

Vico, Freud, and Lacan: On the science of imaginative universals and the formations of the unconscious¹

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1. The comparison I am going to attempt raises specific methodological difficulties. First, since Vico's thought had no proven influence on psychoanalysis in its nascent state, the history of ideas is not very usable as such. I will therefore have to adopt a comparative method that is sufficiently flexible to allow the confrontation of issues and achievements, while taking into account the specificity of objects and their media. Second, since any method that resembles applied psychoanalysis aims to constitute universal principles of interpretation of concepts whose operational value has only been demonstrated in a given field, we must abandon its use and compare the theories themselves in order to determine their fields of applicability. The real similarities between Vichian philosophy and psychoanalysis will then be shown to be more epistemological than thematic: concern for an aisthesis that assures us of a hold on the world, search for resonances of the universal in the most singular, establishment of links between truth and fiction as between poetic mathemes and scientific mathemes, sense of heuristic construction and concern for verification. Thirdly, if the idea of "science" obsesses Vico, Freud and Lacan, it is necessary, in order to grasp the scientificity specific to the sciences that they found, to conceive of synergies between apparently very distant domains and to open wide the partitions that separate the arts and the disciplines.
2. Let us begin by establishing a triptych that allows the poetic revolution the possibility of playing a decisive role in the constitution of our future. Rimbaud was unaware that the poetry he called for would regain the inaugural force of that which founded, at the dawn of humanity, all our institutions, as Vico teaches us; but that did not prevent him from writing from the height of his seventeen years: "So the poet is truly a thief of fire. He is responsible for humanity, even for animals; he will have to make his inventions felt, palpated, listened to [...]. The poet would define the quantity of the unknown awakening in his time in the universal soul. [...] Poetry will no longer set the rhythm of action; it will be ahead"¹. The responsibility of the poet, holder of the civilizing fire, is exercised in invention and in its propagation: poetry ensures the emergence of new knowledge and promotes the only praxis worthy of the name.
3. Lacan had only a weak contact with Vico's philosophy,² but just as Vico thinks of his "new science" as the incorporation into the domain of science of the oldest and hitherto unknown manifestations of human *ingegno*, so Lacan conceives of psychoanalysis as the conquest of a new field of exercise for scientific activity: "Freud addresses the subject to tell him this, which is new — Here, in the field of dreams, you are at home. [...] I dare to state as a truth that the Freudian field was not possible except a

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certain time after the emergence of the Cartesian subject, in that modern science only begins after Descartes has taken his inaugural step. It is on this step that depends whether we can call the subject to return home to the unconscious. [...] The status of the unconscious is ethical, not ontic."³ A new duty appears to us, which the science already established showed itself powerless to fulfill.

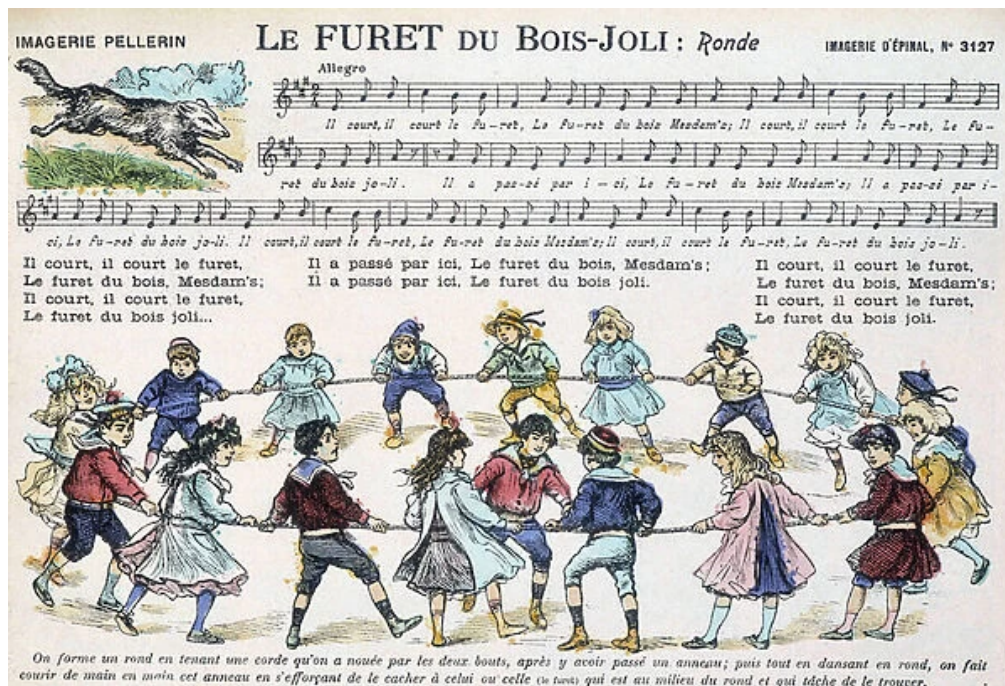
4. On the one hand, Rimbaud's poetic revolution, which is succeeded by silence, as in a thwarted annunciation; on the other, the psychoanalytic and Vichian revolutions which present themselves as the establishment of "new sciences", founded at the end of Cartesianism and in a field which at first seemed to be foreign to modern science. This presentation will doubtless leave aside the poetic revolution, but it is important to keep in mind the conception of poetry as praxis, thanks to which the singularity of a work bears witness to an unprecedented access to the Unknown which changes the world. I would also like to develop the meaning of this triptych by showing that it highlights (1) three dimensions of time: a utopian future in which the poet would be a "multiplier of progress", the present of a practice which is also a rewriting of personal history, the distant past where the first explosions of a properly human thought occurred; (2) three anthropological types: the poet seer, the madmen and the dreamers, the first men; (3) three intentions: the fabrication by alchemy of the word of this "true life" whose absence haunts us, the establishment of the specific language and the working modes of the unconscious, the ideal reconstruction of the different stages of the genesis of man and the civil world; (4) three methods: reasoned deregulation of all the senses, an adventure aimed at grasping modes of constitution of the truth in the transference situation, as determined by the conditions of the analytic cure, the search for the philosophical *verum* through the *certum* that philology alone establishes; (5) three styles: "fabulous opera", speech intended for disciples (simple style in Freud, proceeding by construction of "provisional concepts"; glittering and baroque style in Lacan, mixing with his graphs and his mathemes or mathemata pieces of bravery and provocative formulas), puzzle meticulously forged by Vico and whose reader, totally involved, must reassemble the pieces according to the given rules.
5. The differences between these three types of "revolutions" are obvious; but their real similarities are established from refusals whose energy and rigor are dazzling. "In my whole life [...]," wrote Vico at the end of *De studiorum ratione* of 1708, "I have only really feared one thing, being the only one to know, a situation that has always seemed to me the most perilous, since it exposes one to being either a god or a madman."⁴ Did Rimbaud enter into silence only to avoid sinking into madness? And do psychoanalysts assume their position in the transference only to pursue an analysis that solitude would make too dangerous? Are philosophers *morosophes*, wise fools, as Erasmus would have it⁵ and is "madness-sophia" the truth of philosophy? In any case, there is no possible establishment of a new truth without major risks of delirium, delirium itself being, according to etymology, the result of the furrow or rather the ridge (*lira*), that is to say, the *ados* formed by the plough between two furrows.
6. Refusing to situate themselves in an abstract eternity, our three authors concretely determine the truth as *filia temporis*. And, meditating on the enigma that man presents for himself, they affirm that poetry thinks, that the dream figures, that the symptom speaks, that the metaphor is a shortened little fable. They reject logico-rational discourse as the only way to access the truth, because the truth does not consist in proving, but in finding. The meaning of speech is established here and now and human reality is historically constructed in an eminently concrete language. Style cannot constitute an end in itself; it is the means of establishing a truth, but a truth that is always to be constructed, a truth that is

not a foundation, but the object of an aim: the tip of a cone toward which one tends, bread that must be shared, whether one desires it or not, a great wind that presses against the windows of speech alone⁶. Nothing, however, is more harmful than the contempt for the difference between languages. Misology and hatred of thought are one and the same thing, because the signifier penetrates the signified despite the distance that separates them. Not to take the side of words — to make "low Breton" an instrument devoid of any specificity and to condemn the flowers of rhetoric as superfluous ornaments⁷—is to refuse to take the side of things: of properly human things. Lionel Trilling: *Poetry as a Method of Thinking, Topology, and the Science of Tropes*.

7. The kinship between Vico's method and the psychoanalytic method struck Lionel Trilling and Ernesto Grassi. As early as 1940, the great American literary critic Lionel Trilling was able to see in Freud a sort of second Vico in a very concise passage from *Freud and Literature* that I translate almost in its entirety: "Freud not only naturalized poetry; he discovered its status as a pioneer and he sees it as a method of thinking. Quite often, he strives to show how, as a method of thinking, it is questionable and ineffective in conquering reality; yet he is forced to use it himself to form his own science, as when he speaks of the topography of the mind or when he tells us, in a sort of defiant apology, that the metaphors of spatial relations that he uses are in reality very inexact, since the mind is not a spatial thing, but that there is no other way than metaphor to conceive of its difficult idea. In the 18th century, Vico spoke of metaphorical imagery in the early stages of culture; it was reserved for Freud to discover how, in the scientific age, we still feel and think in imaginative formations, and to create what psychoanalysis is, a science of tropes, of metaphor and its variants, synecdoche and metonymy.⁸ Let us take up three essential points: the constitution of poetry as a "method of thought," the topology of the psychic apparatus, and the science of tropes.
9. (1) If poetry constitutes itself as a "method of thought" producing works, why and how does it distinguish itself from madness conceived as a method of forming morbid symptoms? This is because art and madness are established on similar foundations, to the point that the latter can seem to be a distorted image of the former. "The true artist," Freud wrote in 1916, "knows how to give his daydreams a form such that they lose any personal character that might repel strangers and become a source of enjoyment for others. He also knows how to embellish them in such a way as to completely conceal their suspect origin."⁹ But to affirm that art is the disguised expression of individual fantasies, which have become, as if by miracle, shareable and enjoyable, does not really clarify the problem of poetic creation and sublimation. The real problem is to understand the artist's need to give form to his fantasies.
10. Now, this is where the Freudian unconscious plays a role comparable to the Vichian *ingegno*: the unconscious wants nothing, it invents, it produces and this in its own way, often incredibly disorienting for those of us who no longer imagine and who, above all, believe that they no longer have to imagine. Freud often insists on the "disconcerting character of unconscious processes, to which the researcher can only become accustomed at the cost of a great effort on himself"¹⁰ and attributes it mainly to the fact that what he calls "the reality of thought (*Denkrealität*)" prevails over external reality (*äußere Wirklichkeit*). In the neurotic there is an "omnipotence of thoughts" which leads him to confuse simple psychic movements with real acts. Even if Freud emphasizes the individual dynamics of thought, while Vico studies these collective productions that are the universals of imagination, such preeminence of

the thought real, of the poetic real, in relation to the external real brings to mind Vico's profound formula, according to which "The poetic true is a metaphysical true, in the face of which the physical true that does not conform to it must be considered false" (§205).

11. Linking the constitution of the real (reell, real) to fantasy thought and poetic creation, Freud then emphasizes the need to adopt an imaginative and poetic "method of thought" that adapts to its object, establishes itself on principles quite other than those of formal logic and forces him himself, in order to found his science, to resort to myths and metaphors that he explicitly recognizes as such. Thus, to cite just one example, he does not miss the opportunity to emphasize that "the theory of drives is our mythology."
12. (2) As for the topology of the psychic apparatus, Trilling goes straight to the most difficult. I would like to quote on this subject Freud's astonishing note, written in 1938 and published posthumously in *Ergebnisse, Ideen*.
13. Problem: "Spatiality (*Räumlichkeit*) could be the projection of the psychic apparatus. No other likely derivation. Instead of Kant's a priori conditions, our psychic apparatus. Psyche is extended, knows nothing about it (*weiß nichts davon*)." The text is difficult and I will propose the following interpretation: the opposition outside-in corresponds to a need of thought; and the outside (or at least a certain outside) could well be only a screen on which our thoughts are projected, in order to allow us to access their content. Moreover, what we understand as constants of perception (of size, form, existence), far from being first, constitute late and slow acquisitions of the psyche and the problem is to understand the genesis of human reality at stages prior to, then parallel to, these constructions. No more a priori conditions, but productions which reveal to us a posteriori the functioning of our psychic apparatus.
14. (3) Trilling's remarks on psychoanalysis as a "science of tropes" are all the more remarkable because, while he could certainly refer to Cassirer's study on the different pathologies of symbolic consciousness¹¹, he did not yet have Roman Jakobson's article on "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia" which only dates from 1956¹². Jakobson distinguished between disorders of contiguity and those of similarity which excluded, for the former, metonymy, for the latter, metaphor. "The decisive question" of the *Science of Dreams*, he added, was to know whether "the symbols and temporal sequences used" were based on contiguity or on similarity. On the one hand, Freud's metonymic displacement and synecdochic condensation; on the other, Freudian identification and symbolism.
15. This immediately became one of the pivots of Lacanian reflection: Lacan does not, however, group displacement and condensation under the heading of arrangement by contiguity, but opposes them as relating, the first, to contiguity, the second, to resemblance. To grasp something of desire, one must understand its metonymic structure: desire always moves on the axis of the message, it runs under the signifier, like "the ferret of the *bois-joli*" [see illustration below] that a child, placed in the center of the circle, tries to stop on the rope that his comrades slide under their closed fists. Conversely, to grasp something of the subject, one must understand its metaphorical structure: the subject alienates himself in his images on the axis of the code. He finds in them (and, first, in his mirror reflections) substitutive figures that are both formative and deceptive.



16. The debate on the meaning of these transpositions was conducted in the 1970s: we find a valuable echo of it in a chapter of Lyotard's book, *Discours*, figure¹³ which shows how condensation already presupposes a displacement. The essential is found in the formula of the *Traumdeutung*: "The work of the dream does not think, calculate, or judge: it is content to transform (*umzuformen*)"¹⁴. Let us distinguish four stages: (1) thoughts of the dream, (2) dreamed or figurative dream, (3) text(s) of the dream, (4) associations or reconstructions of the thoughts of the dream. Clearly, a gap separates the dreamed dream from its narrative (2 and 3), but also the immediate narrative (brief and more or less enigmatic) from the abundant material produced by the associations (3 and 4). The essential thing is therefore to understand the work of dreams themselves, constructing essentially plastic metaphors and metonymies, in other words images that are initially mute and concrete, and not verbal and abstract.

17. Now, if Vico is not very interested in dreams as such, not only does he emphasize the importance of plastic and mute language, but he proves that this language must have been the initial language of man, he reconstructs its production at the dawn of humanity and he demonstrates its founding scope. If the world created by man could only be poetic, the first poets could only be soothsayers, contemplating the *templa caeli* and practicing augural science¹⁵.

Ernesto Grassi: the problem of rationality, Ingenium and the unconscious

18. The second text, essential for marking out the different aspects of our subject, is that of Ernesto Grassi "Vico versus Freud: Creativity and the Unconscious", published in 1981¹⁶, the same year that his disciple Donald Philip Verene published his now classic work, *Vico's Science of imagination*¹⁷. Continuing his analysis of Vico's rejection of a priori metaphysics and formal logic, Grassi highlights

the scope of what he calls "the ingenious or imaginative act" in the constitution of reality. The *ingenium* is, in fact, not only the capacity "to unite things that are "separate": it is that of creating human things, that is to say the world which is proper to us.

19. Vico opens a new "area" for philosophical reflection, by showing that "the semantic indicative principles are at the base of the humanization of nature" and that these principles are deployed in imaginative activity on the one hand, and in work on the other, as evidenced by the myth of Hercules, killing the Nemean lion whose skin he wears, and using the flames he vomited to replace the primitive forest with clearings and fields. The original experience of tearing away from the "biological code" is also that of the need to construct reality. Because he is no longer guided by instincts that fix his behavior in advance, man is obliged to invent his world. From the point of view of a concrete semiotics (this "sematology" that Jürgen Trabant would define in 1994¹⁸), Grassi then insists on the fact that "indicative signs" concerning the way of interpreting things appear in the context of our needs and that they provide man with instructions for action.
20. Grassi's article raises several difficulties. The first, which concerns his entire work, is due to the "non-rationalism" that he presupposes in the productions of the *ingegno*. Hence the somewhat irritating formulation of the question posed in the second paragraph of the article: "We are faced with this question: if the act of genius and imagination, with its metaphors, its analogies, and its myths, has no rational character, then does it belong to the sphere of the unconscious?" Why this presupposition? Wanting to base the distinction between the *ingegno* and the unconscious on the presence or absence of a rational character is not convincing.
21. The second difficulty lies in the absence of an effort to define the unconscious. This is, in fact, a heavy task, because Freud's conceptions evolved according to his practice: analysis of dreams and hysterical symptoms, then of obsessive representations and, from 1911, of psychotic delusions. The unconscious, or rather what Freud calls it "for the needs of an intuitive representation"¹⁹, constitutes a system in its own right in the first topic, that is to say in the first construction of the psychic apparatus, where it is defined in opposition to the preconscious and conscious systems. This is no longer the case in the second topic, where certain parts of the Ego and the Superego are unconscious: the illusions of control of the Ego and the repressing powers of the Superego belong to the unconscious, as do the conflicts between heterogeneous drives, the repressed and the foreclosed.
22. In Lacan we find a presentation of the unconscious that goes to the heart of Freudian discovery and on which I would like to insist, to allow its comparison with the *ingegno*. The Freudian unconscious is a factory. But it cannot be defined either as the "seat of instincts" or as a cause. It is not the "romantic unconscious of imaginative creation", from which the Jungian collective unconscious and its archetypes take over.²⁰ To access this unconscious, one must apply oneself to reconstructing what it has produced, just as Vico patiently does for the inventions of the *ingenium* throughout the ages. Freud always opposed Jung's method which, starting from collective psychology to go to individual psychology²¹, misses the singularity and disregards the specific void around which speech is constituted. "To all these unconscious always more or less affiliated with an obscure will, what Freud opposes is the revelation that at the level of the unconscious there is something in all points homologous to what happens at the

level of the subject — it speaks, and it works in a way as elaborate as at the level of the conscious, which thus loses what seemed to be its privilege.”²²

23. The unconscious speaks and is “structured like a language.” That is to say, it has a structure, modes, means, and rules of operation that we must discover. If it is, however, “structured like a language,” it is because we can doubt that it is a language and that it enters into rivalry with other existing languages. In any case, there is no metalanguage, there is no truth of the truth: a universal language would be a universal impoverishment.
24. The whole difficulty comes from the fact that the unconscious is pulsatile: it expresses itself discontinuously, like a trap that opens, in the holes or stumbling blocks of “everyday discourse” and in the different types of symptoms, whether these are somatic like hysterical conversion or verbally articulated like obsessive ideas or delusions.
25. The unconscious is a knowledge that remains partly closed to us, but that we can reconstruct with the help of its sporadic manifestations. It is the discourse of the Other, the one where the subject receives his message in an inverted form; “the sum of the effects of speech on a subject, at this level where the subject constitutes himself from the effects of the signifier”²³; “this part of concrete discourse as transindividual, which is lacking in the subject’s disposition to reestablish the continuity of his conscious discourse”²⁴; “this chapter of my history that is marked by a blank or occupied by a lie.” But this chapter is not necessarily censored forever: the truth can be at least partially rediscovered. And, following Freud, Lacan defines a true historical method based on the critical analysis of sources and on cross-checking²⁵.
26. The status of the unconscious is therefore ethical, and not ontic, as I recalled in my introduction. We have to go for it: we are complex, pre-programmed machines, and it is a question of knowing how. “Even before his birth, the subject is already situated, not only as a transmitter, but as an atom of the concrete discourse. He is in the dance line of this discourse, he is himself, if you like, a message. A message has been written on his head”²⁶.
27. If we now compare the Freud-Lacanian unconscious to the *ingegno*, we first have the feeling that they cannot be the same thing.
28. (1) Vico studies the first men, Freud and Lacan of the sick. Since the unconscious that manifests itself in their symptoms is “structured like a language”, Grassi is right not to exclude the possibility of a specific type of rationality in psychoanalysis (“if the act of genius and imagination ... has no rational character, then does it belong to the sphere of the unconscious?”). The unconscious is not an act, but that which separates the subject from himself and dispossesses him of a large part of his autonomy and his signifying power: the sum of the effects of speech, the discourse of the Other.
29. (2) The *ingegno* manifests itself directly and gloriously in the invention of fantastic universals, that is to say in the making of gods, language and institutions. At its antipodes, the unconscious manifests itself only elusively in the gaps of discourse: in a disturbing way in the sick and unpleasantly in the supposedly normal. The *ingegno* manifests human freedom and everything that makes man resemble a

god; the unconscious, on the contrary, is that which determines us without our knowing it and takes away all true autonomy from us.

30. How then can we establish the true relationship between the *ingegno* and the unconscious, the one that is guessed at by all those who feel their thought is cramped in the forms of speculative philosophy that exclude both of them?
31. Neither Vico nor Freud give in on the requirement of intelligibility in their approach to the inventions of the *ingegno* and the formations of the unconscious: their desire is to introduce rationality into areas excluded by a narrow rationalism, purely demonstrative and unconscious of its own inventiveness. The science in the process of being constituted is certainly closer to art than some would like, truth is constructed there through error and does not rest on a bivalent logic, and the separation between imagination and reason disappears as soon as one gains a certain height. Descartes himself suspected this, who suggested that one read his *Principles of Philosophy*, at least the first time, like a novel.²⁷ There is a "logic of imagination": the expression is not Vico's, but it is profoundly Vico's, as Verene shows, because imagination is both subject and object of this science. We cannot therefore exclude from the series of human inventions a rationality or an order that Vico bases on Providence: Providence which acts, however, always by easy, simple and natural means using "exclusively secondary causes", such as the natural customs of men (SN, §343).
32. The common point between the productions of the *ingegno* and the formations of the unconscious is that they obey a logic of ordination that escapes their producer, but that a solid "critical art" or a new science can manage to grasp. This "critical art, also metaphysical"²⁸ of the *Scienza nuova*, has as its object to determine with certainty "when and where" such and such thoughts were born, in order to determine their historical meaning. This art, as André Tosel has shown, relies, in order to broaden and surpass it, on the method of reading the Bible proposed by Spinoza, that is to say on the sincere history (*historia sincera*) of sacred texts through the reasoned investigation of their conditions of production and the reconstruction of their immanent meaning.²⁹
33. Freud's epistemology is of a rigor that makes it similar to these two critical arts, despite the fundamental difference in starting point: no longer a text, as in Spinoza, no longer all the concrete manifestations of human presence in the early times of history as in Vico, but the materials delivered in the transferential situation. Thus Freud opposes his "science built on empiricism" to any purely speculative science: it will certainly not enjoy the "privilege of a foundation drawn with a ruler, logically irreproachable, but will willingly be content with fundamental conceptions that are nebulous, evanescent, barely representable, which it hopes to be able to grasp more clearly in the course of its development and which it is also ready to exchange eventually for others. This is because these ideas are not the foundation of science, on which everything rests: this foundation, on the contrary, is observation alone. These ideas do not constitute the foundations, but the pinnacle of the whole edifice, and they can be replaced and removed without harm"³⁰.
34. The anti-Cartesianism of the method could not be better shown: truth is not a foundation, but the point of a cone towards which one tends. As with Vico, it is the object of an aim that is only achieved through the establishment of the *certum*: when, where and how the explosion of ingenious thought

occurs, this is what interests us first and foremost, and from which the truth or something like a truth can be constructed, by a method of critical variation.

Historical truth and the law of the constitution of discourse: The Freudian myth of the appropriation of signifying power

35. Having reached this point in my presentation, I must admit that I am wavering, because, no matter how I approach the question, I have the impression of not reaching the core of what should be said. If it is true that the experience of analytic treatment has something irreplaceable for grasping Vico's singularity, how can we explain that it owes this to the test of transference? On the one hand, the search for guarantees of truth for my discourse and the analysis of the vicissitudes of the transference relationship force me, in fact, to think of truth as "the daughter of time," like Vico. On the other hand, I discover that the treatment has the essential function of training me in the void on which my desire is suspended, insofar as it lacks the signifier of its own completeness; but this paradoxically reinforces the conviction that no truth is accessible except through its re-experimentation or its reestablishment, here and now. The discovery of the "certain" must, as in Vico, provide the construction of truth with the elements it needs, so as not to remain merely formal. To this end, theoretical reason is of precious help, but only in a second stage: first, an intense effort of imagination, of regression even, and above all of identification is necessary. It would therefore be necessary to go straight to the essence of the method in our two authors, by identifying their "safeguards", as the language so rightly says.
36. For obvious reasons, I will start with the "scientific myths" of Vico and Freud, according to the beautiful oxymoron coined by the latter. Neither of them conceals from us the severity of the struggle they have engaged in to conquer unexplored psychic regions: on the one hand, "the basis of truth (*i motivi del vero*)", writes Vico, "has reached us entirely covered in falsehood"³¹; on the other hand, we can "barely understand and absolutely cannot imagine how the first men who founded humanity thought."³² Vico, however, trusted himself and forged the most sublime myth of the origin of man and of the civil world that one could dream of. Freud overcame his discouragement: he built what he called "his mythology" and invented a myth of the origin of thought in *Die Verneinung* and a myth of the appropriation of language by the collective murder of the leader of the horde in *Totem and Taboo*.
37. Our two authors have in common the insistence on the discovery of the powers of language, on the invention, carried out in a single stroke, of the entire system of civilization (concomitant regulation of relations with the gods, sexuality and the dead) and on the role of fear as the matrix of civilizing prohibitions. But there is no murder or guilt in Vico, who is attached to the pagan world, leaving aside, at least in the *Scienza nuova*, the Jewish tradition and the doctrine of original sin.
38. I will immediately give the key to my developments. Freud emphasizes the appropriation of a language that we must make our own; the real problem is to understand how the advent of the social bond is based on the assumption of a symbolic content and function. Vico, on the contrary, focuses his interest on the invention of a sublime language — attribution to the gods of a physical language and manufactures names of gods that are universals of the imagination; the real problem is to think ingeniously and to access "certainties" whose re-establishment and comparison will then allow the philosopher-philologist to gain truths. But, firstly, the appropriation of signifiers requires an effort of

the whole being that clearly has many points in common with their invention. Second, Vico insists on the simultaneity of the same inventions, at neighboring times, among peoples who ignore each other: he thus denounces our propensity to place in the register of influence what corresponds to creations of the time. Thirdly, the civilizing scope of inventions is undeniably due to the fact that they are tasted and propagated.

39. Let us say then that Freud and Vico share the same questioning on the mode of entry into the symbolic that tears man away from the animal world and founds civil society. But the appropriation of signifiers is explicitly problematized by Freud, whereas Vico leaves the problem in the background, since, in his myth of origin, fiction immediately leads to adhesion.
40. Let us begin with Freud, whose myth of origin is misunderstood to the extent that it is reduced to the "murder of the father," whereas its meaning is, on the contrary, to explain the advent of the paternal function, that is, the creation of the symbol of the father, through a murder, not individual, but collective. The error is to take the means for the end and to cling to a forbidding and apparently unproven element, such as the murder of the father, instead of understanding the problem to which this element is the solution. Here is the content of the Freudian myth: men who were still *bestioni* came together and overturned by a cruel and barbaric act the primitive relationship of domination by the leader of the horde into regulated relationships (1) of sons to a dead and deified father, (2) of brothers sharing power equally, and (3) of husbands to a single and certain woman. A simply dual relationship (that of each dispersed member to the leader of the horde) is then converted into a socio-cultural configuration, distributing rights and duties in relation to the father-totem. The birth of civilization, language and moral conscience would be due to this act, which primitive men denied while commemorating it.
41. Freud does not start, like Vico, from data from the pagan West, but bases himself on the analysis of the totemic system among certain primitive peoples.³³ He establishes, firstly, a correlation between the ambivalence of feelings manifested towards the totem, ancestor of the group, and the law of exogamy which forbids marrying a woman of the same totem. Secondly, he compares the situation thus created with that engendered by the Oedipus complex, as he was able to reconstruct it in his self-analysis or in the treatment, through an intermediary, of little Hans: the civilizational urgency is to neutralize the aggressive drive (which is one of the components of the relationship with the father) and the erotic drive (implied above all in the relationship with the mother), both of which are all the more virulent as the father is felt as a potential rival. Thirdly, he establishes that, in the totemic sacrifice, an action forbidden to each member of the clan taken individually, becomes not only justified, but obligatory, for all the male members of the group: together, they must kill the totem, eat it, mourn it, and, finally, indulge in "the most noisy festive joy." Hence, fourthly, the supposition that such a sacrificial meal would be the commemoration of a very ancient act, the murder of the ancestor perpetrated not by an isolated individual, but by the sons united.
42. But why must the murder have been historically accomplished? While "in the neurotic, action is completely inhibited and totally replaced by the idea", the primitive "does not know any obstacles to action; his ideas are immediately transformed into act; one could even say that in him the act replaces

the idea"³⁴ In Freud, as in Vico, the primitive thinks with his body and in action. In him, thought needs a realization that allows it to access itself.

44. Such a murder, carried out collectively, then engenders both "the appropriation of signifying power"³⁵ and guilt. Insofar as words are, in fact, understood as forces, the possession of which is eminently desirable, they are the object of a usurpation. And this must be done collectively so that the benefits can be generalized: the power of the omnipotent must not be renewed, but on the contrary shared and therefore limited. Language is then born from the outset as a system and every signifier has the power of universalization, as Vico shows with regard to poetic characters. But, while for Vico, a fear, an invention and a collective belief are enough to make language exist, for Freud a murder is needed to share its powers equally.
45. The emergence of collective guilt accompanies socialization and the entry into language: "Society is now based on a common fault, on a crime now committed in common; religion, on the feeling of guilt and repentance; morality, on the necessities of this society, on the one hand, on the need for expiation engendered by the feeling of guilt, on the other hand"³⁶. Anxiety is indeed the matrix of prohibitions, as in Vico, but, unlike what happens in his system, it is directly based on guilt. For the appropriation of language is not self-evident. The sign, it is sometimes said, is born from a murder of the thing; and there is, in fact, an "abyss" between elephants and the word "elephant", to take up this example from Lacan³⁷. Thought is born only from a coup de force, by operating the "substitution" of the word or figure for the signified. It is determined as the rupture of the principle of spiritualization represented by things from the things themselves: in this sense, the symbolic father does not continue the real father or the imaginary father, but emerges in another order (the symbolic order), of which he is the pivot in Freud and Lacan.
46. Let us add that, in Freud, the thought that emerges without a direct relationship with pleasure or displeasure, almost immediately collides with displeasure which confers on it the uncertain status of a representation, to which perhaps nothing corresponds in reality. We thus note a time delay between the formation of the representation and the appropriation of its content. Thus Freud elaborates in *Die Verneinung* (1925)³⁸ a myth of the origin of thought from the late, partial and above all unstable substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle. While the original pleasure-ego expels from itself everything that is painful to it, the real-ego questions itself to know if what is present in it as a representation can be found or not outside it in perception. On the one hand, a decision concerning the good or bad property of the thing, which is at the origin of the judgment of attribution; on the other, a search that corresponds to what Freud calls "the test of reality" and results in a judgment of existence, much more elaborate.
47. There is a constraint on thought, since the representation springs forth, whether we desire it or not. If we return therefore to *Totem and Taboo*, the principle of reality was embodied for hominids in the all-powerful leader of the horde; they killed him together and, in the totemic sacrifice, in particular, reproduce this act symbolically, without wanting to recognize themselves in him. The reality principle then moves into the pact concluded, the prohibitions assumed, the moral conscience in its nascent state. Man only becomes man when the signifiers make law and engender, in their turn, the real, which

is a social and not physical real. But the action of the reality principle remains precarious, so much so that the return to pleasure-displeasure always threatens us.

48. Let us recap. In Freud, civilization, as a system of beliefs and laws that govern the various kinds of sublimation, originates in a tragic and repulsive act. It must be noted that the sublime does not found civilization upstream: if it is the cause, it can only be downstream, as a final cause. Salvation must then be thought of at the level of the species, more than of the individual. But, through the primitive tragedy from which the demand for sublimation is born, the destiny of humanity appears enigmatic and hazardous: civilization reveals itself to be an extremely fragile and precarious thing, because it is based on crime. And, as the best has historically come out of the worst, the situation can turn around and the worst come out of the best, to the extent, in particular, that the Ideal of the ego engenders demands to the height of which the psychic possibilities of the subject cannot rise.
49. Vico's point of view is quite different, since he is interested only in pagan nations and does not imagine any assassination presiding over the birth of the civil world. One can then argue either that he is more modern than Freud, insofar as we have become quite foreign to the idea of a primitive sin of which we are the legatees, or that he misunderstands what touches us and moves us in Judaism, Orphism, Greek tragedy, the condemnation to death of Socrates, the murder of Caesar or the sacrifice of Christ: is it the best who would be the most guilty? Why do we sometimes identify with the god or the hero, and sometimes feel complicit in his punishment?
50. Freud's scientific myth explains the origin of sublimation, but seems at first to escape the sublime. the sublime dazzles, on the contrary, from the outset in Vico's scientific myth and I would like to try to show how its three great moments implement three types of sublime that correspond to a traditional definition since Longinus, at the same time as three types of sublimation.
51. Sublimation, that is to say not *Aufhebung*, over-summation in the cognitive sphere alone, but surpassing or overcoming the entire being, physical, sensitive, imaginative and emotional. Sublimation is defined by Freud as a specific transformation of the instinctual destiny that is neither perversion nor repression, and is placed under the close dependence of plastic and verbal, perceptive and emotional signifiers. Designating on the one hand the process of Oedipal normalization or the discipline of erotic and aggressive impulses, and on the other hand the most original and highest creations, sublimation merges with a process of investment and production of major, emotional and cognitive signifiers.

Of the three moments of Vico's scientific myth: Three forms of sublime and sublimation

52. To grasp the genesis of the fabulatory activity, it is important for Vico to fabulize himself and to rediscover a primitive universal emotion from which a compelling need for meaning was born. Vico makes the fable of the fable, the fiction of the fiction: that of the precise moment when the first men demonstrated their *ingenium*. In this way, he forges a radically new myth, which concerns the simultaneous birth of man, the gods, language and thought. Let us distinguish three moments: (1) the collective halt and feeling of terror of the giants whom no reason seemed able to tear away from "wandering," from the mixing of seeds and from total uncertainty, (2) the common creation of a

dazzling and thundering god, that is to say the creation of Jupiter in the form of a universal of imagination, and (3) the belief in this god, then in other divinities, thanks to which fear took on a civilizing function and the three great institutions of religion, marriage and burial were engendered. The whole system of civilization was born at a single stroke with the hierarchy of heaven and earth, the sexual order and the separation of the living and the dead.

53. The sublime intervenes in each of these three stages: it consists first in looking at a distance and upwards; then, to animate things and invent their signifiers, in other words, to forge fictions to escape the incessant fluctuations of the sensible; and, finally, to believe in these fictions, to let oneself be intimately touched by them, to overcome anxiety in dazzlement and to find new bearings. Emotional consideration of what surpasses man by overcoming him, creative force of thought engendering human reality, metamorphosis of man and his world under the effect of overwhelming knowledge ..., these three traits, since Longinus, characterize the action of the sublime.
54. I would like to try to show that they also define three types of sublimation or, better still, three moments that are ultimately interdependent of the same process of sublimation: (1) an aesthetic sublimation that resides in the setting in motion of thought on the occasion of aisthesis, then (2) a creative sublimation that engenders a signifier of this aisthesis in the form of a universal of imagination, and, finally, (3) a normative sublimation that lies in the belief in the reality of this signifier, and in the adoption of a systematic "conception" of the world and of human action.
55. (1) When the earth was finally dried up and the sky began to flash and thunder, certain giants were "terrified and struck with stupor by the great effect whose cause they did not know." They who were wandering in the great primeval forest suddenly stopped, "raised their eyes and noticed the sky." Standing upright and looking upwards is not at all trivial. It is no longer a simple behavior fixed by nature according to immutable rules, but an act: what I will call the first aesthetic act ever performed, an act that gave birth to man or transformed him into a truly "sublime" animal, as Longinus and Ovid emphasize. "While all other animals, with their heads bowed, keep their eyes fixed on the earth," wrote Ovid, "(God) gave man a sublime face (sublime bone); he wanted to allow him to contemplate the sky, to raise his gaze and to look towards the stars."³⁹ Aristotle had already emphasized this: "if the top is the point of origin of the movement, the right the region from which it comes, the front the region towards which it is directed, even on this terrain we can say that the top has a force of principle in relation to the other notions."⁴⁰
56. Up until this moment, the *bestioni* were so subject to the flow of sensations, they were "so limited to singular things that, as Vico notes, with each change of facial expression, they felt they were dealing with a new face."⁴¹ But with the sublimation of their bodies and their gazes, raised towards the sky, something tended to fix itself. The first emergence of thought occurred through an aisthesis, and an aisthesis that was not beautiful or stabilized, but fleeting, disconcerting and terrible. The event of lightning and thunder served as a conductor for an event of thought: the imagination of the *bestioni* was electrified, worked for the first time and became productive.
57. (2) Those who became the first men jointly forged a little fable, valid for each of them: they imagined that the sky was "a great animated body" which "wanted to tell them something by the whistling of lightning and the crash of thunder"⁴² and that Jupiter addressed them by signs of which he was the

author. The initial poetic fiction therefore consisted in the institution of the sign with all that it has of paradox, since it allows to identify the perceived, while referring it to something other than itself. And such an explosion of imaginative and ingenious energy⁴³ reconstituting the same fable had to be repeated many times: there was a beginning and not a birth, we will say, because the beginning is multiple, while birth is defined as a definitive passage to visibility due to the establishment of an independent existence.

58. The specificity of the aesthetic act appears, in this case, to produce the sign or, more precisely, the signifier, to which we can now refer, because if the flow of sensations escapes perception and memory, this is not the case for the signifiers that represent them and take their place: these *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen* (representatives of representation) on which Freud insists and which ensure our grip on the world. Through this work that they carried out at the dawn of humanity, the giants accomplished a projection in the literal sense, since what was inside their minds came back to them from outside, on the screen of the sky. *De te fabula narratur*: the fables speak of men who nevertheless do not recognize themselves in the inventions that reflect them. If the first emergence of thought occurred during an *aisthesis*, it is therefore only in its favor: the essential is the properly human invention of the poetic character or of the fantastic universal of Jupiter dazzling and thundering, sending to men the message that they attributed to him. Jupiter pronounces the first word ever recorded, the one that Joyce, inspired by Vico, transcribes on the first page of *Finnegans Wake*:

*bababadalgharaghtakamminarronnkonnbronntonnerronntuon
nthunntrovarrhounawnskawntooohooordenenthurnuk!*

59. This is an opportunity here to reflect on the notion of "figure": before being articulated in verbal language, the figure was that by which men created "perceptual identity" as Freud said, and effectively reshaped reality. Here we must pay close attention to the fact that, before being articulated, then becoming tropes for us, the processes of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche allow the plastic and sound creation of Jupiter from lightning and thunder by ensuring, respectively, the passage from the inanimate to the animate, from the effect to the cause and from the individual to the species, as Andrea Battistini has shown⁴⁴.
60. (3) What were, in a third stage, the consequences of such a fiction? The giants imagined ..., but the best thing was that they believed in what they imagined. For, as Tacitus observes, men "imagine a thing and at the same time they believe in it" (*Fingunt simul creduntque*). They forget that they are the authors of a new world of gods. But this forgetfulness proved, in this case, particularly fruitful: the conviction that a god spoke to them must have served the first men as a defense against terror and thereby ensured their access to humanity, as well as the constitution of the civil world, in its different stages. "In the universe, fear made the first gods" (*Primos in orbe deos fecit timor*), a fact that Statius⁴⁵ already recognized, to which Vico refers, while prudently limiting the truth of his assertion to pagan religions alone⁴⁶. Terror is first: it shakes the being in its intimacy and risks dissolving it. Locating its object allows one to defend oneself against its ravages, and the making of the gods protects from the initial terror, while becoming the source of a new fear: fear inspired, this time, not by men to other men, but by each one to himself⁴⁷, fear born less from imposture than from credulity⁴⁸.

61. The fable of Jupiter, "popular, disturbing and instructive"⁴⁹, thus becomes the paradigmatic example of great poetry whose triple purpose is to "invent (*ritruovare*) sublime fables appropriate to popular understanding"; to disturb excessively, that is to say to arouse intense passions; and to teach to act *virtuosamente*, that is to say in accordance with *virtù* and in a heroic way first.
62. Let us return, however, to the awareness of the overwhelming power of an image and its sublimation in a "fantastic universal" or in a "poetic character", that is to say in a fiction, not in an induction. The function of fantastic genres is to gather heterogeneous images within a concrete figure and to bring back "as to certain models or even to ideal portraits, all the particular aspects of things resembling their own genre"⁵⁰. Fantastic genres have less clarity than the intelligible genres that they prefigure, they are born from a deficiency of speculative thought, but their binding force is incomparable. Thus, for example, Hermes Trismegistus imposed the genre of civil wisdom of which the ancient Egyptians were nevertheless powerless to form the concept.
63. Let us emphasize four points: the tacit resumption of Aristotelian theory and its surpassing; the independence of poetic fictions with respect to individuals who have historically lived; the logic of identity and not of analogy then implemented; the necessarily figurative nature, although not conscious of being so, of primordial language.
64. Vico believes, like Aristotle, that poetry deals with the general: the chronicle says "what has taken place," poetry "what could take place," so that it is more philosophical and noble than history.⁵¹ But Vico goes beyond Aristotle in that he distinguishes, alongside the intelligible and abstract universals that seemed the only ones conceivable, from properly fantastic and concrete universals. The fictions then created are both universal and singular, or rather their universal value lies in their dependence on the singular. Because "the universal, as Yves Bonnefoy reminds us, is not a law that, for being the same everywhere, is not really valid anywhere."⁵² The universal is partly linked to a place (a purely mental or also physical place) and operates concretely from it, like the cohesive power of an image, a metaphor or a very specific ideal portrait.
65. These fantastic universals, concrete and individualized figures of the different mythologies, inform us precisely about the societies that invented them and that expressed themselves through them. But this is not a question of euhemerism: the gods are not humans who are deified after their death. It is not the problem of real existence that interests Vico, but that of historical meaning: the hero is in no way an individual, he does not "do" anything, he is not the "cause" of anything, but nevertheless allows us to understand history, as a fiction that reveals its significant depth to us.⁵³ Proper names themselves are only common names. Zeus, Hercules, these are types of gods and heroes that different nations felt the need to invent, without knowing each other.
66. Let us examine the name Homer: it is also a common name. For it does not in any way designate a specific man, but embodies "an idea or a heroic character of Greek men telling, by singing their history" (§873). Homer — or rather the character of Homer — lived four hundred and sixty years, from the Trojan War to Numa; and many Greek peoples claim him as their child. Every rhapsode became Homer, as also every brave man Achilles, because a poetic character is "not analogical, but univocal" (§34). Primitive poetic logic is based on identity: it operates by transports and condensations. And its metaphors are not simple analogies: no comparison, but a unity, on the

contrary, of what is gathered. It must be said that “each member of the class of wise men is Ulysses, as Verene affirms, not that each individual is a Ulysses or like Ulysses. Each individual can be said to be Ulysses in the sense that Ulysses is his reality.”⁵⁴

67. The precedence of figurative language over proper language is fraught with consequences: fiction comes first, although not felt as such. Before designating things and endowing them with proper names, man conceives of general figures or tropes. But he ignores the specificity of his operation. “Vico's paradox is that the language that today is figurative for us was on the contrary the proper and natural language”, as Andrea Battistini writes, and that it was “the only natural way of communicating and knowing”⁵⁵. Its strength was linked to the very conditions of its [68] production: the men of the child world could not choose it freely but encountered it as the only one they could know.
69. The consequence that results from such a fantastic and fictional foundation of the world is the production of a “poetic truth,” so important in the humanization and politicization of the first men that it comes to disqualify the merely physical truth. The linguistic experience precedes and determines natural experience through and through: there is no immediacy, but a relationship to things that is immediately traversed by a movement of first poeticization. This signifying world that weaves us and determines us even before our birth is a poetic world.
70. The epistemological revolution produced by Vico therefore consists in starting not from a sensory or ideal given, as such unverifiable, not from a feeling of evidence, vanishing like any feeling, but from fantastic universals that are themselves attested phenomena of language, fictions produced by man and, as a result, analysable by him.
71. Now, psychoanalysis that operates on language, not only through it, but with a view to it, since the object of the cure is to “come to the words,” rests on the same epistemological presupposition. The human subject is “essentially characterized by his place in the symbolic world, in other words in the world of speech.”⁵⁶ He inhabits a symbolic world and language is the very structure of his thought. But since the unconscious is a power of division, the problem becomes not to alienate oneself to the images of the self and to succeed in structuring oneself symbolically, by escaping the influence of the mirror. This is what the fear of God had historically served.

To Conclude ...

72. (1) I would like to return to the three figures of the poet seer, the psychoanalyst and the philosopher philologist and even morosophist. What is a great author? Not one who simply stimulates our desire to know, but one who succeeds in lifting the refusal of a certain knowledge, who tears from the unknown the new and patiently constructs, by dint of transfers of various kinds, a truth that escapes delirium by becoming common. The knowledge that we can gain, whether it is specific to the history of the human race or to subjective history, necessarily has to do with the repressed, since it concerns a genesis that escapes us and that “the nature of things is none other than their birth at certain times and in certain ways.”⁵⁷ In Vico, this truth is the one that the learned reject: carried away by a *boria* that incites them to explain everything from the point of view of fully developed reason, *tutta spiegata*, they cannot understand the knowledge inscribed in fantastic universals. They forget that consciousness is secondary and that the subject projects its structure into these first forms of intelligibility that are

metaphors and myths. Their resistance is such that they make the history of the first times a *historia stultitiae*.⁵⁸

73. Just as Vico stigmatizes the contempt for mythology, which constitutes "the first science that one should learn,"⁵⁹ because it contains "the first stories of pagan nations" and the language of fables is of a power that concepts cannot reach; Similarly, Lacan denounces the "systematic and principled" ignorance of any "science of desire," of this desire that is "put to sleep by moralists, domesticated by educators, betrayed by the Academies,"⁶⁰ even though taking it into account would allow us to better measure and choose the risks to which we expose ourselves.

74. "*Homo non intelligendo fit omnia*," writes Vico: the man who does not understand becomes things, he becomes a poet and founder of our main institutions. Less a "thief of fire" than a fire-maker, he resembles Hercules, the arsonist of the primeval forest and the hard worker. Freud, for his part, reminds us that no discoverer can avoid descending into hell and that he must implore the help of the infernal divinities, like Juno:

*Quod si mea numina non sunt
Magna satis, dubitem haud quidem implorare quod usquam est.
Si flectere nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.*⁶¹

[Translation: "That if my power is insufficient, I will not hesitate to implore any god. And if I cannot bend the divinities of heaven, I will appeal to Acheron."]

75. (2) We are rightly proud of our logical thinking, our concepts, our definitions, our capacity for argumentation. If "men first feel without noticing", if "they then notice with a troubled and agitated soul (*animo*), and if, finally, "they reflect with a pure mind (*mente*)" (axiom LIII), is not this purity eminently desirable? Why impose harsh and dangerous tasks on ourselves by seeking to access outdated stages of human existence? On this point, Vico's response should be systematically compared with that of Freud in "Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness" of 1907 and in *Civilization and Its Discontents* of 1929, and with that of Lacan, notably in his seminars on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* in 1959-60 and on *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, just after the events of 1968.⁶² The same feeling appears among our authors of an extraordinary fragility of civilization and of a struggle to be waged against the constantly threatening barbarity. Vico's considerations in §1106 of the *Scienza Nuova* on the frenzied individualism, solitude and barbarity of these men of reflection who "like wild animals [...] at the slightest displeasure, take offense and become ferocious" and cannot understand each other, "since each follows his own pleasure or whim", correspond in Freud to a portrait of the human being, prey to aggressive impulses: "Man is not that good-natured being, with a heart thirsting for love, who would at most be able to defend himself when he is attacked": he is tempted to satisfy his aggressive impulses on his neighbor, "to exploit his labor force without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to appropriate what he possesses, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture him and to kill him. *Homo homini lupus*: who would have the courage, in the face of all the lessons of life and history, to oppose this adage?"⁶³

76. The critique of Cartesianism and of analytical and monastic reason corresponds in Lacan to the critique of the academic discourse that nothing can stop: "Keep going. Go on. Keep knowing!"⁶⁴ This discourse places in the dominant place a "all-knowledge", formal and self-referential, caricature of

scientific discourse, pure bureaucratic knowledge in an “I-cracy” that wants to save the truth and emits “the insane pretension of having as its production a thinking being, a subject”⁶⁵. It ignores that the subject only functions to be respected and that “the truth flies away [...] It barely crosses our field that it has gone back to the other side”: we can only half-say it while giving it a chance to pass.

77. If the problem of education in the sublime becomes central for Vico, the solution envisaged by Freud and Lacan is nevertheless not so far away, insofar as it is no longer a question of undergoing a given morality, which decrees good and evil in total indifference to what is desirable or harmful for a given subject, but of accessing the “contrasting pair” of a contradictory and limited desire, “ordinarily finding in the act rather its collapse than its realization”⁶⁶, and of assuming, taking into account our possibilities, the ethos of a civilization, in order to participate in this way in “the expression of a collective responsibility.”⁶⁷ Speech finds its own foundation neither in the field of the subject, nor in that of the Other, but, strong in this negative knowledge, at least it can establish a relationship between the types of assurance it seeks and certain criteria of truth that have successively appeared. This opens up the field of different types of sublimation on which all the figures of culture are suspended.
78. The question is, in each case, that of a “focus point” that allows the subject to grasp the issues that lead him to go beyond his so-called personal interests. But let us give Vico the floor: “If, as the poets say or imagine, heroes are those who boast of being descended from the very great Jupiter, one thing is certain, independently of the fictions of the fable: the human spirit possesses a divine nature, which lacks only knowledge and study to develop.”⁶⁸ Philosophers, he adds, philosophers as he conceives them, define the hero as “he who seeks sublime things.” *Mundus enim juvenescit adhuc*. For the world is still young; it is still “getting younger.”

NOTES

1. Lettre à Paul Demeny, 15 mai 1871.
2. Lacan savait du moins l'importance de Vico. Il mentionne son nom le 10 avril et le 16 juin 1975 dans sa conférence de Genève sur le symptôme et dans «Joyce le symptôme I» : c'est à propos des hiéroglyphes, du nœud borroméen et de l'union de la croix et du cercle chez Joyce. «J'ai lu la *Scienza nuova*. Des idées très élaborées pour son époque».
3. *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Le Séminaire, Livre XI, Seuil, 1973, pp. 45, 47 et 35.
4. *Vie de Giambattista Vico écrite par lui-même*, Présentation, trad. et notes d'Alain Pons, Paris, Grasset, 1981, p. 279.
5. *Eloge de la folie*, trad. Thibault de Laveaux avec les dessins de Hans Holbein, Bâle, 1780, rééd. Le Castor astral, 1989, p. 8. La traduction « sages-fols » est celle de Pièrre de Nolhac, GF Flammarion.
6. Voir Yves Bonnefoy : « Et Baudelaire va chercher à faire dire au poème cet extérieur absolu, ce grand vent aux vitres de la parole, l'ici et le maintenant qu'a sacralisés toute mort » (« L'acte et le lieu de la poésie », *L'Improbable*, Mercure de France, 1959, p. 162).
7. Voir Descartes, Discours de la méthode, I : « Ceux qui ont le raisonnement le plus fort, et qui digèrent le mieux leurs pensées, afin de les rendre claires et intelligibles, peuvent toujours le mieux persuader

ce qu'ils proposent, encore qu'ils ne parlissent que le bas-breton, et qu'ils n'eussent jamais appris la rhétorique ». Reste que la suite du texte montre bien que Descartes vise d'abord à dénoncer un art devenu formel et séparé des expériences qui le fondent.

8. *Freud and Literature*, repris dans *The Liberal Imagination*, Londres, Secker and Warburg, 1951, p. 53 (ma traduction).
9. Introduction à la psychanalyse, 1916. voir aussi *Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*, 1908, et *Formulierungen über die zwei Prinzipien des psychischen Geschehens*, 1911, etc.
10. *Formulierungen über die zwei Prinzipien des psychischen Geschehens*, 1911, fin.
11. *La philosophie des formes symboliques*, 1929, III, 3, chap. 6.
12. *Essais de linguistique générale*, trad. Nicolas Ruwet, éd. de Minuit, 1963.
13. *Klincksieck*, 1971.
14. *Traumdeutung*, fin du chapitre VI.
15. Je renvoie sur ce sujet à l'important article d'Alain Pons « Ecriture et divination chez Vico », texte d'une communication que l'Ecole freudienne l'avait invité à faire en 1982 dans un colloque sur *L'instance de la lettre*.
16. *Vico : Past and present*, edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Humanitas press, Atlantic Highlands, N.S., 1981, repris dans *Vico e l'umanesimo*, Milan, Guerini, 1992.
17. Donald Philip Verene, *Vico's Science of imagination*, Ithaca and London, Cornell Univ. Press, 1981. Grassi se réfère d'ailleurs explicitement à une des conférences récentes de Verene sur « Vico's Humanity ».
18. *Neue Wissenschaft von alten Zeichen : Vicos Sematologie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1994.
19. *Traumdeutung*, VII.
20. Les quatre concepts, *Le Séminaire*, XI, 1973, p. 25
21. Voir, par exemple, les premières lignes de *Totem et tabou*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
23. Les quatre concepts.
24. « Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage », 1953, dans *Ecrits*, Seuil, 1966, pp. 258 et 259.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
26. Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse, *Le Séminaire*, II, Seuil, 1978, p. 327.
27. Lettre de l'auteur à celui qui a traduit le livre, *Biblioth. de la Pléiade*, p. 564.
28. *SN*, § 348
29. André Tosel, « Le déplacement de la critique de Spinoza à Vico », *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 1999, n° 4.

30. *Pour introduire le narcissisme*, 1914, trad. Laplanche, P.U.F., 1969, p. 85.
31. SN, §150.
32. SN, §378.
33. Freud s'appuie sur les travaux Mac Lennan (1869), Salomon Reinach (1900), William Robertson Smith (1907) ou James George Frazer (1910) qui s'accordent à voir dans le totémisme « un système qui tient la place d'une religion (*die Stelle einer Religion vertritt*) et fournit le fondement de l'organisation sociale » et il essaie de penser les relations du clan totémique à la horde primitive, soumise à un omnipotent qui exclut du pouvoir et des femmes les jeunes mâles, selon le modèle établi par Darwin et Atkinson.
34. *Totem et tabou*, dernier paragraphe.
35. Voir Pierre Kaufmann, *L'Inconscient du politique*, chap. III, P.U.F. 1979 et Vrin, 1988. Voir aussi *Psychanalyse et théorie de la culture*, Denoël, 1974 et 1985.
36. *Totem et tabou*, trad. Jankélévitch, Payot, 1951, p. 201.
37. *Les Ecrits techniques de Freud, Le Séminaire*, I, p. 250.
38. Trad. Laplanche, dans *Résultats, idées, problèmes*, II, P.U.F., 1992, pp. 135–139. Laplanche a choisi de traduire *Verneinung* par « négation », alors que Lacan et Hyppolite préférèrent « dénégaration ».
39. *Les métamorphoses*, I, vers 85-87, texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, « Les Belles Lettres », 1969. Georges Lafaye traduit « sublime » par « qui se dresse au-dessus ». Ma traduction est un peu forcée
40. *De caelo*, II, 2, bas p. 69, haut p. 70, trad. Tricot, Vrin, 1949.
41. SN, § 700. On songe aux expériences de Charlotte Böhler sur le transitivisme enfantin, où, sous certaines conditions et à un âge très tendre, la confusion entre le moi et l'autre se montre totale, de sorte que l'enfant qui bat croit avoir été battu
42. SN, § 377
43. Je reprends ici l'heureuse expression de Battistini, *op. cit.*, p. 104
44. Voir Battistini, *op. cit.*, p. 74
45. Stace, *Thébaïde*, III, 661
46. Voir *Léviathan*, I, XII, « De la religion », traduction François Tricaud, Sirey, 1971
47. SN, §382.
48. SN, §191
49. SN, § 379
50. SN, § 209
51. *Poétique* 9, 51 b5-6

52. Les tombeaux de Ravenne », dans L'improbable et autres essais, Mercure de France, 1971, nouvelle édition « Folio essais », 1992
53. Voir Alain Pons, « De la nature commune des nations au peuple romantique. Note sur Vico et Michelet », *Romantisme*, n°9, Flammarion, 1975
54. *The Science of imagination*, p. 77
55. *La Sapienza retorica di G. B. Vico*, p. 74
56. J. Lacan, *Les écrits techniques de Freud*, Le Séminaire, I, p. 95
57. SN, Axiome XIV
58. Alain Pons, « Nature et histoire chez Vico », *Les études philosophiques*, janv-mars 1961
59. SN, § 51
60. *L'Ethique de la psychanalyse*, *Le Séminaire*, VII, fin
61. *Enéide*, VII, 312, exergue à *La Science des rêves* (1900)
62. *L'Ethique de la psychanalyse* (1959-60, publié en 1986) et *L'Envers de la psychanalyse* (1969-70, publié en 1991)
63. *Malaise dans la culture*, chap. V, G.W., XIV, pp. 479-480.
64. *L'Envers de la psychanalyse*, p. 120
65. *Ibid.*, p. 203
66. *Le transfert*, le Séminaire VIII, p. 14
67. *Qu'est-ce qu'un civilisé ?* Atelier alpha bleue, diff. Vrin
68. *De mente heroica*, In Giambattista Vico, *Opere, a cura di Andrea Battistini*, Arnoldo Mondadori, 1990, tome I, pp. 167 et sq., trad. Georges Navet dans *Vico, le sublime et la science du monde civil*, dir. A. Pons et B. Saint Girons, *Le Temps philosophique*, éd. Paris X, diff. Vrin, 2004. Pour le commentaire de ce texte, voir notamment Giuseppe Cacciato, *Metaphysik, Poesie und Geschichte – über die Philosophie von Giambattista Vico*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2002, chap. IV