

Vico's Sons and Daughters

Vico's Sons and his Legacy: The Discovery of the Transmutations of Historical Consciousness and the Development of its Implications in Germania and Anglo-Saxonia: Coleridge, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Jaynes, and John Lukacs.

Seen through the eyes of Vico's daughter, Jane Austen and her *Emma*

Vico, in his *New Science*, is the, as far as I know, first pioneer of *historicity*. This whole talk will attempt to define what this means. (This is a summary which I shall expand in the talk itself.)

I begin with

Key Vico Axioms

XII

Commonsense is judgement without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the whole human race.

XIII

Uniform ideas originating among entire peoples unknown to each other, must have a common ground of truth.

XIV

The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being at certain times and in certain fashions. Whenever the time and fashion is thus and so, such and not otherwise are the things that come into being.

Samuel Beckett's Synopsis of Vico

<http://bibliot3ca.wordpress.com/dante-bruno-vico-joyce-by-samuel-beckett/>

'It is first necessary to condense the thesis of Vico, the scientific historian. In the beginning was the thunder: the thunder set free Religion, in its most objective and unphilosophical form – idolatrous animism: Religion produced Society, and the first social men were the cave-dwellers, taking refuge from a passionate Nature: this primitive family life receives its first impulse towards development from the arrival of terrified vagabonds: admitted, they are the first slaves: growing stronger, they exact agrarian concession, a a despotism has evolved into a primitive feudalism: the cave becomes a city, and the feudal system a democracy: then an anarchy: this is corrected by a return to monarchy: the last stage is a tendency towards interdestruction: the nations are dispersed and the phoenix of Society arises out of their ashes. To this six-termed social progression corresponds a six-termed progression of human motives: necessity, utility, convenience, pleasure, luxury, abuse of luxury: and their incarnate manifestations: Polyphemus, Achilles, Caesar and Alexander, Tiberius, Caligula and Nero. At this point Vico applies Bruno — though he takes very good care not to say so — and proceeds from rather arbitrary data to philosophical abstraction.'

Vico's Daughter Jane Austen

I shall view all which follows through the eyes of Vico's Daughter Jane Austen and her novel *Emma*. Emerging from the most *contra-dramatic* epoch perhaps ever known, the English Eighteenth Century, imbued with its ethos, above all that of Samuel Johnson, she achieves a dramatic vision comparable to Shakespeare's, and, with it, an analysis of consciousness transformation which is both

Hegelian and as profound as that of Hegel – and, in its very English way, both far more lucid – and far easier to miss.

The Sons of Vico

Coleridge

Concept of an intermediate realm and poetic space

‘...my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.’ (Biographia Literaria Ch 14)

Implicit in this is a concept of *dramatic reality*.

Had Coleridge but realised it, *Emma* is the pre-eminent realisation of this concept.

For instance in Austen’s endless inner/outer plays, and plays of self-deception and self-realisation, concealment and revelation, and so on.

Hegel

In the Lordship/Bondsman chapter of *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel creates a modifiable template to understand *Internalisation of the Other*. In modern jargon, narcissistic omnipotence becomes tempered by creative work by the other emerging through necessity.

Austen follows this path in relation to *Emma*, especially in her relation to Harriet, and to Miss Bates, which together lead her to her moment of realisation and transformation, *acts of historicity which are caught in the very act by Jane Austen*.

Nietzsche

In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche puts the Lordship Bondsman analysis powerfully to work in a total system of psychological naturalism explanation, in which he is followed by Freud and Jung and most psychotherapy;

Heidegger

Heidegger is Vico-esque in that he grasps that the *entire framework of our being in the world is logically ‘earlier’, in Vico’s sense, than the logic of factual objective judgement and analysis*. The later Wittgenstein tacitly follows Heidegger in this.

Jaynes

With Jaynes we return to the primary Vico-esque recognition that we create our world imaginatively in our first relation to it – for Jaynes this is through consensual hallucination, the ‘bicameral mind’. He approximates to Vico’s three phases: the gods, the heroes, and ordinary consciousness. Until historical consciousness had worked through its *own* character it was not possible to return to the naivety of first historical discovery we find in Vico.

John Lukacs

John Lukacs, in *Historical Consciousness* and *At the End of an Age* comes nearer than most to actually mapping the evolution of the awareness of historicity.

We can now see Vico himself with an eye on Historicity It is almost impossible to read him otherwise..