is swept along – that is, if one does not stop and challenge or at least qualify the initial supposition – as a hypothetical case of low likelihood escalates into a situation of high frequency; given such frequency, doubts or suspicions[469] are apt to arise about the integrity of any and all passages. Spinoza concludes this section by affirming that it followed «the principle that knowledge of Scripture must be sought only from Scripture»[470], which in his hermeneutical framework, unlike the contemporaneous Protestant slogan of *sola Scriptura*, was meant to ensure that the significance of Scripture was confined to an inferior epistemic level, adding, for emphasis, that his «method […] is the only true method (*nostra methodus* […] *unica et vera sit*)», apart from which no understanding of Scripture is attainable. In summary, in Spinoza's framework, not only is the «meaning» of Scripture a function of merely the second kind of knowledge, and thus categorically incapable of containing intuitive knowledge of the essence of God-Nature, its causes, modes, and properties, but the enterprise itself of discovering such «meaning» is presented, for all intents and purposes, as nigh impossible to succeed.

This section plays a pivotal role in Chapter 7, in more than one way. Primarily, it delineates Spinoza's position on Scripture in relation to his epistemic system, and in doing so, encapsulates the thrust of the *Treatise* as a whole. Secondarily, it also acts as a hinge between what Spinoza expounded before, and what follows. As shown above, while this section focused on the second kind of knowledge, the preceding section dealt with matters of the first kind of knowledge. While purporting to be merely a listing of basic requirements for biblical studies, it already incorporated Spinoza's philosophical reflections. The new section[471], analeptically, reverts to the topic of the data, belonging to the first kind of knowledge, involved in biblical studies that were outlined to a lesser-or-greater degree in the earlier section, and the same two major areas are taken up again: (1) the Hebrew language, and (2) what Spinoza calls «the history of all the biblical books», including the authors, their biography, historical circumstances, and also the transmission of their writings.

Although this new section is the longest of all the sections in the body of Chapter 7, it has a relatively univocal thrust or theme, applicable to both major topics. In the earlier section that came before the key exposition on the «meaning» of Scripture, he had introduced these topics. At the same time, however, as we have noted above, he framed these areas of inquiry, or disciplines, in ways that transcended their "technical" parameters, thus laying the groundwork for, and setting the direction of, the more extensive discussion deferred to in the second half of the exposition.

Spinoza's sets the tone and theme, saying that «[a]t this time I have to discuss any difficulties and shortcomings in our method which may stand in the way of our acquiring a complete and assured knowledge of the Holy Bible»[472]. With respect to the first topic, the Hebrew language, Spinoza provides an exhaustive list of such «difficulties»: the ancient Hebrew speakers left no dictionary, grammar, or textbooks; the semantics of many nouns

and verbs are unclear; idioms, figures of speech, linguistic usage in general are highly obscure, to the point of incomprehensibility; the inherent characteristics of the Hebrew language (its linguistics) make it impossible to determine the «true meaning», due to its irregular pronunciation, ambiguities of conjunctions, adverbs, verbs, lack of alphabetic vowels, lack of punctuation, and questionable vowel pointing. As these individual aspects of Hebrew are discussed, each is seen as further reason to recognize that there are «so many ambiguities as to render it impossible to devise a method that can teach us with certainty how to discover the true meaning of all Scriptural passages»[473]. How is one then to reconcile this (critical) view of the Hebrew language with Spinoza's own project of a Hebrew grammar, published as *Compendium Grammatices hebraeae Lingue*[474]? As pointed out by Moreau, Spinoza's abiding interest in the Hebrew language can be understood as integrated into his metaphysics[475]. Spinoza's discussion of Hebrew grammatical characteristics, such as the passive, the masculine/feminine genders, variable prepositions, adverbs, lack of noun inflections, or verb forms, takes place from the higher perspective of the otherwise vast space of logical necessities, within which, then, Hebrew (as well as Latin, to which it is compared) only realizes a small subset of possibilities. Hebrew, like all languages, belongs to the domain of experience, not of essences[476], which is one of the key conclusions of the *Compendium;* in it we therefore have more a work of philosophical reflection than a standard reference grammar[477] or a work on linguistics *strictu sensu*[478].

Spinoza next turns to the issue of «the history of all the biblical books», including knowledge of the authors, the historical background, the transmission of the writings, and the multiple text versions, referring explicitly to the earlier discussion[479]. However, with a rhetorical technique resembling *amplification* or *accumulation*[480], rather than engaging with the contemporary state of the art or scholarship[481], he seems to place one methodologi-

cal obstacle[482] after another in the path of «achiev[ing] a greater understanding of its true meaning (*vero sensu*)», stating that

we either have no knowledge at all or but doubtful knowledge of the authors […], we do not know on what occasion or at what time these books of unknown authorship were written. Furthermore, we do not know into whose hands all these books fell, or in whose copies so many different readings were found, nor yet again whether there were not many other versions in other hands. […] Deprived of all these facts we cannot possibly know what was, or could have been, the author's intention. […] In the case of certain books […], we do not possess them in the language in which they were first written [citing the *Gospel of Matthew*, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, *Book of Job*][483].

It is difficult not to be overwhelmed by the cumulative impact of this "blow-by-blow" series of «difficulties». We are thus led along to arrive at the conclusion that the research program as originally conceived, in actuality has little if any chance of succeeding, or stated somewhat more strongly, and likely more accurately, given that all the requisite pieces of information/data are irretrievably lost, we are deprived of even the first kind of knowledge as the "raw material" to begin developing the second kind of knowledge by means of scientific reasoning[484]. His concluding explanatory comments on the subject of studies of the authors, historical backgrounds, and the integrity of the biblical "books" shed additional light on the vantage point from which he approaches such biblical studies. He contrasts biblical studies with «matters open to intellectual perception, whereof we can readily form a clear conception (*res, quas et intellectu assequi, et quarum clarum possumus facile formare conceptum*)». «Intellect» and «clear conception» are Spinozan code for the intellectual ability, and the entities within its ambit, that are uniquely associated with the exercise of «intuitive knowledge». To illustrate their stark contrast with the unresolvable uncertainties and unknowables of biblical studies, Spinoza makes the comparison with Euclid and

the *Elements*. Earlier in the book, we argued that *Ethics* was presented in Euclidean deductive-geometrical form in order to sidestep the inadequacies of ordinary, natural language shared by all forms of knowledge of the first kind. Now, Euclid, as the author, and the *Elements* are apotheosized for another reason: they «are concerned only with things exceedingly simple and perfectly intelligible», and as such are unconditioned/unconditional, *ergo* timeless truth[485]. This fundamental assertion is then elaborated in a manner that makes direct parallels with the original outline of requirements[486] to be met in the study of the biblical authors and books: «Nor need we enquire into the author's life, pursuits and character, the language in which he wrote, and for whom, and when, nor what happened to his book, nor its different readings, nor how it came to be accepted and by what counsel»[487]. The discussion has thus come full circle, and the initially established parameters of biblical interpretation are now evaluated against the standard of absolutely certain geometric-deductive logic which is objective, and thus totally removed from historical circumstance, or vagaries and accidents of transmission[488]. In this evaluation, we are brought by Spinoza to the realization that biblical studies are not merely highly problematic in practice, but flawed *in principle* by virtue, or perhaps rather by their inherent vice, of having to rely on the wholly insufficient realm of the first kind of knowledge, inadequate in the severe Spinozan sense by its very constitution within his epistemic system. Conversely, Spinoza's biblical hermeneutics itself necessarily are to be conceived as contingent on, as well as shaped by, his three-tiered theory of knowledge; to do justice to Spinoza, the contents and methodology of the former cannot be divorced from the latter.

In Spinoza's concluding reflections[489] he circles back to key points of the first section of his exposition, as if creating an *inclusio*. The first section[490] of his exposition consisted of two key interpretative guidelines, the first being «the true method of interpreting Scripture», by way of emulating «the method of interpret-

ing Nature», in the form of gathering data for the purposes of acquiring the first kind of knowledge, followed by «deduc[ing] by logical inference the meaning of the authors», resulting in the second kind of knowledge. The second major point, by contrast, does not concern methodology at all but the contents of Scripture, in that «it must be made evident to us from Scripture alone that it teaches true moral doctrine», and «the divinity of Scripture must be established solely from the fact that it teaches true virtue»[491], as though the main result to be sought is already presupposed in the initial premise(s), turning it into a case of circular reasoning. Coming to the final section, these two key topics are taken up again, in reverse order, in the form of brief restatements: first, that the «meaning» of Scripture consists of its «moral doctrines» and «teachings of true piety», and, secondly, «that by a process of logical deduction that which is hidden is inferred and concluded (*legitimis consequentiis deducat atque concludat*) from what is known, or given as known».

Both topics are closely related by virtue of comprising the second kind of knowledge[492], and being featured at the end of the exposition once again reiterates the thrust of Spinoza's argument throughout, namely, that the scope of Scripture remains strictly confined within these limits; he goes so far as saying that a grasp of this basic «meaning» of Scripture, ultimately, is all that is needed: «Therefore, we have no reason to be unduly anxious concerning the other contents of Scripture»[493]. From this perspective, the whole enterprise or project of biblical studies/criticism is being cast in a new light[494]; the seemingly sophisticated methodological apparatus developed in this chapter of *TTP*, in the end, seems to serve little positive purpose, since it is ultimately termed irrelevant to «understand[ing] the meaning of Scripture with confidence in matters relating to salvation and necessary to blessedness»[495].

With the final reference to the role of deduction and inference in Scriptural interpretation, Spinoza confirms and re-affirms

the initially established methodological principle of accordance with the scientific study of Nature. On the face of it, Scripture and Nature seem to be different worlds, the former a cultural, intellectual creation or product, the latter physical reality external to humans; it is thus anything but transparent or trivially obvious that both realms can and need to be dealt with uniformly. Spinoza simply makes this assertion («I hold that …»[496]), without any supporting arguments; but due to the centrality of this nexus, Spinoza's stance regarding the natural sciences cannot be left out of purview and not brought to bear on his biblical hermeneutics.

9.1 *Spinoza's philosophy of science*

It might be said, loosely speaking, that Spinoza had the good fortune of living at a time, and in a place, that coincidentally was not out of sync with his own epistemic and philosophical preoccupations. Historians have felt that there is sufficient evidence to warrant speaking of a "golden age" of Dutch culture and science[497]. Although Spinoza's core interests and predilections were philosophical, it is noteworthy that he was also personally engaged in both theoretical and applied science. *Optics*, *physics* (*kinematics*), and *chemistry* were specific fields in which he participated in the prevailing discourse[498], most prominently optics by choosing the manufacture of optical lenses and instruments in his own workshop as his occupation to support himself, not being associated with, or receiving remuneration from, academic institutions. This "hands-on" involvement, however, put him at the center of key technological advances of telescopes and microscopes[499], and brought him into association with and made him a part of the community of outstanding scientists such as Christiaan Huygens, and theorists-philosophers like Leibniz[500].

Spinoza's own scientific research activities are insofar of particular interest in relation to our subject as they can be considered as a correlate to his biblical studies. As discussed above, Spinoza's approach (hermeneutics) to biblical studies was in-

formed by his epistemic commitments, that is, the tree-tiered taxonomy of knowledge, which internally was made to cohere with ultimate truth-preservation in the form of «scientia intuitiva». If our thesis is correct, a comparable state of affairs should obtain and be observable in Spinoza's approach to natural science[501]. To that end we will examine certain Spinoza letters that deal with physics, on the one hand, and chemistry, on the other hand[502].

With respect to physics, our reading will focus on *Letter 12*. In it Spinoza performs a "thought experiment" of an (incompressible) fluid, such as water, flowing in a channel bounded by two circles; the channel is formed, in plan view as shown in Spinoza's own diagram, by a large outer circle, and an inset smaller circle, and the fluid flows parallel to the circles. However, the key feature of the channel is that the inner circle is eccentrically placed so that the width of the channel is not constant but varies continuously[503]. The main point or argument of this "experiment" is that the continuously variable size of the channel entails that as «all the inequalities of the space lying between two circles […] exceed any number, [so] do all the variations of the speed of matter moving through that area», thus demonstrating the reality of «infinity»[504]. *Letter 12* is also called the "Letter on the Infinite", of which this physical setup is given as the actual proof. How then may Spinoza's surrounding exposition of «the infinite» throw light on his epistemic approach to the «interpretation of Nature»? Spinoza sets the tone and agenda right from the beginning of the letter in terms of his epistemic system, into which we are merely inserting his nomenclature:

[…] there is the failure to distinguish between [3rd kind of knowledge:] that which we can apprehend only by the intellect and not by the imagination, and [1st kind:] that which can also be apprehended by the imagination. […] I answer that we conceive quantity in two ways: [3rd kind:] abstractly or [1st kind:] superficially, as we have it [1st kind:] in

the imagination with the help of the senses, or [3rd kind:] as Sub-stance[505], apprehended by means of the intellect.

This contrast is woven through the entire letter, or, to mix metaphors, executed as multiple variations on a theme. Between these two epistemic poles that carry the main argumentative bur-den, however, the remaining component of his epistemic struc-ture, that is, the second kind of knowledge, is not absent either in the letter. He refers to it by the term of «mental constructs», as applicable to the notions of «Time», «Measure», and «Number». These notions have their origin, not in the sense(d) data, but in the «Modes» of «Duration» and «Quantity» understood as «the affections of Substance», thus implicitly accessible only *via* the third kind of knowledge. They serve as «aids to the imagination», and function, in effect, as «modes of thinking, […] modes of im-agining». Spinoza's example ostensibly is meant to provide phys-ical proof of his infinity thesis, but, conversely, the physics, and mathematics, of "fluid dynamics" is at the same time framed di-rectly in terms of metaphysics[506]: «[…] if anyone were to attempt to determine all the motions of matter that have ever been, re-ducing them and their duration to a definite number and time, he would be attempting to deprive corporeal Substance […] of its affections, and to bring it about that Substance should not pos-sess the nature which it does possess». The correct inference or deduction of the «infinite» variation of the velocity of the fluid (i.e. acceleration/deceleration), thus, for Spinoza, primarily fol-lows from the third kind of knowledge; once this is estab-lished[507], it can be verified from the "experimental" data. We have before us an epistemic compartmentalization, and stratifica-tion, that is isomorphic to that underlying Spinoza's biblical-criticism in *TTP;* in the pursuit of science, physicists[508], lacking the benefit of «intuitive knowledge» – who, in Spinoza's words, «because of their ignorance of the true nature of reality, have de-nied the actual existence of the infinite» – epistemologically, find

themselves in a position on a par with the status that Spinoza concedes to the «prophets» and/or authors of the Scriptures, to whom he applied the disclaimer that «what God is […], Scripture [that is, their extant pronouncements] does not teach formally, and as eternal doctrine»[509] .

In the scientific field of chemistry, our relevant primary source material is Spinoza's correspondence with Henry Oldenburg in London, with, and through, whom he entered into a debate about Robert Boyle's experimental and theoretical views[510], *Letters 6* and *13*, in particular[511], although there are a number of other letters that are also relevant to the subject. On an initial reading, these two letters seem to be about detailed descriptions of experiments, conducted both by Boyle and Spinoza, and their results, involving primarily "nitre", i.e. potassium nitrate, but also general physical properties such as «fluidity» and «solidity», as dealt with in the extremely lengthy *Letter 6*. But beneath the surface of the "technical" details[512], between the lines, but at times not so opaquely, the more fundamental, and therefore more irreconcilable, differences cannot be overlooked. Spinoza actually, with his characteristic incisiveness, sums up[513] key points of contention at the very beginning of *Letter 6*:

First, he gathers from his experiment […] that Nitre is a heterogeneous thing, consisting of fixed and volatile parts. Its nature, however […] is quite different from the nature of its component parts […]. For this conclusion to be regarded as valid, I suggest that a further experiment seems to be required to show that Spirit of Nitre is not really Nitre […].
To make this clear, I shall briefly set forth what occurs to me as the simplest explanation of this redintregation of Nitre […]. […] I shall posit no difference between Spirit of Nitre and Nitre itself other than that which is sufficiently obvious; to wit, that the particles of the latter are at rest whereas those of the former […] are in a state of considerable commotion. With regard to the fixed salt, I shall suppose that this

in no way contributes to constituting the essence of Nitre. I shall consider it as the dregs of Nitre […].

Spinoza's response can be, and needs to be, dissected at various levels of analysis. First, one notes the contrast between Boyle's epistemic approach, which relies on experiments providing the basis for inferences (constituting the first[514] and second kinds of knowledge, respectively), and Spinoza's method of «posit[ing] […] that which is […] obvious», thus independently of experimental evidence. It consists of «motion» and «rest», which are core «common notions», and as such part of the third kind of knowledge, «manifest enough» by virtue of being «intuitively» known. Another level of analysis concerns Boyle's claim of "heterogeneity" of the chemical compounds he produced (without realizing yet the full scope of the chemistry involved) vs. Spinoza's contention that the apparent heterogeneity of nitre was just due to «impurities», thus not disproving its homogeneity[515], which he termed «the essence of Nitre»[516]. These brief introductory statements of Spinoza already lay bare his conflict[517] with Boyle on his most central commitments: the epistemic system, on the one hand, and the very content of his philosophy, on the other hand, revolving around substance, attributes/essences, and modes.

In the latter part of *Letter 6*, the subject changes to "fluidity", and here, also, Spinoza responds to Boyle from the vantage point of his epistemic framework (nomenclature added):

In my view, [1st kind of knowledge:] notions which derive from popular usage, or which explicate Nature not as it is in itself but as it is related to human senses, should certainly not be regarded as [2nd kind:] concepts of the highest generality, nor should they be mixed (not to say confused) with [3rd kind:] notions that are pure and which explicate Nature as it is in itself. Of the latter kind are motion, rest, and their laws […].

Spinoza then goes on to offer a fairly dogmatic-sounding relativization of experiments: «One can never confirm it by chemical or any other experiment. […] I pass on to the experiments which I put forward so as to confirm my explanation not in any absolute sense but, as I expressly said, to some degree». On the other hand, at the end of this section on fluidity, he acknowledges the value of experimental data: «Not that I therefore dismiss this piece of research as pointless. On the contrary, if in the case of every liquid such research were done with the greatest possible accuracy and reliability, I would consider it most useful for understanding their individual differences […]». He can hold both views at the same time, and furthermore, personally enjoy conducting experiments (within his technical means), on the basis that, by the complexities of his epistemic system, (a) viewed "negatively", experimental data belong to the first kind of knowledge, and (b) viewed positively, they are still to be accepted as formal elements of the overall epistemic structure[518]. His disagreement with Boyle[519], and other early modern scientists, including Bacon[520], rather is that, in his view, they were ignorant of, and ignored, the true structure of reality, and thus were unable to give epistemic primacy and priority to the «notions that are pure», as properly explicated in his works.

In *Letter 13*, we possess a follow-up discussion of *Letter 6* that covers the same ground as the earlier letter, and in which Spinoza restates his position on the homogeneity of nitre and a "mechanistic" explanation of chemical reactions. However, the letter is also pertinent to the exploration of Spinoza's epistemological commitments in matters of science. Whereas it seems that in *Letter 6*, the contentious issue with Boyle was the epistemic status of experiments, which for Spinoza belong to the first kind of knowledge, in the new letter the epistemological arguments shift to the next level, the second kind of knowledge. While references to the second kind of knowledge are already present in the previous letter (when he speaks of "drawing conclusions"),

they are relatively incidental, supportive, and not topically prominent. In the current letter, the controversy seizes on the validity of interpretations of experimental results, and their epistemic status, and it surfaces in a very explicit and direct way. Now, Spinoza characterizes his (and Boyle's) interpretations as "hypotheses"[521]:

Therefore it was not for me to prove, but merely to hypothesize […]. […] it is apparent that every calx […] is well fitted to halt the motion of particles of Nitre, and therefore, by my hypothesis, to redintegrate the Nitre itself. […] I do not know why he [Boyle] calls the impossibility of a vacuum a hypothesis, since it clearly follows from the fact that nothing has no properties.

And, to give a sense of how important this characterization of scientific theorizing is for Spinoza, he "unpacks" the intended force, not once, but redundantly, in rapid succession:

[1] I pass on to the experiments which I put forward so as to confirm my explanation not in any absolute sense, but, as I expressly said, to some degree. […][2] For, as I have expressly said, I did not put forward these experiments to give complete confirmation to my assertions, but only because they seemed to offer some degree of confirmation to which I had said and had shown to be consistent with reason.

This reference to «reason» provides the necessary perspective on the value and validity of any and all scientific interpretations of experimental data; it fundamentally differs from the received theory of the scientific process in which working hypotheses have an honored place in the quest for scientific truth at a given level of analysis[522]. For Spinoza, having data in hand, «reason» – in the form of «intuitive knowledge» of ultimate reality as substance, attributes (motion and rest foremost among them), and modes – must guide theorizing, but such scientific theories will always remain at the level of the second kind of knowledge[523].

The above sketch of Spinoza's approach to the study of physical phenomena was meant to point to the "methodological" commonalities[524] that are behind Spinoza's program of «interpreting Scripture» and «interpreting Nature»[525]. In both scenarios, the «method» employed, if this is the correct term after all that has been said so far, is an exercise in Spinozan epistemology that cannot be factored/quotiented[526] out of Spinoza's ontology, or understood in isolation of it. On a certain level, it is not problematic to describe Spinoza's requirement of investigating Scripture in the same way as nature, as a «great intuition»[527]; on a different level, however, it might be argued that such isomorphism is the strictly "logical" consequence he drew from his ontology, specifically his "monism", the singularity of "substance" (with its infinite attributes and modes, to be sure) with respect to both the physical and human world. The world of humans is also a world of "bodies", and Scripture is the product of such "bodies", *and* Scripture itself is a material object, not ontologically different from other parts of material nature[528]. Spinoza coined the phrase *Deus, sive Natura* (*God, or Nature*), and he might as well also have introduced the phrase *Scriptura, sive Natura* (*Scripture, or Nature*)[529]. The study of Scripture *qua* study of Nature is then the inescapable consequence[530]. To conclude this reflection, it would be amiss not to raise the corresponding implication, that is to say, since for Spinoza Scripture is to be dealt with as Nature, being part of Nature, the relationship should therefore be invertible, or bijective[531], and the natural sciences should be viewed and approached by the same principles as the study of Scripture[532]. Spinoza's explicit and systematic outline of his interpretive methodology in *TTP* could therefore fruitfully, be transferred and applied to his treatment of the natural sciences, where we do not have a similarly explicit articulation, such that his critical assessments of experimentation, on the one hand, and scientific theorizing, on the other hand, become intelligible as being compliant

with his epistemic system no less so than his interpretative strategy of Scripture[533].

Our inquiry into Spinoza's hermeneutics was occasioned by both Spinoza and Vico studies that argue for closeness of their hermeneutical strategies, with respect to the Bible, for the former, and Homer's works, for the latter, if not for a high degree of conceptual indebtedness of the latter to the former. The following sections will be devoted to certain aspects of Vico's interpretative turn as they bear on this question, primarily as a heuristic means of bringing Vico's views into sharper focus.

Notes to Chapter 9

[409] L. Amoroso, for example, likely is speaking for many Vico (and Spinoza) scholars when he stated: «Spinoza, ancora, argomenta che la tradizionale attribuzione del *Pentateuco* a Mosè è insostenibile. […] Questa tesi spinoziana ha tanti elementi di analogia con la «discoverta del vero Omero» da parte di Vico da far supporre addirittura che quest'ultima sia stata in parte ispirata da quella (Spinoza, then, argues that the traditional attribution of the *Pentateuch* to Moses is untenable. […] This Spinozan thesis has so many analogies with the «discovery of the true Homer» on Vico's part to make it compelling to even assume that the latter was inspired in part by it)» (Id., *Mosè fu un poeta teologo?,* in *Il sapere poetico e gli universali fantastici*, cit., pp. 211-225, p. 213).

Outside specialized Vico studies, the historian J. I. Israel is also fairly representative with the following view: «The parallel between Spinoza's claim that the Pentateuch is not divine revelation but was written many centuries after Moses, […] and Vico's argument […] that Homer's epics are an accumulation of collective primitive poetic wisdom, […] has often been noted. […] Moreover, Vico not only embraces Spinoza's epistemology along with the methodology of his Bible criticism and view on the origin and social functions of religion, but he is clearly a radical thinker» (Id., *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity. 1650-1750*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 668-669). An even stronger thesis is advanced by J. S. Preus: «[…] that Vico extended Spinoza's critical principles of historical textual interpretation so as to make them universal in their applicability; that Vico's doctrine of the imagination, especially of imaginative universals as the first stage of the development of reason in time, was adapted from Spinoza as well» (Id., *Spinoza, Vico, and the Imagination of Religion*, in «Journal of the History

of Ideas», 50, 1989, 1, pp. 71-93, p. 73). Preus' treatment has the merit of being systematic rather than *ad hoc*, on the premise that Spinoza's and Vico's idea(s) of "imagination" is/are coextensive. While this argument cannot be examined more closely here, it seems to engender its own problematics in relation to results of specialized Vico studies, such as by Spinoza and Vico scholar M. Sanna: «La teoria vichiana dell'immaginazione si distanzia profondamente dalle proposte di Descartes, Spinoza o Leibniz […] (Vico's theory of imagination differs fundamentally from the proposals of Descartes, Spinoza or Leibniz […])» (Id., *Il sapere dell'immaginazione e le sue forme di conoscenza*, in *Giambattista Vico e l'enciclopedia dei saperi*, cit., pp. 283-295, p. 289).

[410] Pages 86-104 in the Shirley translation of *TTP* which we are using as source text.

[411] The reading of *TTP* can be enriched by familiarity with its subtext at various levels; at one level, *TTP* is a rejoinder to his friend L. Meyer's book *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* (*Philosophy the Interpreter of Sacred Scripture*), 1666, that argued for the philosophical status and value of the Bible (see M. Walther, *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung*, cit., pp. 227-252; J. S. Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 7-17, published in Italian as *Spinoza e la Bibbia. L'irrilevanza dell'autorità della Bibbia,* trans. by F. Bassani, Brescia, Paideia, 2015); at another, though not unrelated, level, it was motivated by Spinoza's desire to make a contribution to society: «Spinoza's mode of textualization, then, was irenic because it embedded the Bible in ancient history, where it would no longer be able to trouble modern life», by «prevent[ing] religious and political leaders from manipulating the Bible and curtailing intellectual freedom by using the authority of the Bible to sanction superstitious or self-serving behaviors» (M. C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 24). We are, however, restricting our reading to the hermeneutical aspects as such, and intend to take them seriously in their own right.

[412] Due to our chosen defined objective and purview, the introduction (*TTP*, p. 86, first and second paragraphs, ending on p. 87), and conclusion (p. 99, from second paragraph to p. 103, third paragraph (inclusive), ending on p. 104, comprising the last 10 paragraphs of the chapter in the Shirley translation) are not included in this discussion.

[413] *TTP*, p. 87, first, second, and third paragraph, ending on p. 88.

[414] S. Nadler reduced it to a workmanlike approach: «[…] for Maimonides that reading [the true reading of any Biblical verse] is to be found through an appeal to reason and philosophy, whereas for Spinoza it is to be found in the *proper textual/historical/linguistic study* of the book itself» (Id., *The Jewish Spinoza*,

in «Journal of the History of Ideas», 70, 2009, 3, pp. 491-510, p. 499; italics added). In the standard work on the history of biblical criticism by H.-J. Kraus, the theoretical aspects are highlighted (italics original): «*Als erster entdeckt Spinoza jedenfalls die literarhistorische Problematik in der alttestamentlichen Forschung.* […] *Die Prinzipien einer historisch-kritischen Hermeneutik werden bei Spinoza zum ersten Male formuliert* (*In any case, Spinoza is the first to discover the literary-historical problematics in Old Testament studies.* […] *The principles of a historical-critical hermeneutics are formulated for the first time by Spinoza*)» (Id., *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart*, Neukirchen Kreis Moers, Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956, pp. 56-57). Despite the pivotal historical importance accorded to Spinoza, no indication is given with respect to the (internal) logical place of Spinoza's hermeneutics in his philosophical superstructure or space.

[415] Without claiming bibliographical completeness or representativeness, the following commentaries deserve to be singled out: H. Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol 4: *From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century*, trans. by L. G. Perdue, Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2010, pp. 89-110 (originally published in German as *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, Band IV: *Von der Aufklärung bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 2001; the prior three volumes are vol. 1: *From the Old Testament to Origen*, 2009, vol. 2: *From Late Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages,* 2009, and vol. 3: Renaissance*, Reformation, Humanism,* 2010*,* resp., originally published in German as *Vom Alten Testament bis Origines*, *Von der Spätantike bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, and *Renaissance, Reformation, Humanismus*, resp., C. H. Beck, 1991-1997); D. Savan, *Spinoza: Scientist and theorist of scientific method*, in *Spinoza and the Sciences*, cit., pp. 95-123; M. Walther, *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung*, cit., pp. 255-285, and especially, A. Tosel, *Spinoza ou le crépuscule de la servitude. Essai sur le Traité Théologico-Politique*, Paris, Aubier, 1984. More recently, Y. Y. Melamed commented: «[…] it is not surprising that, with a few exceptions, the existing literature on the *TTP* pays little attention to the metaphysical doctrine of the book, while on the other hand, studies of Spinoza's metaphysics commonly make little use of the *TTP*. These complementary attitudes […] seem to be mistaken for two reasons. First, a study of the *TTP* can tell us quite a bit about the development of Spinoza's metaphysical views. Second, […], on *some* metaphysical issues, Spinoza's discussion in the *TTP* is more elaborate than the equivalent discussion on the same topic in the *Ethics*» (Id., *The metaphysics of the Theological-Political Treatise*, in *Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Y. Y. Melamed and M. A. Rosenthal, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 128-142, pp. 128-129). Due to the restricted objective we set for ourselves, the history of biblical studies/criticism

as such is not within our scope, which, in any case, enjoys a wealth of studies; besides those referred to above, in view of its focus on Spinoza, mention should be made at least of T. L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible*, New York-London, T & T Clark, 2006, and his overall historical assessment: «Historical criticism should be regarded as a product of post-Reformation religious controversies over the authority of the Bible. It was not solely the invention of modern rationalism of the early Enlightenment, or modernity» (p. 235).

[416] Id., *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 4, cit., p. 92; similarly: «Also in the [*TTP*], Spinoza builds on the foundations laid down in the *Ethics*» (*ibid.*, p. 95).

[417] Given a broad scope, including all kinds of «recipients of revelation» (*ibid.*, p. 96).

[418] Spinoza's treatment of Christ and miracles is also an outgrowth of the reflections developed in *Ethics*; Christ is made to resemble «the ideal philosopher» who «grasped things truly and adequately» (thus possessing intuitive knowledge), while miracles are assessed in the light of his «philosophical definition of God», for which see *ibid.*, pp. 98, 100. His "christology" has little, if anything, to do with the doctrine of incarnation, resurrection, and Christ's role as savior (*ibid.*, p. 98).

[419] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[420] See also *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition XXXIII, Note I, and D. Savan, *Spinoza: Scientist and Theorist of Scientific Method*, cit., p. 98.

[421] For a modern account of definitions in logic, including its aspect of intentionality, see J. Hintikka - J. Bachman, *What if …? Toward Excellence in Reasoning*, cit., pp. 334-353.

[422] St. Breton also sees the first and second kinds of knowledge as the ways in which Spinoza evaluates Scripture, for which see Id., *Spinoza. Théologie et politique*, Paris, Desclée, 1977, p. 41.

[423] *TTP*, p. 88, first paragraph to p. 90, first paragraph (inclusive).

[424] Reventlow includes in his *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 3, cit., information on Hebrew language studies by Giannozzo Manetti (1396-1459); Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522); Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484-1531); Jesuit colleges established by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) and successors; Jesuit scholar Joannes Maldonatus (Juan Maldonado) (1533/34-1583); Hugo Grotius (1583-1645); Abraham Calov (1612-1686). Reventlow concluded: «[…] Hebrew, hitherto cared for by Judaism alone, is made available to Christian biblical interpreters. Inseparably connected with this undertaking, after the beginning Manetti made, is the name Reuchlin, who first laid the overall

foundations for this by lexicon and grammar» (*ibid.*, pp. 5-11, 29-35, 94-115, 200, 201-209, 209-223, 223-232, 233).

[425] *TTP*, p. 88, third paragraph to p. 89, second paragraph (inclusive), ending on p. 90.

[426] There is a historical dimension to Spinoza's choice of exemplifying semantics by the literal/metaphorical framework rather than by other aspects of semantics/pragmatics. As E. Camp points out, philosophers of the early modern era often denigrated metaphor, as Hobbes did in *Leviathan* (1651), Chapter 8, and J. Locke, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Book 3, Chapter 10. Camp contrasts this with the modern re-evaluation of metaphor: «Metaphor potentially involves the most creative aspects of human imagination and cognition» (Id., *Metaphor in the Mind: The Cognition of Metaphor*, in «Philosophy Compass», 1-2, 2006, pp. 154-170, pp. 154, 166). More generally, it has been argued that «metaphor […] could be fundamental to language (and thought)» (S. Guttenplan, *Objects of Metaphor*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005, p. 246). For Spinoza, since metaphor is associated with "imagination", and "imagination" belongs to the first kind of knowledge, metaphorical language necessarily fell under, and fit into, his discussion of linguistic data to be assembled by means of, and for the purpose of, the first kind of knowledge. As a subspecies of metaphor, Spinoza also deals with anthropomorphisms; the cognitive and linguistic complexity of anthropomorphizing, alas, has been recognized only recently, as in B. C. Howell, *In the Eyes of God: A Metaphorical Approach to Biblical Anthropomorphic Language*, Eugene, Oregon, Pickwick Publications, 2013; P. Herrmann - S. R. Waxman - D. L. Medin, *Anthropomorphism is not the first step in children's reasoning about the natural world*, in «PNAS», 107, 2010, 22, pp. 9979-9984; A. S. Heberlein - R. Adolphs, *Impaired spontaneous anthropomorphizing despite intact perception and social knowledge*, in «*PNAS*», 101, 2004, 19, pp. 7487-7491.

[427] The study of cognate languages came into its own only decades later, particularly by Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791), for which see Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies,* cit., pp. 86-95, including the résumé: «That Michaelis overestimated the relatedness of these languanges is clear» (*ibid.*, p. 91). The languages referred to are Syriac, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Samaritan. (Other cognate languages, including Ugaritic, Akkadian, Moabite, were not yet discovered). However, the importance of knowledge of cognate languages was already recognized and put to use in the mid-1600's, the most impressive product of which, likely, is the so-called "London Polyglot Bible" (1653-1657), presenting parts of the Bible in Arabic, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Persian, Samaritan, and Syriac. Coptic and Armenian Scripture texts would have been included also if copies of manuscripts had

become available in time from Rome (see *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, ed. by B. Walton, London, Thomas Roycroft, 1657, 6 vols.; reprinted by Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, 1963-1965). The interest in, and pursuit of, "Oriental studies" is detailed in P. N. Miller, *The "Antiquarianization" of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653-57),* in «Journal of the History of Ideas», 62, 2001, 3, pp. 463-482.

[428] In the body of the work, Proposition XLI is expressed appositely: «Knowledge of the first kind is the only source of falsity, knowledge of the second and third kinds is necessarily true».

[429] It might be objected that Spinoza wrote *TTP* before completing *Ethics*, as he found it necessary to interrupt the writing of *Ethics*; in that case, Spinoza incorporated this assertion on the basis of his earlier reflection in *TTP*, but in either case, both places represent his philosophy. On the circumstances of the interruption, see H. Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation, Vol. 4*, cit., p. 82. A. Tosel observed: «Le *T.T.P.* a été publié en 1670. Son élaboration a duré de longues années, parallèlement à celle de l'*Ethique*, ainsi que l'atteste la correspondence (*TTP* was published in 1670. It developed over many years, parallel to the writing of *Ethics*, as is attested by the correspondence)» (Id., *Spinoza ou le crépuscule de la servitude*, cit., p. 15).

[430] Preus stated: «[…] by echoing the language of Francis Bacon, he [Spinoza] implies that the empirical and inductive Bacon rather than Descartes provides the appropriate starting point for a method of interpreting texts historically» (Id., *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, cit., p. 159).

[431] Not to put too fine a point on it, the problematic posed by Spinoza's hermeneutics also concerns his most basic entity, the «pronouncements (*sententia*)». The issue is how to determine in each case what to accept as a pronouncement, as their scope must be allowed to range, even at a surface level, from a single word to multi-sentence textual units.

[432] *Contra* Preus: «Spinoza's inductive method thus amounts to more than mere data-gathering, for he knows that data are meaningful – are in fact data – only in the framework of some hypothesis or theory» (Id., *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, cit., p. 166). Preus does not, however, make reference to, or elucidate how this view is to be integrated into, Spinoza's hierarchically structured epistemology.

[433] This crucial point is developed in R. Miner, *Truth in the Making: Creative knowledge in theology and philosophy,* New York-London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 45-50, on which our comments are based. The references are to *Novum Organon*, cit., Book I, Aphorism 102, and Book II, Aphorism 10.

[434] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

435 Preus described the commonality between Bacon and Spinoza as follows: «Like Bacon, Spinoza takes a bottoms-up approach that begins with the data, in this case all relevant factual information needed as a foundation for understanding the Bible – its language, its authors and their context; the history of its composition, editing, reception, text transmission, etc.» (Id., *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, cit., p. 164). As we are trying to point out, the «bottoms-up approach» as such, attributed both to Bacon and Spinoza, is more complex than the term might suggest, on the one hand, and, more significantly, is motivated by, and implemented in, non-comparable philosophical/scientific frameworks, on the other hand.

436 Theory-ladenness is the subject of J. Hintikka, *Inquiry as Inquiry: A Logic of Scientific Discovery,* Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer Academic, 1999, pp. 241-250.

437 The pointedness of this statement, and others, is reflective of his radical disagreement with Lodewijk Meyer on the fundamental relation of Scripture and philosophy, notwithstanding their agreement on secondary aspects.

438 We will have to keep on reading Chapter 7 to realize that under «meaning», Spinoza subsumes a specific characterization, and well-defined content, as discussed below.

439 This seems to be the position of Preus: «[…] Spinoza distinguishes the question of truth from that of meaning. That distinction and the dialectical relation between the two operations (*interpreting texts* and *making truth judgments*) is the most fundamental principle of his whole method, and is inseparable from his claim that his method is historical, not philosophical» (Id., *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, cit., p. 200; italics added).

440 Reventlow explained: «By "meaning" is understood solely the statements set down by the authors in the texts, […], while the absolute truth alone is to be transmitted through philosophical speculation […]» (Id., *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 4, cit., p. 100). Legaspi, also, sees Spinoza's references to «truth» as imbued with philosophical value, by way of contrast with the content of Scripture: «The discovery of what is "true" is a crucial element of Spinoza's biblical criticism. The quest to discover what is true in and of the Bible is not, for Spinoza, a metaphysical one. He does not seek, by his philological inquiries, to discover the sense in which the Bible itself contains Truth or offers metaphysical precepts that are ratified by reason and experience» (Id., *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, cit., p. 24).

441 For this "model-theoretic" perspective, see W. Hodges, *Model Theory*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), ed. by W. N. Zalta, online at <www.plato.stanford.edu>.

[442] In view of the fact that model theory has been particularly fruitful in mathematics, the following example may be illustrative: The mathematician D. Hilbert constructed an axiom system for Euclidean geometry (*Grundlagen der Geometrie*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1899), leaving the notions of "point", "line", and "plane" undefined; he then showed that it is possible to give concrete meaning to these undefined fundamental concepts, and thus construct a *model* of the axiomatic system by *interpreting* points, lines, and planes as pairs of real numbers on the real number plane, subject to certain equations, thus making the axiom system *true* in this interpretation (see A. B. Sossinsky, *Geometries*, Providence, Rhode Island, American Mathematical Society, 2012, p. 6). The model-theoretic perspective has not been limited to mathematics, however; it has found application in cognitive psychology (see Ph. N. Johnson-Laird, *Mental models and human reasoning*, in «PNAS», 107, 2010, 43, pp. 18243-18250); cultural anthropology (see M. Bang et al., *Cultural mosaics and mental models of nature*, in «PNAS», 104, 2007, 35, pp. 13868-13874).

While borrowing model-theoretic concepts and language for the present discussion, the underlying concepts do not depend, however, on this particular terminology in whole or in part. For example, what we have called *model*, has also been termed *universe of interpretation*, and the targeted state of affairs, *interpretable entities* (see D. Kayser, *Abstraction and natural language semantics*, in «Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B», 2003, 358, pp. 1261-1268, p. 1267). On a higher, philosophical level, the equivalent, not necessarily isomorphic or coextensive, term for *model* might be *field of sense* (see M. Gabriel, *Is the world as such good? The question of theodicy*, in *Dimensions of Goodness*, ed. by V. Hösle, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, pp. 45-65, p. 53; see also Id., *Warum es die Welt nicht gibt*, Berlin, Ullstein, 2013, pp. 91-96, for the German equivalent *Sinnfeld;* published in English as *Why the World Does Not Exist*, trans. by G. S. Moss, Cambridge-Malden, Polity Press, 2015, as well as the extensive treatment in Id., *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Univeristy Press, 2015; for the Italian equivalent *regione d'essere,* see M. Ferraris, *Manifesto del nuovo realismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2012, p. 71).

[443] Walther points out: «Meyers Beweisziel im *Interpres* ist es […] in *konstruktiver* Absicht die Philosophie als einziges Kriterium […] der authentischen Bedeutung der biblischen Texte […] als auch […] der Wahrheit der so ermittelten Aussagen zu erweisen […] (Meyer's objective in *Interpres* is […] to demonstrate, *constructively*, how philosophy proves to be the only criterion […] of the authentic meaning of biblical texts […] as well as […] the truth of the propositions arrived at in this manner)» (Id., *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung*, cit., p. 239; italics original).

444 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

445 To show this, is the main task that Walther took up in his above-mentioned article.

446 This has been pointed out also by S. B. Smith: «This distinction between meaning and truth, so apparently innocent and yet so vital, can be fully understood only when seen in the light of the argument of the *Treatise* as a whole. In the *Treatise* Spinoza defends the radical separation of reason (philosophy) from theology. By further separating meaning from truth and then defining truth as a function of reason, the unstated premise of Spinoza's biblical hermeneutics is that Scripture cannot speak the truth» (Id., *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity,* New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 66). On the other hand, in N. Sinai's overview of Spinoza's biblical hermeneutics, he denotes the meaning of «truth» in this context as what «scripture has […] to say to its reader that is true and relevant *today*» (Id., *Spinoza and Beyond: Some Reflections on Historical-Critical Method*, in *Kritische Religionsphilosophie. Eine Gedenkschrift für Friedrich Niewöhner*, ed. by W. Schmidt-Biggemann and G. Tamer, in cooperation with C. Newmark, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 193-213, p. 198; italics original). The question of the role of Spinoza's overall epistemic system, and the positional value of «truth» in it, is not raised.

447 «Therefore we have no reason to be unduly anxious concerning the other contents of Scripture [other than relating to salvation and blessedness]; for since for the most part they are beyond the grasp of reason and intellect, they belong to the sphere of the curious rather than the profitable» (*TTP*, pp. 98-99).

448 *TTP*, p. 90, first paragraph.

449 The history and multifaceted development and application of this notion is described in M. J. Buss, *The Changing Shape of Form Criticism*, ed. by N. M. Stipe, Sheffield, Sheffield Pheonix Press, 2010, pp. 31-38, 147-211.

450 *TTP*, p. 90; italics added.

451 This is also the reading by J. Sandys-Wunsch: «[…] it can be seen that Spinoza's TTP is the first attempt at biblical theology, that is, at the process of winnowing out of Scripture what is of enduring worth from what can be dismissed as irrelevant. In essence, this is what all biblical theologies in the proper sense of the word have attempted to do» (Id., *Spinoza – The First Biblical Theologian*, in «Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft», 93, 1981, pp. 327-341, p. 339).

452 The term «certain», like other key Spinozan terms, needs to be studied according to idiosyncratic Spinoza usage, some of which is found in the first paragraphs of *TdIE*, cit.: «I say "I resolved at length", [to enquire whether

there existed a true good] for at first sight it seemed ill-advised to risk the loss of what was certain in the hope of something at that time uncertain» (§ 2); «I therefore debated whether it might be possible to arrive at a new guiding principle – or at least the sure hope of its attainment (*ad ipsius certitudinem pervenire*) – without changing the manner and normal routine of my life» (§ 3). «But after a little reflection, I first of all realised that if I abandoned the old ways [the pursuit of riches, honour, and sensual pleasure] and embarked on a new way of life, I should be abandoning a good that was by its very nature uncertain […] in favor of one that was uncertain not of its own nature (for I was seeking a permanent good) but only in respect to its attainment» (§ 6). See the insightful commentary in P.-F. Moreau, *Spinoza. L'expérience et l'éternité*, cit., pp. 65-103, including the contrast with «uncertain» in the sense of *vana et futilia* (futile and in vain) (*ibid.*, p. 69), and Spinoza's and Descartes' concept of «certain» (*ibid.*, pp. 94-103), analogous to the contrast between «epistemological» (Cartesian) and «anthropological» (Spinozan) (*ibid.*, pp. 97-101).

[453] *TTP*, p. 90, second paragraph to p. 93, second paragraph (inclusive), ending on p. 94.

[454] He clearly introduces this task by saying: «Now when we possess this historical account of Scripture […], it will now be time to embark on the task of investigating the meaning of the prophets and the Holy Spirit» (*TTP*, p. 90).

[455] *Ibid.*, p. 90; italics added.

[456] *Ethics*, Part II, specifically Propositions XXXVII-XL.

[457] *Ibid.*, Part II, Proposition XXXVIII.

[458] Garrett commented that «[a]dequacy is one of Spinoza's most important concepts» (Id., *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 52; see also his discussion *ibid.*, pp. 52-55). Similarly, Deleuze emphasized: «Les notions communes sont une des découvertes fondamentales de l'*Ethique* (The common notions are one of the fundamental discoveries of the *Ethics*)» (Id., *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, cit., p. 271). He also points out their being imbedded in Spinoza's overall philosophy: «C'est pourquoi les notions communes nous font connaitre l'ordre positif de la Nature […]. C'est cet ordre de la nature qui exprime Dieu comme source, et plus nous connaissons les choses suivant cet ordre, plus nos idées elles-mêmes expriment Dieu, quand elle est dirigée par les notions communes. […] Commun ne signifie plus general, c'est-à-dire applicable à plusieurs modes existants ou à tous les modes existants d'un certain genre. Commun signifie univoque: l'attribut est univoque, ou commun à Dieu dont il constitue l'essence singulière et aux modes dont il contient les essences particulières (This is why the common notions let us know the true order of Nature […]. It is the order of Nature that expresses God as the source; and

the more we know the things according to this order, the better our ideas themselves express the essence of God. All our knowledge expresses God when it is guided by the common notions. […] Common means more general, that is to say, applicable to more existing modes, or to all existing modes of a certain kind. Common means univocal: the attribute is univocal, or common to God where it constitutes the singular essence and to modes where it contains the particular essences)» (*ibid.*, pp. 270, 271, 280). Similarly, M. D. Wilson: «Certain features of Spinoza's conception of "what is common to all things" are fairly easy to understand, at least as long as one stays within the terms of his system. Obviously, he wants to contrast the shaky, superficial, and shifting inferences and abstractions that we make imaginatively as a result of our random encounters with various bodies, with direct intellectual insight into the fundamental principles that cause things to be what they (essentially) are» (Id., *Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, cit., pp. 89-141, p. 115; see also W. Röd, *Spinozas Idee der Scientia intuitiva und die Spinozanische Wissenschaftskonzeption*, cit., pp. 142-144).

[459] Zac explained: «De même que le savant, après avoir rattaché les données aux lois universelles inscrites, comme "dans un code" dans les modes infinis et immédiats de Dieu […], de même l'exégète biblique poursuit son enquête historique […] (Just as the scientist, after having related the facts to universal laws, written, as "in a legal code", in the infinite and immediate modes of God […], so the biblical interpreter pursues his historical inquiry […])» (Id., *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'Écriture*, cit., p. 35). Deleuze, too, understands universality in a uniquely Spinozan sense: «On ne dira donc pas que les notions plus universelles expriment Dieu mieux que les moins universelles. On ne dira surtout pas que l'idée de Dieu soit elle-même une notion commune, la plus universelle de toutes: en véreté, chaque notion nous y conduit, chaque notion l'exprime, les moins universelles comme les plus universelles (Therefore, it does not say that the more universal notions express God better than the less universal ones. Above all, it does not say that the idea of God is itself a common notion, the most universal of all: in fact, every notion leads us to it, every notion expresses it, the less universal as well as the most universal ones)» (Id., *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, cit., p. 278).

[460] As suggested in S. B. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity,* cit., p. 79; see also T. Nyden-Bullock, *Spinoza's Radical Cartesian Mind*, London-New York, Continuum, 2007, pp. 126-128; D. Savan, *Spinoza: Scientist and Theorist of Scientific Method*, cit., pp. 95-123, pp. 105-110.

[461] *TTP*, p. 90.

[462] *Ibid.*, p. 91; J. C. Morrison noted that «on the first superficial level the teaching of Scripture is reduced to the empty platitude of "justice and chari-

ty"» (Id., *Spinoza and History*, in *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, cit., pp. 171-195, p. 186).

[463] This epistemic direction in Spinoza's hermeneutics (and scientific thought, as discussed further below) is commented on by Sandys-Wunsch: «One can see from Spinoza's attempt [at biblical theology] that his concept of what was philosophically true determined what he found to be significant or not» (Id., *Spinoza – the First Biblical Theologian*, cit., p. 339). By implication, the supreme state of intuitive knowledge also, transitively, even affects, and is inseparable from, the determination of the initial data generated by, and as, the first kind of knowledge.

[464] *TTP*, p. 91.

[465] Spinoza provides his examples of «those Scriptural pronouncements which are concerned with moral conduct» in *TTP*, pp. 91-92.

[466] Zac commented: «Le fond de la thèse que Spinoza défend dans le *Traité théologico-politique*, c'est que l'Écriture nous prescrit l'obéissance et non la connaissance de l'essence de Dieu (The substance of the thesis that Spinoza defends in the *Theological-Political Treatise* is that Scripture commands us obedience, and not knowledge of the essence of God)» (Id., *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'Écriture*, cit., p. 172). Similarly, C. Chalier: «Inutile en effet, selon lui, d'étudier la Bible pour découvrir cette idée [l'idée adequate de Dieu] car […] il soutient que si les "idées" de Moïse ou des prophètes relatives à Dieu ont tel ou tel sens, elles ne sont jamais varies (It is useless, in fact, according to him, to study the Bible in order to discover this idea [the adequate idee of God] since […] he maintains that if the "ideas" of Moses or the prophets about God have this or that meaning, they are never true)» (Id., *Spinoza. Lecteur de Maïmonide. La question théologique-politique*, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 2006, pp. 66-67). On the other hand, the radical opposition intended here between the second and third kind of knowledge, the "punch line", is not perceived by Morrison: «But he immediately contradicts this by saying that Scripture "does not expressly teach as eternal doctrine" anything about "what God is" or His providence and that "the prophets had disagreed among themselves about these things"» (Id., *Spinoza and History*, cit., p. 182). This might be an opportune moment to underline Spinoza's transparency in relegating Scripture to a philosophically impertinent status by way of reference to the history of biblical studies/criticism. C. Chalier, *Spinoza*, cit., p. 78, concluded: «De son côté, Spinoza rejette ce langage [biblique] comme privé de tout contenu philosophique […] (On his part, Spinoza rejects this [biblical] language as devoid of all philosophical content […])». As pointed out above, from a "model-theoretic" point of view, Spinoza rejected Meijer's working thesis that Scripture was an expression, a "model", however flawed, of philo-

sophical reason. Spinoza's opposite philosophical stance can be made to stand out by comparing it with the hermeneutics of later interpreters, out of which the following may be seen merely as illustrative cases-in-point:

(1) F. C. Baur (1792-1860): According to Reventlow, Baur «had come under the influence of the philosophy of history developed by Hegel, from which he appropriated "the idea of process, through which God as the absolute Spirit mediates with himself and is revealed to himself"» (Id., *History of Biblical Interpretation,* Vol. 4, cit., p. 277);

(2) J. Wellhausen (1844-1918): Wellhausen subscribed to an evolutionary framework of the development of religion and culture (R. G. Kratz, *Eyes and Spectacles: Wellhausen's Method of Higher Criticism,* in «Journal of Theological Studies», NS, 60, Part 2, October 2009, pp. 381-402, p. 383). J. S. Baden observed: «This evolutionary framework is highly conditioned by the period in which it arose, and it assumes a theory of religious development that is largely unattested in societies ancient or modern» (Id., *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2012, p. 218);

(3) R. Bultmann (1884-1976): According to R. E. Palmer, while «[t]he influence of Heidegger on Bultmann […] is sometimes vastly overstated […], it is nevertheless fair to say that Heidegger was a decisive force in Bultmann's thinking on the hermeneutical problem. This reflects itself in demythologizing, which is essentially a hermeneutical project in existential interpretation» (Id., *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1969, p. 49; see also B. H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 143-156). Another aspect of Bultmann's hermeneutics seems to be a form of scientism, succinctly summarized by A. J. Grant: For Bultmann, «[u]nlike science and technology, myth presents a subjective view of the world, a view unacceptable to modern sensibility» (Id., *Vico and Bultmann on Myth: The Problem with Demythologizing*, in «Rhetoric Society Quarterly», 30, 2001, 4, pp. 49-82, p. 61);

(4) I. Finkelstein (b. 1949): Finkelstein is a proponent of the so-called "minimalist" interpretation of biblical history. In A. Berlin's assessment, «[l]urking behind their [minimalists'] scholarship is a political agenda. It is, as has already been recognized, an anti-Israel and anti-Zionist agenda. […] the minimalists appear to think, if they undermine the Bible's ideology of the exile, they will undermine the modern Zionist cause» (Id.,*The Exile: Biblical Ideology and Its Postmodern Ideological Interpretation*, in *Literary Construction of Identity in the Ancient World. Proceedings of the Conference "Literary Fiction and the Construction of Identity in Ancient Literatures: Options and Limits of Modern Literary Approaches in the*

Exegesis of Ancient Texts", Heidelberg, July 10-13, 2006, Winona Lake, Indiana, Eisenbrauns, 2010, pp. 341-356, p. 345). More generally, "minimalism" has been said to «remind(s) historians that their preferred ways of understanding the Bible may reflect hopes and ideas about the modern world» (M. Bishop Moore - B. E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History,* Grand Rapids, Michigan-Cambridge, Eerdmans, 2011, p. 263).

Despite the divergence of the individual approaches to biblical studies, from a structural point of view, commonality exists in that the Bible is placed in the position of serving as an "interpretation/model" for philosophical/ideological commitments. These approaches appear to have more affinity with Lodewejk Meijer than Spinoza, an aspect that does not seem to have received attention in reception historiography.

[467] *TTP,* p. 93; *mente Spiritus Sancti* and *rei veritate,* if understood as synonyms, or hendiadys, both make reference to the same realm of Spinoza's ontology, accessible only by means of intuitive knowledge, rather than referring, by the former, to the realm of "Holy Spirit/God", the realm of the third kind of knowledge, and, by the latter, on the other hand, to the world of actual phenomena, the domain of the first kind of knowledge.

[468] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

[469] These suspicions would add to suspicions of a more general kind, as described by J. M. Forte Monge: «En primer lugar, la sospecha respecto a la unidad de sentido entre los multiples libros de las Escrituras […], frente a interpretaciones que postulan una sistemática presunción de coherencia, una sospecha, por lo demás, sobradamente justificada por la propria heterogeneidad de autores y contextos históricos que han producido la Escritura (In the first place, [it is] suspicion with respect to the uniform meaning of the multiple books of the Scriptures […], confronted with interpretations that postulate a systematic presupposition of coherence, a suspicion, furthermore, fully justified by the heterogeneity itself of authors and historical contexts that have produced the Scriptures)» (Id., *Hermenéutica crítica y hermenéutica filosófica. Gadamer frente a Spinoza*, in «Ingenium», 4, July-December 2010, pp. 125-144, p. 125). As noted above, with respect to Spinoza's "suspicion" of language, by virtue of language being part of the first kind of knowledge, such "suspicion" is less a matter of doxastic attitude, independently, than a side effect of the structure of his (three-tiered) epistemic system; analogously, his putative "suspicion" of the second kind of knowledge (the «meaning» of Scripture) is only an epiphenomenon of the strategic function of the second kind of knowledge in contradistinction to the third kind of knowledge. Topicalization of attitudes runs the risk of trivializing key aspects of Spinozan ontology and epistemology.

[470] *TTP*, p. 94.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94, first paragraph, to p. 99, first paragraph (inclusive).

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴⁷³ At the conclusion of this discussion of Hebrew, he reiterates that Scripture contains «meaning» only «in matters of moral conduct» (*ibid.*, p. 96), that is, an element of the second kind of knowledge, acceptable since it is validated ultimately by intuitive knowledge. We might also take note of the rhetorical turn that Spinoza's argumentation takes: what is initially advertised as mere «difficulty'', or a matter of relative degree, has become an absolute state of affairs, «impossibility», understatement (*diminutio*) thus morphing into exaggeration (*superlatio*). As P. J. Bagley commented: «[…] the language in which they [the biblical narratives] are composed presents numerous virtually insoluble problems. […] determining the authentic meaning of Scripture is severely curtailed since the form and matter of the Bible frequently pose insurmountable interpretive obstacles» (Id., *Spinoza, Biblical Criticism, and the Enlightenment*, in *Modern Enlightenment and the Rule of Reason,* ed. by J. C. McCarthy, Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1998, pp. 124-149, pp. 134, 135).

⁴⁷⁴ Published in English as *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. and trans. by M. J. Bloom, London, Vision Press, 1962; reprinted, and ed. by R. Keele, in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, with trans. by S. Shirley, ed. with intro. and notes by M. L. Morgan, Indianapolis-Cambridge, Hackett Publishing, 2002, pp. 586-675.

⁴⁷⁵ «On a en effet absolument voulu trouver dans celle-ci un parallèle entre les thèses métaphysiques de Spinoza et sa description de la langue hébraïque (One needs to be in effect absolutely prepared to find in it [the *Compendium*] a parallelism between Spinoza's metaphysical concepts and his description of the Hebrew language)» (P.-F. Moreau, *Spinoza. L'expérience et l'éternité*, cit., p. 339). For a detailed examination of the work, see Z. Levy, *The Problem of Normativity in Spinoza's "Hebrew Grammar"*, in «Studia Spinozana», 3, 1987, pp. 351-390, concluding: «The distinctive feature of the *Grammar* is its ambitious aspiration towards rationality. Spinoza did not limit his investigation to the elaboration of grammatical rules as such but wished to lay bare the essential laws and reasons which determine linguistic phenomena in the Hebrew language […]» (*ibid.*, pp. 387-388).

⁴⁷⁶ «Une fois encore apparaît la différence entre le domaine des essences et celui des existences qui marque pour Spinoza le lieu d'instauration de l'expérience […] (Once more there appears the difference between the domain of essences and that of existences which defines for Spinoza the place where experience is established)» (P.-F. Moreau, *Spinoza. L'expérience et l'éternité*, cit., p. 344).

[477] Another key aspect of Spinoza's reflections on the Hebrew language is his identification of its grammaticalization with the "mentality" or "spirit" of the people that spoke it (*ibid.*, p. 345).

[478] See also the assessment by Morgan: «It is likely that Spinoza's grammatical inquiry, then, mirrors the commitments of his philosophical thinking overall. It is guided, on the one hand, by his scientific naturalism and, on the other, by his commitment to a priori reasoning akin to that found in geometry – or, in this case, in Latin, viewed by him as reflecting a pure, a priori structure» (Id., *Spinoza: Complete Works*, cit., p. 585). This view is shared by Y. Y. Melamed: «[…] between the lines of this text, one can easily find some of Spinoza's most crucial metaphysical doctrines. One example is a certain analogy Spinoza draws between parts of speech – nouns […], adjectives, participles, and the metaphysical terms they denote – substance, attributes, modes». Melamed cites Spinoza's own exposition from the end of Chapter 33 (Id., *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 30-32); Melamed follows W. Z. Harvey, *Spinoza's Metaphysical Hebraism*, in *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy*, ed. by H. M. Ravven and L. E. Goodman, Albany, New York, State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 107-114.

[479] «When I touched on this topic I did make a brief reference to the importance of knowing all these details, but there I deliberately passed over certain considerations which must now be taken up» (*TTP*, p. 97).

[480] See Vico's *The Art of Rhetoric*, cit., pp. 95-98, commenting: «The use of accumulation in the oratory is very great when different and several facts are enumerated in order to emphasize and to urge on, and they are brought together as though into a pile» (*ibid.*, p. 97).

[481] As a representative of mid-17th-century textual scholarship, Walton may be cited, especially in connection with his lengthy *Prolegomena* of 102 folio pages included in the appendix of the first volume of the London Polyglot Bible. Among other subjects, Walton addressed the potential usefulness of cognate languages in dealing with ambiguities in the original Hebrew, but notably the problem of textual differences in the extant versions, proposing guidelines for text-criticism, as part of which he also emphasized the need to study the co-text (*sive antecedentia & consequentia*) and "parallel passages" (*locurum parallelorum & similium observatio*). See Miller, *The "Antiquarianization" of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible*, cit., pp. 474-481, concluding: «[…] Walton and those he cites were indeed asking the sort of questions about ancient Judaism and Christianity that would later be posed by sociologists, anthropologists, and historians of religion». See also P. Gibert, *L'invention critique*

de la Bible, XVᵉ-XVIIᵉ Siècle: L'invention moderne de la critique du texte biblique, Paris, Gallimard, 2010, pp. 102-109.

[482] While the topic of the history or legacy of Spinozan biblical hermeneutics in biblical studies/criticism is outside our subject matter, it may be *apropos* to raise the possibility that the current state of the discipline might not be entirely unrelated to the problematics of the methodology that Spinoza developed in consonance with his epistemic system, as seen by the (self-critical) reflections of some of its practitioners today: according to Legaspi, academic biblical studies have «produced […] an astonishing amount of useful information», nevertheless, «biblical studies have entered a period of crisis having to do, among other things, with methodological disarray, lack of consensus on key questions, the triviality of a great deal of historical scholarship […]» (Id., *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, cit., pp. 169, 167); in the view of S. D. Moore and Y. Sherwood, «the Bible entered into a second life as document or text. It became possible to do almost anything with this Bible – as text – provided that anything took the preapproved form of historical-critical analysis and hypothesis. For there is no end of things that one can do with the letter, especially the letter of the Bible […]» (Id., *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2011, p. 62). See also Walther: «Spinoza begibt sich so intensiv in den Kern der protestantischen Hermeneutik-Discussion, daß seine Ansichten auch innerhalb des Protestantismus rezipiert worden sind, daß eine von Spinoza wesentlich mit beeinflußte Richtung des Protestantismus entstanden ist – was der Intention Spinozas bei Abfassung des TTP entsprach (Spinoza injects himself so intensely into the heart of the Protestant hermeneutics debate that his views, in turn, were broached within Protestantism also, leading to the rise of a current within Protestantism in which Spinoza was a major influence – as intended by Spinoza in writing *TTP*)» (Id., *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung*, cit., p. 237, footnote 12). For a survey of modern biblical studies methods, see *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by J. Barton, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; K. J. Dell and P. M. Joyce (ed. by), *Biblical Interpretation and Method: Essays in Honour of John Barton*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. The very notion of (formal) "methodology" in biblical studies, qualifying it as a discipline, has been challenged recently in St. L. McKenzie and J. Kaltner (ed. by), *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches in Biblical Criticism and Their Applications*, Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2013, stating «that their topics [traditional biblical criticism] do not represent methods that can be delineated through a series of steps but are rather approaches or perspectives – ways of looking at the Bible. Perhaps now there is […] more candor about the subjectivity of any interpretation, less call

to pose as a programmatic *method* for getting at the meaning of the Bible and more recognition that we all read it from different […] vantage points, be they ideologies, orientations, or […] the platform of insights from an adjacent discipline» (*ibid., Preface,* pp. xi-xiii, pp. xii, xiii; italics original). Such re-classification of "methods" as "approaches" is not without fundamental hermeneutical consequences, since it entails re-classification of the domain of discourse, and the exchange of an epistemic paradigm for a doxastic one.

[483] *TTP*, pp. 97, 98.

[484] This is the inevitable conclusion that Spinoza himself pointed out: «These difficulties […], I consider so grave that I have no hesitation in affirming that in many instances we either do not know the true meaning of Scripture or we can do no more than make conjecture» (*TTP*, p. 98). In the words of Morrison, «[b]y elaborating the "difficulties" and "imperfections" of achieving an adequate history of Scripture he shows that these conditions cannot be fulfilled» (Id., *Vico and Spinoza*, cit., p. 67).

[485] Tosel treated this Euclid-related passage in more detail in *Spinoza ou le crépuscule de la servitude*, cit., pp. 65-67, e.g. commenting: «En effet, un texte intelligible, à la limite, possède une intelligibilité éternelle; il vaut pour tous les temps, tous les lieux (Indeed, an intelligible text, ultimately, possesses an eternal intelligibility; it is valid for all time, everywhere)» (*ibid.*, p. 65).

[486] *TTP*, p. 90.

[487] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[488] To quote Tosel again: «L'idée vraie d'un texte intelligible efface dans son propre procès les circonstances devenues alors extrinsèques de sa propre genèse empirique. […] A la limite une œuvre philosophique vraiment euclidienne porte avec elle la nécessité, en tous cas la possibilité d'effacer jusqu'au nom de son auteur (The true idea of an intelligible text effaces in its own process of becoming the external circumstances of its own empirical development. […] Ultimately, a truly Euclidean philosophical work carries with it the need, in any case the possibility, of effacing even the name of its author)» (Id., *Spinoza ou le crépuscule de la servitude*, cit., p. 66); see also Ch. Norris, *Spinoza & the Origins of Modern Critical Theory*, cit., pp. 29-30: «As usual, it is the model of Euclidean geometry that Spinoza takes as his ideal case of a knowledge exempt from all accidents of time and place».

[489] *TTP*, p. 98, second paragraph, to p. 99, first paragraph (inclusive).

[490] *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

[491] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[492] Walther dissects Spinoza's biblical hermeneutics also in terms of his tripartite epistemic system, albeit without using Spinoza's numerical nomenclature (added by us): «Spinoza fügt also zwischen [3rd kind of knowledge:] der

Klasse der unmittelbar und vollständig vergewisserungsfähigen Bedeutungen und [1st kind:] diejenige der unverständlichen noch [2nd kind:] eine dritte Klasse von pragmatisch zwar ausreichenden, aber inferioren, bloß moralisch gewissen Urteilen. Damit ist der Ort historischer Erkenntnis epistemologisch bestimmt (Thus Spinoza inserts between [3rd kind of knowledge:] the class of meanings that are immediately and completely truth-evaluable, and [1st kind:] the class of unintelligible meanings, additionally [2nd kind:] a third class of evaluations that are inferior and merely certain in matters of morals, though adequate for pragmatic purposes. This then establishes and fixes the epistemological position of historical knowledge)» (Id., *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung*, cit., p. 279).

[493] *TTP,* pp. 98-99.

[494] This can be seen in the way Spinoza "deconstructs" Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch in Chapter 8 (pp. 105-115 in the Shirley translation). It is well-known that Moses's authorship was called in question, and even denied, by others before Spinoza, most notably by Hobbes and Isaac La Peyrère (in a work published in Amsterdam in 1655), and Spinoza himself claims that the 12th-century Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra already doubted Moses's authorship; on this question, W. Z. Harvey pointed out, however: «With one exception, Ibn Ezra's examples, as Spinoza himself interprets them, do not prove that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but only that there are some passages in it not written by him. […] As for Ibn Ezra's true view, it might be argued plausibly that he had in mind only minor interpolations» (Id., *Spinoza on Ibn Ezra's "secret of the twelve"*, in *Spinoza's* Theological-Political Treatise, cit., pp. 41-55, p. 47). Another possible influence was Menasseh ben Israel, and his work *Conciliator* of 1632 (E. M. Curley, *Notes on a Neglected Masterpiece: Spinoza and the Science of Hermeneutics,* in *Spinoza: The Enduring Questions*, ed. by G. Hunter, Toronto-Buffalo-London, University of Toronto Press, 1994, pp. 64-99, pp. 70-77). R. H. Popkin considers Samuel Fisher (1605-1665), and his book entitled *The Rustics Alarm to the Rabbis* (1660) as a significant influence (Id., *Some New Light on the Roots of Spinoza's Science of Bible Study*, in *Spinoza and the Sciences*, cit., pp. 171-188). However, rather than attributing Spinoza's views simply to his *ad hoc* reception of prevalent views that were congenial to him, we postulate that his treatment of Moses (and *mutatis mutandis* of other parts of Scripture) is circumscribed and animated by his philosophical and epistemological commitments, thus agreeing with Curley: «One thing that distinguishes Spinoza from both Hobbes and La Peyrère is that he has what they do not – a well-worked out theory of what is required for the interpretation of a text» (Id., *Notes on a Neglected Masterpiece: Spinoza and the Science of Hermeneutics*, cit., p. 77).

Consequently, applying the principles of Chapter 7, Spinoza deals with the question of Pentateuch authorship systematically, that is, in terms of the first kind of knowledge in the form of available data, as well as the second kind of knowledge arrived at by drawing inferences, conclusions, from the data. Thus, first, he characterizes the Scriptural information in the problematic way that is germane to knowledge of the first kind: «As it is, the historical study of Scripture has remained not merely incomplete but prone to error; that is, the foundations of Scriptural knowledge are not only too scanty to form the basis for a complete understanding, but are also unsound» (*TTP*, p. 105). The specific evidence he then adduces consists largely of text passages that appear to contain anachronisms, that is, information known only a long time after Moses, or at least after the death of Moses (see T. L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible*, cit., pp. 226-228). On the basis of these scattered passages, Spinoza takes the next step, making the inference with respect to the entire Pentateuch: «Thus from the foregoing it is clear beyond a shadow of doubt that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by someone who lived many generations after Moses» (*TTP*, p. 109; see also repeatedly used equivalent "deductive" language, as «plain conclusion/compel this conclusion», «it therefore follows», «it is clear that», «what logically proceeds»). However, three non-extant documents referred to in the Pentateuch are ascribed to Moses, including the «book of the Law of God» (S. Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 112). In his analysis, Spinoza does not engage with the actual content of the Pentateuch which is consistent with his view that the particulars and specifics in Scripture are not relevant beyond its most general «meaning» of enjoining acknowledgment of the «divine» and charity, in accord with «reason».

In the remaining part of Chapter 8, Spinoza «conjecture[s]» that the Pentateuch was written in the Persian era, by Ezra (*TTP*, p. 113). Spinoza expands the inquiry into Pentateuchal authorship into an inquiry into the authorship of *Joshua* through *Kings* collectively. Apart from putative textual «interconnections» (*TTP*, p. 112), his crucial argument for attributing *Genesis* through *Kings* to Ezra is that «there was only one historian, with a fixed aim in view», and that «all these books have but a single theme» (*TTP*, pp. 112, 113). In Curley's words, according to Spinoza, «Ezra wrote for a definite political purpose: to show that the tragedy that had befallen the Hebrew people has occurred because they neglected to follow the law of Moses», and that «Ezra's Bible is an exercise in theodicy [...]» (Id., *Notes on a Neglected Masterpiece*, cit., p. 69). The "main theme" of these Bible books, according to Spinoza, encompassed history all the way into the Neo-Babylonian period which in turn made it neces-

sary to identify the single author as someone living after this period. («Hence it follows that the historian could not have been anyone before Ezra»: *TTP*, p. 113).

We can recognize the intentionality and (inevitable) identification of a single «theme», also called «unity of theme» by Spinoza, as reflective of Spinoza's conception of the second kind of knowledge; as shown above, to achieve this kind of knowledge, one needs to find in the confused mass of disparate and raw data that which is «common» and «universal», in the specific Spinozan sense. Spinoza's historical-critical method thus bears the imprint of his epistemology. The thematic focus on the theodicy question, possibly, is not unrelated to the early modern theodicy debate, for which see Hösle, *God as Reason*, cit., pp. 50-74, on Spinoza pp. 53-56; published originally in German as *Theodizeestrategien bei Leibniz, Hegel, Jonas*, in *Pensare Dio a Gerusalemme*, ed. by A. Ales Bello, Rome, Lateran University Press, 2000, pp. 219-243. If so, then Spinoza's attribution of this unifying theme could be a projection of this contemporary issue onto the biblical corpus. It cannot here be further explored what kind of nexus may exist — that is, whether it is causative or resultative — of the relativization of Moses with the subsumption of the Pentateuch within the postulated singular theme. On the «political and spiritual topicality of Moses», see W. van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: A Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic*, Leiden-Boston-Cologne, Brill, 2001, pp. 129-131.

[495] This ultimate conclusion has been arrived at by various readers of *TTP*; Preus commented: «Spinoza's historical-critical study had the opposite motive [opposite to the desire to get at the "very words of God" in their original meanings], of course – to disarm the interpreters by highlighting the Bible's historical relativity and irrelevance as a norm of contemporary religious ideas» (Id., *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, cit., p. 183); according to Legaspi, «Spinoza's program was not constructive. What little of value that could be gained from the Bible could be ascertained from reason itself» (Id., *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, cit., p. 24). As commented previously, what might be portrayed as attitudes or intentions made intelligible within Spinoza's historical context – biographically, intellectually, socially, politically –, have deeper roots in Spinoza's thought itself, developed and expressed in his coherently articulated philosophical system: «While on the first superficial level the teaching of Scripture is reduced to the empty platitude of "justice and charity", on the second deeper level this content is refuted in order to make room for its replacement by a new teaching, namely, the rational plan of living presented in the *Ethics*» (J. C. Morrison, *Spinoza and History*, cit., p. 186). On the other hand, Spinoza seems to have been profoundly misunderstood by others, as in Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of*

the Bible, cit., p. 226: «Judicious linguistic and philological study of the text is an essential first step in rendering the meaning of a passage of Scripture. […] The historical conclusions Spinoza draws from his rational exegesis of Scripture in the *TTP* appear strikingly familiar to students of contemporary biblical scholarship». Some readers oscillate between polarities, as in M. Greschat, on the one hand: «Dementsprechend steht hier mit einem Schlage [historisch-kritisch] vor us, was grundsätzlich als wissenschaftliche Exegese und im einzelnen als Einleitungswissenschaft bis heute geläufig ist (Accordingly we have before us in succinct form [historical-criticism] what is still accepted as the principle of scientific exegesis, and, in practice, as a preparatory science [to biblical studies])», and on the other hand: «Der Exeget, der ausgezogen war, die Offenbarung Gottes aus den biblischen Texten zu eruieren, endete somit bei Unsicherheiten und Unverbindlichkeiten. Natürlich war das nicht Zufall, sondern Spinozas Absicht (The exegete who embarked on a mission to decipher the divine revelation in the biblical texts, thus ended up with uncertainties and generalities. This was no coincidence, of course, but Spinoza's intention)» (Id., *Bibelkritik und Politik. Anmerkungen zu Spinozas Theologisch-politischem Traktat*, in *Text – Wort – Glaube. Studien zur Überlieferung, Interpretation und Autorisierung Biblischer Texte*, ed. by M. Brecht, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 1980, pp. 325-343, pp. 336, 337).

[496] *TTP*, p. 87.

[497] So N. Maull: «Indeed, Spinoza lived and worked in an extraordinary time and place. This Golden age of the Dutch Republic (1585-1695) boasted not only Rembrandt, but Swammerdam, De Graaf, van Leeuwenhoek, and Stevin» (Id., *Spinoza in the Century of Science*, cit., pp. 3-13, p. 4). By the same token, one might be allowed to say, conversely, that it is these and other scientists and artists who lived in a privileged cultural world by virtue of being contemporaries of Spinoza.

For a fuller account of Spinoza's life and times, see the biography by M. Gullan-Whur, *Within Reason: A Life of Spinoza,* New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000.

[498] We are not concerned here with the secondary question of the ultimate scientific value of his contributions in any of these fields; historians of science generally regard them as of (intellectual) historical interest, not necessarily as substantive scientific results (see *ibid.*, p. 117).

[499] D. J. Struik explained: «We should not think of Spinoza, the grinder of lenses, as an old-fashioned craftsman, a colleague of the baker, the butcher and the like candlestick maker. In Spinoza's time the grinding of lenses was as up-to-date as the making of electronic apparatus is at present» (Id., *The Land of Stevin and Huygens. A Sketch of Science and Technology in the Dutch Republic during the*

Golden Century, Dordrecht-Boston-London, D. Reidel Publishing, 1981, p. 100). The lens-making process is described in Gullan-Whur, *Within Reason*, cit., p. 89. The tragedy was that the prolonged exposure to glass-dust exacerbated his chronic lung condition, and contributed to his early death (*ibid.*, p. 113).

[500] For further background on the pivotal scientific role of optical instruments in Spinoza's age, see E. G. Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic: The Shaping of Discovery*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996; on the development of optics theory, see F. J. Dijksterhuis, *Lenses and Waves: Christiaan Huygens and the Mathematical Science of Optics in the Seventeenth Century*, Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer Academic, 2004.

[501] For a discussion of details of Spinoza's scientific views, see A. Gabbey, *Spinoza's natural science and methodology*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, cit., pp. 140-191; on optics, pp. 150, 153-155; on physics/kinematics, pp. 155-169; on chemistry, pp. 178-180.

[502] We are foregoing an examination of his treatment of optics, for which *Letters 39* and *40* could serve as case study; for example, whether Spinoza's treatment of spherical lenses lends itself to be seen through the "lens" of his reflections on the circle and its associated infinities in *Ethics*, Part II, Proposition VIII, Note.

[503] Spinoza took this example from his *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, Part 2, Propositions 9-11, for which see *Spinoza: Complete Works*, cit.

[504] For a more detailed discussion of this illustration, see H. Boehme, *Analysis bei Hegel*, in «Mathematische Semesterberichte», 61, 2014, 2, pp. 159-181, pp. 163-166.

[505] With «Substance», Spinoza places the discussion explicitly at the heart of his deepest philosophical reflections, and, furthermore, in the letter itself, insists on its implications for the understanding of «the infinite»: «[…] Substance is not manifold, rather there exists only one Substance of the same nature. […] no Substance can be conceived as other than infinite».

[506] In Peterman's view, «[…] there is good reason to think that these passages contain […] a deeper critique of the grounds of mechanism, on the basis that the fundamental properties it posits satisfy the imagination but not the intellect. […] So is appears that Spinoza would hold physicists to his highest standard of knowledge» (Id., *Spinoza on Physical Science*, cit., pp. 216-217).

[507] He argues that «[o]ur conclusion is reached because number is not applicable to the nature of the space between two non-concentric circles».

[508] In the letter, Spinoza not only dealt with the subject as such, but also included references to those who did not share his philosophy, such as: «if men had paid careful attention to these distinctions», «all who have attempted

to understand the workings of Nature […] perpetrating the grossest absurdities», «many people, confusing these three concepts [Number, Measure, Time] with reality, because of their ignorance of the true nature of reality».

[509] *TTP*, Chapter 7, p. 91.

[510] While they are outside the scope of our essay, the relations between English and Dutch intellectuals and scientists during our period are of great historical interest, for which see e.g. L. Jardine, *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland's Glory*, New York, Harper Collins, 2008, pp. 263-318.

[511] Both letters are discussed in: N. Maull, *Spinoza in the Century of Science*, cit., pp. 5-7; A. Gabbey, *Spinoza's natural science and methodology*, cit., pp. 177-180, and more extensively, L. Simonutti, *Dalle "sensate esperienze" all'ermeneutica biblica. Spinoza e la nuova scienza: Galilei e Boyle*, in *Spinoza. Ricerche e prospettive per una storia dello spinozismo in Italia. Atti delle Giornate di studio in ricordo di Emilia Giancotti, Urbino, 2-4 ottobre 2002,* ed. by D. Bostrenghi and C. Santinelli, intro. by C. Santinelli, Naples, Bibliopolis, 2007, pp. 299-327, pp. 313-323; these papers also provide extensive further relevant references. On Spinoza's wide-ranging disputes with Boyle, see also Ch. E. Lewis, *Baruch Spinoza, a Critic of Robert Boyle: On Matter,* in *Spinoza: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 1, cit., pp. 236-253, on the issue of experimentation, pp. 244-249.

[512] The complexity of the argument(s) is described by Simonutti as: «il confronto fra due diverse concezioni epistemologiche e filosofiche: quella razionalistico-meccanicistica e quella corpuscolarista e sperimentale (the confrontation between two different epistemological and philosophical conceptions: rationalist-mechanistic, on the one hand, and corpuscularist and experimental, on the other hand)» (Id., *Dalle "sensate esperienze" all'ermeneutica biblica*, cit., p. 317). Here we are mainly focusing on the "rationalist" and "experimentalist" aspects of the positions taken; this is not to say, however, that, for an in-depth treatment of the issues, the other aspects could be ignored.

[513] If "summing up" is the appropriate term for something that is placed at the beginning, with the rhetorical effect of immediately framing the debate in terms defined by Spinoza, rather than at the end of the argument, as logical or necessary consequences.

[514] Lewis also noted: «Spinoza assigned experimentation to the first type of knowledge. Experimentation is not accorded the certainty of reason much less intuition. Experimentation is only knowledge "from symbols", that is, "opinion or "imagination"» (Id., *Baruch Spinoza*, cit., p. 248).

[515] For Spinoza's metaphysical grounding of «homogeneity» of matter in «Substance», see *ibid.*, p. 250.

[516] In *Letter 13,* Spinoza is even more pointed: «[…] we can quite easily explain all the phenomena of Nitre […], while regarding Nitre as a homogene-

ous body, not heterogeneous». Simonutti commented: «Il filosofo olandese non propone, quindi, un ragionamento fondato su una procedura fisico-sperimentale, ma procede nella fondazione razionale dei principi della meta-fisica per affermare la necessità dell'esistenza della materia che egli dimostra essere, oltre che infinita, necessariamente estesa e omogenea in tutte le sue componenti (The Dutch philosopher does not propose, therefore, scientific reasoning based on a physical-experimental procedure, but proceeds to the rational foundation of the principles of metaphysics by positing the existence of matter that he demonstrates, apart from being infinite, to be necessarily extended and homogeneous in all its parts)» (Id., *Dalle "sensate esperienze" all'ermeneutica biblica*, cit., p. 319). Simonutti makes reference to *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition 15, Proof, and Note.

[517] There were in the end personal, and very human, consequences, as Si-monutti related: «Gli sforzi del Segretario della Royal Society non riuscirono tuttavia a impedire il raffreddamento dei rapporti di Spinoza con i due amici inglesi […] (The efforts of the Royal Society secretary were nevertheless una-ble to prevent the cooling of the relationship between Spinoza and his two English friends […])» (*ibid.*, p. 325).

[518] Maull raised the question: «Why, given Spinoza's apparent interest in experiment, is he so estranged from it philosophically?» (Id., *Spinoza in the Cen-tury of Science*, cit., p. 7). In our view, he integrated empirical research philo-sophically under the rubric of the first kind of knowledge, and his skepticism and questioning of experimental results is thus profoundly philosophically motivated and (formally) justified.

[519] Simonutti described Boyle's intentions as follows: «Cimentandosi in uno dei primi tentativi di analisi autonoma dei fenomeni chimici e fisiologici, Boyle vuole dimostrare la validità della scienza sperimentale sotto il profilo conoscitivo (By engaging in one of the first attempts of autonomous analyses of chemical and physiological phenomena, Boyle wanted to demonstrate the validity of experimental science as part of the epistemic enterprise)» (Id., *Dalle "sensate esperienze" all'ermeneutica biblica*, cit., p. 316).

[520] For Spinoza's differences with Bacon, see A. V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spi-noza's Method*, cit., pp. 77-81, discussing Spinoza's reference to Bacon in *Letter 37*; A. Gabbey, *Spinoza's natural science and methodology*, cit., pp. 170-176, discuss-ing Bacon's and Spinoza's *experientia vaga*, and concluding (nomenclature add-ed): «The difference here between Bacon and Spinoza is that for Bacon *experi-entia vaga* is an ineffectual *method* of finding the causes of things: for Spinoza it is [1st kind of knowledge:] an *empirical base of a specific logical kind* from which [2nd kind:] are inferred general propositions which are useful in life but which

do not reveal [3rd kind:] the essences or causes of things» (*ibid.*, p. 176; italics original).

521 In Röd, the second kind of knowledge is explicated emphatically as inherently «hypothetisch (hypothetical)» (Id., *Spinozas Idee der Scientia intuitiva und die Spinozanische Wissenschaftskonzeption*, cit.). "Hypothetical" assumes its semantic value strictly by comparison with «intuitive knowledge». The term "science" also would undergo relativization: «Was in der Gegenwart unter "wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis" verstanden wird, ist in keinem Falle als adäquate Erkenntnis im Sinne Spinozas zu kennzeichnen, sondern wäre von Spinozas Standpunkt aus als inadäquate Erkenntnis auf Grund von Beobachtungen und kausalgesetzlichen Hypothesen aufzufassen gewesen (What is understood today as "scientific knowledge" is not at all to be characterized as adequate knowledge in Spinoza's sense, but would have to be understood from the standpoint of Spinoza as inadequate knowledge pursuant to observations and hypotheses formed according to the laws of causality)» (*ibid.*, p. 149). As a corollary, the modern term "underdetermination" used in connection with scientific theorizing is not coterminous, either, with Spinozan «hypotheses», intersecting with it only trivially. This has been recognized by Curley: «If the statement "hypotheses are underdetermined by experiment" means merely that no experimental data, no matter how extensive, will ever make a hypothesis metaphysically certain, […], very probably Spinoza would agree» (Id., *Notes on a Neglected Masterpiece*, cit., p. 66). However, in the subsequent comment on the Boyle/Spinoza controversy, Curley reverts to treating Spinoza's proposition of «homogeneity» at the empirical level rather than as metaphysically motivated. With respect to Spinoza's framework of biblical interpretation, an analogous qualification is made by Walther inusing the term «philosophisch-wissenschaftliche(n) Theorie (philosophical-scientific theory)» (Id., *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung*, cit., p. 276); in other words, to qualify as fully "scientific", biblical hermeneutics would need to conform to Spinoza's ontology.

522 Th. Nowak explained: «When hypotheses have been challenged over an extended period of time and always found to be consistent, these then become "laws"» (Id., *A Molecular Glimpse of How Mother Nature Can Regulate Our Being*, in *Forms of Truth and the Unity of Knowledge*, ed. by V. Hösle, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2014, pp. 115-139, p. 117). In Spinoza's conception, "hypotheses" never lose their dubious status by their intrinsic and systemic shortcoming of not constituting «intuitive knowledge». The Spinozan epistemic status of «hypotheses» is related to various Propositions in *Ethics*, in D. Savan, *Spinoza: Scientist and Theorist of Scientific Method*, cit., pp. 115-118.

[523] This argument goes further (or perhaps better said, in a different direction) than Maull: «Spinoza's message […] is that experiments (because they admit to different interpretations) decide no unique hypothesis and that a mechanical hypothesis […] may only be justified by rigid mathematical proof from higher principles» (Id., *Spinoza in the Century of Science*, cit., p. 6). By «reason», Spinoza did not have in mind a form of mathematical physics. A side glance at the (modern) history of Spinoza reception shows that this tendency has not always been resisted. Maull acknowledged that «[i]t has become commonplace […] to mention a conceptual link between elements of Spinoza's physical theory and rather more recent scientific notions – comparison with potential energy, with fields of force, and even geometrodynamics», (*ibid.*, p. 12); see also A. Gabbey, *Spinoza's natural science and methodology*, cit., p. 183, endnote 6, calling such notions «bizarre meditations» and «surreal diachronic assignations». The best known case-in-point, of course, may be Einstein, given his professed Spinozism, about whom P. Pesic noted: «At a critical moment he invoked Spinoza to justify his opposition to quantum theory in the name of rigorous determinism» (Id., *Einstein and Spinoza: Determinism and Identicality Reconsidered*, in «Studia Spinozana», 12, 1996, pp. 195-202, p. 195; see also D. Home - A. Robinson, *Einstein and Tagore: Man, Nature and Mysticism*, in «Journal of Consciousness Studies», 2, 1995, 2, pp. 167-179). Perhaps it was also due to his reception or arguably "overinterpretation" of Spinoza that Einstein conceived other entities in physics in certain ways, such as space – not as a structural component, but as the all-embracing entity whose geometry underlies forces and matter – and maybe also his predilection for oxymoronic "thought experiments" (*Gedankenexperimente*) could be traced back to an (idiosyncratic) reception and interpretation of the isomorphism of God-Nature and Mind that are central themes in *Ethics*. According to Wilson, «[…] thought is coextensive with materiality according to Spinoza […]» (Id., *Spinoza's theory of knowledge*, cit., p. 115).

On the other hand, Peterman salutarily noted, with respect to Spinoza's discussion of extension, motion, and rest in *Ethics* – labelled in Spinoza studies as "physical digression" or "physical interlude" – that seems to have given rise to much of modern "philosophical-scientific" speculation: «Given that Spinoza does not provide the definition of motion and extension, we might wonder to what extent we should even treat the interlude as specifically *physical*» (Id., *Spinoza on Physical Science*, cit., p. 219; italics original).

[524] Nadler gave the following example of commonalities rooted in Spinoza's epistemic system as well as ontology (kept separate here for expository purposes): «[…] such essences [of natural phenomena] are the equivalent

within natural science of what meanings are for hermeneutic science» (Id., *A Book Forged in Hell*, cit., p. 133).

[525] It is no coincidence that Gabbey can cite the programmatic *TTP* passage (p. 87) as template for Spinoza's scientific method, rather than the other way around (Id., *Spinoza's natural science and methodology*, cit., p. 170), and unsurprising that in both cases, analogous outcomes are reached: with respect to Scripture, «this method […] teaches […] not what they [the prophets] intended to signify or represent by the symbols in question. The latter we can only guess at, not infer with certainty from the basis of Scripture» (*TTP*, p. 93); for physical/chemical phenomena, «I [Spinoza] deny that these things follow from the said experiment more clearly and evidently than from many other commonplace experiments, which do not, however, provide definite proof» (*Letter 13*).

[526] To use an elementary mathematical illustration, in the study of the structure of a cylinder (in topology), that is, the 2-dimensional surface of a cylinder, it is possible to identify two fundamental components, a circle and a line, but their study in isolation is not commensurate with correctly describing the nature of the cylinder as a "product" of both, a very simple kind of "interaction", nonetheless an interaction rather than merely a disjunctive "sum"; mathematical illustrations of "interaction" can be found at any desired level of complexity.

[527] As stated by Simonutti: «"Interpretare la Scrittura per se stessa" […], procedendo secondo una metodica e una critica, strumenti che l'ermeneutica biblica condivide con la matematica e le scienze della natura, e in questo consiste la grande intuizione di Spinoza ("Interpreting Scripture through itself" […], proceeding according to a methodology and a criticism, tools which biblical hermeneutics shares with mathematics and the natural sciences, and this constitutes the great intuition of Spinoza)» (Id., *Dalle "sensate esperienze" all'ermeneutica biblica*, cit., p. 327).

[528] We are following Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*, cit., p. 5, who, to a particular extent and depth, has developed these implications. He calls Spinoza «the first philosopher explicitly to consider Scripture, that is, writing as a part of nature in its materiality, as irreducible to anything outside of itself, […] a repetition or emanation of something posited as primary. For Spinoza, nature is a surface without depth; Scripture as part of nature conceals nothing, holds nothing in reserve».

[529] *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5; Garrett, in a different context, also expressed the fundamental state of affairs: «For Spinoza […], nature and man form only one *imperium* […]» (Id., *Meaning in Spinoza's Method*, cit., p. 81).

[530] Tosel commented: «La comparaison entre la Nature et l'Écriture doit se lire dans le sens d'une reconduction de celle-ci à celle-là. […] C'est l'Écriture qui est une réalité naturelle que l'on doit décrire à partir de ses données consti-

tutives, et définir génétiquement à partir de ses éléments formateurs (The comparison between Nature and Scripture should be read in the sense of grounding the latter on the former. […] It is Scripture that is an entity of nature which should be described from the facts that are constitutive of it, and explicated ontogenetically, starting with the elements out of, and by which, it is formed)» (Id., *Spinoza ou le crépuscule de la servitude*, cit., p. 61).

[531] E. Kleinert, *Mathematik für Philosophen*, cit., p. 51.

[532] Curley argues against this implication in Id., *Notes on a Neglected Masterpiece*, cit., pp. 80-81; his argument, however, does not proceed along the lines of Montag's ontological argument, but in relation to the hermeneutics of Meijer/Maimonides which functions at a different epistemological level and scope.

[533] It is beyond the scope of the present topic to inquire further as to how, to the extent that this nexus renders Scriptural hermeneutics problematic, Spinoza's science mirrors these problematics.

VICO'S INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK
OF THE HOMERIC WORKS

The task we have set ourselves – relating Vico to Spinoza's hermeneutics – is challenging and problematic insofar as it must start from the recognition that the fundamental epistemic objectives these great thinkers pursued diverged in radical ways. If these essential aims are deemed incommensurable, it poses difficulties with respect to correctly relating the terminology and concepts used by virtue of their apparent similarity or even identity. The preceding sketch of Spinoza's hermeneutics in the form of his biblical-criticism/historical-criticism was meant to identify, perhaps at the price of oversimplification, his overriding objective. This objective, as argued, consisted of the demarcation of two epistemic levels: the level of «meaning» belonging to the "second kind of knowledge" vs. the higher plane of «truth», accessible only through the "third kind of knowledge", «scientia intuitiva». As has been pointed out above, Spinoza had a special connotation in mind with reference to «meaning» of Scripture, namely, an instance of «common notions» in the ontology of *Ethics*, consisting of the recognition of God-Nature, and the mandate to «love […] neighbors as themselves»[534]. Not to put too fine a point on it, by implication, everything else in Scripture is relegated to a subaltern role, a fact that Spinoza candidly expressed earlier in *TTP* (nomenclature added):

If we now consider the nature of the natural Divine Law, […], we shall see:
1. […]
2. That it does not demand [2nd kind of knowledge:] belief in historical narratives (*fidem historiarum*) of any kind whatsoever. […] Nor can [2nd

kind:] the belief in historical narratives (*fides historiarum*), however certain, give us [3rd kind:] knowledge of God, nor, consequently, of the love of God. […] and so [2nd kind:] belief in historical narratives (*fides historiarum*) is by no means essential to [3rd kind:] the attainment of our supreme good. However, […], I do not deny that [2nd kind:] their study can be very profitable in the matter of social relations. […], as far as [3rd kind:] reason allows[535].

This text portion is relevant to our inquiry by its reference to "history"[536]; it provides a bridge to Vico's treatment of "history", and thus can serve as the needed common ground on which to develop comparisons. The main point, if we may reduce the statement, is that developments in human history and culture, and the "lessons" derived thereof – generalizing from Spinoza's treatment of biblical history – must, firstly, be considered of limited value, and, secondly, wholly contingent on expressing «reason» in the form of «the knowledge of God[-Nature]». Such «reason» alone can form the basis of community and political life hitherto unrealized[537].

When the same question is raised with respect to Vico's overall objective or inquiry, the answer, in one respect is comparable: it involves a reconstruction of (ancient) history[538]. A closer look, nevertheless, is in order; it needs to identify more specifically in what Vico's "reconstruction" of history consists. It is, of course, at one level a reconstruction of the very origins of civilization, and the complex forces that were operative at that beginning, including what may be called the prevailing «attitudes of mind»[539], alongside corresponding social and "political" conditions and institutions. However, as has already been commented on in connection with Book II of *Scienza nuova*, entitled "Poetic Wisdom", far from portraying the knowledge of the "founding fathers" of civilization as "primitive", and inferior to subsequently achieved intellectual states, he sees in them the originators of human knowledge, creating the conditions of possibility of science; the «imagination» and the resultant «imaginative universals» he as-

cribes to, and credits them with, have nothing of the taint of the first kind of knowledge that is associated with «imagination» in Spinoza's epistemic system.

This divergent judgment on early human history cannot be separated from the methodology Vico follows in reconstructing it, just as Spinoza's fixation of «meaning», or a «unity of theme», in Scripture, cannot be separated from his «method of interpreting Scripture». In the process of exploring Vico's methodology, we will let ourselves be guided by the perspective from which Vico himself approaches matters. The perspective he takes is expressed in the binary terms of "philosophy" and "poetry". Vico's hermeneutical agenda is set in the very first paragraph of Book I, identifying the issue at hand: «[…] we shall here examine particularly if Homer was ever a philosopher» (§ 780), and brought to a resolution at the end of the Book, first by expressly denying the "philosophical" nature of Homer, and then, positively, crediting primacy to "poetic wisdom": «[…] the philosophers did not discover their philosophies in the Homeric fables […]. But it was poetic wisdom itself [which] provided occasions for the philosophers to meditate their lofty truths […]» (§ 901)[540].

The polarity under which Vico pursues his inquiry allows him delve into and explore various aspects and dimensions of the issues he was concerned with in *Scienza nuova*, all at the same time, of which we will touch on the following: (a) the true source of knowledge – is it "poetry" or "philosophy"?; (b) "poetry" (myths/fables) and the origin(s) of human civilization; (c) "poetic" language as gateway to historical reconstruction; and, lastly, (d) the "Homeric question" of the authorship of the Homeric works.

Vico frames the issue of the source of knowledge as a polemic with Socrates/Plato[541] (and other ancient philosophers) (§§ 780, 808), and by implication early modern philosophers like Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf, but they typify the kind of epistemic and cognitive aspirations (against which he wishes to de-

marcate the content of the Homeric poems), described in such phrases as «a mind chastened and civilized by any sort of philosophy» (§ 785); «the constancy […] developed and fixed by the study of the wisdom of the philosophers […] a philosopher's gravity and propriety of thought» (§ 786); «maxims of life, as being general, […] as sentences of philosophers, and reflections on the passions themselves are the work of false and frigid poets» (§ 825); «not […] the natural product of a calm, cultivated, and gentle philosopher» (§ 828), and «a straightforward, orderly, and serious mind such as befits a philosopher» (§ 831). Vico, of course, counted himself among this intellectual class, but he made a Herculean effort to transcend its strictures, and give credit where credit is due, for the genesis and generation of knowledge about the world (italics added):

[…] the [archaic] peoples, who were almost all body and almost no reflection must have been all vivid sensation *in perceiving particulars*, strong imagination *in apprehending and enlarging them*, sharp wit *in referring them to their imaginative genera*, and robust memory *in retaining them*[542] (§ 819).

Their world consisted not only of the external physical environment, but also, and more especially so, of the world of social relations and institutions (juridical/governmental) in the creation of the first forms of which, in fact, they were engaged in. As already stated above, in the Book's conclusion, Vico relegated "philosophy" to a dependent position on "poetry" which provided "philosophy" with the original, fundamental issues and problems to reflect on, but furthermore «supplied them also with means of expounding them» (§ 901). There is, on Vico's part, no implicit reference to Spinoza, nor need there be one, in order to justify a comparison. Vico's argument is not directed against philosophy as such, after all, he was a philosopher himself, but concerns itself with the relative position and status of "philosophy" and "poetry" (always understood in the Vichian sense), and with respect to this relation, "poetry" comes first, diachronically and

epistemically. Our earlier exposition of Spinoza's epistemology would suggest that Vico's assessment is the reverse of Spinoza's, based as the latter's is on the undisputed primacy of the third kind of knowledge[543].

Vico's insistence on the epistemic priority of "poetry" over "philosophy" is further argued on the basis of its primordial, originary force. In what is, since Nicolini's numbering, referred to as Chapters V and VI of Section I, "Philosophical Proofs", comprising §§ 810 to 838, and "Philological Proofs", §§ 839 to 872, Vico establishes that civilization began with predominantly "poetic" rather than "philosophical" mind sets and creative abilities: «Inasmuch as the poets came certainly before the vulgar historians, the first historians must have been poets» (§ 813)[544]. In going back to the beginnings of human culture, Vico adhered to his own originally established principles in Book I, and Axiom LXIV, in particular: «The order of ideas must follow the order of institutions (*cose*)» (§ 238). The virtually identical statement, in its fundamental constituents, in Spinoza's *Ethics* (Part II, Proposition 7: «The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things») is plausibly considered as laying behind Vico's epigram[545]. However, if that is taken to be the case, then Vico's specific, or concrete, "application" of the principle needs to be taken into consideration also, and already in the Axioms, his non-Spinozan, if not ironically anti-Spinozan, thrust is evident, namely, in the immediately following Axiom LXV that bears a contrarian relationship to Spinoza's metaphysics: «This was the order of human institutions (*cose umane*): first the forests, after that the huts, then the villages, next the cities, and finally the academies» (§ 239)[546]. And it gets worse, in Book III, the *cose umane* come to the fore in the guise of the «vulgar feelings [and] vulgar customs of […] barbarous Greece», in evidence of which he adduces «that the gods are esteemed according to their strength» and capacity for violence[547], as well as citing the «inhuman custom […] of denying burial to enemies slain in battle,

leaving their unburied bodies instead as a prey to dogs and vultures» (§ 781). Also, the reactions and actions of the heroes of the *Iliad* are held up as emblematic of "heroic/[barbarous]" rather than "civil/[civilized]" human nature[548] (§ 783).

Vico clarifies his usage of the term "poetry" by distinguishing it from the alternative early modern (and modern) usage of "art imitating life", in his words, «poetry [as] an imitation besides»[549] (§ 812). Rather, for Vico, "poetry", as already discussed in connection with Book II, "Poetic Wisdom", brings "reality", or the world of human ideas, actions, and relations, into being in the first place[550], and to this creative language Vico refers as "myths" and "fables", counterintuitively and perhaps even ironically[551], saying that «[t]he fables in their origin were true and severe narrations, whence *mythos*, fable, was defined as *vera narratio*» (§ 814). In accordance with his "philosophical" and "philological" commitments, these original literary productions were unvarnished expressions of key aspects of life at the time, their initial "gross[ness]" (§ 814) in fact testifying to their authenticity[552]. This has major hermeneutical and methodological implications: if "poetry/myths/fables" are taken to be originary, they constitute the key determinants in terms of which to understand, and interpret, the archaic world[553]. The role and use of "context", then, takes on a radically different meaning: rather than making the first "poetic" creations subject to the putative illuminating insights from the historical background, the first "poetry/myths/fables" themselves form the underlying "context" in which everything else is to be elucidated. In this perspective, Vico is turning Spinoza's historical-critical method on its head[554].

This interpretive «master key» leads Vico to endeavor to discern in the ancient poems, myths, and fables «the memories of the institutions and laws that bind [men] within their societies» (§ 812), thus embarking on a project of "historical reconstruction"[555]. That such a project entails stupendous complexity and problematics needs no special emphasis[556]; therefore, our ap-

proach and point of view represents merely a particular, and likely relatively ancillary, aspect of Vico's multifaceted program. It mainly revolves around the nature of the "history" into which he was inquiring. As a way of narrowing down the location of Vico's research in the "space" of approaches to history, just two different approaches – out of not a few others – in the history of Homeric reception will here be highlighted. On one side of the interpretive space, both diachronically and hermeneutically, we can look to the earliest Homeric reception in antiquity among the Greek-speaking people that in essence took the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to be factual, reliably detailed, unquestionable accounts of the Trojan War and its aftermath[557]. This began to change, however in the late sixth and early fifth centuries (BC), the best witnesses to that change being Herodotus and Thucydides. Both engage critically with Homer's historical accuracy (and finding plenty of implausibilities, and replacing them at times with their own implausible scenarios), but find themselves in a dilemma, wanting to recognize Homer's poetic imagination and prowess, not necessarily positively, on the one hand, while not abandoning their historical content and significance, in principle, on the other hand[558]. At the opposite side of this space is the view that the Homeric poems are strictly the product of the 8th century BC, dealing with contemporary interests, but overlaid with a "patina" of putatively archaic or "old-fashioned" touches[559]. Thus, the poems are taken to portray an actual society existing at a particular time (in rapid transition, by ancient standards), but any supposedly older elements are literary devices to create an "epic distance" or "alienation effect"[560].

Vico's approach stands in contrast to both "schools of thought": he is interested in reconstructing, or at least bringing to the surface, not actual events and actual participants, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, *contra* a purely fictionalized reading, the actually prevailing cultural characteristics of primitive societies and peoples much earlier than the 8th century[561], the

confluence of their predilections and institutions. In the most crucial dimension of governance, he feels that his integrated "philosophical/philological" framework provides the wherewithal to locate and identify in the Homeric poems, in the mix of "realistic" narratives and "mythical" interludes, actual traces of the first two fundamental cultural developments, consisting of the "age of gods", favoring "theocracies", followed by the "age of heroes", tending to be characterized by forms of "aristocratic" regimen. In Vico's close reading of the poem(s), he "discovers" a remote pre-8th century world in which deities and human celebrities become «concrete personification[s] of some general feelings and ideas»[562]. Clearly, this result constitutes something different from ingeniously applied historicizing "patina"[563]. As commented above, while each of the three cultural "ages" contains seeds and elements of the others, in Vico's view, certain currents predominate overwhelmingly. In this framework, Vico holds that «[t]he constancy […] which is developed and fixed by […] the wisdom of the philosophers, could not have depicted gods and heroes of such instability» (§ 786)[564]. His first major conclusion and interpretative breakthrough consisted of the realization that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* consisted of material from entirely different historical *milieux*: «[…] we must suppose that the two poems were composed and compiled by various hands through successive ages» (§ 804)[565]. It was the fruit of the complex to and from movement between the literary content, at multiple levels, and his theoretical suppositions (that we have described as "functorial", when viewed separately, and as "adjunction", when viewed as interlocked). What is remarkable is that Vico held to this view in the face of all the evidence that the Homeric poems had come down in heavily altered form, as he fully acknowledged:

The fables in their origin were true and severe narrations […]. But because they were originally for the most part gross, they gradually lost their original meanings, were then altered, subsequently became improbable, after that obscure, then scandalous, and finally incredible.

[…] And, […] they were received by Homer in this corrupt and distorted form (§§ 814, 815)[566].

Also, on a more mundane level, Vico points out glaring anachronisms, at least as he considered them to be the case: «Yet we do not see how to reconcile so many refined customs with the many wild and savage ones which he attributes to his heroes at the same time, and particularly in the *Iliad*» (§ 804)[567]. Based strictly on a close reading of the poems – in constant mutual interaction with, and interpenetration of, his theoretical framework, comprising "philosophy" and "philology"[568] – without the benefit of a wealth of linguistic/historical/archaeological data, he arrived at views and conclusions that are not incompatible with the stock-in-trade of modern Homeric studies, or at least certain currents in such studies[569]. The «confused mass of material» (§ 853) made his project by his own admission exceedingly difficult[570] and slow in taking shape, over two decades by his own reckoning. But the point that stands out is that the questionable state and condition of the extant and available literary resources did not preclude them, in Vico's mind, from being an indispensable repository of historical knowledge, provided, of course, they are treated with the right kind of investigatory tools.

Despite the multi-layered distortions and outright replacement(s)/substitution(s) of "original" material, *in principle* it was still possible to arrive at a coherent picture of the nature of ancient civilization(s). This conclusion provides a point or space of contact, and comparison, with Spinoza's hermeneutics of *TTP*. On the other hand, as discussed above, in *TTP*, Chapter 7, Spinoza presents a catalogue of "difficulties" associated with biblical studies, the cumulative effect of which amounted to the realization that *in principle*, knowledge of ancient biblical matters (extended by Spinoza to any and all "sacred" texts) was impossible. Vico and Spinoza, at the same time, share a commonality in that both thinkers approach the chosen ancient literature with ulterior "ideological" motivations; these ulterior reflections are brought

to light in the process and progress of their works, and can thus be related both to methodology and ultimate outcome of their treatment of the material, Homer's poems and Scripture, respectively. In Spinoza's case, it is the position of all things "language" at the bottom of his epistemic pyramid that results in casting a pall over the value of biblical studies; for Vico, however, his model of the development of human civilization places high value on the "originary" processes which, for him, find expression in the very language with which Spinoza takes issue[571]. In the light of these fundamental incongruities, it would therefore seem problematic to link Vico with Spinoza in his (Vico's) hermeneutical practice without complex qualifications[572].

The fourth area introduced above, the question of authorship of the Homeric poems, and the related question of the existence of Homer, or rather Vico's views of his existence, fits into, and in fact needs to be studied in relation to, the overall framework of Vico's work on the poems; it also provides a platform for consideration of the oft-posited thesis that Vico's rejection of the 8th century BC Homer as author of the poems echoed Spinoza's denial of Moses as author of the Pentateuch.

10.1 *Vico and the "Homeric question"*

As observed above, Vico frames his exposition in Book III of the content of the Homeric poems (with its multiple strata) in contradistinction to "philosophy": «Homer the greatest of poets, we denied that he was ever a philosopher» (§§ 836, 896). This assertion goes to the heart of Vico's engagement with the Homeric poems: the poems (both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) are not, as Vico repeatedly claims – more extensively than any other point or line of argument – the product of a mind or minds of an age indulging in philosophical reflection or highly intellectual registers. The "Homeric question", therefore, assumes a different complexion for Vico than for other readers of the early modern age[573], or the modern age, for that matter. In spite of the "corruption"

through time, of the material at all levels, Vico remains convinced of the authenticity of many of its archaic features: «The ineptitudes and indecencies are effects of the awkwardness with which the Greek peoples had labored to express themselves in the extreme proverty of their language in its formative period» (§ 830). The material – or, rather, the parts of the material that Vico designates as such - had to be originally created in the ancient culture(s), by gifted - but forever remaining anonymous – "poets": «we must suppose that the two poems were composed […] by various hands through successive ages [the time frames of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*]» (§ 804)[574]. These first poets gave expression to their culture(s), and also, vice versa, these cultures gave rise to these poets and poetic works, so that Vico could give credit for the poems to the communities as a whole: «These two characters [Achilles and Ulysses], since they had been created by an entire nation, could only be conceived as naturally uniform ([…] agreeable to the common sense of an entire nation […])» (§ 809). The other side of the coin (of genuine authorship of the poems), or corollary, is Vico's rejection of the notion that the poems were the brainchild of a single literary giant of an intellectually highly advanced age[575], calling such attribution «the Homer as he has hitherto been held to be/believed in»[576] (§§ 805, 873, 874, 901). In support of his thesis, Vico cites the conflicting stories and claims about the person supposed to be that author, in terms of his fatherland, and time in which he lived; the fact that he reiterates these incongruities three times indicates the weight they are meant to carry in his argumentation (§§ 788-804, 861-872, 875-879).

Therefore, when Vico says that «Homer was an idea or a heroic character of Grecian men insofar as they told their histories in song» (§ 873), he is giving full credit to the long line of folk poets and their epigones[577] for the epic poems that later came to be attributed to someone in the 8th century named Homer; these folk poets were «the true Homer» (§ 787), where "Homer" is

emblematic of the right to be recognized as (original) author(s)[578].

Thus, Vico distinguishes between two kinds of "Homers", that is, "the Homer hitherto believed in", and "the true Homer". However, there is another, a *third* "Homer" present in Vico's «search for the true Homer». Without bringing this third "Homer" into view and discussion, it becomes highly problematic answering the perennial question of "Homer's" existence. Most of Vico's references to this (third) "Homer" are incidental, although not for that reason less significant, but the following introductions of this "Homer" are more descriptive and specific. The first has a decidedly diachronic or chronological character:

Such works the Greeks could produce only in the time of their heroism, at the end of which Homer must have come. The fables […] reached Homer distorted and perverted. […] they were all at first true histories, which were gradually altered and corrupted, and in their corrupt form finally came down to Homer. […] The first age invented the fables to serve as true narratives […]. The second altered and corrupted them. The third and last, that of Homer, received them thus corrupted (§ 808)[579].

The second expository reference is of a functional nature: «This derivation [of *homeros*] is natural and proper when applied to our Homer as a binder and compiler of fables» (§ 852). This "Homer" is thus assigned to a specific and concrete historical period (which, for argument's sake, we take to be the 8th century BC, without being invested in a precise date); he is also cotextually identified as an actual individual. Furthermore, he is not the "Homer believed in up to now"[580], but rather «a binder and compiler of fables (*legatore,* ovvero *componitore di Favole*)»[581] that have come down to him[582], not the inventor or creator of the stories out of whole cloth, so to speak. This constitutes a deliberate downplaying of the status of the 8th century poet. It needs to be seen, however, in relation to the core concern that Vico

pursues and grapples with, which is the unearthing of ancient historic strata that could provide insight(s) on the origins of civilization, in complex interaction with his "philosophical" and "philological" speculation, and to that end, the 8th century BC poet Homer, living outside the pertinent time frame as he did, had little, if anything, to contribute[583]. From a source-critical perspective, Vico's lack of interest in the 8th century recorder of the poems cannot be taken for lack of esteem for the literary accomplishment of this third Homer, not only in putting the poems in writing as such but also in transforming them into a literary masterpiece[584].

In the light of these explicit distinctions between three kinds of "Homers", it would seem that Vico's belief in the existence of an 8th century individual writer traditionally named Homer should be beyond dispute. This is not the case, however; actually, it would appear that the balance of Vico studies is weighted in favor of doubt or rejection of an affirmative belief on Vico's part[585]. The "blame" for causing the controversy could be placed at the feet of Vico himself, in a manner of speaking, by virtue of a key paragraph in Book III of *Scienza nuova,* that is, § 873, the second half[586] of which reads:

And certainly if, as in the case of the Trojan War, there did not remain of Homer certain great vestiges in the form of his poems, the great difficulties would lead us to conclude that he was a purely ideal poet (*un Poeta d'idea*) who never existed as a particular man in the world of nature. But the many great difficulties on the one hand, taken together with the surviving poems on the other, seem to force us to take the middle ground (*affermarlo per la metà*)[587] that Homer was an idea or a heroic character of Grecian men insofar as they told their histories in song.

Much of the problematic, and thus also any solution, revolves around the type of designation, or, in the terms of analytic philosophy, definite description, ascribed to the different occurrenc-

es of, or (anaphoric) references to, "Homer" in this statement. In our reading, this section (re)-introduces all three "Homers" that appeared, and re-appeared, previously in the Book: (1) the "Homer" of which «vestiges in the form of his poems» remain, denotes Homer, the individual of the 8th century; on the other hand, (2) the «purely ideal poet who never existed as a particular man» means the presumed literary genius, the "philosopher", the «rare and consummate poet», who supposedly single-handedly created the poems out of his boundless imagination, in other words, being «the Homer believed in up to now». And, finally, the paragraph confronts the reader with (3) «the true Homer», the Grecian people(s) and culture(s) that gave expression to and preserved their history/ies in their songs and poems, to be recorded for posterity in due course more permanently, if in «corrupted» form.

Vico's baroque beginning contrafactual conditional – *if there did not remain…, the difficulties would lead us…* – can be converted into its equivalent, the factual logical conclusion that, first of all, "Homer" «existed as a particular man in the world of nature», the opposite of «a purely ideal poet». Vico then – relating them chiastically to the order in which they appear in the preceding sentence[588] – reiterates «the many […] difficulties» as well as «the surviving poems», before affirming that «the true Homer» was the entire Greek civilization(s). The «many and great difficulties» refer, of course, both to the contradictory and inconsistent claims regarding Homer's homeland and age, and other, more substantive, incongruities that Vico rehearses in a *staccato* series of twenty-four points (§§ 874-901) immediately following § 873. This is the third time he does so, serving to emphasize his polemical target that runs like an unbroken thread runs through Book III, namely, the notion of the singular literary creator of the poems.

As has been noted, Vico does not engage appreciably with the received Homeric texts as literature since his primary, if not ex-

clusive, interests lie elsewhere. This relative "indifference" provides no warrant to imply that he denied the existence of the 8th century compiler/recorder/redactor[589]; if anything, it implies rather that the existence of the latter Homer is not at issue at all, and therefore, does not enter, or participate, in the questioning and deliberative process. But proceeding more systematically (and pedantically), there are three sets of possibilities that Vico forces us to consider in terms of the sense of the cryptic «per metà»[590] as involving pairs of disjunct alternatives, or options, from which to choose: the first pair being the existence of the 8th century Homer *OR* «the Homer believed in up to now»; the second, the proposition of the existence of the 8th century Homer *OR* «the true Homer», and lastly, «the Homer believed in up to now» *OR* «the true Homer». The first pair is ruled out by the explicit statement at the very end that the affirmation «per metà» concerned Homer as a heroic character of the Greek people as a whole, not as a single individual. The remaining two possibilities encapsulate the division of views in Vico studies. By our reading of the beginning of the second part of § 873, given the existence of the poems in the extant form, Vico took the existence of the 8th century Homer just the same as granted[591], thus making the second set of choices inapplicable. Settling on the third pair of alternatives – Vico's affirmation of "Homer" as the Greek people expressing themselves in the beginning through anonymous folk poets, constituting «the true Homer» – goes along with the denial of «the Homer believed in up to now»[592], which unambiguously expresses the (co-textual) logical force of «*per metà*», and has the merit of being consistent with the thrust of the entire Book III[593].

It should be noted that another interpretative current is to sidestep altogether the question of the existence of either «the Homer believed in up to now» or the 8th century Homer, affirming only the Greek people as «Homer as a poetic character», without attributing to Vico any intention of acknowledging or

arguing the existence of either of the other two "Homers"[594]. The "strategy" of this interpretation consists of changing the scope and application of «*per metà*» from the function of picking out one half of a pair of disjunctive alternatives, to a judgment of the (relative) quality/qualification of the single notion of «Homer as a poetic character», in other words, arguing that it meant that "Homer" was "part fiction, part reality". As a result, «*per metà*», semantically, is assimilated to a different term used by Vico for "half" of something: «[…] the Greek poets, profoundly steeped in that doctrine (as was Menander, for example, in comparison with whom Terence was called even by the Latins "half a Menander (*Menandro dimezzato*)", could create certain luminous examples of ideal human types […]» (§ 808). By this interpretive move, the domain to which Vico's «*affermarlo per la metà*» belongs, namely, the domain of thinking, logic, and (discrete) truth-values, is replaced by a domain of the non-logical notion of variations in degree (a species of metric space, when endowed with additional structure), which is grounded in the primitive relation of "more or less"[595]. Text-immanent exegesis in this case, therefore, cannot be divorced from questions of underlying ontology.

Against the horizon of the proposed interpretation of Vico's understanding of the genesis and development of the Homeric poems, the putative parallel with Spinoza's critique of Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch can now be (re)considered. As will be recalled, Spinoza's main contention and result was that the Pentateuch (as well as several other Bible "books" immediately following it in the Old Testament canon as we have it today, up to, and including, *First* and *Second Kings*) were written by the Persian Era Ezra (albeit using older material)[596]; however, Ezra's work included relatively small portions of text directly attributed to Moses, including, most importantly, the part called "the Book of the Law of God"[597]. And, most significantly, Spinoza argues for Ezra's authorship on the basis of «a fixed aim in view», «the unity of theme of all these books, their interconnections»[598].

Instead of parallels, several incongruities spring to mind, at various levels of analysis. At the most elementary level, Spinoza places Moses as an individual early in the history of the Hebrews[599] whereas Vico places Homer, the compiler/redactor of the poems at the (preliminary) end of their historic transmission. In that respect, it might be more justified to compare the 8th century Homer with (Spinoza's) Ezra rather than Moses, but this possibility is neither advanced by Vico, or in any Vico reception[600]. In a partial, limited agreement with Spinoza, Vico, actually, places Moses, and the Pentateuch, at a very early time, such as in his argument about the antiquity of certain historical information, or silence thereof, in the *Iliad*: «Painting had not yet been invented.[…] Hence neither Homer nor Moses ever mention anything painted, and this is an argument of their antiquity» (§ 794)[601]. Vico never suggests that this ancient material was compiled/redacted only centuries, if not a millennium, later, by a Hebrew "Homer"[602]. But perhaps the more fundamental question, or objection, to be raised concerns the theoretical, and philosophical, presuppositions with which Spinoza, on the one hand, and Vico, on the other hand, read the ancient texts. Spinoza, as noted, guided by the metaphysical imperative of «common notions», is invested in seeing reflected in them a univocal theme; none of this single-minded/valued focus is present in Vico, to the contrary, in the words of Mazzotta:

Like the disjointed, contradictory, episodic structure of the Homeric poems, history is made up of loosely arranged parts, anonymous and discordant voices, and heterogeneous happenings that, in their spontaneous blind occurrences, resist a harmonious unified totalization if not imposed by the political will of a tyrant[603].

Notes to Chapter 10

[534] *TTP*, Chapter 7, p. 91. Our reading of the «meaning-truth» duality is therefore different from J. Mali: «Spinoza's main argument in [*TTP*] is that the authors of the Old Testament primarily composed it for political purposes, seeking only to inculcate piety and obedience to their particular God, and therefore we must not even seek in it any truths – whether religious, natural, or historical» (Id., *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico's "New Science"*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 217). Not to belabor the point, for Spinoza, «truth» is found only in the metaphysical realm of substance, attributes, modes, whereas in the «religious, natural, or historical» spheres, only the first and second kinds of knowledge hold sway. To be sure, Spinoza also uses the term "true/truth" colloquially at times, to denote plain and simple factuality or correctness, discernible from the co-text.

[535] *TTP*, Chapter 4, p. 51; the Elwes translation has «truth of a historical narrative» where Shirley uses the phrase «belief in historical narratives» in rendering «*fides historiarum*» (*Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. by R. H. M. Elwes, New York, Dover, 1951, p. 61). It may be noted that Mali's gloss, at least partly, is predicated on Elwes' locution; the consequences for reading Vico are not insignificant, by maintaining, on the one hand, that «[m]ore than anything else, however, Vico owes to Spinoza his main heuristic principle – that the meaning of the text is immanent and must be derived from its historical context", and, on the other hand, that Vico «sought to overcome [Spinoza's] convenient distinction between what had really happened (truth) and what people merely believed to have happened (meaning), by suggesting that in historical reality the meanings that people have spun around real events have themselves become eventual […]» (Id., *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, cit., p. 219, 220).

In this connection, also Levene's perspective is to be noted, in "blurring" the lines between Spinozan «meaning» and «truth»: «It is not that Spinoza thinks history cannot be true, it is that, as with truth itself, the value is in what one does with these histories, and in how one, […] makes sense of their particular thrust». Levene contrasts her reading with (a) «either he is seen as banishing all truth from the Bible by focusing on the meaning alone», or (b) «he is seen as culling from its plethora of narratives the core truths that it most fundamentally teaches» (Id., *Spinoza's Bible*, cit., pp. 119, 120). It is evident that we have argued for reading (a), provided that «truth» and «meaning» are associated to the third and second kinds of knowledge, respectively.

[536] Levene rightly takes exception to a view of Spinoza that denies him philosophical engagement with history: «Spinoza is often accused (by Hegel,

for example) of having no real conception of history, or at least no interest in it» (*ibid.*, p. 119). Spinoza's ultimate evaluation(s) and use(s) notwithstanding, *TTP* consists of an extensive review, and reconstruction, of biblical history, perhaps even to a greater degree and extent than philosophers have undertaken post-Spinoza. More important, still, is the fact that history/historiography is integrated in his epistemic system; as indicated in the quoted text above, «historical narratives» are part of the second kind of knowledge. As such they serve as a valuable, if not indispensable, foil for the third kind of knowledge.

[537] P. Cristofolini, *La scienza intuitiva di Spinoza,* cit., pp. 188-190, p. 189 esp.: «In altri termini, la scienza politica è un'altra esplicazione della scienza intuitiva (In other words, rational political discourse is another expression of intuitive knowledge)».

[538] We assume the correctness of the view held in Vico studies that he knew *TTP*; G. Costa, for example pointed out that Spinoza's works were in the Valetta library, and he could also have had access to the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, and its entry on Spinoza by Pierre Bayle (Id., Review of G. Bedani, *Vico Revisited*, cit., in «NVS», 8, 1990, pp. 90-92, p. 91). Another secondary, indirect source of Vico's familiarity with Spinozan hermeneutics, by all indications, was fellow Neapolitan Biagio Garofalo (1677-1762) whose book *Considerazioni intorno alla poesia degli ebrei e dei greci* (1707) was a work of Spinozist reception (see P. Totaro, *«Il lezzo di ser Benedetto»: Motivi spinoziani nell'opera di Biagio Garofalo*, in «BCSV», XXX, 2000, pp. 61-76; F. Bregoli, *Biblical Poetry, Spinozist Hermeneutics, and Critical Scholarship*, in «Journal of Modern Jewish Studies», 8, 2009, 2, pp. 173-198, pp. 177-180). Garofalo's work has been re-issued, (ed. by M. Sanna, with cooperation of A. Lissa, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2014), with an extensive introduction by M. Sanna, in which Sanna points out the interest Garofalo's views on the Hebrew and Greek languages would have held for Vico. From this perspective, one cannot help but share puzzlement over the fact that Vico in a letter to Garofalo of late 1721, neglected to interact with Garofalo on these matters; as M. Sanna and S. Caianiello commented: «[…] non è facile spiegare como mai né nella lettera che qui se presenta, in cui pure si tratta di temi contigui, né altrove Vico non vi si riferisca mai in modo esplicito ([…] it is not easy to explain that neither in the letter before us, although in it related topics are dealt with, or elsewhere, does Vico ever refer to it explicitly)» (Id., *Una lettera inedita di G. B. Vico a B. Garofalo del 4 ottobre 1721*, in «BCSV», XXVI-XXVII, 1996-1997, pp. 325-331, p. 328).

[539] B. A. Haddock, *Vico's "Discovery of the true Homer"*, cit., p. 591.

[540] Vico stays focused on the contrast throughout Book III, including additional references to "philosopher(s), philosophy" in §§ 784, 785, 786, 806, 807, 825, 828, 829, 831, 836, 837, 838, 845, 896, 897. This usage of "philoso-

phy" is to be distinguished from his own "philosophical proofs" (§ 810) that are part of his overall epistemic system, as argued above, which also includes his own construct of "philology", being brought to bear in Book III as "philological proofs" (§ 839).

[541] See G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 142-143, 156-160 for a more in-depth discussion of Vico's «paradoxical logic» in his seemingly incorrect gloss of Plato who never said that Homer had been a philosopher. The seeming "paradox", however, becomes intelligible when Plato's criticism of Homer is seen in its "competitive" moment for imputed normative supremacy: «But Plato's condemnation of Homer is above all political. Plato finds Homer politically and morally debatable […]. Finally, as a mimetic activity poetry falsifies the original truth of the idea, forces us to live in the midst of simulacra, and hampers any original discoveries» (*ibid.*, pp. 156-157).

[542] While the speculative nature of Vico's theorizing does not lend itself to, or demand, empirical verification to any degree of specificity, appreciation for the daunting and bold task he took on might be enhanced by what has become known about the ancient world(s) in the meantime. For example, in § 819, Vico highlights the importance of memory at a time when «common script", that is, the alphabet and alphabetic writing, was not yet invented. This age is dealt with in D. Schmandt-Besserat, *Record Keeping before Writing*, in *Scrittura e scritture. Le figure della lingua. Atti del XXIX Convegno della Società Italiana di Glottologia, Viterbo, 28-30 ottobre 2004*, ed. by M. Mancini and B. Turchetta, Rome, Il Calamo di Fausto Liberati, 2009, pp. 67-80. Schmandt-Besserat concluded: «Like most of the greatest human achievements, writing was the final link of a long chain of inventions. It all started in the Near East in a distant past, when probably, early farmers began counting the products of their crops and flocks with pebbles» (*ibid.*, p. 79).

[543] For comparable conclusions regarding Vico's and Plato's views on poetry and philosophy, see G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 143. The discussion could certainly be expanded to deal more fully with the overall epistemic systems of both Vico and Spinoza; for example, by placing Vico's epistemic trichotomy side-by-side with Spinoza's tripartite hierarchy of knowledge. In that case, our present focus on a key aspect alone would need to be (re-)considered in relation to the complete epistemic framework. For a more in-depth comparison of Vico and Spinoza on this aspect, based on a reading of *Ethics*, see F. Valagussa, *Vico. Gesto e poesia*, preface by V. Vitiello, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2013, pp. 112-115, concluding: «La razionalità può anche essere il risultato ultimo del cammino storico del genere umano, ma non per questo è il luogo dell'intera ricchezza che la storia ha prodotto […]. […] Vico rifiuta esattamente la pretesa di individuare nella raziona-

lità […] l'unico criterio di giudizio […]. […] secondo le parole di Spinoza, tutto accade secondo necessità, senza che si possano rintracciare atti eroici o epoche di barbarie. La "nuova scienza", al contrario, rivendica il valore della memoria, della fantasia e dell'ingegno […]. (Reason can thus be the ultimate outcome of the historical journey of humans, but this does not mean it is the locus of all the richness produced by history […]. […] Vico refutes precisely the pretension of designating reason […] as the sole criterium of judgment […]. […] according to what Spinoza says, everything happens by necessity, without the possibility of being able to explain heroic deeds or eras of barbarism. The "new science", on the contrary, vindicates the value of memory, imagination, and ingenuity […])» (*ibid.*, p. 115).

[544] Similarly §§ 820, 840, 841, 842, 845, 848.

[545] V. Vitiello, *Prefazione. Scrivere la storia*, in F. Valagussa, *Vico. Gesto e poesia*, cit., pp. V-XI, p. VII.

[546] In the Corollary and Note (Scholium) to this Proposition, Spinoza makes it clear that «ideas» and «things» belong strictly to his metaphysical system, not mundane historical processes: «Substance thinking and substance extended are one and the same substance, comprehended now through one attribute, now through the other. […] God's intellect and the things understood by God are identical. […] as long as we consider things as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature […] through the attribute of thought alone».

[547] § 781: «Diomed can wound Venus and Mars with the help of Minerva, who, in the contest of the gods, despoils Venus and strikes Mars with a rock».

[548] Let us not overlook the note of none too subtle sarcasm that Vico could not resist appending (in both the 1730 and 1744 editions): «What are we then to say of his [Homer's] representing his heroes as delighting so much in wine, and, whenever they are troubled in spirit, finding all their comfort (c*onsuolo*, 1730; *conforto*, 1744), yes, and above all others the wise Ulysses, in getting drunk? Fine precepts for consolation, most worthy of a philosopher!» (§ 784).

[549] See G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 146: «Castelvetro, much like other Renaissance theorists […], never understood the true origin of poetry».

[550] Referred to by Mali as «the mythical foundations of reality» (Id., *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, cit., p. 86), and a view in which Vico likely was influenced by Italian humanism, as proposed by E. Garin, *Science and the Civil Life in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. by P. Munz, Cambridge-New York, Doubleday, 1978.

[551] Vico studies are replete with expositions and elucidations of Vico's "myth-ology", as a starting point of which (in English) the following are help-

ful: J. Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, cit.; D. Bidney, *Vico's New Science of Myth*, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, cit., pp. 259-277; A. J. Grant, *Vico and Bultmann on Myth*, cit. Caponigri described the Enlightenment view of "myth" against which Vico's re-evaluation can be set: «Myths could be construed, from the illuminist point of view, only as pure phantasies, as disguised rational structures or, most sinisterly of all, as deceptive devices meant to beguile the ignorant [...]» (Id., *Philosophy and Philology*, cit., p. 95); similarly, Mali: «Myths, legends, folk-tales were considered worthless as "historical evidence", and therefore useless to science», and so characterizes Vico's proposition as «a polemical stance» (Id., *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, cit., pp. 205, 220).

552 Bidney commented: «In a prereflective age, such as the age of the gods and the age of the heroes, poets had not yet learned to fabricate deliberate, systematic fictions and falsehoods, and it may therefore be assumed that they spoke theological and historical truths» (Id., *Vico's New Science of Myth,* cit., p. 269). Vico cites the *Iliad* as going back to the time «when Greece was young and consequently seething with sublime passion», and the *Odyssey* as later, «when the spirits of Greece had been somewhat cooled by reflection, which is the mother of prudence» (§ 879). And in general, Vico asserts, «[s]uch crude, co[a]rse, wild, savage, volatile, unreasonable, or unreasonably obstinate, frivolous, and foolish customs [...], can pertain only to men [...] in the weakness of their minds, [...] in the vigor of their imagination, and [...] in the turbulence of their passions [...]» (§ 787). We therefore concur with G. Cacciatore: «Diese ["philosophischen" und "philologischen"] Beweise zeigen zum Beispiel, daß die Mythen keine verzerrten Bilder von der Wirklichkeit darstellen [...] (These ["philosophical" and "philological"] desiderata demonstrate, for example, that the myths do not constitute distorted pictures of reality [...])» (Id., *Die Hermeneutik Vicos zwischen Philosophie und Philologie*, in *Die Hermeneutik im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. by M. Beetz and G. Cacciatore, Cologne-Weimar-Vienna, Böhlau Verlag, 2000, pp. 311-330, p. 329).

553 Vico made this point, of course, already at the beginning of *Scienza nuova*, in his explanation of the frontispiece: «We find that the principle of these origins both of languages and of letters lies in the fact that the first gentile peoples, by their demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters. This discovery [...] is the master key of this Science [...]» (§ 34). Valagussa sees Vico's approach as deliberately polemical vis-à-vis Spinoza's «geometric method» of *Ethics* (Id., *Vico. Gesto e poesia*, cit., p. 112).

554 In Mazzotta's view, «[...] a context presupposes the belief in an articulated totality, in a common field wherein individual entities acquire meaning in terms of a surrounding whole. Such is the view of the Neoplatonists or monists, such as Bruno and Spinoza, who assume the whole reality is made of in-

terdependent, organically linked parts. For Vico, however, the context is not a given, an abstract preestablished totality within which particulars are fitted and become intelligible» (Id., *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 149).

According to Walther, Spinoza's emphasis on historical context is rooted in philosophical commitments: «Daß der Rationalismus-Vorwurf gegenüber Spinoza nicht darin besteht, daß dieser die Empirie ignoriere […], sondern darin, daß er mit einem rationalistischen Apriori an die Bibel herantrete, das dieser von vornherein die Intention auf Wahrheitserkenntnis abspricht und sie deshalb zum Gegenstand kontextueller Kausalanalyse machen kann and machen muss […] (The criticism of Spinoza as being rationalist did not mean to say that he ignored empirical reality […], but that he approached the Bible with a rationalist a priori, which denied it, in principle, its claim or intention of conveying knowledge of truth, and thus, it [the rationalist a priori] could, and had to, make it a subject of contextualized study of its origins and development)» (Id., *Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung*, cit., p. 283).

[555] Vico describes his project explicitly as "historiography" by statements such as: «Inasmuch as the poets came certainly before the vulgar historians, the first history must have been poetic (§ 813); […] poetic allegories […] must necessarily contain historical significations referring only to the earliest times of Greece (§ 818); the poets must therefore have been the first historians of the nations (§ 820); all ancient profane histories have fabulous beginnings (§ 840); it was the poets who began to write Roman history (§ 842); we were obliged […] to restore to the fables their original historical meanings (§ 846); the history of the peoples of Greece was all written by their poets (§ 847) the cyclic poets […] preserved all the fabulous history of Greece from the origins of their gods down to the return of Ulysses to Ithaca (§ 856)».

[556] See E. Nuzzo, *Tra ordine della storia e storicità. Saggi sui saperi della storia in Vico*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2001, pp. 1-108.

[557] See the more detailed assessment of prevailing ancient attitudes in L. Kim, *Homer between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 22-46, on which our comments are based, summarized as follows: «[…] a vision of Homeric poetry as an accurate mimetic reflection of historical reality – Homer as a painter of heroic life – was common throughout antiquity» (*ibid.*, p. 27).

[558] According to Kim, «Thucydides is thus caught in the same bind as Herodotus, engaged as they both are in a struggle for historiographical authority with an illustrious predecessor. […] they have to concede that Homer did know the truth and that he was interested in conveying some of that truth in his poetry. In other words, they question Homer's devotion to historical accu-

racy on the grounds that he was a poet, yet still insist upon a certain historiographical impulse on the poet's part» (*ibid.*, p. 45).

[559] This view is held by K. A. Raaflaub, *Homeric Society*, in *A New Companion to Homer,* ed. by I. Morris and B. Powell, Leiden-New York-Cologne, Brill, 1997, pp. 624-648, p. 628; see also I. J. F. de Jong, *Convention versus Realism in the Homeric Epics*, in «Mnemosyne», Fourth Series, LVIII, 2005, 1, pp. 1-22, p. 3. Raaflaub explains the contemporary 8th century BC cultural setting as follows: «Die erhaltenen Epen widerspiegeln deshalb recht nahe die Perspektive und Umstände der Gesellschaft des Dichters. […] In der *Odyssee* ist eine Heimkehrgeschichte in einen mittelmeerischen Kontext eingebettet. Interessen der Zeit der Erkundungs und Handelsfahrten und der Kolonisationszüge des 9. Und 8. Jh. sind offenkundig. In der *Ilias* kämpft ein panhellenisches Expeditionskorps gegen eine Koalition östlicher, nichtgriechischer Völker. Diese Konzeption paßt zu andern panhellenischen oder zumindest überregionalen Phänomenen, die gerade im 8. und 7. Jh. aufkamen […] (The extant epics therefore reflect rather closely the perspective and circumstances of the poet's society. […] In the *Odyssey*, a story of returning home is embedded in a Mediterranean context. The interests of the era of exploratory and trade voyages and colonizing movements of the 9th and 8th centuries are obvious. In the *Iliad*, a panhellenic expeditionary force fights against a coalition of Eastern, non-Greek peoples. This conception is consistent with other panhellenic phenomena or at least phenomena involving multiple regions)» (Id., *Die Bedeutung der Dark Ages: Mykene, Troia und die Griechen*, in *Der neue Streit um Troia. Eine Bilanz,* ed. by Ch. Ulf, Munich, C. H. Beck, 2003, pp. 309-329, at. p. 325). Raaflaub, at the same time, acknowledges "international" relations in the earlier Bronze Age (*ibid.*, footnote 52), for which see P. Collins, *From Egypt to Babylon: The International Age 1550-500 BC*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2008, pp. 14-89.

[560] K. A. Raaflaub, *Homeric Society*, cit., p. 628; Raaflaub concludes: «Hence such customs cannot have been artificial poetic structures or fossilized memories of things long gone» (*ibid.*, p. 648). Raaflaub contrasts his interpretation with that of «an artificial and unhistorical one that arbitrarily combines components from wildly divergent periods and cultures». In *Die Bedeutung der Dark Ages*, cit., Raaflaub explains some of his hermeneutical presuppositions: «In frühen Gesellschaften ist historische Erinnerung nichts Selbstverständliches. Interesse an der Vergangenheit besteht nur, soweit diese Vergangenheit für die Gegenwart relevant ist. […] Wenn also eine Gesellschaft nach einem Intervall ohne historisches Bewußtsein ein solches Bewußtsein und damit auch Mythen entwickelt, die in einer fernen Vergangenheit angesiedelt sind, handelt es sich dabei eher um historisierende Fiktionen als um genuine historische Er-

innerung (In early societies, historical memory is not a given. Interest in the past does exist only insofar as this past is relevant to the present. […] So if a society, after an interval without historical consciousness, develops such consciousness and along with it myths located in a distant past, likely they represent historicizing fictions rather than genuine historical memory)» (*ibid.*, pp. 327, 328).

Ch. Ulf seemingly takes the same position: «Die heroisierte Vergangenheit stellt eine von der Gegenwart des Autors aus betriebene poetische Fiktion dar. […] Auch können die als Erzählung über the Vergangenheit angelegten Texte, wie Mythen und auch Epen, keine ehemals gültige Ethik oder eine frühere <Ordnung> tradieren, sondern spiegeln die Projektion aktueller Wünsche einer bestimmten sozialen und/oder politischen Gruppe in eine konstruierte Vergangenheit wider (The past presented as heroic constitutes a poetic fiction produced from the perspective of the present time of the author. […] Furthermore, the texts, such as myths and epics, too, that are purported to be narratives about the past, cannot transmit an ethic in force formerly, or an earlier <order>, but rather reflect the projection into a constructed past, of the current aspirations of a certain social and/or political interest group)» (Id., *Was ist und was will "Heldenepik": Bewahrung der Vergangenheit oder Orientierung für Gegenwart und Zukunft?*, in *Der neue Streit um Troia*, ed. by C. Ulf, cit., pp. 262-284, pp. 281, 283). This begs the question, of course, how this would differ, in principle and/or degree, from modern, or any kind of, history-writing, a thorny subject obviously outside our subject matter.

B. Patzek adduces a different and more "technical" reason for questioning the theory of oral transmission over a span of centuries: «Bekannt ist, daß das Gedächtnis der Menschen mündlicher Kulturen an ihre menschliche Umgebung und örtliche Umwelt gebunden ist und selbst in diesem Fall die kommunikative Konsistenz des Gedächtnisses mehr als drei Generationen nicht überdauert (It is known that the memory of people in oral cultures is linked to their community and local surroundings, and that even in that case, the communicative consistency of memory does not last longer than three generations)» (Id., *Die homerischen Epen im Spiegel ihrer geschichtlichen Tradition: Oral Poetry* und *Oral Tradition*, in *Der neue Streit um Troia*, cit., pp. 245-261, p. 259).

[561] Haddock refers to «attitudes of mind», «modes of thought», «*Weltanschauung* [worldview]», «thought-structures», «attributes of […] characters» (Id., *Vico's "Discovery of the true Homer"*, cit., pp. 591, 592, 594).

[562] J. Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, cit., p. 199. Caponigri highlighted the reverse epistemic direction: «[…] the process of the formation of the poetic myth may begin in the idealization of an historical figure. What must be observed immediately, however, is that the actuality of this figure is of indiffer-

ence both to the form and to the operation of the poetic character […]» (Id., *Time and Idea*, cit., p. 176).

563 Vico's interpretation, however, cannot be claimed as taking sides in the question or controversy, whether "old" or "new", over the historicality of the main data points of the Homeric stories. The "new controversy" (*der neue Streit*) ensued with J. Latacz, *Troia und Homer: Der Weg zur Lösung eines alten Rätsels*, Munich, Koehler & Amelang, 2001; published in English as *Troy and Homer: Towards a Solution of an Old Mystery*, trans. by K. Windle and R. Ireland, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, arguing for an accurate and reliable portrayal of a Late Bronze Age setting, to which *Der neue Streit um Troia*, is an (overwhelmingly countervailing) response by specialists (archaeologists as well as historians).

For a balanced reference to arguments, it should be mentioned that historic elements of periods and culture(s) pre-dating the 8th century have been highlighted by researchers. M. Meier-Brügger, for example, cites the view: «Der troianische Sagenkreis ankert im 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr. und muß spätestens kurz nach 1200 v. Chr. Bestandteil der Heldenepik geworden sein. […] Der sich um Troja rankende troianische Sagenkreis ist vermutlich erst nachmykenisch fester Bestandteil der griechischen Heldenepik geworden. Das Sagengut muß die Zuhörer immer wieder gefesselt haben (The Trojan cycle of legends is anchored in the 2nd millennium BC and must have become part of heroic epic shortly after 1200 BC at the latest. […] The Trojan cycle of legends revolving around Troy likely became a fixed part of Greek heroic epic only in post-Mycenaean times. The material of the legends must have fascinated listeners each time anew)» (Id., *Die homerische Kunstsprache*, in *Der neue Streit um Troia*, cit., pp. 232-244, pp. 236, 240). This appears to negate the "three-generations" model of oral transmission referred to above.

M. West has tried to make a case for the great age of the Greek hexameter: «Evidently the hexameter that we find in Homer was no recent creation. It had been established for seven centuries or more. […] For at least seven centuries down to the time of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* it seems to have remained essentially unchanged, despite the considerable renovation which that lapse of time effected upon the Greek language and perhaps upon the nature of the epic tradition itself» (Id., *Homer's Meter*, in *A New Companion to Homer*, cit., pp. 218-237, pp. 234, 237). See also J. Bennet, *Homer and the Bronze Age*, *ibid.*, pp. 511-533, p. 523: «The most convincing evidence of the existence of epic in the Bronze Age is linguistic, because such elements are subconsciously incorporated in the very fabric of the poems».

Other classicists who have come out in favor of considering Greek-Anatolian, and, more generally Indo-European culture, going back to the sec-

ond half of the 2ⁿᵈ millennium BC, to the extent of what is known about it, are J. Katz, *The Indo-European Context*, in *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, ed. by J. M. Foley, Malden, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 20-30; and E. D. T. Vermeule, *"Priam's Castle Blazing": A Thousand Years of Trojan Memories*, in *Troy and the Trojan War: A Symposium held at Bryn Mawr College October 1984*, ed. by M. J. Mellink, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, Bryn Mawr College, 1986, pp. 77-92.

More recently, E. H. Cline, while focusing on the "traditional" dating and events associated with Troy, has raised the hypothetical possibility of reference to the 15ᵗʰ century BC: «[…] if one were to search for a historical event with which to link pre-Homeric traditions of Achaean warriors fighting on the Anatolian mainland, the Assuwa Rebellion, ca. 1430 BC, would stand out as one of the largest military events within northwestern Anatolia prior to the Trojan War, and as one of the few events to which the Mycenaeans (Ahhiyawans) might tentatively be linked via textual evidence […]» (Id., *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 41; see also Id., *Achilles in Anatolia: Myth, History, and the Aššuwa Rebellion*, in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80ᵗʰ Birthday*, ed. by G. D. Young, M. W. Chavalas, R. E. Averbeck, Bethesda, Maryland, CDL Press, 1997, pp. 189-210).

[564] As Haddock comments, attributing the ancient mores to inventions of intellectuals was considered anachronistic by Vico (Id., *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer"*, cit., p. 590). To some extent, the issue at hand may be illustrated (with requisite caution and caveats, to be sure) by the difference between two modern literary works, the musical *West Side Story*, on the one hand, and Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* (*Il nome della rosa*), on the other hand. *West Side Story*, about individuals caught up in rival gang feuds in New York's Harlem, is a modern version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which in turn has antecedents in Italian Renaissance plays, and even in antiquity; in spite of the immense literary and situational transformation(s) of the story, the underlying historical background of a particular form of social pathology has been preserved over great arcs of time. On the other hand, *The Name of the Rose* is a work about, among other things, modern semiotics and literary theory, but given the "patina" of the late Middle Ages. But, as *The Name of the Rose* demonstrates, even historicizing "patina" presupposes historical knowledge (which in Eco's case is considerable), and thus could be "mined" for actual historical insights, however refracted and fractured, thus leaving open the possibility of a certain convergence of these two seemingly incompatible paradigms. Be this as it may, it has been correctly observed that «Vico […] suggested that [language is] the most serious witness of […] ancient customs and ways of living followed by peoples in which the same language originated» (E.

Riverso, *Vico and Wittgenstein*, cit., p. 272). Stripped to its core, Vico's hermeneutics has been characterized as: «En la palabra encarna la historia, y en la historia encarna la palabra […] (In language, history is embodied, and in history, language becomes flesh and blood)» (A. Gutiérrez, "*Verum et factum cum verbo convertuntur": La historicidad como discurso en Giambattista Vico*, in «CsV», 17-18, 2004-2005, pp. 99-104, p. 101).

565 In his autobiography, Vico proudly underlines his achievement: «Vico […] read both the poems of Homer in the light of his principles of philology; and by certain canons of mythology which he had conceived, […] shows how […] the poet weaves into the treatment of his two subjects two groups of Greek stories, the one belonging to the obscure period [the *Iliad*] and the other to the heroic [the *Odyssey*] […]» (G. Vico, *Autobiography*, cit., pp. 159, 160).

566 In the preceding § 808, Vico had given a somewhat expanded outline of the process of "corruption" of certain parts or aspects of the narrative: «Hence he [Homer] must be assigned to the third age of the heroic poets. The first age invented the fables to serve as true narratives, […]. The second altered and corrupted them. The third and last, that of Homer, received them thus corrupted». On the dynamics of this process over time, see Caponigri, *Time and Idea*, cit., pp. 195-197. It is the understanding of this dynamic that Vico appropriates for penetrating through the layers of distortion, to the original grounds of the legends, fables, and myths.

While Vico is primarily concerned with material changes to the stories, he also recognizes editorial and text-critical alterations, such as those made under the Pisitratids, Athenian tyrants (6th century BC), and by Aristarchus of Samothrace (2nd century BC), at the library of Alexandria (§§ 853-855, 860). On Vico's reference to the Pisitratids, see further L. Ferreri, *La questione omerica dal Cinquecento al Settecento*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2007, pp. 189-191; G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 149, 150.

These editorial/redactional interventions, at the same time, are (indirect) evidence for Vico of the original archaic nature of the poems, which he calls «a confused mass of material they must have been before, when the difference we can observe between the styles of the two poems is infinite» (§ 863), and despite Aristarchus' editing, the poems «still retain a great variety of dialects and many improprieties of speech, which must have been idiomatic expressions of various peoples of Greece […]» (§ 860). This raises the question of Vico's view of, and approach to, text-criticism as such which will not be addressed here, however; it is not without its own tensions if, on the one hand, one can speak of «il disinteresse vichiano per la critica testuale e per la ricerca delle fonti (Vico's lack of interest in textual criticism and source criticism)», and, on the other hand, of Vico's own practice of meticulously editing and re-

wording his own writings (M. Lollini, *Il mito come precomprensione storica aperta nella Scienza nuova di Giambattista Vico*, in «BCSV», XXVI-XXVII, 1996-1997, pp. 29-53, p. 39; G. Nencioni, *Corso e ricorso linguistico nella Scienza nuova*, in «BCSV», XIV-XV, 1984-1985, pp. 39-62; and especially Vico's *Correzioni, miglioramenti e aggiunte* (corrections, refinements, and additions) in turning the 1730 edition into the final 1744 edition of *Scienza nuova*, for which see G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni,* cit., p. 777).

[567] Summarizing his observations in §§ 792-803, Chapter III on "The Age of Homer". E. H. Cline refers to various putative anachronisms on the basis of current historical/archaeological knowledge: cremation rather than burial; the characteristics of chariots and fighting tactics; individual duel and method of marching; weapons and other artifacts (Id., *The Trojan War: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 45-49).

[568] In Nuzzo's words: «La scienza della storia può essere data perché quella storia ha un "ordine" che può essere ricostruito […] con una "concatenata serie di ragioni", e l' "interpretare", l'esercizio ermeneutico esercitato anche sui tempi più distanti e favolosi, può essere ricondotto e fondato ad un ordine di necessità logiche […]» (Historical knowledge can be obtained since history has an "order" that can be reconstructed […] with an "interconnected series of explanations", and the process of "interpretation", the hermeneutical practice applied also to very distant and legendary times, can be attributed to, and founded on, an order of logical necessity […])» (Id., *Tra ordine della storia e storicità*, cit., p. 101).

[569] See J. Bennet: «[…] we can go some way to explaining how some features of the material world of the Bronze Age were preserved in Homeric poetry, while, […] social features – and many linguistic features – were systematically and subconsciously modernized through time» (Id., *Homer and the Bronze Age*, cit., p. 531); similarly, E. H. Cline: «Overall, the *Iliad* seems to be a compilation of details and data spanning the full range of time from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. This may be expected, if changes and updates were constantly being made to the poem as it was handed down over the centuries, in order to keep it fresh and relevant». Cline's view of underlying "historicality" vs. pure "fictionality" characterizes the evidence as «uncertain» and "equivocal", however, does not dismiss it out of hand, for example, «whether the Greek poems are a reflection of what seems to have been more than several hundred years of on-again, off-again conflict between the Hittites and the Ahhiyawans (Mycenaeans) – a telescoping of numerous events into a series of epic poems about the "war to end all wars". […] The lines between reality and fantasy might be blurred, particularly when Zeus, Hera, and other gods become involved in the war. And we might quibble about some of the details,

but overall, Troy and the Trojan War are right where they should be, in northwestern Anatolia and firmly ensconced in the world of the Late Bronze Age, as we now know from archaeology and Hittite records, in addition to the Greek literary evidence from both Homer and the *Epic Cycle*» (Id., *The Trojan War*, cit., pp. 45, 49, 68, 104, 110).

For more detailed historical studies, see the following contributions in *A New Companion to Homer*, cit.: I. Morris, *Homer and the Iron Age,* pp. 535-559; S. Morris, *Homer and the Near East*, pp. 599-623; W. Donlan, *The Homeric Economy*, pp. 649-667; A. W. H. Adkins, *Homeric Ethics*, pp. 694-713; the following contributions in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean (ca. 3000 - 1000 BC)*, ed. by E. H. Cline, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2010: D. Nakassis - M. L. Galaty - W. A. Parkinson, *State and Society*, pp. 239-250; S. Lupack, *Minoan Religion*, pp. 251-262; id., *Mycenaean Religion*, pp. 263-276; Ch. Mee, *Death and Burial*, pp. 277-290; B. E. Burns, *Trade*, pp. 291-304; T. Bryce, *The Trojan War,* pp. 475-482; as well as R. Osborne, *Homer's society*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. by R. Fowler, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 206-219.

[570] Lollini points out the contentious issue surrounding connections between "myth" and "history": «La corruzione dei miti rende estremamente arduo il tentativo di stabilire una linea diretta di continuità tra mito e storia (The corruption of the myths makes it extremely arduous to try to establish a direct link between myth and history)» (Id., *Il mito come precomprensione storica aperta nella Scienza nuova di Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 45).

[571] Morrison came to similar conclusions: «[…] while Spinoza emphatically denies that historical knowledge is necessary for either understanding or judging scientific or philosophical books, Vico asserts that historical knowledge is essential for understanding and judging *all* books. […] Spinoza's history of Scripture shows that it is only confused and inconsistent opinion produced by the imagination. […] For Vico, historical knowledge about the products of the human mind is the only possible knowledge for man» (Id., *Vico and Spinoza*, cit., pp. 67, 68; italics original).

[572] In this light, the historical assessment by Israel would therefore seem to be overstating matters: «Even those modern commentators who insist that Vico was a philosophical opponent of Naturalism and Spinozism are obliged to concede that Spinoza exerted a significant influence on many of Vico's key formulations, on his critical philological method […], on his ethical philosophy, and finally, especially on his approach to the interaction of religion and society. For the evidence for this is unanswerable» (Id., *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, cit., p. 668).

573 The most comprehensive account of early modern Homeric studies is L. Ferreri, *La questione omerica dal Cinquecento al Settecento*, cit.

574 To be counted among those responsible for the "original" poems, to the extent of changes and accretions made by them, are «the rhapsodes, who […] sustained life by singing the poems […] throughout the cities of Greece; and they were the authors of these poems inasmuch as they were part of these people who had composed their histories in the poems» (§ 878); «[…] rhapsodes were stitchers-together of songs, and these songs they must certainly have collected from none other than their own peoples» (§ 852, see also §§ 849, 851).

575 In the conclusion of Book III (prior to the Appendix), Vico succinctly summarizes these complementary sides: «Wherefore his poems should henceforth be highly prized as being two great treasure stores of the customs of early Greece. […] the Homeric poems, having been regarded [traditionally] as works thrown off by a particular man, a rare and consummate poet, have hitherto concealed from us the history of the natural law of the gentes of Greece» (§ 904).

576 Mazzotta refers to «the "Homer" as a solitary, unique, self-conscious author», adding: «One can inscribe within the issue, at least in part, Vico's radical critique of the theory of the unique author of the Homeric epics, of the theory, that is, of Homer as a Cartesian subject, who observes, dominates, and represents reality from the transcendent standpoint of a consciousness dwelling outside the empirical particularities of the world» (Id., *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 144, 145).

K. Simonsuuri refers to «[t]he false Homer that Vico first examined», who «was the sum total of the ideas that the literary and philosophical tradition had assembled about Homer's divine origins, omniscience and esoteric wisdom» (Id., *Homer's Original Genius: Eighteenth-century notions of the early Greek epic (1688-1798)*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 93).

577 Memorably, he calls them «Homer, lost in the crowd of the Greek peoples» (§ 882).

578 M. Mooney refers to "Homer" in this sense when stating that: «Homer was not a philosopher, that he was not even a man, or two men» (Id., *Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 202). In terms of the contents of the Homeric poems, Simonsuuri expressed Vico's intended meaning: «The true Homer was a conglomerate of the myths of the Greek people, an expression in language of their dreams and actions» (Id., *Homer's Original Genius*, cit., p. 98).

579 Other chronological indicators, either general or specific, are: «up to the time of Homer» (§ 819); «earlier than Homer» (§ 856); «Homer comes

eighteen hundred years after the institution of marriage […]. […] it was before Homer's time that the theological poets flourished […], Hesiod, putting him thirty years before Homer. Cicero affirms […] that there were other heroic poets before Homer […]» (§ 901).

⁵⁸⁰ Haddock calls him «the matchless poet of the heroic age» and notes that Vico's «dissolution of the historical identity of Homer» targeted this concept of "Homer" (Id., *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer"*, cit., p. 585).

⁵⁸¹ G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 1155.

⁵⁸² To quote Haddock again: «He had compiled the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from cognate stories derived from popular traditions; and contradictions in the modes of life portrayed in these groups of stories could be explained by the different regions or periods of heroic Greece from which they had issued» (Id., *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer"*, cit., p. 589).

⁵⁸³ As Amerio noted: «Abbiamo già notato che non è questa circa la persona di Omero la parte più importante e più innovatrice degli studi omerici del V.; ma piuttosto quella circa la natura e il valore estetico e storico dei due poemi (We already noted that the most important and innovative aspects of Vico's Homer studies do not concern the person of Homer but rather the nature and value, aesthetically as well as historically, of the two poems)» (Id., *Introduzione allo studio di G. B. Vico*, cit., p. 495).

To get a sense of how Vico at times deals with, and incorporates, historical individuals in his reflections, see the expositions on Vico's treatment of Solon in the following essays in *Il sapere poetico e gli universali fantastici*, cit.: A. Pons, *Una storia senza "nomi propri"*, pp. 275-286; M. Sanna, *I "mostri" della storia*, pp. 287-297. Sanna explains the process by which Vico arrives at «[l]a riduzione di Solone a un universale fantastico e l'indifferenza vichiana verso la sua esistenza o non esistenza […] ([t]he reduction of Solon to an imaginative universal and Vico's indifference toward his existence or non-existence […])» (*ibid.*, p. 289). See also Caponigri, *Time and Idea*, cit., p. 176: «[…] the natural existence becomes a matter of indifference for historiographic purposes and is replaced wholly by the poetic character itself».

⁵⁸⁴ Likely B. B. Powell speaks for most readers of Homer: «Everything about the *Odyssey* is different from the *Iliad*. They are literary opposites, created by one of the greatest artists that ever lived» (Id., *Introduction*, in *The Odyssey*, translation, introduction and notes by B. B. Powell, foreword by I. Morris, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 1-36, p. 26).

Ulf remarks concerning the conversion of heroic song into heroic epos: «Der für die Poetisierung des Textes notwendige Aufwand ist natürlich nicht auf einen […] inneren Prozeß zurückzuführen (The expenditure of effort re-

quired for creating a poetic text naturally is not […] due to an internal process)» (Id., *Was ist und was will "Heldenepik"?*, cit., p. 282).

G. Danek refers to the oral epic tradition received by the 8th century Homer, somewhat oxymoronically, as "hypo-text": «The Homeric epics were hyper-texts at the time when they were composed. Their hypo-text was the whole epic tradition. […] this hypotext as it was has disappeared for us precisely because it was wiped out and replaced by the monumental texts which Homer composed […]. But if we take into account the hypertextual nature of the Homeric epics, they become richer and more meaningful» (Id., *The Homeric epics as palimpsests*, in *In the Second Degree: Paratextual Literature in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Culture and its Reflections in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Ph. S. Alexander, A. Lange, R. J. Pillinger, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 123-136, p. 135). On certain literary aspects of the two works, see I. J. E. de Jong, *Homer*, in *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, Volume One,* ed. by I. de Jong, R. Nünlist, A. Bowie, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. 13-24). See also V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., p. CCXXXVI.

[585] With respect to the voluminous history of reception of Vico's intended stance, it is still important to cite B. Croce and F. Nicolini (without engaging here with their lines of reasoning, or with the historically interesting responses to their interpretations): B. Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, cit., pp. 183-196; Id., *Saggio sullo Hegel, seguito da altri scritti,* Bari, Laterza, 1913, pp. 269-282; F. Nicolini, *Saggi vichiani*, cit., pp. 181-209, on the subject "La seminegazione della personalità storica di Omero (The halfway denial of the historicity of Homer)".

[586] The first half consists of a single, convoluted sentence giving effusive praise to unnamed «men of acute minds and excelling in scholarship» and «the most judicious critics» for raising questions concerning «the Homer believed in up to now», thus introducing the key issue. Nicolini suggests these were Francesco Spinelli, prince of Scalea (1686-1752), Matteo Egizio (1671-1745), Francesco Bianchini (1661-1729) (Id., *Saggi vichiani*, cit., pp. 182, 186). For Vico's intellectual debt to Bianchini, see also C. Lucci, *Vico lettore e interprete dei poemi omerici nella Scienza nuova (1744)*, cit., pp. 49-51.

The paragraph in its entirety is discussed in detail in G. Cerri, *G. B. Vico e l'interpretazione oralistica di Omero*, in *Oralità. Cultura, letteratura, discorso. Atti del Convegno Internazionale. Urbino 21-25 luglio 1980*, ed. by B. Gentili and G. Paioni, Rome, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985, pp. 233-258; R. Ruggiero, *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., pp. 191-195; the same material also appeared in Id., *La "volgar tradizione"*, cit., pp. 237-245.

[587] G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 1158.

[588] The possible chiastic structure of the second half of the paragraph may be shown in the form of the following key phrases (which in the Bergin/Fisch translation follow the order of the original Italian text):

a: Homer

b: vestiges in the form of his poems

c: the great difficulties

d: he (*Omero*) was a purely ideal poet who never existed as a particular man

c': the many great difficulties

b': the surviving poems

a': Homer [as] a heroic character

There thus appears parallelism between the "Homers" at the beginning and end of the chiasmus, on the one hand, and, in the center, on the other hand, focus on the "Homer" against whom the entire Book III is directed, beginning with the topic of this "Homer" as a "philosopher" (§ 780), and ending with the same topic, by describing him (hypothetically) as «a rare and consummate poet» (§ 904).

The phrase «a purely ideal poet» reads «un *Poeta d'idea*» in G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit., p. 1158; if this «*Poeta d'idea*» is understood as «the Homer believed in up to now (*Omero finor creduto*)», rhetorically, he serves a double function, providing a contrast with both the 8th century Homer, and «the true Homer», but at the same time binding all parts of the argument together, as is a basic function and effect of chiasmus. Ruggiero seems to concur with the identification of the «*Poeta d'idea*» with «the Homer believed in up to now», based on the comparison of the 1730 and 1744 editions, by paraphrasing the clause as «fosse stato artatamente costituito [*finto*, 1730] come un poeta d'idea (that he was artfully contrived as an idealized poet)» (Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., p. 194). In *La "volgar tradizione"*, Ruggiero comments that «[i]l verbo "fingere" ha qui valore di *immaginare* […] (the verb "to feign" here has the sense of *to imagine* […])» (*ibid.*, p. 243, footnote 10).

[589] In this respect, we concur with Croce who wrote: «[…] there was no strictly logical passage to the denial of the existence of an individual Homer […]» (Id., *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, cit., p. 190).

[590] The binary, disjunctive use of «per metà» is also present in Book I, Axiom X (§ 140): «The same axiom shows how the philosophers failed by half (aver *mancato per metà*) […], and likewise the latter [the philologians] failed […]» (G. Vico, *La Scienza nuova. Le tre edizioni*, cit. p. 860). Haddock refers to the «complementary role of philosophy and philology» (Id., *Vico's "Discovery of the True Homer"*, cit., p. 591).

[591] The existence of the 8th century Homer was disputed by the *abbé* d'Aubignac (1604-1676), in his *Conjectures académiques ou dissertation sur l'Iliade*

(1715, posthumously); however, since this work was unknown to Vico, his «search for the true Homer» was not a reaction to it, or a topicalization of d'Aubignac's contention (G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, p. 152).

[592] Ruggiero, by a different route, arrived at a corresponding conclusion: «Ma, a ben vedere, Vico non solo non nega la figura del poeta greco [la personalità di Omero], ma la sua attenzione è rivolta piuttosto ad altro. […] L'Omero dunque non è quello "finor creduto", cioè il frutto della finzione tradizionale che ha conglobato su quel nome una molteplicità di caratteri discordanti, ma è ad uno stesso tempo poeta singolare e "carattere eroico d'uomini greci, in quanto essi narravano, cantando le loro storie"» (But, all things considered, Vico not only does not deny the figure of the Greek poet [the person of Homer], but his attention revolves rather around something else. […] Homer therefore is not the one "believed in up to now", but at the same time a single poet [i.e. the 8th-century Homer] and the "heroic character of Grecian men insofar as they told their histories in song")» (Id., *Nova Scientia Tentatur*, cit., pp. 192, 194, 195).

See also the carefully qualified conclusion in V. Ch. dos Santos: «O filósofo Naplestano refutou formalmente a existência de Homero, na medida em que noção de autoria individual se vinculava a um tipo de conhecimento que chamou de *sapienza riposta* (The Neapolitan philosopher formally denied Homer's existence, provided that the notion of individual authorhip is linked to a kind of knowledge called *esoteric wisdom*)» (Id., *Vico e a descoberta do verdadeiro Homero,* in «Acta Scientiarum. Human and Social Sciences», 27, 2005, 1, pp. 21-30, p. 28, online at *Portale Vico*, <www.giambattistavico.it>, under the tab *Biblioteca digitale*).

[593] The second proposition as representing Vico's view, nevertheless, has numerous proponents. In this case, affirming the identity of «the true Homer» goes hand in hand in hand with denial of the existence of the 8th century Homer. To cite a few representative views: Mooney: «[…] Homer was not a philosopher, […] he was not even a man or two men» (Id., *Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric*, cit., p. 202); G. Cerri: «Egli [Omero] non fu un individuo storico […]; ma non fu nemmeno invenzione in senso stretto. Omero è la figura simbolica nella quale i Greci ipostatizzarono la moltitudine indefinita degli aedi […] (He [Homer] was not a historical individual […]; but he was neither an invention in the strict sense. Homer is the symbolic figure by means of which the Greeks hypostatized the indefinite multitude of the poets […])» (Id., *G. B. Vico e l'interpretazione oralistica di Omero*, cit., p. 243); V. Placella (using the 1730 edition): «[…] partendo dal fatto incontestabile dell'esistenza dei due poemi, arrivò a negare Omero «per mettà», cioè a riconoscerlo come «carattere eroico» […] ([…] starting with the undeniable fact of the two extant poems, he

ended up denying «half» of Homer, namely, acknowledging him as «a heroic character»[…])» (Id., *La mancata edizione veneziana della Scienza nuova*, in *Vico e Venezia*, cit., pp. 143-182, p. 171, 172); F. Valagussa: «Omero non è un aedo realmente esistito […]; Vico intende considerare Omero come universale fantastico […] (Homer is not an actually existing poet […]; Vico intends to consider Homer as an imaginative universal […])» (Id., *Vico. Gesto e poesia*, cit., p. 108); S. Mazzarino: «[…] ma già per Omero la precisazione vichiana ch'egli fosse "carattere eroico" non consente di affermare senz'altro ch'egli "non fu particolar uomo in natura" […] ([…] but already in the case of Homer, Vico's designation of him as "a heroic character" does not mean anything but that he "never existed as a particular man in the world of nature" […])» (Id., *Vico, l'annalistica e il diritto,* Naples, Alfredo Guida, 1971, p. 42).

[594] As in V. Hösle: «Und zweitens *kann* jenes Zur-Hälfte-Behaupten durchaus auch dahingehend verstanden werden, Homer sei nichts als ein poetischer Charakter: Denn auch in diesem Fall wäre er keine bloße Fiktion, sondern es läge ihm etwas Reales zugrunde – nämlich die Volksdichtung der Griechen (And secondly, the half-affirmation *can* be understand arguably in the sense that Homer was nothing but a poetic character: since in this case also, he would not be merely fictional, but rather based on something real – namely the folk poetry of the Greeks)» (Id., *Einleitung*, cit., p. CCXXXVI; italics original; see also Amerio's similar argument, *contra* Croce, in Id., *Introduzione allo studio di G. B. Vico*, cit., p. 495, footnote 1, with reference to B. Croce*, Saggio sullo Hegel,* cit., p. 280, who allowed for the existence of Homer as an individual).

[595] E. Kleinert, *Studien zur Mathematik und Philosophie*, cit., pp. 19-21.

[596] *TTP*, Chapter 8, pp. 105-115.

[597] S. Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell*, cit., p. 112.

[598] *TTP*, pp. 112, 113.

[599] Vico also places Moses at the (relative) beginning of the history of the Hebrews; this leads to a further problem with respect to Spinozan influence on Vico's reconstruction of early civilization, identified by L. Amoroso: «Così, se per Vico Mosè fu poeta e fu teologo, lo deve essere stato però in un modo abissalmente diverso da quello dei "poeti teologi" delle nazioni gentili (Thus, if according to Vico, Moses was a poet and a theologian, he must have been such in a profoundly different way from the "theological poets" of the gentile nations)» (Id., *Mosè fu un poeta teologo?,* in *Il sapere poetico e gli universali fantastici*, cit., pp. 211-225, p. 220).

[600] Bringing Ezra as writer of the Pentateuch into the picture and argument would have made the parallel(s) between Moses and Homer even more problematic. Only by glossing over (Spinoza's) Ezra, Mali, for example, could

state that «Spinoza […] not only ruled out Moses as the author of the *Pentateuch*, but attributed its composition to the entire Hebrew people […]. In a similar vein Vico claimed that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were not written hy Homer himself, who in fact had never even existed […]» (Id., *The Rehabiliation of Myth*, cit., p. 219).

[601] Vico makes two other explicit refences to Moses in *Scienza nuova* 1744: in § 465: «[…] St. Jerome holds […] that the Book of Job, which is older than the books of Moses, was composed in heroic verse […]»; in § 585: «Moreover, Homer himself, as often as he mentions the heroes by name in his two poems, adds the fixed epithet "king". In striking harmony with this is the golden passage in *Genesis* in which Moses, enumerating the descendents of Esau, calls them all kings […]». In both instances, the great antiquity of the Pentateuch is affirmed, as corollary to the great antiquity of the Homeric material. In all three paragraphs, however, mention of Moses has merely an incidental character from which no conclusions can be drawn with respect to analogies between Homer and Moses either in terms of authorship or existence. L. Amoroso commented: «[…] a parte un paio di confronti di carattere occasionale e marginale fra Omero e Mosè [§§ 464 (465), 585, 794], non si parla di quest'ultimo come sublime poeta […] ([…] apart from a couple of comparisons of an incidental and marginal character, the latter is not spoken of as a sublime poet […])» (Id., *Mosè fu un poeta teologo?*, cit., p. 217; see *ibid.*, pp. 213-217, for Vico's earlier preoccupation with Moses). Amoroso also speaks of Vico, in *Scienza nuova* 1744, in terms of «un arretramento di Vico di fronte alla possibilità di applicare alla Bibbia l'ermeneutica da lui elaborata per la mitologia greco-romana (a distancing by Vico from the possibility of applying to the Bible, the hermeneutics that he developed for Greek-Roman mythology)» (*ibid.*, p. 218). On the more general subject of "Vico and the Bible", see G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., pp. 234-255.

[602] The mere juxtaposition of Homer and Moses, in itself, therefore, does not imply a more fundamental commonality, such as Lucci reads into it: «L'accostamento fra i poemi omerici e il *Pentateuco* è esplicito in *Sn44*, III, 794. […] La congruenza tra i presupposti della *Scienza nuova* e quelli delle opere spinoziane, va al di là dell'esplicita presa di distanza da parte di Vico (The Homeric poems and the *Pentateuch* are explicitly brought together in *Sn44*, III, 794. […] The congruence of the presuppositions of *Scienza nuova* with those of Spinoza's works supersedes the explicit distancing on Vico's part)» (Id., *Vico lettore e interprete dei poemi omerici nella Scienza nuova (1744)*, cit., p. 46, footnote 1).

[603] G. Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World*, cit., p. 159.

Conclusion

While these notes attempted to be inspired and guided by the postulated overall structure of the work, that is, its "concentric" arrangement, the aspects dealt with were highly selective and restricted, and thus *ipso facto* fall short of reflecting the breadth and depth of the result(s) of Vico's decades-long reflections. Our choice of topics also may serve to give the impression of univocality in Vico's thought when this could not be further from the actual state of affairs which is a rich, "baroque", body of thought moving along complex directions and dimensions. It is however true that Vico is motivated, and energized, by the notion of the possibility of discovering the origins of civilization and human societies (*modulo* the Hebrews); and it is also the case that the principal means at his disposal is the study of relics and artefacts of the past in the form of language[604] in all its forms. Our notes gravitated to aspects of Vico's views and uses of language, and thus share certain commonality; this does not mean, however, that Vico's work can be reduced to the same "core" concerns. Perhaps the greatest difference between Vico's exposition(s) in *Scienza nuova* and ours lies in the fact that Vico does not make any explicit mention of Spinoza or polemically engage with Spinozan philosophy, that is, in the direct and discursive manner in which he engages with Grotius, Selden, Pufendorf, and Bodin[605]. Our procedure of juxtaposing Vico and Spinoza was mainly an expository tool, a means of profiling Vico's stated and unstated views by way of comparisons and contrasts with Spinoza, in interaction with other assessments, both *pro* and *contra* any affinities, in both Vico and Spinoza studies. As matters stand, the results obtained consistently seem to point to fairly sharp differences between the two thinkers. These disagreements seem to come to the fore already from the beginning of *Scienza nuova,* namely, in relation to their reception of Euclid, considered met-

onymic for failsafe logico-deductive reasoning on Spinoza's part, but conceptual creativity on Vico's part. This philosophical bifurcation at the incipient phase of *Scienza nuova* seems to set the stage for divergences to come, whether in connection with their theory of knowledge, philosophy of language, or the hermeneutics of ancient texts.

While the side-by-side comparison of Vico and Spinoza presented here consistently seems to suggest, and point to, a wide intellectual and philosophical gulf between these thinkers, the discussion dealt only with certain specific, restricted points and levels of analysis. A more adequate assessment of their bodies of thought, or rather Vico's body of thought in relation to Spinoza's, would need to take place at a more fundamental level of their philosophies[606]. Irrespective of how such an evaluation may turn out, the differences in specific areas seem undeniable, and add to the testimony of the early modern age as a period of intellectual ferment and pluralism[607], perhaps its most lasting legacy for the modern age.

Notes to the Conclusion

[604] This point of emphasis, however, is not meant to imply exclusion of other types of resources playing a role in Vico's investigations; in fact, Lucci has argued convincingly Vico's interest in, and use of, archaeological artefacts, especially under the influence of Francesco Bianchini (Id., *Vico lettore e interprete dei poemi omerici nella Scienza nuova,* cit., pp. 49, 60, 73). This is a welcome corrective to the view that «er sich andererseits für die zu seiner Zeit in Ansätzen beginnende Archäologie und Epigraphik nicht interessierte […] (on the other hand, he had no interest in archaeology and epigraphy, the rudiments of which started to develop in his time […])» (V. Hösle, *Einleitung*, cit., p. CLXXX).

[605] Vico wrote a very short "chapter" entitled "Reprehension of the metaphysics of René Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, and John Locke", to be part of Book II of *Scienza nuova*, but it was finally not made part of the work. For in-depth discussion, see «NVS», 8, 1990, pp. 2-18, with commentary by D. Ph. Verene, and also Id., *Vico's Reprehension of the Metaphysics of René Descartes, Bene-*

dict Spinoza, and John Locke. Translation and Commentary, in *Giambattista Vico: Keys to the New Science*, cit., pp. 179-198, and esp., M. Sanna, *La "fantasia, che è l'occhio dell'ingegno"*, cit., pp. 91-126.

[606] For a more detailed discussion of Vico's and Spinoza's thought at this level, pointing out both divergences and convergences, see V. Vitiello, *Introduzione*, cit., pp. LIX-CXVIII.

[607] R. Evangelista speaks of «un'epoca profondamente dinamica e dalle contraddizione profonde (a profoundly dynamic era and an era of profound contradictions)» (Id., *La filosofia di Tommaso Rossi fra scienza e antropologia*, in T. Rossi, *Della mente sovrana del mondo*, ed. by R. Evangelista, Naples, ISPF Lab/Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, 2014, pp. 11-66, p. 66 (online at <www.ispf-lab.cnr.it>); see also R. Bordoli, *Il Seicento plurale: nuove filosofie e tradizioni,* in «Lo Sguardo», II, 2011, 6, without pagination (online at <www.losguardo.net>).

Appendix

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF *SCIENZA NUOVA*

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Abstract

The present study of Giambattista Vico's defining work, *La Scienza nuova* (*The New Science*) is concerned with an approach to the work that pays requisite attention not only to the *content* but also to its *form*. To that end, Horst Steinke proposes that *Scienza nuova* possesses the structure of a ring composition by which individual parts of the work relate to each other in complex but identifiable ways. This approach, which is developed through a discussion of all five Books that make up the work, also leads to, or implies, certain constraints on the interpretation of Vico's thought, resulting from an interplay of form and content. Since Vico made Homer the centerpiece of his own work, Vico's hermeneutics are discussed in the context of his underlying philosophy of language, and both are compared with Spinoza's thought. Finally, the so-called "Homeric question", in Vico's view, is addressed in an original way.