

Discussion

Truth-Makers: On Robert Miner's Genealogy of the Genealogists

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The Problem

MODERN PHILOSOPHY is haunted by the thought that what we claim to know is nothing but the construction of our mind. This is haunting, because instinctively we say that construction and knowing are opposed to each other. Knowing leads us to reality, whereas construction fashions mere fiction. Knowledge leads us into an open space that is accessible to everyone, while construction produces only private fantasies. With Husserl, truth can be defined as intersubjective, whereas that which is “true” only *for us* is by definition false. Therefore, that truth would be made, not found, seems to be counterintuitive.

However, modern “genealogists” like Foucault have claimed that truth claims are generally the construction of those who dominate the discourse. It is the discourse that determines what is true, and discourse is shaped by self-promoting narratives, whether it be collective or individual, conscious or unconscious. Therefore truth is made, and the genealogist tells the story of its making.

But what saves this genealogical narrative from the accusation that the genealogist himself is just making up his own truth? Is not this genealogy merely another narrative that constructs rather than finds truth? And how can this genealogy then be the formulation of a critique of truth-claims? The claim of telling the *real* story seems to imply a notion of

truth, a truth that is not made, but discovered. In short: It presupposes a realistic concept of truth, that is, a metaphysics of truth.

Can there be a genealogy that tells *this* story? A genealogy that unmasks not only false truth claims in general, but also false genealogies in particular, without falling into same trap? Can there be a genealogy that both affirms that truth is made and also retains a metaphysics of truth?

The Thesis

Robert Miner claims that Giambattista Vico's (1668–1744) *Scienza nuova* does precisely this, for it articulates a model of genealogy that is consistent with its own truth claims. Thus it is a genealogy that is not relativistic or antimetaphysical. In contrast to the genealogies of Nietzsche and Foucault, Vico's genealogy even comes to the defense of classic Christian metaphysics. By its nature this genealogy criticizes as well as accepts the modern idea of truth as “making.” It criticizes various makings as distortions, but accepts the idea of a truth that is made in its own form of a genealogical narrative, one that can claim to be a new science—*Scienza nuova*.

If Miner is correct, epistemological realists would have reason to be interested in Vico. The argument between them and much of modern relativism would have to be recast. We no longer have to choose between realism *or* genealogy, truth *or* making, but rather we can integrate truth *in* the making, realism *as* genealogy. Vico would have answered modernity ahead of time and needs to be rediscovered from this perspective.

We have to thank Robert C. Miner for having paved the way for this rediscovery in his first book and dissertation, *Vico, Genealogist of Modernity*.¹ In a careful reading of the texts, he reconstructs this new genealogical science of Vico. In a second book, *Truth in the Making*,² he takes a step further and tries to write something like a genealogy of Vico's genealogy itself, by tracing its roots back to the Trinitarian theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas himself.

What Miner accomplishes—taking the modern ideas of genealogy and deconstruction and turning them against their practitioners—is in the tradition of his teacher John Milbank and “Radical Orthodoxy.” By unearthing the voices that the modern narratives silence, he turns the modern hermeneutics of suspicion against the modern discourse itself. He writes a subversive history from the vantage point of theology, the

¹ Robert C. Miner, *Vico, Genealogist of Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

² Robert C. Miner, *Truth in the Making: Creative Knowledge in Theology and Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

blind spot of modernity, thus uncovering the suppressed memory of modernity's roots. In this case, what is subject to this reversal is not just some assumption but one of the very methods of that discourse itself. In this way, it becomes clear that the modern antimetaphysical idea of "truth in the making" has actual theological and metaphysical roots.

To know the truth by making it is characteristic of the divine mind. As Aquinas points out against Origen: *scientia Dei est causa rerum*, and not vice versa. With Henri de Lubac, we could say that this is part of the "drama of atheist humanism" of Feuerbach and others. This humanism claims divine predicates for human beings, attributes that have allegedly been alienated from them by projecting them onto God. Unlike the nineteenth century, however, the twentieth century does not seem to be aware of its theological roots. Robert Miner therefore provides an important anamnesis.

With the help of Vico, Miner does not hesitate to challenge as many people as possible. His book is also an implicit criticism of those who argue *against* the notion of truth as making, that is, of modern antimodernism. The latter have unwittingly accepted a distorted, non-theological version of knowing by making. Those, therefore, who are afraid of this principle have already subscribed to modern secularism.

The fear of this principle is of course understandable, because it has been used to create a purely secular space, independent from a theological framework of creation or even a metaphysical idea of an independent reality. Miner's Radical Orthodoxy denies that there is such a purely secular space, that is that reality and truth can be understood independently from theology, precisely *because* truth is in the making. Truth is in the making insofar as it is either a theological construct or not truth at all. Though Radical Orthodoxy may sound rather Barthian, it does not deny the possibility of *fides quaerens intellectum*, especially the *fides quaerens intellectum historicum*. The kind of reason that this theology seeks is primarily *historical* reason or genealogy, which is akin to the new science of Vico.

As it turns out, knowledge and truth by making is at its best a metaphysical participation in God's own making, occasionally even ecstatically so. It is literally part of God's indwelling in us. Miner quotes John 3:21: "he who does the truth, comes to the light" (*Truth in the Making*, 126). This theological version of knowledge by making is an even more exalted creativity than its secular version, which rather pales in comparison. With this, Miner gives indirectly a proof for de Lubac's observations on atheist humanism. Atheism does not strengthen the dignity of man as it expected. Since man is made in the image and likeness of God, the disappearance of God rather weakens the dignity of man, sometimes to the point of extinction. Human beings find their highest dignity as co-creators

with God himself. Turning truth as making *against* the theological tradition is self-defeating.

The Narrative Examined

This appears to be the general thesis of Robert Miner's books. Is it true? The argument that he gives lies in the plausibility of the story that he tells. Testing the validity of his thesis is testing the plausibility and accuracy of the genealogy or narrative that it proposes. For this purpose, we are going to follow his historical analysis, which culminates in Vico's explicit statement of truth in the making: *verum et factum convertuntur*.

As genealogy, Miner's is a *critical* history, attempting to show that the secular space that is opened up by disconnecting our making from God's making is a disastrous chasm.

Aquinas

With Aquinas, however, everything is still in balance. This is true particularly for the relation between three different kinds of production: technical making, creation, and generation.

Modern knowing as making has understood making on the model of technical fabrication. Pace Heidegger, this is precisely not true of metaphysics. It is precisely *without* metaphysics and without a notion of creation (rather than technical fabrication), that construction ends up in nihilism (*Truth in the Making*, xii f.). Our technical making depends on God's creating, and though they are fundamentally different, they are also analogical.

Both creation and technical making imply that we *know* what we are doing, that is, we have an idea of our work. And both involve an act of the will: They are voluntary. Yet, following R. G. Collingwood, Miner points out that creation is not a technical production for several reasons. The most important is that there is (1) no given matter or raw material that the creator works on; nor are there (2) given ideas that would be extrinsic to him. In other words, God is not a demiurge.

This difference between fabrication and creation affects the ways we know. First with regard to (1) the raw material. Both God and man know through making, though the range of making is different. According to Aquinas, God knows particulars, precisely because he also makes the *matter* of things. Conversely human artists create only the *form*, and that is therefore the only thing we know. Thomas does not yet draw out the implications of this: Our knowledge remains at the fringes of things, and nature would be more opaque to our knowledge than our own artifacts. Even with regard to the *form* of things, we are not entirely their maker; the artist arrives at the form only by *abstraction*.

With regard to (2) the ideas and exemplars of creation, unlike for a demiurge, these are not outside of God—that would make God subject to necessity; yet they are not created either—that would make creation the product of blind chance. Creation is an intentional act, free, and motivated by love, not need.

But neither are they without derivation; they do derive from a form of production as well. This third form of production is generation:³ the Divine Word is begotten, not made. As an exemplar of creation, the word is at the same time a form of *self*-knowledge of God. This is not true of the ordinary human craftsman. But there might be analogies. As Jacques Maritain has pointed out, God is more like a poet than a craftsman. Poetic knowledge is born from connaturality, that is, from the Schleiermacherian spiritual unconscious that precedes the split into subject and object, where we are primordially acquainted with ourselves. So while God's artistic knowledge in the Divine Word is different from that of the craftsman, one could find an additional analogy by pointing with Maritain to poetic knowledge.

With regard to artificial things, we can therefore also make and know the form of what we are making. We, too, *conceive* a plan of the work, rather than create it, as Miner points out against Collingwood. Hence there is a genuine way in which we can participate in divine creativity and be co-creators—not acting by necessity or chance, but through a preconception that is analogous to divine conception. This is true for the craftsman, as well as for the legislator, who conceives of the natural law as participating in the eternal law (*Truth in the Making*, 9f.).

This participation also is the paradigm for understanding the analogy of being. Miner discusses the various forms (especially *analogia attributionis* and *analogia proportionalitatis*) and their problems, and finds the solution in the notion of a participation of the *esse* of creatures in the *esse* of God as their efficient, exemplary, and final cause. It is not entirely clear to me how Miner wants to develop this topic. His digression into Trinitarian theology in Olivi and Duns Scotus suggests that he wants to contrast an analogical communication of being as well as the divine generation with a philosophy of production of divine persons. The latter would attempt to derive univocally an epistemology of representation from divine knowing, a theory that anticipates modern theories of knowing as mirroring. This is interesting, and one would have liked to know more about it.

³ We tend to distinguish between creation and emanation, but Miner finds that Thomas uses *emanatio* for both generation and creation, and so he stresses the continuity between them. See Miner, *Truth in the Making*, 7f.

Communicating being (or making in general) is a relation. For any relation one would assume that the terms of the relation are ontologically prior to the relation. Miner tends to downplay this implication. For the side of the *made*, he stresses the continuing creaturely dependence on its maker (*Truth in the Making*, 16). But for the side of the maker, at least for the human maker, he tends to make the idea of the artist dependent on the actual work. The idea is not supposed to be a representation or picture of the work; rather, it is something like a spiritual matrix (perhaps a Kantian schema?) that finds its reality only in the act of making. Here we would know something indeed only after we have made it, or *in the making*. It is seeing through making (*Truth in the Making*, 8, 10). This might be plausible for Maritain's poetic production, but I doubt that one can carry this very far in the context of Thomas.

Miner also makes maximum capital out of a passage in Thomas that affirms that knowing the Trinity is necessary in order to understand creation (*ST I*, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3). Without knowledge of the Trinity, we would have to assume that God creates out of necessity and not out of love.⁴ This Thomas says in an article in which he denies that the Trinity can be known by natural reason. Thus, it would confirm Radical Orthodoxy's claim that purely secular reason and pure philosophy will necessarily go astray.

This might be true, but by emphasizing this, Miner does not address a whole field that might have confirmed his theory of "truth in the making" even further. However, this would have been a confirmation on merely secular and pagan grounds: the theory of the *intellectus agens*; in Aristotle, the *nous poietikos*. Its very name implies that the mind is *making* something in knowing. Moreover, it is precisely here that the human mind is connected to the divine: Aristotle sees the *nous poietikos* as divine and coming *thyraten* from the outside. It is a pagan philosopher who makes this connection strong; and it is the Christian theologian Aquinas who has to argue against making this connection too tight, lest we lose the individual, immortal human soul. This does not necessarily undermine the whole genealogy of Miner, but it might allow for more room for secular, pagan reason—even Vico might have allowed for this.

⁴ Someone who would want to think further on these lines would find food for thought in Leo Cardinal Scheffczyk, "Die Trinität—das christliche Tremendum und Fascinosum Gottes," in *Die Normativität des Wirklichen. Über die Grenze zwischen Sein und Sollen*, Festschrift for R. Spaemann, ed. T. Buchheim et al. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002), 362–80.

Cusanus

Nicolaus Cusanus's *vis assimilativa* (in the dialogue *Idiota de mente*) looks more conventional against this background as well. Cusanus wants to be in the middle between Plato and Aristotle: Knowledge neither starts just from the senses (Aristotle) nor from the intellect (Plato). Genera and species are not just *entia rationis*, nor are they eternal exemplars. With Aristotle, we do know "in the making," but what we make has an exemplar. Yet this exemplar is not in a platonic realm of forms or ideas, but in the one simple and "infinite form," which is God (*Truth in the Making*, 24f.). Hence, Cusanus explains the agent intellect in platonic terms. It is a power that makes us to be in the image and likeness of God. Here Cusanus makes a word play on making (*facere*) and the face of God (*facies absoluta*). The making of the *vis assimilativa* assimilates us to the face of God. And it is able to do so because it shares in the divine *simplicity*. This *vis speculativa* stems from the mind's simplicity by which it is the measure (*mens est mensura*) of things, that is, it is a capacity for unity and for synthesis or *complicatio*. Therefore the ten Aristotelian categories are also brought together in a higher unity, even though they are not reduced to a common genus.⁵ While the mind is the mirror of things (*vis specularis*), this does not imply passivity: It is a power, a *vis*.

The mind understood as a capacity for synthesis: Here we might suspect a predecessor of Kant, where the synthetical judgments a priori are derived from the unity of the transcendental apperception. This is true especially since the model seems to be the mathematical construction of space. Miner accordingly points to Ernst Cassirer's interpretation as an example for this reading, and he himself seems to understand knowing as making in a similar sense (*Truth in the Making*, 34f.). In this perspective, it could seem as if Cusanus has thought of the world as mere unshaped "solidity" that is formed into geometrical forms by the mind; the actual reality would be disappearing as a noumenon behind the mental making (*Truth in the Making*, 32). I doubt, however, that Cusanus is really that modern. That the mind is *measuring* things does not mean that it is *shaping* them (even though measuring is an *activity* of the mind). The *facere* of the mind is less about synthesizing the world than it is about finding the original synthesis or simplicity in all things and ourselves. "Solidity" only means three-dimensionality, and the *facere* that explicates this three-dimensionality is abstraction by subtraction, not by construction.

Therefore it is not really about constructing space by going from point to line to surface either. It seems rather that Cusanus is reversing the

⁵ This seems to be the problem, in the discussion, not the *facere*.

Euclidian process: The *facere* of this mind is not merely the *explicatio* of retracing the extension that is there by measurement. More importantly, it is the ability of *complication*, not explication. It is not *unfolding* but *enfolding*, for example, when the line is enfolded in the point, which is “its totality and perfection” (*Truth in the Making*, 32). It is about enfolding, because the goal is simplicity. It is geared toward knowing the simple self and the simple God, whose first image is the mind.⁶ It is very modern to think about knowing as having its goal in knowing *things*. That indeed, I would claim, will be the case from Bacon onward, but not in Cusanus. It might be that Miner is projecting this onto Cusanus in his desire to find a more modern notion of knowing as making. On the other hand, Miner himself points out that indeed the *telos* of knowing as making in Cusanus is an asymptotic *theosis* (*Truth in the Making*, 38)!

Another parallel with Kant might be that in the making of knowledge Cusanus sees us as going beyond the contingent world and its connections to necessary connections and, ultimately, beyond to the absolute necessity. This necessity is without alterity and is the source of all connection; it is the unity of the multiplicity, which is God. While this is described as *facere*, it is not a making without God. *Our* mind is not the source of unity; rather, we find the unity because we are made in its image and likeness. The human knowing through *facere* is a making indeed, but only in the mode of assimilation, not creation.

As Miner points out himself in various ways (*Truth in the Making*, 25, 38), Cusanus’s aspirations to unity and synthesis are not so much Kantian, but rather an expression of “Leibnizian” irenic wisdom that wants to combine the good in all, as the layman in the dialogue combines Plato and Aristotle, philosophy and theology or rhetoric. And this wisdom has its origin in a making that is a participation in divine wisdom and unity. In this regard therefore Cusanus is a strong contrast rather than an ancestor to the following act of the genealogy.

Francis Bacon

For Francis Bacon the makings of the mind are separated from its divine and metaphysical ground in whose image and likeness they are made. Bacon does not receive the light of knowledge; he *makes* it in the form of the axioms of science (*Truth in the Making*, 43f.)—just as God has made light on the first day of creation. The light of the axioms is like God’s word, informing the matter of creation (*Truth in the Making*, 46), and it is made by us. We make the light by which we discover things; it is artifi-

⁶ Cf. also the quotes in Miner, *Truth in the Making*, 34.

cial light. It is also with this light therefore that we bridge the chasm between the knowing mind and the things to be known, a task that is ever difficult after the fall.

How do we arrive at these axioms? The most clever and sharp tool for dissecting and analyzing nature is induction rather than dialectic, syllogism, or abstraction (*Truth in the Making*, 40–43). Beginning with an empirical stage, recorded in the written form of tabulation, it arrives at its own form of abstraction. Ultimately this produces axioms, which are in turn tested in experiment (they have to resist a falsification test). They also have to show their value in predicting particulars, that is, in their fruitfulness of implied results. Against Karl Popper's own more empiricist interpretation of Bacon, they guide the research along a Popperian road.

In this regard, knowing through making seems to take a Promethean turn. At the same time, the goal of science and knowledge is to know the world, not God. And knowing the world is a way of controlling it, of increasing our power.

On the other hand, Miner finds some indications that ultimately Bacon's goal is not practical, but contemplative. Miner points to passages where Bacon both tempers action with the value of contemplation and is tempered in his Promethean inclinations by charity (*Truth in the Making*, 43f.). It seems to me, however, that charity in Bacon is understood as pragmatic usefulness, and is meant precisely against the separation of contemplation and action. It rather reinforces a pragmatistic turn, in opposition to the alleged sterility of scholasticism.

Likewise, while Miner's more contemplative reading views Bacon's goal as finding the most general axioms, it seems to me that this still describes Bacon's method only. For Bacon's goal is (and remains) pragmatic. Even atomism as metaphysical theory, though maybe akin to Bacon's purposes, is of no interest to Bacon. As Miner himself points out, the dissection that leads to it is interesting only for pragmatic purposes; a general atomistic theory is a useless abstraction (*Truth in the Making*, 50).

Nevertheless, there seems to be a tension, if not contradiction in Bacon, insofar as charity remains inspired by *theology*. Thus theology would play the role of a guide in natural science. Yet, on the other hand natural science should (against Paracelsus) not be influenced by theology (the book of God's work is *not* to be read through the book of God's Word). The latter side of Bacon is the modern side, a side that creates the purely secular space of modern science.

The notoriously obscure notion of "forms" in Bacon also finds a deeper analysis in Miner. They cannot mean final causes that Bacon famously rejects as sterile and that have use only for the analysis of human

action. Nor are they formal causes in the sense of substantial form. In Miner's reading they are akin to "laws which govern the motions of natural bodies." Combined with mathematics (which, according to Miner, Bacon does *not* reject), they might look like the mathematical laws of modern science. In other passages, however, (for example, aphorism 2.5), they look more like the sense qualities of later empiricism (yellow, heavy, fluid, etc.). It is not clear to me how Miner puts these notions together in one notion of "form." From my perspective, they look like the sense impressions of empiricism. These impressions, although defined as sensual, are actually something like Platonic ideas. For Bacon, for example, they are eternal and immutable; one might compare this with Thomas Hobbes, for whom these are the most simple and universal elements (that is, the nature of things), which are arrived at by analysis.⁷

Although eternal and immutable, Bacon views these forms through the pragmatic lens, namely as the basis for recipes for successful action. It seems to me, that this kind of action still has an alchemistic ring to it. They are the foundation of a science of material and efficient causes that shape Bacon's mechanics, of which he says that it "is nothing less than magic." It seems that there is a strange amalgamation of modern mechanics and alchemy (Bacon talks about gold) at work behind the disparate notion of form.

If I had to write this genealogy, I probably would track its development along slightly different lines. Bacon's emphasis on analysis and dissection—as opposed to abstraction or platonic synthesis—makes him appear not as the continuation of Cusanus but as his very opposite. The genealogy might not be as linear as it seems. The shift from synthesis to analysis implies also a shift in direction: Not knowing God is the *telos*, but knowing the world, and this for the purpose of domination and usefulness.

What is the reason for this shift? To my mind it is the heritage of late medieval nominalism and the Reformation that found God to be a *Deus absconditus*. Bacon finds it to be God's glory and very nature to hide himself.⁸ Revelation seems to be the only access to God, but does not enlighten creation at all. The *revelata* are mere *posita/placita* of God and they are informative only for knowing primary and not secondary causes. Science is about secondary causes, and it must make its own light for knowing them. *This* creates the secular space that Radical Orthodoxy abhors. An open question might be whether nominalism is the cause or the effect of this turn to knowledge as power in a secular space.

⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁸ Ibid., 44.

This turn to a secular space might be motivated by a theology rooted in despair and anger over God's absence. This, in turn, can lead to a desire to take things in one's own hands. One could see this as the motivation behind much of modern technological developments, and in Bacon we do find a theological expression of it. We find ourselves in the ignorance and the suffering that are the result of the fall of Adam. The question is how we find a replacement for Eden without depending on God's grace, and instead relying on our own powers, that is, on technology.⁹ (Today we might see this especially in the development of medical and genetic technology.) It is a secular Eden. Bacon uses the language of mysticism in order to describe the union of subject and object that is achieved in scientific knowledge: It is spousal imagery, and his desire for a knowledge that is fruitful is directly correlated with it. The new mystical unions happen in the bridal chamber of the laboratory, where fruitful technologies are begotten. The guiding paradigm of life is not the monk, but the scientist. Thus contemplating God or final causes would be rather the paradigm of the fruitlessness of religious life ("the research into final causes, like a virgin dedicated to God, is barren and produces nothing"); this is not where Eden is to be sought.

If, therefore, Miner points out that truth as making can be, in its correct form, an almost ecstatic participation in God's making, then this tie is clearly severed in Bacon. Reversing Bacon, we could say that it is indeed in the ecstatic or contemplative making and knowing of final causes that we participate in God's knowledge. Final causes are the intelligibility of the world itself, because they mirror the mind of the Creator, who gave them a purpose and who is the ultimate final cause of all things. The world is intelligible without the making-torture of Baconian experiments. The making that is involved in the knowledge of final causes is probably not so much construction, but an "active listening." If this is the model of metaphysics, then Bacon's image of the spider does not really fit: It is not spinning its concept out of itself. Rationalistic construction is rather the mark of a *degenerate* metaphysics. True metaphysics merely reconstructs and preserves the condition of the possibility that there is something intelligible for induction to induce in the first place.

Baconian induction, on the other hand, does not allow nature to speak, but rather "presses down on nature," tortures it, and is "closely bound up with works," that is, with pragmatic concerns and making.¹⁰ While it

⁹ In footnote 29, Miner says that this is not satanic, even though making one's own light has been related to something "luciferian"; it is rather about going back to a prelapsarian state. However, this does not appear to be mutually exclusive.

¹⁰ Cf. Miner's exposition 40ff.

wants to know the nature of things, it is actually not interested so much in the things themselves, but in how they can be constructed in a useful manner.¹¹ Forms and natures of things are not *facta* of the human mind for Bacon, but our knowledge of them is pragmatic knowledge.

For Cusanus, the knowledge to be attained includes also self-knowledge which does not seem to be of great concern to Bacon either. This will be different for René Descartes. But both Bacon and Descartes similarly want to make man the master and owner of nature. If the *Cogito* is the mark of an egocentric inversion, it might not be alien to Bacon either. It is this inversion that could be understood as the original fall that opened the gap between subject and object, a gap that Bacon's method wants to bridge. With Hans-Georg Gadamer, one could point out that, at the same time, it is this scientific method itself that cements the gap, because it implies a self-stabilized subject over against the object from which it therefore is alienated. The need to dominate the object comes from an insecurity that is self-inflicted.

René Descartes

It seems that René Descartes with his introspective *Cogito* is more interested in self-knowledge than Bacon, but in Miner's reading, this appears to be only the prelude and groundwork for Descartes's mathematical science. This science is again about knowledge as power and control through construction, not about contemplation of the truth for its own sake. Miner makes a very strong and convincing point that Descartes is the opposite of what Richard Rorty (or Charles Taylor) thinks of him. His mind and knowledge is *not* the "mirror of nature." Miner shows that Descartes can rather be understood as a pragmatist and therefore in basic agreement with Rorty himself. Descartes's mathematical science is not about mirroring, but about mastering nature. Even a mirror could be a tool for mastering nature (*Truth in the Making*, 143 note 28), but for Descartes it goes beyond this: Knowledge and understanding is achieved by constructing reality. His cosmology, for example, is "the fable of *le monde*," constructing the world from light as its principle. We cannot rely on our "adventitious ideas," our empirical impressions of the sun, because they would deceive us about the sun's size. True knowledge is gained through scientific, astronomic, and mathematical construction of this object, that is, through what would fall under the category of "invented ideas" (*Truth in the Making*, xxx). We could compare this to the model of

¹¹ Bacon's philosophy sounds empiricist and pragmatist at once; that is a tension that only later is split into two ways, for example, by Dewey and Russell.

modern science, where we assume that we have understood something, if we can simulate, that is, reconstruct it as a computer program.

This is true not only for the particular scientific ideas, but also for the whole method itself. (And this method is universal, not differentiated according to the subject matter, as in Aristotle. Only this allows for a coherent construction of reality.) Descartes points out that we understand reality in the way a craftsman understands his tools and what they produce. And so we construct the very method itself, as a craftsman constructs his tools, and what the tools make are representations of reality. These representations in turn are therefore not mere mirror images, but (mathematical) constructions. *They* are that in which knowledge terminates, not reality. The representation is literally a *factum*, reality is a construct. His physics is pure geometry, it does not describe real matter, but what scholastic terminology would call *materia intelligibilis*. His physics is imaginary rather than real and solid; the latter according to Descartes would not really serve our understanding. Understanding therefore is derived from construction, truth from making.

In other words, Rorty mistakes Descartes for an enemy, while in fact he is an ally in his pragmatism. Miner undermines the typical opposition between pragmatism and Descartes as the searcher for objective certitude. In his reading, Descartes is precisely this: a pragmatist, and even more so than Bacon. There is nothing "given" as foundation of certitude. With the exception of God (and maybe the human mind) everything is made. Properly speaking, only these two instances could count as innate ideas, everything else is our construct (and even God as *causa sui*, or the *Cogito* as the product of thought could possibly be considered to be *facta*).¹² This includes mathematical truths: They are given, but they are constructed by God arbitrarily. Thus they do not have an inner intelligibility, they are *facta* in the sense of a *factum brutum*. Therefore, our use of mathematics does not make things intelligible, but only operable.

According to Descartes's *Regulae*, we understand complex things and natures by being able to (re-)construct them and their effects from their simple parts.¹³ Mere perception as in a mirror is not what understanding is; that would be rather like "imitating others without knowing why, like monkeys." The envisioned construction also proceeds from the simple

¹² Miner tends to assimilate even innate ideas to the fictitious/invented. Cf. Miner's rendering of innate ideas as "born from within" rather than "inborn." Miner, *Truth in the Making*, 62.

¹³ For example, the magnet; Miner, *Truth in the Making*, 66. One could make it a point to say that this anticipates even the pragmatist Peirce: we make our concepts clear by including their effects in their definition.

parts as deduction, rather than mere conjecture and impulse. It is a concatenation in an ordered series, intuiting¹⁴ the necessary connections between the simple parts (*Truth in the Making*, 65f.).

This seems to imply that at least the simple parts are not constructed, but that they are that out of which the construction is made. Yet Miner interestingly points out that even the “simples,” the basic building blocks of nature, are the product of construction for Descartes. This is necessary because only a homogenous nature can be put into a *series* for the sake of construction (which will also be the motivation behind the calculus). An Aristotelian nature that falls apart into ten disparate categories is not helpful.

Thus the basic units of nature are themselves a construct that depends on the *ars* that is to be performed. What is understood to be simple is dependent on the problem or question that has been constructed beforehand. Simplicity is a function of the order to be pursued. Descartes compares it to playing a game. (Miner could have made the point that what we have here is not only a pragmatist Descartes, but an anticipation of the later Wittgenstein’s idea that, against physicalistic atomism, simplicity is relative to a language game!) In this game, simples are not the starting point, but the result, as Miner points out with Jean-Luc Marion. And the result is to be evaluated not against the actual reality, but by the clarity it generates (*Truth in the Making*, 67f.).

Even mathematical and geometrical terms such as extension, number, and duration are constructions. What Descartes calls “dimensions” (including weight and speed) are our pragmatic constructs (*Truth in the Making*, 72). Miner might have made this point even stronger, because, in the third Meditation, Descartes seems to argue that we can construct *everything* except the *Cogito* and God. Unlike Locke, he includes even colors in this. David Hume’s “missing shade of blue” would have been no problem for him.

All of these constructions are therefore relative to a problem or question. And these questions are themselves constructions. They are constructed like a mathematical problem, which is taken as the relation between something known and something unknown, just as in an equation. The unknown is related to the known by way of a mathematical proportion and depends therefore on the reduction of everything to homogenous magnitude (including the “secondary qualities,” which can only be compared as magnitudes). For this purpose, Cartesian science abstracts from the particular subject matter (which in turn enables

¹⁴ Intuition itself becomes a form of construction, that is, constructing! In contrast to the Aristotelian *nous*; Miner, *Truth in the Making*, 68.

Descartes's *universal* method as *mathesis*). The use of formal languages and symbolization, furthermore, makes this process smoother. This is the purpose of analytical geometry.

Miner points out that, for Descartes, number and similar concepts are not distinct from that which is numbered. This sounds like a nominalist position. I am not sure, however, whether Descartes does not deny the reality of *things* rather than the reality of *mathematics*. At least it is not clear if Descartes assumes that there is something like things in themselves as *noumena* behind the mathematical construction, or if reality is just that: the geometrical space, *res extensa*. The critique of his physics by later authors seems to indicate this latter position.

Descartes's method is not purely intellectual. As Miner points out, it relies on a combination of intellect and imagination. This should not be surprising, since it is a *mathematical* method. In scholastic terminology, unlike metaphysics, mathematics does not abstract from matter altogether, but rather, retains a *materia intelligibilis*.

A fortiori the universal science of Descartes cannot include God (who is immaterial and not subject to imagination). Theology and metaphysics in the traditional sense are not part of this science. We see confirmed what we have stated above: This is not about knowing God and the self, but about knowing things in the world. Descartes's "metaphysics" or *prima philosophia* is mere epistemology; if God appears in this context, then it is only as a function of epistemology. The only thing of interest is the "secular space."

However, Miner rightly points out that Descartes is not entirely consistent. Since all (including mathematics) depends on God's creative will, there does not seem to be the genuine secular space of rationality that we are used to associate with Descartes. The space that he opened up (in spite of his presuppositions) is genuinely inconsistent. And indeed, Descartes's first Meditation asserts that the certainty of mathematics depends on God's goodness, a *genius malignus* could deceive us even in this. The same seems to be true for the *Cogito*.

Yet I think that Descartes' voluntaristic God is another form of Bacon's *Deus absconditus*; it is precisely God's seemingly arbitrary decisions that make us turn away from him to stick with the secular space that we can construct for ourselves. On the other hand, it might be that in Descartes there is still a tension that will open up among later Cartesians; that is, there is the self-preservation against the hidden God and the forces of nature by way of knowledge as power. But there is also the self-effacement vis-à-vis God as it will come out in Blaise Pascal and Malebranche. In Malebranche, knowledge is not making; in Malebranche, it is direct reception from and

in God. Baruch Spinoza combines both strands and constructs self-preservation as self-effacement. Miner sees Spinoza as someone in whom there is no *factum* anymore, because his pantheism excludes creation. But in fact, in Spinoza, *everything* is *factum* (in the sense of geometrical construction), and it is precisely by intellectual participation in this construction that we achieve self-preservation in the *amor intellectualis Dei*.

In Leibniz, we find another combination of both strands. Miner prefers Leibniz because he preserves the freedom and goodness of God's making. This makes us somehow more dependent on God and on the theological rather than secular understanding of his doings. Further, it allows us to understand our own participation in this as a participation in freedom and goodness rather than in Spinoza's geometrical necessity. Leibniz's physics is superior as well, because he thinks theologically: From the goodness of God, he can allow final causality a heuristic and real role in physics. The *factum* does not have to imply an unintelligible *factum brutum* as it does in Descartes with his blindly contingent creation. Nor do geometrical necessity and the abolishment of creation in Spinoza make the world more intelligible or less "brute" of a fact.

Thomas Hobbes

In contrast with Descartes, Thomas Hobbes looks surprisingly non-arbitrary, non-nominalistic. This is at least the point that Miner tries to make against Leo Strauss and Oakshott. Hobbes indeed is a representative of the coincidence of truth and construction. The definitions of science are clearly something *made*. This sounds rather nominalistic, and that is the way it is usually understood. But Miner tries to show that the making of definitions in Hobbes is *not* arbitrary, because there are certain requirements for definitions, especially the requirement that they generate their subject matter. They must not be "sterile" and "inactive" because knowledge is knowledge from causes: As the principles of science, definitions must therefore be able to function as causes.

It seems to me, however, that this requirement could be fulfilled by arbitrary definitions as well, as we can see from non-Euclidian geometries. If they are not to be arbitrary, then we need a further grounding of these definitions in the nature of those things that they define, that is, the simple parts of nature. In Descartes they were a matter of construction as well. According to Miner, in Hobbes they are not. For Hobbes, we arrive at the most simple and universal parts by analysis (*Truth in the Making*, 83). Since they are simple, they themselves cannot be understood by analysis. But against Strauss's reading, this does *not* imply their unintelligibility. The first principles of nature are *indemonstrable*; otherwise they would not

be the first, that is, those from which everything else is demonstrated. Yet they are not unintelligible, but rather “manifest of themselves,” or “known to nature” (*Truth in the Making*, 84).

The first principles are body, matter, quantity, and extension; all of these are in turn caused by *motion*. Motion is the very first principle; it is the only unmoved mover, because motion cannot have any other mover but motion.¹⁵ Motion is even the cause of geometry, since the motion of the point creates the line and the motion of the line creates the surface, and so on. Hence, geometry is not made *ex nihilo*, but from motion.

If first things are indemonstrable, then their definitions will be affected by this as well. If definitions include causes, then universal and ultimate causes themselves can have a definition only by explication. These explications have their own kind of requirements: They must not be self-contradictory or equivocal, and they must be faithful to the *name* that they have in “normal discourse.” This sounds nominalistic. If Hobbes is *not* a nominalist, then what is meant by “names in ordinary discourse” must be more than mere convention. This however is less clear to me. There appears to be a certain assumption that ordinary language is in tune with the real nature of things, since Hobbes talks about it as the explication of passions and thoughts common to all men. This seems to exceed mere convention—but is it because our minds are wired in this way or because this is the way things are outside of our minds as well? Hobbes indeed takes it to be the explication of material that is not made by us. Yet he understands this explication in terms of *creation*, that is, the mind hovers over the deep, over the dark waters, to speak the word. While we are not creating the *matter* of things that we name, it seems that we are not finding but creating the *form* of things, in the mode of a demiurge.

In the context of the *Leviathan*, which proceeds to construct the commonwealth through its definitions, the creation metaphor seems to embrace even the matter: In this case the material is we ourselves. The raw material is our passions, and the Leviathan-construct is an *artificial* man (*Truth in the Making*, 92). Yet this would not make a difference if there actually was something like a human nature (including the nature of our passions) and the material was not all that raw; then it would be given, not made. To my mind, Hobbes still is a nominalist.

This is confirmed by the pragmatist motivations of Hobbes: “the end of knowledge is power,” and thus the end of philosophy is *essentially* practical. Hence the truth of the “indemonstrables” is not so much a proof by

¹⁵ One could wonder, however, if motion does not presuppose space, or something that is moved.

self-evidence, but a proof by an increase in power. This is true even for the postulates in geometry: They enable the construction of problems and show their fruitfulness in finding and deriving properties. Social science goes beyond this only insofar as it includes not only the effects in its definitions, but also the final cause: peace and protection. This is actually necessary, because otherwise we would not arrive at the properties that Hobbes wants to deduce. In other words, the properties are relative to the practical purpose. They are not necessarily what nature is in itself. Nominalism and pragmatism go together. Miner interestingly points out, however, that this is also a limitation of the principle of knowledge through making. The *goals* of this science, even though they are part of the science and its definitions, do not obey its method, because they are not *facta*. Thus they are not constructed but assumed and therefore do not have to be accepted (*Truth in the Making*, 94). To my mind, in Hobbes and Spinoza the goal is the *conatus sese preservandi*—which indeed is assumed and not deduced. It therefore contains a rest of teleology that does not fit into a geometrical-constructive model of reality, even though it seems to underlie even the theory of physical motion, at least in Spinoza (but likewise in Hobbes, where this motion is the first principle).

Miner sees the problem that Hobbes's "ideal" lacks content (*Truth in the Making*, 94), but is it not lacking intelligibility? It is unintelligible in this theory how one can derive "ought" from "is." Yet this derivation is crucial, if the goal of science is practical and not contemplation. Even if the goal were a *factum*, it could still be a *factum brutum*, that is, nothing normative. Hobbes might see human nature as universal, but it seems to be a non-normative nature. It might be a normative point of reference for knowledge, but not for action—not as a final cause.

Ultimately Miner does give us the answer: To be normative, the *factum* has to be of *divine* making. This answer he gets from Vico.

Vico: The *Verum-Factum* Principle

With this, we arrive at the culmination of Miner's genealogical narrative: Giambattista Vico. He has been guiding the story line all along, because it is Vico who for the first time formulates its principle: *verum et factum convertuntur*. While this in some way claims to be a self-evident principle, it really is far from being obvious. Would it not seem to be far more self-evident to say the opposite, that is, *falsum et factum convertuntur*? Insofar as something is the mere fabrication of our mind it is false.

Indeed, this is what Vico says about much of pagan and contemporary philosophy. Clearly, this principle has a critical function, and serves a hermeneutics of suspicion, as all genealogy. But, as the adage says, *abusus not*

tollit usum. The abuse of this principle still preserves and is built on a deeper meaning. It is this meaning that Miner wants to propose to us as well.

The deeper truth of this principle, however, cannot become evident in a merely secular or pagan context. Vico is the genealogist of the attempts of early and modern societies to construct truth without God. They fail because, while truth is always made, making is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for truth. The making makes truth only if it is a genuine participation in God's making. It is an analogical participation in divine making, which by its nature implies divine providence. We presuppose that our mind is guided by divine providence, and this guarantees that our making is not just our own. In other words, where there is truth in the making, it is a creative participation in divine providence. (In some way, it requires the trust in providence that Bacon lacked.)

In contrast, the making becomes false if providence is denied. Philosophies that deny providence will deviate by their nature from the truth. They will distort the *verum/factum* principle. They can do so by falling into two opposite extremes: philosophies of fate and philosophies of chance. Vico likes to exemplify the first by Stoicism, the second by the philosophy of Epicure.

Somehow in anticipation of Hegel, these forms of thought have their historical instantiation and development. History has at once the critical function of showing the origin and genesis of error and distortion, as well as showing the universal features that are characteristic of all of humanity. History, therefore, must be guided by divine providence, in order to display this intelligibility. History becomes—maybe for the first time—a science, a genealogical science, namely Vico's *Scienza nuova*, which itself wants to be the highest exemplification of the principle of truth as making.

Prior to Vico, history was not seen as capable of science, while nature was scientifically intelligible. Vico reverses this. Following Hobbes, he sees the social and human world as capable of conceptual reconstruction (*Truth in the Making*, 114); we are fundamentally more acquainted with the human world than with nature, because we are its makers.¹⁶ Nature by contrast is not made by us, but by God; we can understand it only from the fringes, not from the inside out. History is also the coincidence of truth and certainty. In science, the more certain something is, the more unreal and *merely* constructed it is. The more true—and in this sense real—it is, the more uncertain it will also be. But in the case of history,

¹⁶ We could wonder, whether it is from here that nature, too, will become part of history—in some way in Hegel as well as in evolution theory. In Hegel, this has idealist presuppositions (our ultimate identity with the *Weltgeist*), whereas in evolution theory it is reductionist, yet maybe dependent on theological premises.

which is of our own making, the object coincides with the construction (*Truth in the Making*, 105). It is almost anticipating an idealist notion of science as identity between subject and object, especially in its Hegelian, that is, historical form.

Vico's new science is archeological. It explores particularly the origins, that is, the cultural beginnings, because knowledge is always knowledge from causes. The origins will display certain commonalities and actual agreements, which are preserved in the "common sense" of all peoples. They are discovered by combining empirical erudition with synthetic, but somehow intuitive, *ingenium* (Vico, 71ff., also for the following). This *ingenium* presupposes the teleology and economy of history, that is, providence.

The new science will employ a hermeneutics of suspicion against previous historiography and the nationalistic pride of the "conceit of scholars and the conceit of nations."

Vico's genealogy is also normative, that is, like Nietzsche's genealogy, it is not value-free, but critical—only in the reverse. It does not elevate paganism over Christianity, but vice versa.

The new science will be linguistic. Etymology is an important tool for Vico, because he assumes that "ideas and languages accelerate at the same rate" and that the "order of thoughts and things and language is the same." Implied is the linguisticity of experience. Language is the substance of thought; it brings thought into being (Vico, 91). In mythical language, for example, people are experiencing fear only once they are able to express it by naming it "Jove." The historical origins of ideas and of language therefore go together. Implied is a view of language in which, according to Vico, *nomen* and *natura* originate from the same word, just as *logos* means both idea and word. *Intelligere* is analogized with reading as the *colligere* of elements (letters) into words (Vico, 91 and 27f.). This would be in contrast to an instrumentalist view of language, where thought and experience precede their expression. With regard to this critique, Vico is himself the starting point of a new genealogy that goes through Collingwood to Gadamer (with influence from Heidegger).

There is an anti-Cartesian point in this anti-instrumentalist view of language: We do not know ourselves by a Cartesian reflection that produces the *Cogito* as a starting point. Rather, we know ourselves only in and through our external expressions in history. It is therefore false pedagogy to start with the mere internal reflection of the *Cogito*, rather than with a humanist training of the imagination in art and rhetoric. Vico does not fail to point out that Descartes himself has learned from the very tradition that he discourages others to read (Vico, 18). Vico also prefers the empirical approach of Galileo and Bacon to Descartes (even though the

Promethean Bacon lacks the necessary sense of human finitude) (*Vico*, 5).

Yet, critical reflection is important as well, and it needs both *ars topica* and *ars critica*, that is, both the piling up of information and the sorting through into genera (*Vico*, 4f.). Reflection on its own, however, will be practically inept. Just as Gadamer will do later, *Vico* emphasizes the virtue of prudence, which is needed for the application of general principles. This application cannot be achieved by mere reflection and antecedent casuistry. The latter would only produce a *doctus imprudens*, who is slow in decision or suddenly erupts into action “both astonishing and arrogant.” He lacks the *sensus communis*, which is the rule for both prudence and eloquence and which helps in urgent decision making through the *ars topica*. Eloquence moves to action; it motivates and transforms desire to the point where the *utile* and *honestum* are perceived as identical—a process that, after the fall, can be only asymptotical (*Vico*, 7–12).

Cartesian reflection is not only impractical, it is even theoretically ineffective in persuading the skeptic (*Vico*, 13ff.) (one could compare here Gadamer's points against reflection arguments). *Vico* does not believe in Descartes's argument for or from the *Cogito*. He is suspicious of the first-person perspective; for unlike Descartes's first-person meditations, he writes his autobiography from the third-person perspective (*Vico*, 18). Only this can provide *scientia*, that is, knowledge from causes, whereas reflection only leads to empty *con-scientia*.¹⁷ The *consentia* of the *Cogito* fails to know the causes of its thought.¹⁸ According to *Vico*, the only things that we can know are those that we cause. Hence we could know ourselves only if we were our own *makers*. But our thinking is not the cause of our being (*Truth in the Making*, 104).

Knowledge of causes does not come from introspection but from production: We know ourselves only after the fact. Because he is the first cause, only God can know everything from introspection. Thus, making and being are identical in him (*Truth in the Making*, 104). We could therefore say that Descartes's *Cogito* is an illegitimate divinization. It would be part of our necessary humility, which is the root of all knowledge, to acknowledge that we cannot be God, and that we cannot even know God in the sense that we could prove him from prior elements. With

¹⁷ Here one could ask *Vico* critically: How is it possible to recognize ourselves in our expressions? We can recognize ourselves only, if we are already acquainted with ourselves, prior to our expression. *Vico* might say that this acquaintance is what is provided by “*consenzia*,” but that is about all that *consenzia* does.

¹⁸ This is also why the connection of the mind-body causality has to remain unclear for more principal reasons: If we do not know the causes of our thought, we know even less how our thought can itself, in turn, be a cause.

that, and because all knowing is making, we would be the maker of our God, that is, the god of our God. For Vico, on the other hand, God seems to be the object not of demonstrative or abstractive science, but of moral philosophy. This is because God is the goal of all morality and virtue, and the governing virtue that might lead us to this goal is prudence (*Truth in the Making*, 104). Theology is accessible only to practical reason.

Having said this, it is curious that Vico derives his *verum/factum* principle from a Cartesian strategy of radical doubt. Yet this doubt does not lead to the *Cogito*, but to the *verum/factum* principle, which is its direct competitor. Vico argues that if we doubt everything that we can know about the historical origins of humanity, then what remains is precisely this principle. Historical origins are manmade, and therefore their principles can be found in the modifications of our own mind (*Vico*, 87ff.).

Vico: The Genealogy

Applying this principle to history, we find something that looks Hegelian in its threefold schema: the age of gods, the age of heroes, and the age of men. Yet it is not so much a Hegelian model as a Trinitarian one, as we will see. This underlines that there is no “secular space.” In other words, we understand pagan history only if we understand God and participate in his Trinitarian making of things. This is all the more interesting because Vico’s history is essentially the history of the *pagan* world. Miner shows convincingly that Judeo-Christian salvation history is the model on which Vico reads and evaluates pagan history. It is a theology of pagan history. Salvation history is not, as we could say, the *material* object of his new science, but the *formal* object, that is, the lens through which pagan history is seen.

Divine providence would be common to both gentiles and Hebrews. Yet, because, after the fall, only the Hebrews preserve the memory of divine providence, the pagans substitute it with other things. They produce their knowledge by a making that is idolatrous and *violent*. This is the critical aspect of Vico’s genealogy. It is his intention to make a new argument for Augustine’s thesis that all pagan virtues are nothing but splendid vices. On the other hand, just as Augustine is himself, he is also positive about the pagans. After all, they are still under God’s providence (for example, *Vico*, 64).

The Age of Gods

The first stage of human history (after the fall) is the age of gods. This age is theocentric, but the names of the gods originate as reification of human needs. It is childlike in that it is not capable of intentional decep-

tion or irony (insofar it is a *narratio vera*). Although this worldview is false, it does preserve two important truths: (1) divine providence and (2) free will. These two important truths are retained in popular wisdom, the *sapientia volgare*.

The worldview is false, however, insofar as these early people are, out of fear, creating images in their own likeness. For example, they give the sky a body and a mind and name it "Jove." Unlike Augustine, Vico does not presume that these gods are necessarily demons, but rather poetic imaginations. The gods are *facta*; they are (attempted) knowledge by some form of mytho-poetic making, made not by reason, but by imagination. The character of these gods is ethically doubtful: Goodness is power, might is right. The form of its religion is idolatry, because it identifies God with a part of nature (for example, the sky). The corresponding divination¹⁹ obtained by sacrifice is not only the result of the vice of curiosity, but also of ignorance of God's transcendence over nature. They do not know that God cannot be identified with the physical course of nature and its signs.

Jove is the "savior" only because he did not destroy them. He is also the founder of local stability and communal living under governance. Socially, the first human fathers are also priests and the theological poets of this age. They are in charge of divination and jurisprudence alike (both understood as reading the signs of the gods), yet they mistake their own activity for that of the gods.

This is also the beginning of marriage, a bond that binds the early nomadic giants into a social existence. Their bestial lust is now tamed to be performed not publicly, under the sky, but in caves. There is a new element in this: This taming is not just out of mere ignorance or fear, but also out of *shame*, projecting moral indignation on the gods as well. Marriage comes about as the ratification of the pact between god and man (*Truth in the Making*, 117 and 120f.).

The origin of monogamy leads to the acknowledgment of personal children by their fathers as well and, with that, the reinforcement of personal identity as defined through family relations. Other men who do not achieve this status join them as *famoli*—that is where the term *family* is derived from. The new family culture includes the establishment of the institution of promise keeping (especially as opposed to adultery) and property rights (derived from burial rites), as well as the establishment of

¹⁹ According to Vico, there is a relative superiority of Chaldean astrology which comes from Shem, while the Western forms are from Ham and Japheth. The Hebrews have no astrology at all.

a hierarchy (fathers as priests). It also establishes selfhood: The self is the result of the taming of a bundle of desires through violence, fear, and shame. It is the cultural creation of a moral agent.

For the first time in history, the goods of the noble, useful, and pleasant are achieved in a human institution. At the same time, this society is still based on falsehood and violence (including that of sacrifice).²⁰

The Heroic Age

The following heroic age sees a gradual development from mytho-poetical thought to rational thought. It occurs in comparable ways both in Greece and in Rome. It is not only the development from Achilles to Socrates, but it is also reflected in the struggle between Patricians and Plebeians. Political and social relations start out as relations between classes, not between individuals. Law is based on strength and power, but this does not come about by the conceit of the ruler, as Hobbes might have it, but by providence. In Rome, it is an aristocratic republic with chosen kings (against Bodin). Yet, this power is still based in violence. And it is based on language. This linguistic character of power is a quite modern insight of Vico.

In the beginning, this language is poetic, the language of myth. Universals can be conceived of only in the poetic form of gods and their origins, that is, in terms of theogony. This is reflected in the class structure, namely the beastly and divine origins of the plebs and patricians, respectively. These myths therefore legitimize the existing structure and conceal the actual source of law in violence. They are protected by the secrecy of the law and the priests, who interpret it by divination.

Given the linguisticity of thought, the liberation from this form of thought likewise takes place in the form of language. There are the fables of Aesop, not a heroic aristocrat, but an ugly slave who undermines existing patterns through ironic comparisons. The still imaginative form of the fables (as opposed to intellectual articulations) shows them to be an early form of thought. A step further are the maxims of Solon, who exhorts the plebs to realize their humanity, particularly in the maxim "Know thyself!" Language also takes a turn to more vulgar or human (as opposed to heroic) language. It is not sung, and it is composed of the genera of which the gods of heroic language are the particulars. At the same time, it is reflected in law (Solon) and, only after this, will it result in philosophy. It is only with Socrates's reflection that universals and ideas become

²⁰ It could be an interesting endeavor to compare Vico's and R. Girard's scapegoat notion of sacrifice.

explicit and actual in language. Reflection is the basis of abstraction; it leads to conceptual universals rather than metaphors. Unlike Gadamer and Rorty, Vico sees this reflection still as a welcome step toward liberation. But also he sees it as important that rational philosophy remains bound to the soil of myth and fable, religion and law. Reflection is parasitic on the pre-existing narrative, while at the same time it is the philosopher's task to purify (and strengthen!) popular myth (*Vico*, 132).

The Human Age

It is precisely this grounding in myth and fable that seems to get lost in the *age of barbarism* or the *human age*, which is an age of *nihilistic* reflection. The development that goes from the crude (divine stage) to the severe (heroic) to the benign (Solon) now arrives at the delicate and finally dissolute (human). The "delicate" is dominated by pleasure and demagogues, hedonism and power. It is followed by the remedy of an ineffective monarch (for example, Tiberius) and finally ends in dissolution (Caligula and Nero). After this, there are only two remedies: the conquest by another nation (since they cannot govern themselves anymore) or a regression to beastlike individualism, solitude even in the midst of the crowd. "They shall turn their cities into forests and the forests into dens and lairs of men." This will be more barbarian than the beginnings, but it can lead to a new beginning.

Philosophy contributes to barbarism as well, because it is now developing the esoteric wisdom of solitary individuals and forgetting the truth of "vulgar wisdom," especially the notion of providence that has been preserved in it. We can see this particularly in the two opposite extremes of Stoics and Epicureans, that is, fatalism (Stoa) and chance (Epicure), rationalist certitude (Stoa) and skepticism (Epicure). Stoics also deny human freedom as another part of the "vulgar wisdom" that preserves some truth. Both are idle solitaires: the Epicureans in their garden, the Stoics as contemplatives, isolated against passions as well as other people (*autarkeia*). Reflection leads to individualism. Both destroy Roman jurisprudence: Epicurean ethics is all prudence, and no *ius*; Stoic ethics, all *ius* without prudence (*Vico*, 75f.).

Among the Greeks, Plato begins similar things. Socrates still integrates vulgar and esoteric wisdom, practical and theoretical knowledge, narrative and reflection. But Plato deduces his ideal republic in an antihistorical way, that is, he denies divine providence in actual history. It is therefore no surprise that he destroys the *sensus communis* by introducing sexual communism in his ideal republic.

The Hebrews

These are the typical three stages of pagan history. It might be surprising that Vico does not thematize Judeo-Christian salvation history as well, since we would expect to find God's providence established here more than elsewhere. It is Miner's insight that Vico does not mention this history (and increasingly less in the development of his work), not because it is unimportant, but because it is the ever-present but non-thematic lens through which pagan history is seen. It is not the material object, but the formal object. It is part of the *explanans* rather than the *explanandum*. Antireligious readings of Vico will necessarily miss this point (Vico, 110).

Hebrew history also is the *measuring rod* of other histories. This is so, according to Vico, because the Hebrews preserved the more accurate history of the origins in their scriptures. In other words, they simply have the better memory. Unlike Greek historiography, they even preserve Egyptian and Assyrian history. But, as Miner points out, in order for it to be the lens there must be something not only different but also similar. And indeed, both have a common origin: It is only after the flood that some sons of Noah regressed into the woods, back to feral origins. They abandoned civilization, as well as their offspring, who grew up in dirt and feces, developing into giants (Vico, 111). From these, their "feral and fecal beginnings," they find some remedy from the fall of Adam by sacrifice and by giving honor to God. They also attempted to put together the broken pieces of Adam's *sapientia integra*, but only in self-made laws, which are constructions of their own making.

In contrast, the Hebrews preserved the pure contemplation of Adam, a purity of the mind rather than the pagan purity of the body. Accordingly, pagan contemplation (from *caelis templum*) is the observation of heavenly *bodies* only, a form of idolatry, identifying parts or the whole of nature with God rather than acknowledging the transcendence and freedom of the creator.²¹ The Hebrews, on the other hand, still had the "knowledge of good and evil" and therefore did not need practices of divination, which were forbidden. The revelation of God could take the place of the false makings of projecting one's own nature on the sky ("Jove") (Vico, 112). To the Hebrews, God revealed himself as elusive: *I am who I am*. While the Hebrews' original language was also more poetic and imaginative, and not yet one of conceptual universals, they did not substitute gods for universals. Neither did they conceal the origin of their

²¹ As Miner says, the Jew Spinoza also will do precisely this, after deconstructing the Hebrew revelation; Miner, Vico, 112.

ruling cast by myths, but rather, they gave a historical and unflattering account of the offices of the Levites and the kings. Beginnings in general are not seen as grounded in violence, but in acts of God's love and his free giving. This is also reflected in their notion of law: It remains grounded in inner law and purity of heart, rather than external violence and coercion. This is reflected in laws such as the Jubilee year, the treatment of foreigners in the country, and the fact that there is no right of life and death over one's sons.

The Hebrews therefore preserve the notions of freedom in both God and man; they know of the benevolence of God, which is shown in his providence, and in which we can participate through the help of Revelation. The Hebrew world still participates in divine truth. The pagan world, on the other hand, has to find a substitute, that is, find its own certitudes. (This might be similar to the epistemological endeavors after the loss of the certitude of faith in today's post-Christian world.) What it achieves, however, will always bear the mark of violence, a forced certitude. Pagan laws and divination can achieve an intrasystematic certitude, but not a participation in truth. In other words, they have to split certainty from truth and replace the *verum* with the *certum*.

Christianity

This split is a perennial problem after the fall, and the purpose of the *Incarnation* is precisely to heal this split. It leads us back to the transcendent truth in which we need to partake, but by means of a bodily starting point. Before that, God had revealed himself in more "mental" ways. He himself is revealed as pure spirit, for example, talking internally to himself at the moment of creation. Then he speaks externally to the prophets, and finally through Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God speaks through the apostles and the Church, which continues to heal the split between *verum* and *certum* through her proclamation. It does so by subordinating the human mind as finite to the infinite and uncreated first truth: a truth that is begotten, not made. Only in this manner can the *verum/factum* principle be applied without idolatry and distortion. As Miner says, "*Verum-factum* is not a secular thesis, but a principle that requires the subordination of *verum* to *verbum* and *factum* to *genitum*" (Vico, 29). It is only this that makes Vico's new science, that is, his genealogy, possible. This is the reason why salvation history is the lens, not the object, of his genealogy. With it, genealogy is not only true, it is also the most certain science; even though it will never have the certainty of human science and construction, because we do not really know the genera of things in the mind of God. Human science, on the other hand, will be certain, but

does not attain truth. The healing of the split, even with the Incarnation, seems to happen in a continued tension (*Vico*, 29f.).

Hebrew historiography and the Incarnation therefore provide the critical lens through which Vico's genealogy can conceptualize pagan history. By no means is he romanticizing early pagan beginnings, as Miner can show against earlier readings of Vico.²² The reason for this assumption might be that Vico also argues against the reflective modernity, particularly the rationalism of Descartes. But he is not therefore a romantic traditionalist (he actually appreciates Galileo and Bacon). The pagan origins are not the counter-model to Descartes, they are rather a parallel, and here Vico's genealogy unfolds its full critical potential.

Descartes

For Vico, René Descartes's new science is a renewed *distortion* of the *verum/factum* principle. It is the attempt to establish the *certum* without the *verum*. It is based on the certitude of a mathematics that we can know perfectly because it is *made* by our mind. And this mind operates not by participating in divine revelation, but by relying totally on itself, having its starting point in the *Cogito*. We know ourselves perfectly, because we make ourselves in the *Cogito* (which could be understood as a self-knowledge by self-production through thinking). This empowerment of the *Cogito*-subject reintroduces a note of pagan violence. The issue is somewhat reverse, however, because the moderns make their mind into God's infinite mind, whereas the old pagans, in an act of idolatry, make God's mind into their own finite mind (demiurge; *Vico*, 28). The ancients are pulling God down; the moderns are elevating themselves (maybe in remembrance of the element of deification in the Incarnation).

Descartes also brings back the solitary mind of the pagan philosophers, reflecting himself out of the tradition. Descartes and Gassendi (or empiricism) could be understood as taking the place of Stoa and Epicure, just as these rationalists and empiricists share the same presupposition, that is, the denial of providence. They share also the need for certitude and control, which leads to either the presumption of success or the skepticism of experienced failure. The rationalistic ethics of Descartes and Spinoza could be understood as an ethics without God and grace that is

²² Miner argues with Mazzotta that Vico is not just an anachronistic fossil, or a learned antiquarian, advocating the primitives or folk wisdom against modern technology, something he would not understand (Miner, *Vico*, 73). Nor is he a secular romantic (B. Croce) or a cosmopolitan relativist (I. Berlin) (Miner, *Vico*, xiv); the heart of Vico is not "reconstructive imagination" (Berlin), but constructive ingenium and metaphysics; history in turn has a critical function.

nothing more than a more sophisticated pagan virtue of self-love. Their abandonment of the narrative tradition is tantamount to the third age's arrival at a new barbarism (Vico, 130f.).

Mathematics

Mathematics is the paradigm of this new philosophy. It is an exemplification of the *verum/factum* principle, but in a form that amounts to a self-divinization. It is our own creation; it is the construct of our mind and therefore remains totally under the control of the *Cogito*. It is human pride especially to invent a mathematics of *infinity*, because being able to construct an infinite world of forms and having control over this infinity implies that the mind is itself infinite—a prerogative of the divine mind. Vico likens the Cartesian analytical geometry to divination: a process that begins from the infinite and descends to particular conclusions. It all seems rational, but it is somehow magic (Vico, 25). For Vico, even though analytical geometry can be useful, it actually destroys true understanding, because (unlike *synthetic* geometry) it blinds the imagination and confounds the memory (Vico, 20ff.).

Does that mean that Vico rejects mathematics? By no means. Seeing its value, he is aware, however, that mathematics needs a metaphysical foundation in order to lead not only to certainty, but also to truth. This is where mathematics connects with Vico's epistemology in principle. To this epistemology we need to turn now.

Generally, Vico's goal is *not* humanist imagination or empathy against the role of reason (*Truth in the Making*, 108ff.). He is certainly not the romantic who wants to go back toward early pagan mytho-poiesis, as Miner shows. His new science is constructive (*verum et factum convertuntur*) and has geometry as its ideal, and is, as he says himself, "entirely metaphysical and abstract in conception" (*Truth in the Making*, 108ff.). His *ingenium* is not the metaphysical *fantasia* of the primitive mind, which is a form of idolatry and self-deception (*Truth in the Making*, 122f.). In this way, he can appreciate the interest in mathematics.

For Vico, truth is in the making. *Intelligere* is understood to come from *legere/colligere*, that is, assembling or composing elements into a whole (*Truth in the Making*, 97), just as we would in the process of reading. Composing is an act of making. But for us the elements that we are making into a whole are not subject to our making. Only God knows these elements truly because "in God knowing and making are the same thing." He knows the elements, and all of them, because, unlike a demiurge, he makes them. Now elements strictly speaking are not made, if making implies composition. As simple, they cannot be composed. Yet

they are “generated” by God as his eternal Word: They are begotten not made. *Verum creatum convertatur cum facto, verum increatum cum genito* (*Truth in the Making*, 99). Thus, nothing is outside the mind of God. His knowledge is not limited by anything extrinsic. Even his knowledge of things is self-knowledge (*Vico*, 28). It is infinite (*Truth in the Making*, 97ff.). Our mind, however, operates from the sidelines of creation and is limited by what is given to us. It is finite. We know the elements not by generation, but by abstraction. Our knowledge compares to God’s as a plane image is to a three-dimensional statue. We know by composing and making, whereas God knows by disposing and generating (*Truth in the Making*, 100f.). Yet, in our making and abstracting we can participate in divine making. Otherwise we might attain the certainty of clear and distinct ideas, but not truth. True knowledge is knowledge from causes, that is, the genera of things. These genera the human mind cannot construct, it can arrive at them only through abstraction.

This abstraction in Vico (as in Hobbes) is a form of *division*. As with the science of history, the starting point of this division is anthropological, it is the human being. We do not make ourselves, as in the *Cogito*, but we divide the different parts of our nature. Man is divided into body (medicine) and spirit (with logic [ratio] and ethics [will] as sciences). The body is further divided into figure (geometry) and motion (mechanics [motion from the edge] and physics [motion from center]). From figure and motion are derived being (metaphysics) and unity (arithmetic). This “vivisection” of man in some way kills what in God “is life” and a unified whole. But it is necessary because of our fallen condition (*Truth in the Making*, 101).

Yet, abstraction also participates in divine creativity. It brings forth the point that can be drawn, and the unit that can be multiplied, that is, mathematics and geometry. But they remain precarious; they are merely humanly useful ficta. They are no objects at all, but mere names that are treated as things. The point as it is drawn is even a contradiction, because it ceases to be a point. Yet it can be defined only in this way, that is, as construction (*Truth in the Making*, 101).

This sounds nominalist, but it is only the consequence of mathematics understood as autonomous, and in Cartesian terms. The truth of mathematics can be salvaged only in metaphysics. The origin of mathematical points is “metaphysical points” (a stoic notion). These are themselves not multipliable, yet they virtually contain the extension that is necessary for mathematics and mathematical physics. Generating a line from this point is indeed an analogy to divine making. Vico wants to be in the middle between two extremes: (1) the dogmatic rationalism of

Descartes (for whom physics is geometry and we the makers of nature as we are of geometry), and (2) the skepticism for whom mathematics is a mere figment of the mind (that is, different from physics and reality altogether). The middle ground would be to understand mathematics both as rooted in metaphysics and as our construction, but as a construction that participates in divine making (*Truth in the Making*, 107). But it is only in this constructing and making that we touch divine transcendence. "Making is the source of our acquaintance with eternal truths that are not of our making" (*Truth in the Making*, 108).

It is also meant to be a middle between rationalist mathematical determinism and necessity and the chance of skepticism. Vico here feels akin to the admired Leibniz's notion of "moral necessity," which likewise is grounded in divine providence, freedom, and goodness (*Vico*, 40).²³

Law

Descartes's mathematical constructions of reality have a parallel in theories of law. These are the constructions of natural law by Hugo Grotius and others. Grotius, in some way, combines the worst elements, that is, the rationalist determinism and stoic denial of human freedom, as well as the denial of divine providence. His natural law is a pure human *factum*, made *etsiamsi Deus non daretur* (*Vico*, 77f.).

For Vico, on the other hand, the origin of law is neither Hobbes's struggle for life, nor an a priori construction, but guided by divine providence. It is based in moral virtue (not Machiavellian *virtù*) and the *natural* sociability of man. This sociability shows not just in language, but already in facial expressions. Unlike animals, we have a countenance and are able to recognize distress in the face of the other. Anticipating Levinas, Vico seems to see this as the foundation and starting point of justice. It is a spontaneous compassion that is prior to any self-interest (*Vico*, 42).

Nevertheless, natural inclinations (*ius gentium*) need to find the form of law (*ius naturale*). This happens not by a priori construction, but as mediated through the customs of the nations (their *ius civile*), which, in their universality, show the hand of God's providence (rather than an accidental diffusion). They reflect not the esoteric wisdom of solitary philosophers, but the common sense (or "vulgar wisdom") that still preserves both the foundational truths of divine providence and free will

²³ Miner, *Vico*, 92, 64. For the notion of moral necessity as mediating divine and human knowledge in this age, cf. Sven K. Knebel, *Wille, Würfel und Wahrscheinlichkeit. Das System der moralischen Notwendigkeit in der Jesuitenscholastik 1550–1700* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000).

as well as the three social elements: religion, marriage, and burial (*Vico*, 75). As a participation in God's eternal law, natural law is unchanging and as spiritual cannot be caused and constructed by the physical movements of historical development. Yet, it emerges in the field of history and utility; the changing physical world is the *occasion* of our mental knowledge of it. The true *cause* of natural law and the source of its validity, however, is not *utilitas* but *honestas* (*Vico*, 44).

Natural law, eternally valid, is emerging in a historical process. This process itself shows the hand of God's providence. Again genealogy is based on a theological principle. As for pagan history, where the lens and *explanans* was salvation history, so for the development of law, it is the Trinity itself. We have already seen that for *Vico*'s epistemology the Trinity played an important role with its generation of the divine Word. In history, he correlates another three-step schema with the three persons of the Trinity. History and genealogy derive their intelligibility from divine providence, and divine providence shapes history in its own Trinitarian image and likeness.

The first step is the *ius gentium* (or *ius naturale primum*, which is akin to the stoic *primum naturae*), which is based on the liberty of nature, self-preservation, and procreation. It is immutable and cannot be abolished by positive law. The second step is the *ius civile*, which takes the *ius gentium* as its matter and selects from it in accordance with the occasions of their particular circumstances and purposes, which is the form of this law.²⁴ Thirdly, the *ius naturale posterius* takes, in turn, the *ius civile* as its matter and finds the eternal *ratio* in it. It overcomes the self-interest of the *primum naturae* in ethical and heroic virtue (Pompey's *navigare necesse est, vivere non*). It is the fulfillment of the *ius corporis* in the *ius veri*. It is achieved not by rationalistic deduction, but by history and providence (*Vico*, 53); a derivation less certain, but more true (seeking certainty can lead to pagan harshness and violence in law, a certainty derived from might and authority only). The *ius veri* blends philology and philosophy, narrative and reflection.

This triad can be brought together in various ways with the Trinity. From what I gather from Miner, one could analogize the following triads: Father/Son/Holy Spirit; *nosse/velle/posse* (or *esse*); *ius naturale/ius civile/ius gentium*; prudence/temperance/fortitude; religion/marriage/burial; dominion/liberty/protection; auspices/veiling of bride/show of force; maturity/adolescence/childhood (*Vico*, 47–53).

²⁴ One could compare this to Scheler's insight that different cultures do not create different values, but select them according to their own circumstances and occasions.

Given the last triad, it seems that the historical process from *ius gentium* to *ius naturale* is a process of maturing from self-assertion through temperance (marriage) toward prudence, but it is also a process that reverses the procession of divine persons: a return to the Father from the Spirit through the Son. In any case, the Trinity would be the lens that makes historical and personal development both possible and intelligible.

The result of this process is Christian humility and *contemptus sui*; law receives its ultimate form from charity that originates from divine grace. By contrast, although pagan virtue can mitigate the original violence, it cannot get rid of the root cause of violence, namely self-love. True jurisprudence and Christian piety therefore need to go together. There is no good secular jurisprudence. This is so because law and the regulations of life have to be seen in the light of the ultimate end, and this cannot be known in pagan ways. Plato might have grasped some of it, but the Stoics saw it in mere and impractical *apatheia*, driven by the vain desire to escape suffering. Epicure's exhortation to moderation is good, but actually inconsistent with his own materialist presuppositions: *Delectatio* as the goal is neither a body nor the void—and that was supposedly all that exists.

Aristotle got closer with his idea of *theoria* as an act of the inner man. Contemplation as a goal is seen correctly, but he mistakenly separates it from the active life and assigns a different end to practical life. In fact, however, the ethical life is a preparation for contemplation. Aristotle also does not recapture the universal brotherhood that existed before the fall, and that is meant to be part of the ultimate goal. While Aristotle says himself that the end with a wider scope is more noble, he does not expand the polis toward the universal humanity. Thus he loses part of the goal, because true charity cannot exclude anyone. This is still the pagan ethnocentrism that has its root in self-love and violence (*Vico*, 60–64).

For Christian contemplation, the mind needs to be purified by humility (*Truth in the Making*, 124). Only in this loss of self can we participate in truth. This participation is the experience that it is not we who think, but rather it is God who thinks in us. We even know our own minds, not by a *Cogito*, but in God: "*Deus in me cogitat; in Deo igitur meam ipsius mentem cognosco*" (*Truth in the Making*, 124). This is the meaning of the old dictum "know yourself." It means: know yourself as finite, but disposed toward the infinite. This will enkindle God's action in us. Participation in divine providence culminates in ecstasy.

This is my attempt at a critical summary of Miner's presentation of Vico. I have striven to bring out some more of the logic behind it. While surely much of Vico's genealogy is historically debatable, there are many intriguing insights in Vico. More than this, his *scienza nuova* would be a

point in case for Radical Orthodoxy: There cannot be a purely secular science that does not go astray. Secular interpretations of a *verum/factum* principle without God and creation would miss the main point of Vico (*Vico*, 83).

The reason for this can itself be given only in theological terms. Only through the Trinity, through the notion of providence and salvation history, can there be a science of history, epistemology, and possibly even mathematics. The very principle of Vico's science is theological in origin. The problem with the *verum/factum* principle is not that the modern world is using it, but that it is abusing it in pagan ways. Miner has made a good case: Not only is genealogy not necessarily antimetaphysical or anti-Christian, it is necessarily theological if it is to be self-consistent. A pagan genealogy would share in what they usually want to fight: violence. Violence does not stem from metaphysical hierarchies, but from their denial. Vico, in turn, is not just a traditionalist, but he attempts to recapture the tradition through a very modern approach: one that sees truth in the making and its construction as genealogy. If he is antimodern, he is so in genuinely modern and original ways.

Vico's genealogy is also more consistent than modern ones. Miner shows this in a comparison with Nietzsche (Miner's ever-present conversation partner). While Nietzsche seemingly needs fewer metaphysical assumptions, only Vico can account for authorial intent, that is, for the narrator behind the narrative of the genealogy. He is against the *Cogito*, but not against selfhood or the author altogether. He might even be able to account for the existence and historical situation of his own theory within his own narrative. He can be fairer to his opposition, because the errors that he criticizes still fall under God's providence. Nietzsche himself would find a place in Vico's genealogy as one of those who reject providence in favor of fate: "the eternal recurrence of the same" (*Vico*, 141).

In many ways therefore, this genealogy (Vico's as well as Miner's) recommends itself through its coherence and insights that it generates. But is the identification of truth and making unproblematic? Vico's genealogy itself seems to imply the opposite. Thus we will have to explore some further implications.

Further Considerations

Epistemologically, it seems to be possible to give the seemingly modern *verum/factum* principle a rather traditional meaning. Miner has shown that it results from theological roots. Yet, if we would look at the *nous poietikos* of Aristotle, we even have a pagan ancestor. Radical Orthodoxy would be overtaken by secular thought again. On the other hand, it is precisely in

Aristotle that the “agent intellect” is divine in origin. It is a participation in something that comes “from the outside.” This pagan “making intellect” is quite the opposite of modern conceptions, because here “pagan” and “secular” do not imply an *etiamsi Deus non daretur*. On the other hand, in Aristotle, the “agent intellect” seems to be the result not of an exalted theological epistemology, but rather, the opposite: It is the result of a rejection of Plato’s intuition of ideas. Without this direct intuition, we need to “make” the universals because they are not directly accessible. At the same time, the intellect is also receptive (*nous pathetikos*). Given this background, the genealogy of “truth in the making” might look somewhat more ambivalent and complex.

Making in Aristotle’s sense does not imply “constituting” the object of knowledge either. Aristotle is not Kant. It is not about construction, but abstraction. What the agent intellect illuminates is real. It is *made*, not *made up*. If for Aristotle scientific knowledge is knowledge from causes (or better reasons),²⁵ then the cause in question is not our mind, but one that our mind discovers and *reconstructs*. That is the only reason there can be falsehood. We can also make nonsense, and *factum et falsum convertuntur* as well. If knowing would be *only* making, this difference would not exist.

Vico would not disagree with this. He would agree with Aristotle in that we know universals only by making. This making, as a participation in God’s making, would be also very much in harmony with Aristotle’s idea that the agent intellect comes from the outside. On the other hand, Vico would agree with Plato in that the ultimate correspondence that makes for truth would not be with the things before our eyes, but with the mind of God, that is, with his providence.

Any kind of epistemology will have to strike a balance here. Miner points out in an interesting footnote that this is analogous also to the question of divine grace and human agency as it was debated in this age in the controversy *De Auxiliis* (Vico, 173).²⁶

²⁵ Reductionist philosophies of mind want to reduce intentionality to causality, in which the mind and knowledge would be a passive product of physical processes. The truth of the *verum/factum* principle could be a reconsideration of a notion of intentionality that cannot be reduced to causality. Ultimately, causes would have to be understood through reasons, not vice versa.

²⁶ We should also note that in the context of this debate truth as making has been challenged even with regard to God: God’s foreknowledge of our free acts is *not* based on Thomas’s principle *scientia Dei est causa rerum* anymore. We do affect God’s mind in the Molinist *scientia media*. We are making not only our knowledge, but God’s! This *electio in mente divina* might be an even more radically modern turn than that of Descartes himself. Cf. Tilman Ramelow, *Gott, Freiheit, Welterwahl* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), for example, 94, 222.

However, the emphasis on construction in Vico might be slightly tilting this balance. The reason for this seems theological: He inherits the *Deus absconditus* of nominalism, just as Bacon does. One reason we need construction is that the world after the fall is not as intelligible anymore. On the other hand, some of his agnosticism with regard to the world is already the *result* of the principle that truth is in the making. Nature is not open to the agent intellect, *because*—unlike history—it is not our making. Here he seems to be in harmony with what we have seen in Bacon as well as in Descartes. The difference is that he does not want to take refuge in *human* construction, but in a reconstruction of the divine ideas and divine providence. While Descartes's response to the perceived unintelligibility of the world is to divinize the human mind, Vico feels rather humbled by the situation of a *Deus absconditus*. Construction can only be reconstruction with the help of revelation.

The causes and reasons for the reconstruction, the *genera, forms, or natures*, are divine archetypes. Speculating beyond Vico, one could draw attention to a ubiquitous biological paradigm in this. The divine ideas are the cause of things as well as of our ideas about them; this is the source of intelligibility. But they themselves are “generated” in God as the divine Word. They are *genitum, non factum*. This corresponds to our ordinary language, in which there seems to be a certain isomorphism between thought and procreation. We “conceive” an idea and the result is a “concept.” Hence we talk about a “fertile intellect.” That is why, in the Trinity, the conception of the one divine idea, the divine Word, makes the conceiver a “Father.” Even in the world, which is more a *factum, non genitum*, this is still reflected in the “nature” of things, that is, the incarnate universal ideas of the divine mind or (in stoic terminology) *logoi spermatikoi*. The term nature comes from *nasci*, as Vico points out (Vico, 89). The universals, according to Aristotle, are universal through procreation. That is why we make biological classifications that divide things into “genera,”²⁷ and it is why we universalize this scheme in the *arbor paphyr-iana*: a *family* tree of all things.²⁸ In other words, the generation of things

²⁷ This is where theological biology and natural science (including evolution theory) intersect.

²⁸ The knowledge by which we finally return to God is again one that is described in terms not of making but of a spousal, mystical union. Bacon transfers that imagery to scientific knowledge (see above). Spousal relations on the other hand, can be characterized as a form of knowledge: “. . . and Adam *knew* Eve . . .” (Gen. 4:1). Spiritual fatherhood might become more intelligible on this background. This is true in non-religious contexts: In Plato’s “Sophistes” the “Eleatic Stranger” speaks of his “father Parmenides” (presumably not his biological father). Socrates can talk about himself as a “midwife”—a birthing process as the

from the divine mind is a *genealogy* of its own kind. Nature obeys the same rules as history. It has the shape of genealogy, that is, of procreation, and it is this that makes it intelligible.

Should we not conclude from this that nature is just as intelligible as history? Furthermore, if this is true, then the first and primordial paradigm for truth is not making, but procreation. The first truth does not obey the *verum/factum* principle: The divine Word as *veritas Patri* (Anselm) is begotten not made. It is an instance not of creation but procreation. If knowing is a participation in the mind of God, then we are not makers, but conceivers.

This might also preserve the idea that making is a deliberative act that involves the will, whereas biological conceiving (in some way) and the acts of the intellect are not voluntary (we cannot *not* think). Doing (will) could still *follow* knowing (intellect), rather than being involved in it from the outset. The *factum* follows the *genitum*.

We also need to leave open the possibility that knowledge is sometimes not gained in action, but rather in “passion,” which is in its postlapsarian form: suffering. As Gadamer pointed out, “making experiences” always means making *negative* experiences. Or, as we could say, making an experience is the experience of something that is not of our making.

At the end of it all, the fulfillment of human knowing will not be a making, but takes the form of platonic intuition again. For Christians, this is the beatific vision. But already the pagan Aristotle knew that the ultimate goal of human life (and the perfect actualization of the *nous poietikos*) is contemplation.

Truth as making, on the other hand, seems to be the result of thinking of the world as unintelligible. Nominalism, Newtonian mechanics, and evolution theory do not leave us with a very meaningful cosmos to live in. Even those who, like Alasdair MacIntyre, try to rethink our life in this cosmos in Aristotelian terms want it to be “shorn of metaphysical biology.” Genealogy however, if understood in the above-mentioned way, is a biological paradigm; and it extends to the whole cosmos and makes it intelligible. Any other genealogy would just put mythological wallpaper on the cosmos we live in; it would not even matter whether it is Christian or pagan wallpaper. Whatever we encounter would be just our own making, a self-made prison.

Vico's reminder that genealogy is rooted in God is an important reminder, but not just for understanding history, but also for understanding

consequence of spiritual conception; and if someone is good at this begetting of knowledge, we call him a “genius.” Even the language of “innate” ideas might harken back to this parallel of knowing and conceiving.

nature, for the simple reason that *we* are part of nature. If nature is only our construct, then this will be true for our own *human* nature as well. There is no reason to make a difference here, and modern biotechnology does not make it. If everything is unintelligible, and therefore only the product of our own intellectual and technological making, then there is no reason to stop with our own biological nature, which—as the result of random mutations and factual selection—would be mere raw material for our making. With this, the modern subject of all making has become itself the product of its own makings. What, according to Vico, Descartes’s *Cogito* attempted—a making of the self—is now becoming technological reality as well. Vico is right that we need Christian humility against the presumptions of our own making, and his reminder of the three “common senses” of religion, marriage, and burial are more timely than ever. But ultimately it is only the intrinsic intelligibility of human nature, one that is not of our making, which can set a limit to our making.

Vico points out how ethics and law have their root in the spontaneous compassion elicited by the countenance of the other. The question might be whether this can be reconciled with truth as making. To know the truth about the other person does not seem to be based on *construction*, but rather on an *encounter*. Would not this be true for any kind of knowledge? Is not knowledge by definition an encounter with something that is not of our making? Even Kant seems to recognize that, in the experience of the beautiful, we have to acknowledge something that is not of our making, for we are, in a way, surprised by it. Sometimes it is being surprised by joy. Knowledge, as well as happiness, is an experience of self-transcendence, of finding ourselves in the other, yet not because the other is the product of our making. Conceiving truth as making can deprive us of that happiness. In Vico, this self-transcendence might be more susceptible to self-deceit, because it is built into the act of making. It is through humility that we are to find that it is actually *God* who is doing the thinking and making in us. In some way, the self-transcendence is in the act, not in its object. It might be necessary to rediscover the object-pole as well, if we want to avoid the possible atheist or pantheist reductions of this self-transcendence, which either swallows God in the act or the act in God.

While according to Vico, the ancient pagans were making their truth, they would have never thought of it in this way themselves. They were doing it in some way *bona fide*. Modern thought, however, not only thinks in this manner, but also states the *verum/factum* principle explicitly and subscribes to it. As a distortion of an originally theological idea, it seems to have gained its own momentum. It has found even new theological application, as for example when Pope John Paul II’s encyclical

Laborem exercens (no. 25) speaks of work not as punishment for sin, but as a cocreation with God. However, as we have indicated, there are also more problematic implications of this principle, and they would make it desirable to extend Miner's genealogy to the present day, although the story might become complicated, as I will indicate now.

Miner points out that the standard scheme of writing the history of early modern philosophy by dividing it up into rationalism and empiricism might not fit anymore (*Truth in the Making*, xvi). Yet, he would have to account for how someone like Hume fits into his genealogy. Is he the *reaction* against the *verum/factum* principle? Is he the skeptic that reacts and does not want to make truth anymore? In this case, pragmatism (insofar as it is critical of Hume) would turn out to be just an Anglo-Saxon variation on continental rationalism. We might notice in passing that the sense-data of empiricism are *data*, that is, something *given*. Reflection on the subject of that giving might be what could lead the empiricist back to divine providence. Similarly it is with our talk about *facts*: What we call facts (compare the German: "*Tat-sache*" or "*Wirk-lichkeit*") are understood by our language as *facta*, something made, but not made *by us*.

Leibniz is mentioned as someone who was admired by Vico (*Vico*, 40), and indeed, he finds the truth of history and nature as well as those of metaphysics contained in divine reason and providence. Both are derived from God's freedom, goodness, and benevolence. There is a single origin of history and metaphysics in God himself, and we know it by participating in God's wisdom and goodness. The result is neither determinism and fate (Stoa) nor pure chance (Epicure), but rather "moral necessity."

In some way, Kant also attempted a synthesis of necessity and contingency. But he did so not with God and providence, but rather by continuing the anthropocentric turn that starts with Descartes. It is we who make the synthesis. While our constitution of the world remains limited, that which lies beyond this limitation and guides our constitution is not understood as God's providence, but as our own unavoidable regulative ideas.

Idealism goes beyond this by posing the human subject as the first maker (insofar as everything is deduced from its activity). It is identical with this making of the truth, with its *Tathandlung* (Fichte). The subject is nothing but making itself, including the making of its own receptivity. Knowledge of the world is self-knowledge, just as it was in Aquinas and Vico for the *scientia Dei*. This is all the more so, since on the quest for a common root of Kant's two kinds of reason (pure and practical), Idealism settles on *practical* reason. Truth is derived from making, reason and will are identical. The implication for existentialism or pragmatism could be drawn out further. But if there is nothing that is not made, then there is

nothing to contemplate, no fulfillment of nature that would be given and intelligible, and therefore no definition of what it would mean to rest in an achieved *telos*. The existentialist person is a *homo faber usque ad nauseam*.

If there is a goal to reach, then it can be defined only as an identity of subject and object. History itself would have to be conceived as the fulfillment of that goal because history is what is made by man. This is the philosophy of Hegel. The goal of history is a self-knowledge in which all of history is contained. And since history is made by us, we have made even the absolute truth. The truth that we make is the thought of God's own mind; we are the makers of God's providence. Some of this is actually anticipated in Vico's "new science" of history, only that it is not we who become God, but it is God who is thinking in us. Thus, we remain finite. Hegel's history as "God's walk through the world" is an anthropocentric form of Vico's providence. Similarly, the three-step processes of our mind and of history are not so much conceived of on the Trinitarian model as in Vico. Rather, it is the Trinity that is conceived of on the model of the processes of our mind (which implies significant reductions). Yet, Vico could give Hegel credit for still attempting to think of the Incarnation as the crucial point in the history of the world. It is only that religion is "sublated" ultimately into philosophy, which is the reflection of the absolute Spirit. This means that, as much as he manages to preserve the role of Christianity, in the end, Hegel is a representative of the "barbarism" of absolute reflection.

Appreciative of Vico, Gadamer has tried to overcome this teleology of absolute reflection in his notion of historically effected consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). For Gadamer, the mediations of consciousness and its contents through history exhibit the bad infinity that Hegel disliked: It is not going anywhere, it is just going on. If the mind is participating in something greater, it is the tradition and Vico's common sense, but it is disconnected from divine providence. Vico, on the other hand, might be a help in showing that tradition is rooted in divine providence. If it is the tradition of the Church, it even allows for a certain teleology—the development of dogma—without the necessity of postulating that we ourselves are God's way of becoming an absolute Spirit.

This would allow us to talk about history in the singular, rather than just as a collection of various histories or stories. For Gadamer this unity of history was a remnant of Hegel's teleology of history. Everything is headed toward this absolute goal. Yet, there are other ways of thinking about the unity of history, and Vico gives us a model: salvation history.

History as a genealogical narrative implies a common subject about which the story is told. This could be simply the human species as such.

World history would be the history of humanity. And indeed, it is not human to live in isolation, but to live in openness to all other cultures and peoples and to acknowledge them as part of the subject of a common history. The Stoa at least got close to conceiving the world in this way, as a common space of men and even gods. But history is not just space, it is time. And the first instance of conceiving of a world history as such is tied to Christianity and the Incarnation.²⁹ For Vico, the Incarnation was tying together the lost unity of *certum et verum*. But it also is a unification of time and eternity. Time and history is now taken up into the realm of eternal intelligibility, and the key to its interpretation is the Incarnation, with its prehistory and unfolding in history. Jesus Christ is divine providence incarnate.

In the Incarnation, humanity becomes a unified subject for the first time, because it is taken up into the hypostatical union. If there is a goal of history, then it is the unification of humanity in the mystical body of Christ. As it was already Israel's vocation to bring all nations to God, so, too, the Church represents all of humanity (actually or potentially assumed into the second person of the Trinity).

This should be of interest to Radical Orthodoxy, since world history as such, and any genealogy that narrates it, would be unintelligible without theology. One could, on the other hand, concede that the universal openness of human nature is, on the natural, secular level, at least *open* to universal conceptions, even though this is only actualized through the *supernatural* redemption of human nature. In a sense, globalization would find its true realization only in supernatural ways.

Given Vico's critical distinction of truth-making as secular and truth-making as our analogical participation in divine providence, one could develop it further into a critical genealogy of the process of globalization. A globalization of economics and technology, for example, can provide unity only through an ideology of making, an "idolatrous" unity. The true unity would best be derived from contemplating what divine providence has already done in the Incarnation. The true unity of humanity would have something to do with the Word of God, the only-begotten Son, who assumed this humanity. In other words, a true globalization is a unity of humanity that has to be begotten, not made. A unity that comes from utilitarian points of view (maybe akin to Hobbes), or through manmade perspectives (similar to Descartes's geometry), will, on the contrary, view Judaeo-Christianity and the Incarnation as a particularistic religious threat

²⁹ I am indebted here to my teacher Robert Spaemann, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsglaube*, *Hochland* 51 (1959): 201–16.

to unity—rather than the starting point. (This is actually the reason why Karl Marx, a Jew, embraced anti-Semitism.) This point of view will not remain neutral with regard to the question of divine providence.³⁰

An inner-worldly humanism, a global making of civilization that is not anchored in God's providence, will always become "idoltrous" in Vico's sense. But, as Vico saw, it will be the modern form of idolatry. Unlike the pagan idolatry, it does not make God into something finite, but man into something infinite. It will attempt to play God, taking over his providence: If God can bring good out of bad, then taking over his role will assume that we, too, can do bad in order to "make" the good. Marxists, out of a claim to a superior insight into a secularized providence ("historical materialism"), assumed that they were allowed to use any revolutionary means to bring about the classless society. Similarly, the notion of progress can be used to justify ethically problematic measures (including progress in human biotechnology). If there is no God, then we have an *obligation* to take world history into our hands. Vico's distinction between true and false forms of making turn out to be even more foundational than party lines. Carl Schmitt notes that Lenin and the capitalist have the same goal: the electrification of the planet. Further, Max Weber's observations on the development of a universal bureaucracy might go in the same direction. The Antichrist of Benson, Solovyev, and others is a *maker*, either of universal, global peace or of a technological Utopia.

From the viewpoint of "divine providence," on the other hand, globalization is an event that is eschatological, that is, not of our making or initiative. It does not even coincide with the triumph of Augustine's *civitas Dei*. If anything it will resemble rather the opposite, a catastrophic persecution of Christianity. It might be that through a "List der Vernunft" (Hegel)—that is, through providence—the secular globalization will pave the way for the global spread of the Gospel, just as the pagan globalization of the Roman Empire opened the way for Christianity as the universal religion (this is how Prudentius and others interpreted divine

³⁰ Furthermore, inner-worldly secular perspectives of globalization will only arrive at a unity that is organized around material goals. As John Paul II pointed out before the U.N., the material world arrives only at goods that cannot be shared without loss, which therefore will always lead to conflict. Spiritual values, on the other hand, can be shared without loss. True unity can therefore not be "made" by human technology; it can only be arrived at through contemplation. Peace, ultimately, will be a fruit of conversation between religions and cultures; it will not be "made" by a world-police. A "project world-ethos" (Hans Küng), on the other hand, tries to make "ethos" into a product of making, rather than accepting it as the motivation that can itself not be made, but only begotten. Precisely as a project for which we labor it *presupposes* an ethos which it cannot make.

providence). Yet, there will always be a difference between the *civitas Dei* and this world with its history. Divine providence and salvation history might serve as a lens through which to read even present history, but it can never be directly identified with “the walk of God through history,” as Hegel or the Messianism of his materialist successors would like.

Vico himself seems to preserve this tension. While trusting divine providence, he is fairly sober with regard to the future and the idea of progress, in spite of his triadic structure. There is an element of *cyclical* history in his thought as well. The unfolding of salvation history happens in the midst of this; the *civitas Dei* cannot be identified with any state or secular development, because that would be a return to pagan history. The Church transcends any state, just as providence transcends our machinations. This transcendence rather touches the world through the sacraments. *They* are the doings that are ours as well as God's. The sacraments are the ultimate paradigm and the true root of the *verum/factum* principle. God has guaranteed that, in this specific case, our action would be taken up into his own making, and be part of his providence. Using this as a prime analogate, the theologian and Christian genealogist might hope to participate in the guidance of Revelation as it is offered to the *civitas Dei*. But it is even secular genealogy that is still inspired by this light of divine providence. Radical Orthodoxy can take its clue from Nietzsche himself. The founder of modern *secular* genealogy knew that we could not rid ourselves of our theological roots. He knew:

that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests—that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless ones and anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine.³¹

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³¹ “Daß auch wir Erkennenden von heute, wir Gottlosen und Antimetaphysiker, auch unser Feuer noch von dem Brande nehmen, den ein Jahrtausende alter Glaube entzündet hat, jener Christen-Glaube, der auch der Glaube Platos war, daß Gott die Wahrheit ist, daß die Wahrheit göttlich ist.” Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1887), bk.V, 344.