

The Big Architectural Adventure of Giambattista Vico

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The eighteenth-century Italian philosopher of culture Giambattista Vico should have been embraced by architecture theorists if only for his poetic account of human origins and development. More than Heidegger's Building Dwelling Thinking, Vico proposed that the human imagination, not the circumstances of environment or innovations of technology, shaped culture, thought, and human institutions. Yet, apart from a few initiatives, including the efforts of the architecture historian Edgar J. Kaufmann, whose family had commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design Falling Water and whose monographs on Ledoux involved the Enlightenment, discussions of the origin of mankind, Vico has lain dormant in architecture thinking.

'Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?'

'To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.'

'The dog did nothing in the night-time.'

'That was the curious incident . . .'

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Silver Blaze* (1892)

Giambattista Vico's big architectural adventure never happened, actually, but the ground was well laid; a few scholars loaded the prescribed ammunition; footnotes flew; conferences buzzed. Yet, the visions of this eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher of culture, historian, and creator of a 'new science', whose scope and ambition has not been equalled by anything post-modernism has put forward, never reached the front lines of architecture theory or practice, despite some obvious opportunities. In the 1960s, Giorgio Tagliacozzo, a sociologist teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York, worked with Sir Isaiah Berlin and the Frank Lloyd Wright specialist Edgar J. Kaufmann, Jr., head of the Edgar Kaufmann Foundation, to revive scholarly interest in Vico with an international conference

(Tagliacozzo, 1969). Papers were presented by authors who constituted a virtual *Who's Who* of academia: Ernesto Grassi, Alain Pons, Sir Isaiah Berlin, René Wellek, Edmund Leach, Stuart Hampshire, and Sir Herbert Read – but no architecture theorists! This was perhaps because, except for Edgar Kaufmann, few architecture scholars had made a connection between Vico's theory of culture and the exigencies of the built world.

This was ironic, for Vico in his own day was 'an architects' philosopher'. The Venetian architectural theorist, Carlo Lodoli, was so enthusiastic about Vico's work that he was to have paid for the publication of the 1744 edition of *The New Science*. The deal fell through, however, and the embittered Vico planned to publish the 'scandalous' correspondence as a preface (Verene, 1987a). Friends persuaded him that this would be legally inadvisable. Left with some empty pages in the folios of the new edition, Vico claimed that he quickly formed a preface based around an image that would serve the reader as a 'memory place' for the whole work. Much work has gone into deciphering

this enigmatic emblem, which puts *The New Science* into a spatial metaphor (Papini, 1984). The 'architectural' relevance of *The New Science* may become clearer, ironically, because of this 'broken connection' with the architectural theorist, Lodoli.

The clearest accounts in English of the relationship between Vico and Lodoli have come from two architecture educators and theorists, Marco Frascari (1981) and Diana Bitz (1992). Many of Vico's ideas were 'in the air' of the Italian *rinascimento*. Secret societies managed to keep poetry and science alive beneath the stern gaze of the Spanish Inquisition. Vico wrote in his *Autobiography* (1725–1728) that the depth of a prison cell was a measure of the quality of the poet or philosopher interred there. 'Pagan' ideas borrowed from classical antiquity fuelled such advanced programmes of discovery and knowledge as Francis Bacon's *Novum Organon* (1620), a work Vico admired deeply. To avoid prosecution, Vico carefully excluded Hebrews and Christians from his account of a gentile 'ideal eternal history', a sequence of three cultural stages beginning with an 'age of the gods' (nature as demonic); an 'age of heroes' (nature as intentional; man as an active agent); and an 'age of men' (nature as dead; human thought as instrumental).

The key to his new science of culture, Vico claimed, was the nature of mythic imagination. In a radical revision of the Cartesian account, Vico held that perception began with a transposing of the subject's mentality to a position *behind* appearance. Ignorant of the true causes of things, the first humans 'made themselves the measure' by establishing 'gods' behind and within material reality. Thus the practice of divination became the basis of religion. With institutions such as marriage and ancestor worship to civilize their wild nature, the first humans restrained themselves directly through laws and customs and, indirectly, through language, the arts, and the built environment.

The centre of Vico studies began to

coalesce around the energetic networking of Tagliacozzo, and a second international conference was planned with the help of the philosopher, Donald Verene (Tagliacozzo and Verene, 1976). Verene (1981) began to advance his own ambitious and original programme, effectively arguing that Vico's idea of an 'imaginative universal' (*universale fantastico*) was not only central for the development of *The New Science* but was Vico's most valuable gift to present-day theory. According to Verene, Vico has yet to be fully understood, let alone outdone, because his view of myth is 'permanently original'. Indeed, it seems that many of Vico's commentators have missed the fully radical nature of this single idea, which has proven more congenial to artists and poets than to philosophers and critics. Verene often worked with architecture students and faculty who, attracted by Vico's comprehensive cultural theory, found it an intriguing alternative to the limited agendas of positivism, phenomenology, existentialism, or (later) deconstruction. Verene lectured at the Architectural Association in London (Verene, 1987b) and visited Daniel and Nina Libeskind at their Architecture Intermundium studio in Milan.

Verene's teaching at Penn State University and Emory University attracted a cadre of young scholars in various fields (philosophy, art education, cultural geography, architecture), whose work began to incorporate Vichian themes. Frascari's pupils at the University of Pennsylvania and, later, Georgia Institute of Technology (for example, Bloomer, 1993), sometimes overlapped with Verene's. Verene and Frascari both played major roles in the 'Commonplace Conference on the Philosophy of Place' held in 1986 at Penn State University. Architecture scholars, many of them with an informed interest in Vico (David Bell, David Leatherbarrow, Mary Alice Dixon-Hinson, Bahram Shirdel, Daniel Libeskind, and Alberto Pérez-Gómez), joined philosophers for a comprehensive review of the idea of place (Black, Kunze, and Pickles, 1989). Mary Alice Dixon-Hinson had already

published an engaging comparison of Vico and Duchamp (1985–1986); Leatherbarrow and Pérez-Gómez continue to refer to Vico in their writings; and Libeskind has quietly planted Vichian ideas and sentiments into his written and built works.

Still, Vico did not fare well in an age attuned to phenomenology and, later, deconstruction. Verene's mentor, Ernesto Grassi (1980), wrote persuasively that Heidegger's later philosophical ideas were sympathetic to Vico's, but this advice was not strong enough to dislodge the line of thought now extending from Nietzsche through Heidegger to Derrida and, subsequently, Deleuze and Guattari. Mark Wigley's seminal study of Jacques Derrida (1993) laid out a clear path for a specifically architectural version of post-modern deconstruction, reinforced through journals such as *Oppositions* and Yale's *Perspecta*. Continental philosophy played almost no role at universities, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, regarded as centres of architectural influence. Vico sounded old-fashioned in comparison to the new French thought, which was often less radical and certainly less original than Vico's. Ever the melancholy stranger on the sidelines, Vico was the 'dog that did not bark in the night'.

This failure seems manifestly unfair, given such firm endorsements as this one by Joseph Rykwert (1980, p. 281):

Vico's deduction . . . was quite original and had the profoundest effect. If the objects of our knowledge, as far as the natural sciences are concerned, exist as part of divine creation, the objects of our historical knowledge are more 'knowable', since they are made by man in the first place. History must therefore be a more proper object of scientific investigation than physical nature . . .

Yet . . . Vico was not a determinist; he did not think that one can 'situate' oneself in a point and time and see how the cycles [of gods, heroes, and men] will 'inevitably' develop. On the contrary, he saw the basic structure of the cyclic development of nations, tribes, and individuals constantly buffeted and modified by accident so as to produce an infinitely varied account of history.

Rykwert's overt praise was backed up by

genuinely sympathetic employment of Vico-like ideas, especially in *The Idea of the Town* (1976). However, no one has called Rykwert a 'Vichian', just as there has been nothing anyone could call a Vichian 'movement' elsewhere in architecture. Although secondary sources such as Rykwert's have been enigmatically tantalizing, the primary sources – Vico's own writings – have proved too difficult for general academic discussion or pedagogical retailing.

This persistent perceived difficulty was demonstrated with particular clarity in an article by a humanist geographer William J. Mills (1982). Mills genuinely hoped to find a new and imaginative basis for geographical theories of place, but he concluded that, while Vico had much to offer, he fell short of providing much more than sympathy for existing humanist approaches to the landscape. Mills' perspectives flattened Vico's contemporary relevance by finding him obscure (Kunze, 1983). Typically, Vico has been misread and misunderstood *precisely* by the scholars who are attracted to him. The tendency has been to treat misunderstanding with focused scholarship rather than broad revisionism. In contrast, Verene advocated a 'generic' correction made by centralizing Vico's of concept imaginative universality. This approach created a polemical divide with those who held that the epistemological principle, *verum ipsum factum* (that humans may perfectly know what they have made), was the most important feature of Vico's thinking.

There is a more surprising source for potential Vico revisionism, however. Vico falsified parts of his *Autobiography* to create a 'Saturnine background' for his ambitious project: an exemplar for how thinkers must relate to their theory (Kunze, 1987, pp. 186–206). In *The New Science*, Vico instructs the reader how to create the 'new science' for himself. In a meditative state, the reader compares the 'external' evidence of cultures to the 'internal' evidence of the structure of his own mind. With a fractal-like logic

of suturing microcosm to macrocosm, the reader is to achieve something akin to a spiritual state (Vico, 1744, §345). How we comprehend *The New Science*, then, is not through Cartesian-style analytic evaluation or deconstructivist detachment, but, rather, through a reflective imagination that moves between reading and the book itself as one would move from dream to waking experience. The parable of the man who dreamed he was a butterfly and then wondered if he were not a butterfly dreaming he were a man is apt. The reader must dream a science amidst of a collection of images that retroactively dream *the reader*.

Image as Symptom/Sinthom

Symptoms, Lacan (1973) wrote, are what all of us use, in the face of madness, to be able to do something rather than nothing. Both Vico's stage management (the scholar as a melancholy *poète manquée*) and contemporary misreading of his theory can be seen as 'symptomatic' – a means of dealing with the unsymbolizable, hollow core of authority. Vico uses misunderstanding to create a higher order of understanding based on reading as a dream taking place within a gallery of images. In *The New Science*, the reader is asked to compare the evolution of the human mind with 'the modifications of his own mind' – an early form of the principle 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny' (the development of the individual replays the evolution of the species). But, there is more. The reader's access to the mentality of myth is both an external, historical question and an internal psychic puzzle. Like dreams and the unconscious, mythic thought is both inaccessible and accessible at the same time. And, also like dreams, it is difficult to say whether dreams are a projection or residue of conscious life or whether conscious life might not be an artefact of our dreams.

Vico claimed that the model for this dream movement, a collection of images related to human origins, was inserted into the front

pages of final edition, in the place of an account of the architect Lodoli's withdrawal of financial support (figure 1). The reader is invited to review, or rather 'pre-view', the entire idea of *The New Science*. This radical theory of reading takes up into itself the idea of misreading, as something inevitable and even essential to the process of ultimate understanding. It is truly 'new' – 'forever new' so to speak – because the reader must continually reconstruct it. Each idea is a *hapax* formation – a novelty that 'back-projects' its own history.

The *dipintura*, filled with images that seem to have a Rosicrucian origin, depicts



Figure 1. The *dipintura* of *The New Science*.

the ceremonial clearing made by the first humans after being frightened by the thunder ('Jove') into believing in the divinity of the sky (Papini, 1984). The thunder, the first divine word, was unintelligible. But, it led the first humans to establish a ritual of divination to determine Jove's intentions. The ritual demanded sacrifice, hence an altar and symbols of the boundaries of purification, fire and water. The fixed clearings consequentially introduced fixed-field agriculture, so the plough leans on the altar, and subsequent human inventions, such as the alphabet, laws, and commerce, are represented by icons that spill out to the bottom margin of the image.

But, the primary 'event' of humanity took place within perception. This impregnates ordinary sense experience with a kind of 'inverse' – sight with blindness; touch with distance; sound with the silence of mute signs and hieroglyphs ('myth' comes from 'mute'). The sign in general is destabilized from within – what Lacan identified as the 'sliding of signifiers, "polysemy"'. Thus, the human world is, if anything, like the curtain painted by the ancient Greek painter, Parhassios in his contest with the famous Zeuxis. (Unlike Zeuxis's perfectly painted bowl of fruit, Parhassios's curtain fooled the judges into thinking it was 'really real' – a simple strategy of positioning the 'curtain' within the margins of the framed view. In this sense, by *not signifying*, Parhassios's curtain was 'the Real' in that it was *precisely what it was*: a limit of perception.)

Vico's image thus shows the limit of human perception, the globe perched precariously on the edge of the altar, surmounted by the allegorical figure Metafisica, 'Metaphysics'. This goddess gazes at the blue of the divine 'eye' (the word here has visual and boundary implications). The eye in turn generates a beam that is reflected off Metafisica's jewel – a sapphire, for 'wisdom'? – on to the statue of Homer, the eponymous first poet (the first poets were also kings and physicians, according to Vico and other anthropologists), whose base is cracked to

indicate that the poet's role in human origins is misunderstood.

Homer in turn gestures towards the helmet of Hermes, god of boundaries. Hermes, who conducts souls of the dead to Hades ('invisible'), is also the guide of the melancholy reader. Strangely, the winged hat is the only object *not* mentioned in Vico's extensive description of the *dipintura*. A surplus part of the image is echoed by a lack in the text. Also, wings for the head are the only element appearing three times, once in the form of wings on Metafisica's head in the *dipintura* and again in an image on the title page, called the *impresa*. Metafisica is now seated next to a plinth or altar bearing the engraving *Ignota Latebat*, 'she lay hidden' (figure 2). She gazes in a mirror at the virtual image of the triangle (builder's square). The winged helmet is donned by the reader in his dream-excursion into the image and, beyond that, *The New Science*. If Verene is correct, and the *dipintura* and *impresa* constitute a 'before' and 'after' picture of the work, then Hermes is the 'travel agent' who both conducts the tour and makes it possible (Verene 1987a). 'Before' is the clearing that becomes the *urbs quadrata*. 'After' is the reconstruction of divine wisdom 'through a glass darkly'.

The triangles that populate the two images suggest a rebus-like relationship between elements that correspond to 'reality' (a network of signifiers that, together, constitute the institutions of culture), the Real (the a-symbolic and unsymbolizable, invisible, divine source of authority), and the imaginary (the projected worlds of poetry). Rather than regard these images simply as devices to teach the illiterate through pictures, we might see how, working within the iconographic traditions of the seventeenth century, Vico established a radical connection between the human project of self-knowledge and a heretical view of the Judeo-Christian creator-God.

It should never be forgotten that Vico worked within the shadow of the Spanish Inquisition, nor that his work explicitly



Figure. 2. Image on the title page of *The New Science*.

involved a 'subversive' account of how gods were fictitiously projected onto nature. While it is easy for moderns to see this account as agnostic or even atheistic, Vico had to insulate his arguments from Church censors by limiting his theories to pagan gentiles. Whether or not he really thought his account of religious imagination applied both to pagans and Judeo-Christianity alike is a matter of speculation. But, his use of Neoplatonic and Rosicrucian imagery and ideas is beyond doubt.

The issue of Vico's theology plays a crucial role in the interpretation of *verum ipsum factum*. The meaning of this dictum is based on an analogy of proportion. Just as God 'perfectly' knows the world He created, humans should be able to know the world they create (Vico, 1710). But, what if there is a crucial and scandalous gap in God's knowledge of the world? This is not a radical view, but one supported by standard theology (Miles, 1995). God cannot locate Adam in the Garden of Eden. God 'experiments' with his best servant, Job, 'to see if' he will forsake him, even in the face of cruel torture. Finally, God cannot or will not rescue Christ from

execution. In the mystic Jewish text, the *Zohar*, creation is allowed only after God willingly *contracts* his presence and control. If, according to the *verum ipsum factum* principle, man follows God's 'example' of divine creation, the result is not only an incomplete knowledge of the world but a perversely obscured knowledge! The project of *The New Science* is not a view of history projected on a smooth screen of representation, a 'map of the world' but rather a series of puzzles involving self-contradiction as well as self-reference.

The *verum-factum* principle thus becomes, perversely, even more of a key than the imaginative universal. It shows what *kind* of knowledge Vico specifies. In keeping with the use of the *dipintura* and *impresa* as dream-puzzles, the reader turns to questions of topology: namely, how the 'knot' suggested in the images' triangulation of reality, the imaginary, and the Real can be tied. Put in more explicit terms, this is a question of how de-stabilizing of meaning (the 'sliding' of signification) enables the 'dreamer' to imagine and experience a 'Real'.

The answer to this lies in the image

that Vico himself cites as the precursor to his own: the 'Table of Cebes', an image mentioned in a polyglot text widely read in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance (Sider, 1979). Attributed falsely to the Cebes of Plato's circle, this story relates how pilgrims passing by a temple dedicated to Saturn were allowed by the attending priest to view an image displayed at the back of the temple. The priest warns the pilgrims that the image is a puzzle. Those who understand it will be granted divine wisdom while those who do not will be cursed with idiocy.

The traditional illustrations of the image lying at the rear of the Temple of Saturn in the Table of Cebes show a *mons delectus*, a labyrinthine 'mountain of choice', whose alpine initiates struggle upward, past a number of trials and temptations, to reach a temple concealed by clouds at the pinnacle. The topography of this *mons* is the same as the *Old Testament* Tower of Babel, whose top is shown as either incomplete or destroyed. In truth, the top was simply invisible, as was its architectural predecessor, the Sumerian Ziggurat, known as Bab'el, or 'gate of God'. Invisibility from below was a consequence of the contingent location of the viewer *versus* the etherial penetration of the head (of *Metafisica*, for example) into the divine realm. The relation of the head to the divine, and the connection of both to wings is a commonplace tradition of the emblem tradition.

Let us perpetrate an outrageous anachronism in the service of making a point: 'It is clear that Vico was a reader of Lacan'. The imaginative universal that initiates human consciousness is a 'suture' of the human body into the centre of external nature, but it is done 'behind a screen' that conceals this act from the human gaze. Thus, there are two screens, properly speaking. One conceals the act of suture/metaphor (the world as a kind of human body). The other is a surface upon which nature is represented as image – the screen Plato had in mind, in *The Republic*, as the central entertainment of the Cave. Two screens create a 'lamella',

a thin tissue that is 'neither dead nor alive' and serves Lacan in his description of the condition known as 'between two deaths'. Vico would have a lot to say about this, even without reading Lacan, for this is the interval celebrated by all cultures with funerals and mourning observances. The soul, not quite ready to take its leave of the body, is in an anxious and unstable state. In a more general sense, it is the hysteric's ground for feeling 'out of place' in the world; for finding in the world not a home but a collection of symptoms reflecting, uncannily, his own displacement and unease.

The Vichian thunder is sufficient to set all signifiers a-sliding, since it obliges humans to fix with ritual and convention what has been set loose in perception and to reconstruct time as a composite of fate and chance. Lacan's idea of 'quilting' (attempts to stabilize the sliding process) is an apt term for Vico's *certum*, or 'the certain', the severe laws, customs, and fables of the first human groups. However, the most useful Vico-Lacan creation is the structure of the space between the two deaths, or the two screens, a condition defined by the generally well known visual phenomenon of *anamorphosis* but temporally structured through the ancient rhetorical and musical device of chiasmus/fugue.

Chiasmus is one of the oldest devices in the history of rhetoric. It is the means by which any sequence can be structured by mirroring one part with another. ABA: BAB (inversion) is one form; another is ABCD: DCBA (palindrome). Chiasmus is fundamentally a three-part order: a normative order, a reversed or pied sequence, and a connecting hinge or joint, anticipated by faint links that create a ladder between the intersecting lines of action. In music, counterpoint and fugue challenge the listener to hold several distinct lines of melody in the ear at the same time.

Chiasmus is effective because it brings together the visible and the invisible. The act of synthesis is not symbolized but, rather, embodied by a material event. Vico's description of the reader's act of

comprehending *The New Science*, in fact, adopts chiasmus logic:

For the first indubitable principle posited above is that this world of nations has certainly been made by men, and its guise must therefore be found within the modifications of our own human mind. And history cannot be more certain than when he who creates the things also narrates them (Vico, 1744, §349).

[T]he reader will experience in his mortal body a divine pleasure as he contemplates in the divine ideas this world of nations in all the extent of its places, times, and varieties (Vico, 1744, §345).

The wit of *The New Science* lies not in Vico's aligning the human world to the structures of the individual mind – a Piagetian exercise of 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny' – but of the 'idiotic symmetry' that couples the human individual with the world through the device of ignorance. *Not knowing* the true cause of things, Vico shows how mankind uses its own bodies and natures as the measure through a metaphoric transformation of interior to exterior, an inside-out 'suture' of what lies most remote to the innermost heart.

This principle extends to Vico's own situation as a part-time instructor at the University of Naples. Unable to afford a cook, Vico very likely lived on a diet of the street. This was not so bad. According to Paola Frascari (2004), Naples was famous for its pizza, a variation on the ubiquitous Mediterranean flat round breads, baked quickly and optionally garnished with vegetables and meats. Pizza bakers usually did not serve their patrons on their premises. Instead, teams of vendors wrapped their heads with coiled 'rugs' soaked in water and balanced small cylindrical stoves on top. The hot coals in the stoves heated pizzas on shelves above. According to Marco Frascari (2004), the pizza's use of tomatoes involves a demonstration of Vichian 'idiotic symmetry'.

The suitability of tomatoes to be edible was debated for long time by botanists and by cooks after they had been imported from the New World. They also struck popular imagination

and its genus name *Lycopersicon* (wolf-peach) was enthused by the folk credence that if someone will eat tomato will become a werewolf, but the Neapolitans, realistic people that believed in the sensuous, that is in their testing taste, had made tomato a staple of their meals.

The enthusiasm of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples for this peasants' food led to the general acceptance of tomatoes, first described by an English cultivator as 'love apples', translated hopefully by the French into the aphrodisiac *pommes d'amour*, and confused somewhat by the Spanish appellation, *toma de los Mores* (Moors' tomato), the result could easily travel to Germany as a *Liebesapfel*. From love to gold was not difficult in Italian, as *pomme d'amour* became *pomo d'oro*. Although Cartesians persisted in rejecting the fruit, poor Neapolitans could not afford to throw away such an obviously good food. But, the poor Vico brought a principle to his exigency. Marco Frascari (2004):

To reach a decision over the possible toxicity of tomatoes Vico had to consider that mythos and logos combine in a sensually sentient solution since, as he had explained in his *New Science*, the power of imaginative metaphysics is solution to human knowledge . . . when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.

Understood rationally, the tomato can be nothing but poisonous. Filtered through the etymological and error-filled labyrinth of love, gold and werewolves, the tomato is not only edible but delicious. The idiotic symmetry that led to Vico's conception of *The New Science* probably had, as its chiasmic counterpart, the life of the street where vendors – 'simple men' to say the least – pulled from above their heads the oven-hot round aromatic breads, an image impossible to ignore for its magical irony. Knowing that ignorance begets wisdom when there is a chiasmic symmetry to create a chiasm and, hence, a barrier around which thought must travel in a circle to strike at the empty heart of the Other, Vico must have laughed

when he conceived the elegant Latin phrase, *verum ipsum factum*. Indeed, this all-time great punch-line cannot be equalled for its timing (Vico's 'ideal eternal history' of three necessary ages of cultural development) or its dry wit ('acute' wit was held to come from *ingenium*, the spark of the animus that penetrated into matter, or *anima*).

The Fate of Vico

The connection of Vico and Lacan, the claim that *The New Science* evolves from and employs chiasmus, and the story of Vico's tomato pizza do not come from the philosophers, whose territorial claims on Vico have isolated this thinker for over two hundred years of scholarship. Of course, if there were no sellers, there were not many buyers either. Architects, apart from Carlo Lodoli, Giambattista Piranesi, and possibly Marc-Antoine Laugier, through Lodoli's protégé, Francisco Algarotti, have not been much interested. Modern day scholars such as Bitz, Frascari, and Dixon-Hinson have attempted to build new bridges, but these projects face a world that is continually 're-Cartesianed' by projective and instrumental techniques that dominate practice and are 're-Aristotled' by destructive word-games that undermine theoretical discourse and misrepresent our intellectual heritage.

Vico's message for architecture has to do with the senses rather than deductive thinking. Senses imply the body in all its imagined states: from guest to ghost, from host to enemy, from sensuous youth to infirm crone. 'Between the two deaths' is not just Lacanian, it is also Platonic, Mandelbrotian, Chaplinesque, Hitchcockian. It is especially Vichian, if we follow the threads of mystery between the *Autobiography* and *The New Science*. Two deaths, not one, is human fate, for chiasmatically speaking we live two lives; one for the money (the network of symbolic signifiers, or 'culture'), a second for the show (our imaginative projections of other points of view).

Three's to get ready. A new architectural agenda involving Vico's curious ideas requires a new definition of 'sense' from the perspective of metaphor. This might be cast in the form of a 'cultivated synaesthesia', where feelings and sensations are not divided according to the standard neurologist's palette of taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell. One overlooked example of synaesthesia is 'reading', which is what the first humans did after the thunder disclosed its awful word. The world became a hieroglyph, pregnant with meaning because, for the first time, humans looked at the world in ignorance. Modern reading's scribbles and glyphs are still capable – as poetry attests – to eliciting direct feelings and sensations. Such was the aspiration of T. S. Eliot's 'objective correlative'.

Four's to go. Four, according to Joseph Rykwert, is the city as *urbs quadrata*, the town founded with an act of sacrificial horror. It is too simple to romanticize this as a basis for collective and restorative memory, as Rykwert sometimes seems to do. But, if the kernel of truth lying within *The Idea of a Town* is sought, there is the chiasmatic truth of fratricide between twins, a mandate available only through the death of a half of something, so that two realms, the visible *and* invisible, can be ruled from a single pivot point. This is why Romulus and Remus founded Rome, but also why the twin gods, Castor and Pollux, guarded it. These brothers, one mortal the other divine, were granted eternal co-life by agreeing to rotate their rule of heaven and earth – a chiasmatic contract if ever there was one.

Four parts constitute the round of possibilities, the four parts of Vico's ages (gods, heroes, men; *ricorso* or 'return'), the four humours with melancholy reserved for poets, artists, and philosophers. The four is also two plus two: the Master and Servant engaged in their symbolic dialectic; and the duet played by the invisible and whoever is empowered to possess it. At the still centre, between the 'two screens' where the *lamella* of

hysterical human life dances its labyrinthine two-step, is the anamorphic condition. This is James Joyce's 'twone', and also Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, double maidens and double guardians of – what? – the sky in back and the portal in front that is the eye of the audience. (The remaining inhabitant is, as one could predict, the perplexed seated figure of Melancholy.) Four to go is a four-mula for the imaginary, a pair of pairs, a *pomme* of love as well as gold, a head filled with food.

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