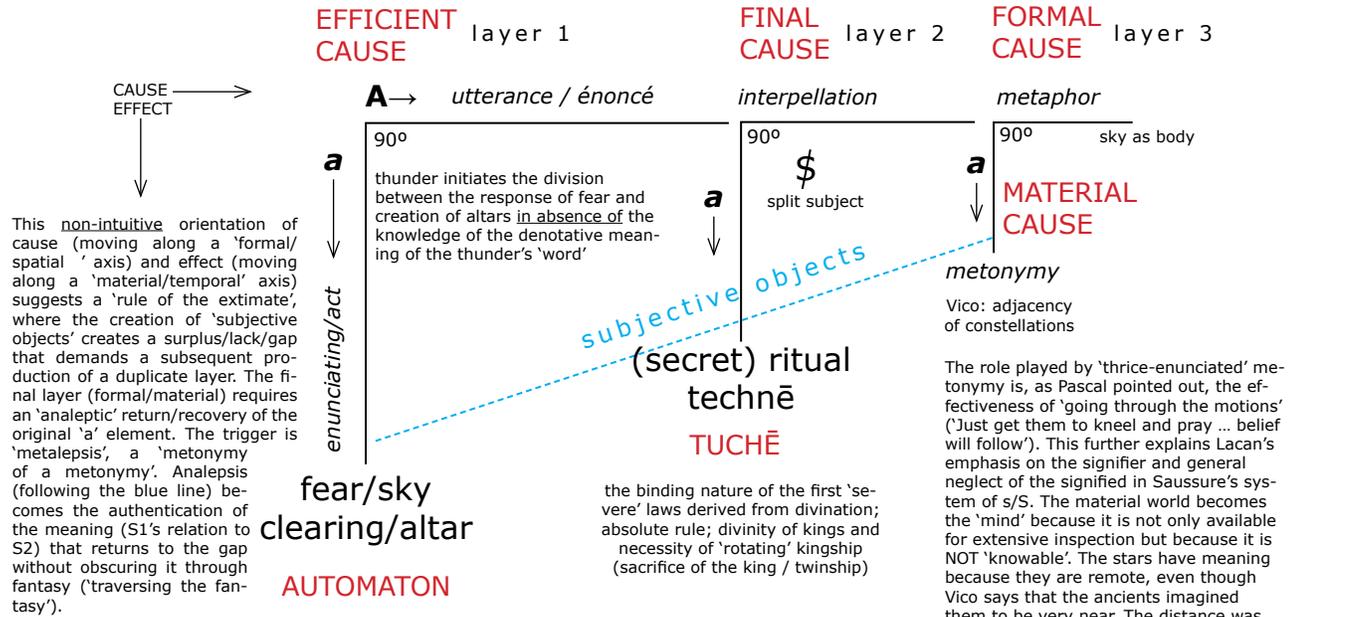


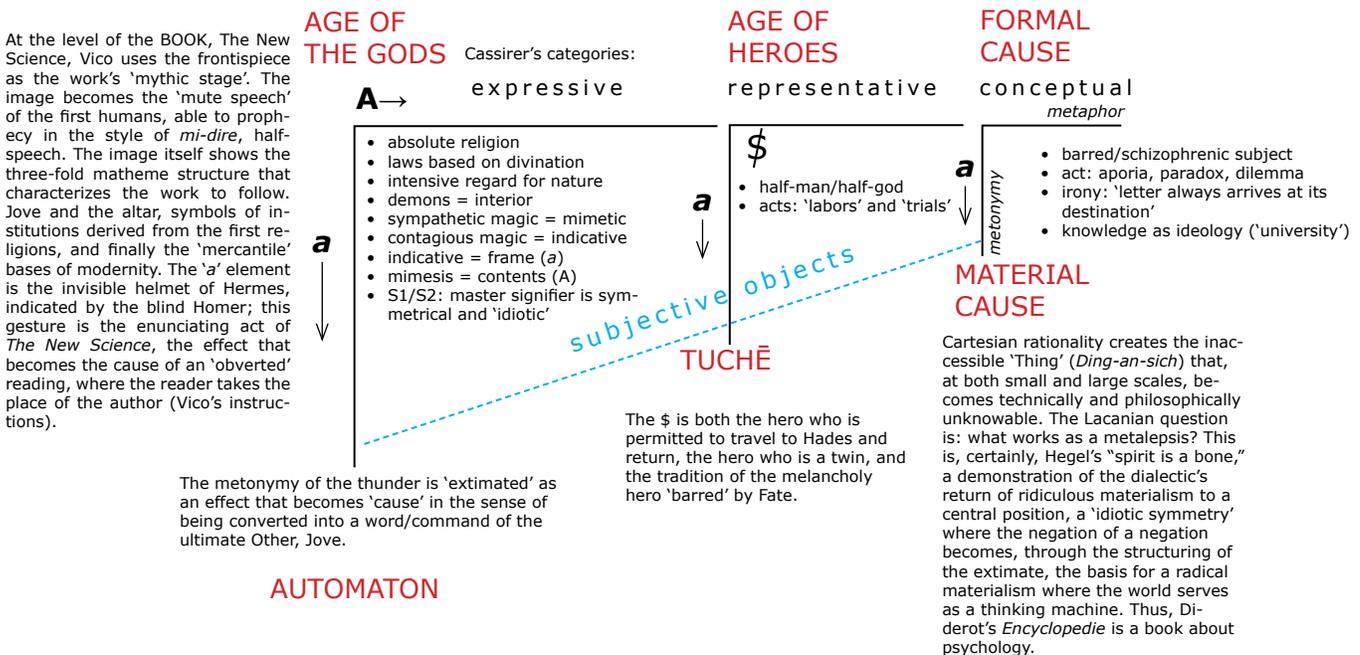
# ENUNCIATING VICO

The distinction between the act of speech (e.g. yelling "Fire!" in a crowded auditorium and the subsequent rush to the exits) and the literal referent of that enunciating (i.e. an actual fire) is critical to the Lacanian idea of the extimate. So to is it to Vico's principle idea, the "imaginative universal," by which human consciousness invents itself by transposing its qualities to nature, when the thunder is perceived to be the word of Jove and the sky is then realized to be Jove's body. The strong links between Lacan's and Vico's conception of the extimate can be demonstrated through the expanded system of causes outlined by Aristotle but adopted to include *tuchē* and *automaton*, the forms of chance attributed to human opportunity and natural accident.

Efficient, final, and formal cause create three 'layers' that can be viewed as running simultaneously, with layers 'showing through' the transparent layers to contaminate other causes. Form is uppermost in the sense of the most visible. Efficient cause is associated with S1/S2, the master signifier and the knowledge that externalizes it, extimately. \$/a, the components of final cause complete the structure of discourse. Formal/material cause



## The Ideal Eternal History:



# ENUNCIATING<sup>1</sup> VICO : NOTES

- §1 To date, no one has considered Vico in Lacanian terms, and it seems that the most productive way of doing this is to use Lacan's most 'Vichian' ideas first: the extimate, enunciating/enunciated, and the theory of discourse. Essentially Vico uses the same fundamental principles in his own 'New Science' — the imaginative universal, the role of metaphor, and the stages of history ('ideal eternal history'). Even some of Vico's more obscure ideas, such as the 'common mental dictionary' that is constructed by all cultures no matter what their conditions within history and geography, relates directly to Lacan's ambitious attempt to create, within his theory of discourse, a set of fields (agent, other, production, truth) within which a set of fixed element (master, knowledge, *objet petit a*, barred subject) circulate.
- §2 Furthermore, Vico employs a form of Lacanian 'paranoic' speech — the *mi-dire* or half-speech, which is characteristic of poetic prophecy but also employable by the modern philosopher to construct an 'ironic discourse' that uses its own ciphers and puns. Vico's text has been compared to a labyrinth, but this is not ambitious enough; taken with the *Autobiography*, *The New Science* is 'encoded' so that metalepsis and analepsis can be made available to the astute reader in order to fulfill Vico's demand, that the reader become the author of the work. The mythic level of *The New Science* is the frontispiece, where the 'mute speech' of the image becomes the enunciating act that serves the remainder of the text as an unconscious automaton. Half-speech is the function of a general and interpretive chiasmus operating throughout *The New Science* at all levels.
- §3 Metalepsis proceeds from the 'metonymy of metonymies' — the discovery of a 'reading technique' that is, as Vico describes it, a 'reading through the body'. From the *Autobiography*, we are told that this is a matter of the Stoic combination of animus (animating spirit) and anima (material, 'bone' in Hegel's terms) using the structure of the wedge — convenient for our diagram — because, in Latin 'wedge' and 'heaven' mean the same thing (*caelum*). Heaven is, returning to the metaphorical thought of the first humans, the azure/ether of the blue sky, whose direct overhead presence was required by ancient Romans for the completion of any contract or oath. Vico 'swears' an oath and establishes a contract with the reader, who is obverted into the position of author by virtue of this metalepsis; the enjoyment of the contract (cf. Lacan's idea of 'usufruct' — possession under conditions of an obligation to preserve) becomes analepsis — 'recovery'/'restoration'.
- §4 The neurological counterpart to the Vichian mathemes relating metaphor to metonym, M◊m, is the relationship between semblance aphasia and contiguity aphasia, related by Ernst Cassirer ('Pathology of the Symbolic Consciousness', in *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*) to mimetic magic and contagious magic. The relation of the three mathemes to the diagrams and practices of magic expand to show how the primary 'gestures' imbedded in the logics of metaphor and metonymy (mimesis and indication, respectively) tie Vico's three mathemes to the 'pathology' that, at the neurological level, represent M◊m as mathemes themselves. Thus, the errors of Roman Jakobson and other (mostly) Structuralists in creating bi-polar schemes based on metaphor and metonymy can be corrected by emphasizing the consecutive and recursive system that Vico called the 'ideal eternal history'. Jakobson himself recanted the rationalized system dividing S/s along the lines of metaphor and metonymy, but he did not discover that Vico had provided a solution 200 years in advance of Jakobson's error.

1 'Enunciating/*énoncé*' refers to Lacan's distinction between the speech act and the literal contents of words, meanings, and grammatical/syntactical relationships (*énoncé*). The extimate affects this distinction directly. Just as the shout Fire!, an effect or enunciating act, has direct effects without requiring a real fire to serve as the *énoncé*, effect become cause and is associated with the 'unconscious' of the partial objects that form the basis of Aristotle's two 'chance' causes, automaton and *tuchē*.