Stanislav Riha

"Since I believe that Science belongs to educated professionals, I and all involved have tried to keep the content of this magazine (even though it is a HIQ Society mag.) on an ordinary human level.

In fact, is it not the case that - to be a human being is the most intelligent way of life?"
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Divine Providence as Horizontal Transcendence in Vico

by Paul Edgeworth

In recent times, there has been a remarkable revival of interest in the work and philosophy of Giambattista Vico.1 His major work, the *New Science*, was intended to unlock not a few secrets about the human adventure, for in it Vico addresses the origin and development of religion, morality, law, political science and language, to mention but a few items deemed worthy of his attention.2 Vico demonstrated systematically that the understanding of a past society was a demanding and rewarding intellectual undertaking.3 Although Vico’s study is encyclopedic in its range, our present examination of this work will restrict itself for the most part to retracing the discovery of the origins of divine and human institutions among the gentile nations. Since the *New Science* is committed to begin where its subject matter began and its task is the explanation of the aforementioned institutions, the task of this science must be to proceed as if to create these institutions or to be present at their creation.4 It is the purpose of this paper to arrive at an understanding of the common nature of nations in the light of divine providence. In doing so it is hoped that we will have obtained greater insight into how a socio-historical world develops out of primitive man’s relationship of religion to imagination. While it may seem that God’s role recedes as man’s consciousness advances, nevertheless, God’s providence remains at work within and behind the institutions that man has created. A question then which Vico asks himself and which we must ask ourselves as well is how was it possible for the “bestione” to enter upon a “corso” at the end of which there were human institutions? The answer for which Vico writes the *New Science* is that the “bestione” himself created the human being he became under the influence of a divine providence which has never been absent even in the narrow, shortsightedness and misguided motives by which the actions of men have frequently been characterized.5

In the 17th Century, religion becomes subject to critical enquiry. Vico tells us that he will focus on the religion of the gentiles and not the Hebrews. For the latter, sacred history is potent. If God has chosen to interact directly with a chosen people, there is not much more that can be said. Vico will therefore concentrate on how religion arose within the gentile nations. He will analyze its social roles, and what he analyzes will not be explained by revelation. By separating gentile from Hebrew history, Vico makes clear that the human race, in the absence of revelation, in the light of divine providence. In doing so it is hoped that we will have obtained greater insight into how a socio-historical world develops out of primitive man’s relationship of religion to imagination. While it may seem that God’s role recedes as man’s consciousness advances, nevertheless, God’s providence remains at work within and behind the institutions that man has created. A question then which Vico asks himself and which we must ask ourselves as well is how was it possible for the “bestione” to enter upon a “corso” at the end of which there were human institutions? The answer for which Vico writes the *New Science* is that the “bestione” himself created the human being he became under the influence of a divine providence which has never been absent even in the narrow, shortsightedness and misguided motives by which the actions of men have frequently been characterized.5

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5 Ibid., 100.
could evolve only in a direction programmed into it in advance by a Creator who destined all peoples to create religions and institutions as they wandered the earth after the great flood.\(^1\)

Before turning to Vico’s now well-known story of the beginning of religion, we should first address ourselves to two of the concerns that he needed to examine in his attempt to arrive at an understanding of human origins. These two key elements of Vico’s thought are known as the error of the conceit of scholars and the error of the conceit of nations. In so deliberating, Vico set out to show that his predecessors had misunderstood both the capacities of the human mind and the development of the human race.\(^2\)

With the error of the conceit of scholars, Vico criticizes his predecessors for judging the origins of humanity “on the basis of their own enlightened, cultivated, and magnificent times.”\(^3\) Later thinkers who dwelled on ancient myths or fables with their own civilized minds did not see in them the very framework of the primitive and poetic world they described.\(^4\) It was from these first, primitive men—“stupid, insensate, and horrible beasts, all the philosophers and philologists should have begun their investigations of the wisdom of the ancient gentiles.”\(^5\) We cannot assume that an agent in a distant and primitive culture understands and describes his actions in anything like the terms we would use.\(^6\) Vico thus challenges the fundamental assumption underlying such accounts of myths, namely, that they are products of a rational mind.\(^7\) Those scholars who were Vico’s predecessors then did not understand the proper historical meaning and origins of humanity. They elevated early man to a level of rationality we now share and take for granted. It is Vico’s belief, however, that we need to descend from the heights of sophisticated reasoning as exemplified by Plato and return back to the origins of mankind. It cost Vico twenty years of exasperating difficulties “to descend from these human and refined natures of ours to those quite wild and savage natures, which we cannot at all imagine and can comprehend only with great effort.”\(^8\) In retrospect, we can say that Vico seemingly succeeded in descending from this modern-day refined mind to perceive a primeval forest with its giants as if he had lived in it.\(^9\) In undertaking the new science then, Vico is urging a heroic journey on us, one that begins with a descent to the origins of mankind, which is

\(^2\) Ibid., xvi
\(^4\) Miuccio, 90-91.
\(^5\) *NS*, par.374, 116.
\(^9\) Miuccio, 102.
at the same time an ascent in that it is a return to the beginning principles that will be seen to structure the beginning, maturation, and end of the nations of men.¹

With the error of the conceit of nations, Vico observes “every nation barbarian or civilized has considered itself to be the oldest and to have preserved its records from the beginning of the world.”² Each nation in thinking it is the oldest, thus thinks that it is the origin of all. The isolation that each nation originally found itself in led it to overestimate its originality and antiquity.³ Each nation, in turn, believed their laws and institutions given to them by God—a privilege which Vico believes was granted to the Hebrews alone. Each of these nations then fails to see, as we will shortly come to realize, that they imaginatively created human institutions themselves.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of what Vico is bringing to our attention thus far is his insistence that the conceit of scholars can be said to arise directly from that of the conceit of nations, for intellectual error is social in origin and the correction of such error must arise from a more complete understanding of society.⁴ Human thought in the early stages of its development was not rational, but imaginative, specifically poetic; accordingly, if the scholar is to understand the origins of society he must employ a method, namely the use of imagination, consistent with this realization.⁵ This means that primitive people were poets, and it was therefore a grave error to believe with the rationalists that these primitive poets were philosophers as we understand that term today.⁶ Hence we are beginning to see that mythology constitutes a unique source for understanding primitive man, and that it is necessary to search in myth for the evidence of the origins of human institutions.⁷

With this as a background, let us turn at this time to Vico’s examination of the origins of religion and its relation to human imagination. The transition by the proto-humans from their primitive state to a human state begins when a particularly striking lightning storm piques the curiosity of these first humans, and arouses fear and awe in them which, given their active imaginations and innate poetic capabilities, they interpret the storm in terms of the actions of a great divine being.⁸ These proto-humans pictured the sky to themselves as an immense, animated body they called Jove, who by hurling his bolts and through the noise of his thunder was trying to tell them something.⁹ Their terror of the natural elements, that is to say, their

²NS, par. 53, 34.
⁵Ibid.
⁷Ibid., 93.
⁸Simon, 42.
⁹Miuccio, 92.
beginning sense of religion, forced these early men into hiding in a cave along with one captured woman only, thus forming the first family. Given that a divine Jove is looking down upon them, these first brutish men feel shame concerning their canine-like sexual relations in the open-to-the-sky forests, and fear that their god will find their behavior offensive. It was then out of a sense of fear and a piety born out of this sense of fear that religion came about. It is in such a manner also that marriage, the family and life in social units within ensconced habitations came into being. Finally, settled as couples and living in one place they became aware of the stench of the rotting corpses that had previously been left where they fell, and this gave rise to the custom of burial rites. Following this, we gradually see a complex, hierarchical society taking shape, as those individuals who could not defend themselves became beholden to those who could, exchanging their freedom then in return for safety and protection. Later we see that division will rent the family when the slaves realize that they are as human as their masters, and this, in turn, will give rise to a dialectic involving a struggle for power and autonomy which will ultimately lead to reform and the creation of laws, codes, and the institution of the state.

From the foregoing, we can see that religion is the first and the primary custom of human society. Gods are seen as creations of the human imagination. Religion is seen, in turn, as responsible for giving rise to human institutions. Thus Vico can say that the nature of these institutions can be explained without any reference to any direct intervention by God, for their nature can be explained by the way his new science attempts to do so. Such an approach acknowledges that if a process can be explained without an intervening supernatural force then it should do so, if it is to merit the status of being called a science.

Primitive man, Vico tells us, faced an awesome, at times, frightening nature, and desired something superior to himself to protect him and to save him, and this notion of a powerful Jove is arrived at not through a process of reflection, but rather through man’s poetic imagination. Hence Vico is led to believe that mythologies are true narratives, for they tell of circumstances and happenings in early times, and they, in turn, allow us to discover the history of the earliest men and their institutions.

In such fashion the first men of the gentile nations, children of nascent mankind, created things according to their own ideas. But this creation was infinitely different from that of God. For God, in his purest intelligence, knows things,
and, by knowing them, creates them; but they, in their robust ignorance, did it by virtue of a wholly corporeal imagination. And because it was quite corporeal, they did it with marvelous sublimity; a sublimity such and so great that it excessively perturbed the very persons who by imagining did the creating, for which they were called ‘poets,’ which is Greek for ‘creators.’

Two notions from the above statement, as a minimum, are worthy of further comment, and they are forthwith the notions of imagination and creation, respectively. Furthermore, we can say that the latter notion follows upon the former, in that we are able to understand the history of gentile nations in so far as we are able to arrive at an understanding of man as the creator of it. The stories that the first men told about the gods then are really stories about the men themselves. These stories exemplify the religious way of thinking according to which it was the gods who did whatever men were doing. For in reality men did what was being attributed to God.

As in Heidegger, poetics is also for Vico the process of creative thought, of metaphor, that describes and shapes the way the world is. Metaphor as exemplified in the comparison between a known and an unknown became the chief intellectual tool at a primitive mind’s disposal. We can say then that man is by nature inclined to form his ideas based upon a relationship of resemblance with things he already knows. Vico, furthermore, makes the observation that a metaphor was conceived to be a short fable, and as such, it became a product of the human imagination. Vico’s master key then was that the first men were poets who spoke in poetical characters. It was poets and not philosophers, who had written the first human history, using their imagination and not their reason. All knowledge can thus be collected under one poetic Weltanschauung that is imaginative and syncretistic, capable of forming continuous relations between things. Fabular or poetical thinking entails penetrating through philosophy to its philological foundations where human choice is discovered to be the

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1NS, par. 376, 117.
2Miuccio, 92.
3Morrison, 257.
4Ibid.
9Levine, 67.
10Ibid., 75.
Vico is consequently able to recreate the early history of man and of nations by imaginative inference, while simultaneously arguing that the protagonists in these very same histories were dominated by their imaginations, and therefore by implication, can only be understood by our imagination engaging with theirs.\textsuperscript{2}

Thus we have seen that the imagination contains the images that humans create and then process metaphorically.\textsuperscript{3} Just as the creation of tools allowed the first humans to carve out and shape the physical landscape, so too the creation of metaphors allowed them to carve out and shape a mental landscape.\textsuperscript{4} Donatella Di Cesare provides insight into man’s creative nature when he compares it to the creativeness that is God’s alone. In the case of God, \textit{verum} is convertible into \textit{factum}, for divine truth is what God sets in order and creates in the act of knowing it. God created the world of nature and He alone can therefore truly know this world.\textsuperscript{5}

Man, in turn, surrounded by a natural world created by God and of which He alone has knowledge cannot understand it. Thus man in his first beginnings cannot obtain knowledge rationally through the intellect. It is not then with the understanding, but rather with the senses and imagination that primordial man interprets the reality within which he is immersed. Though ignorant of how God has created things in the world which he is inhabiting, primaeval man nevertheless strives to re-create them. This results in a humanizing of that which he has not himself created. So Vico tells us that just as the natural world is brought forth or created with the word of God, so too the civil world arises with the poetic activity of man.\textsuperscript{6} Our world then is a product of our “makings.”\textsuperscript{7} Only he who has created something can know what he has created.\textsuperscript{8} Accordingly, man can come to know the world of nations, since he has created them.\textsuperscript{9}

Vico tells us that his new science “must therefore be a rational civil theology of divine providence.”\textsuperscript{10} It is a rational theology because it rationalizes, that is, interprets into intelligible genera, the poetic theology of divine providence of the theological poets.\textsuperscript{11} It is also a civil theology for it shows that this theology is really a history of the cities and nations that men have made themselves.\textsuperscript{12} Based on what Vico has been telling us, we can also come to a realization that a rational civil theology of divine providence will serve as a demythologization of non-

\textsuperscript{1}Daniel, 2.
\textsuperscript{2}Trompf, 79.
\textsuperscript{3}Danesi, 48.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{5}Tristram, 148.
\textsuperscript{8}Tristram, 148.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10}NS, par. 342, 102.
\textsuperscript{11}Morrison, 258.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
rational divine theology, for it becomes apparent that the stories about the gods are really the histories of men.¹

But in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never failing light of a truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind. Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers should have bent all their energies to the study of nature, which, since God made it, He alone knows; and that they should have neglected the study of the world of nations, or civil world, which, since men had made it, men could come to know.²

Vico tells us that this world of nations has been made by man. He further tells us that what the new scientists of his time were seeking in the study of nature was not there; necessity lay rather in self-knowledge acquired through speculation about the human world, for that is where thoughts worth thinking were really to be found.³ Turning our scrutiny then upon man, we can say that humankind can be said to make itself by making the social structures which alone separate them from their bestial, gigantic progenitors.⁴ Humanity thus emerges in the process of imposing upon itself social restraints, and this process, for Vico, is initiated by the workings of God’s providential plan.⁵

Throughout the development of man and nations, we can see an inherent logic that transcends the conscious intentions of individual agents at work.⁶ For this inherent logic, which Hegel was to call later the “cunning of reason,” and which Wundt was to call the “heterogony of ends,” Vico sought no other name than that of providence acting not by force of laws imposed from without, but rather making use of the customs of men.⁷ Though the religious model derived from the first theological poets still obtains, it is now expressed by Vico in terms of the hidden and natural workings of God in the world of nations as created by man.⁸ The New Science thus becomes a demonstration of what providence has wrought in history without human discernment or counsel and often against the designs of men. In this light then man’s poetic makings can be viewed as a response to the promptings of divine providence.

It is true that men have themselves made this world of nations . . . but this world

¹Ibid.
²NS, par. 331, 96.
³Goetsch, Jr., 287.
⁵Ibid.
⁷Ibid.
⁸Wilson, 57.
without doubt has issued from a mind often diverse, at times quite contrary, and always superior to the particular ends that men had proposed to themselves; which narrow ends, made means to serve wider ends, it has always employed to preserve the human race upon this earth. Men mean to gratify their bestial lust and abandon their offspring, and they inaugurate the chastity of marriage from which the families arise. The fathers mean to exercise without restraint powers from which the cities arise. The reigning orders of nobles mean to abuse their lordly freedom over the plebeians, and they are obliged to submit to the laws which establish popular liberty.

The free peoples mean to shake off the yoke of their laws, and they become subject to monarchs. The monarchs mean to strengthen their own positions by debasing their subjects with all the vices of dissoluteness, and they dispose them to endure slavery at hands of stronger nations. The nations mean to dissolve themselves, and their remnants flee for safety to the wilderness, whence, like the phoenix, they rise again. That which did all this was mind, for men did it with intelligence; it was not fate, for they did it by choice; not chance, for the results of their always so acting are perpetually the same.¹

From the foregoing, we see that the fear that primordial man experienced gave rise to religion and thus served the purpose of providence. Next came an understanding characteristic of the heroic age that auspices justified the uses of strength and conferred authority.² For “it is a mark of the strong not to lose by sloth what they have gained by valor. Rather do they yield, from necessity or for utility, as little as they can and bit by bit.”³ This also served the purpose of providence, and thus Vico can say that Epicurus, Hobbes and Machiavelli were wrong in holding that chance held sway in the rise of human institutions, as were also Zeno and Spinoza wrong in favoring fate or a kind of determinism.⁴

For although man by nature is driven by his passions and is bent on his own advantage, men nevertheless come together in civil society and recognize a common good.⁵ Out of ferocity, avarice, and ambition, the three vices which run throughout the human race, it creates the military, merchant, and governing classes, and thus the strength, riches, and wisdom of commonwealths. Out of these three great vices which could certainly destroy all mankind on the face of the earth, it makes civil happiness.⁶

¹NS, par. 1108, 425.
²Miuccio, 101.
³NS, par. 261, 81.
⁴Miuccio, 101.
⁵Morrison, 259.
This . . . proves that there is divine providence and further that it is a divine legislative
mind. For out of the passions of men each bent on his private advantage, for the
sake of which they would live like wild beasts in the wilderness, it has made the civil
institutions by which they may live in human society.¹

The world of nations is indeed made by men, but it comes about as if it were done by a mind
that must be thought of as super-human.² For while it is true that the world of nations is made by
man, it was “divine providence [which] initiated the process by which the fierce and violent were
brought from their outlaw state to humanity and by which nations were instituted among them.”³
And, Vico tells us, it did so awakening in mankind a confused idea of divinity, which men in their
ignorance wrongly attributed to that which it did not belong, and thus through the terror inspired
by this imagined divinity, they began to put themselves in order.⁴ The course we have thus far
traversed with Vico goes a long way in explaining how a world of human institutions could arise
without an implausible transcendental rationality. For the men that were our forebears became
what they were by the same historical processes by which the societies themselves had evolved,
and the later rationality that we would find in the age of men was the outcome of that process.

We can iterate that God’s providence can be seen as underlying the institutions of man even
though man himself is not always aware of the workings of God. It is God’s immanence at work
and it gives rise to a transcendence which is manifested in the institutions that man has created.
It is a transcendence that we can term horizontal in that this transcendence still remains at the
level of the human. It is not something alien permanently suspended and existing on a plain
above and apart from what is human. The key to horizontal transcendence is to be found in the
order and authority imposed by customs and institutions created by man. Yes, created by man,
but nevertheless reflecting the divine providence at work which is always acting for the
preservation of man.⁵ It is a providence at work which is best described as that which abets
rather than directs or supplants man’s intelligent free choice.⁶ It can be distinguished from a
vertical transcendence which imposes laws down from a higher level, that is, from the divine to
the human. Such a transcendence would be completely external to man and would take the form
of direct divine intervention and imposition of authority as when God chose to interact directly
with the Hebrews. Indeed, it would be difficult to see how such an absolute transcendence could

¹Ibid., par. 133, 62.
²Morrison, 259.
³NS, par. 178, 70.
⁴Ibid.
⁵“I[O] this world without doubt has issued from a mind often diverse, at times quite
contrary, and always superior to the particular ends that men had proposed to themselves; which
narrow ends, made means to serve wider ends, it has always employed to preserve the human
race upon this earth.” Ibid., par. 1108, 425.
⁶Tristram, 152.
be understood by man absent divine revelation, because something which is absolute would by
definition require an absolute mind to understand it.¹ But as we have seen, Vico’s account must
be naturalistic and he is committed to the thesis that human beings are the makers of their own
history and institutions.² In the case of horizontal transcendence the customs and institutions are
created by man. They made it by choice as Vico has told us.³ Though these customs and
institutions can be said to exercise authority and establish order over man, they, nevertheless,
remain on the level of the human. These man-made customs and institutions do indeed govern
the individual and are external to the individual, but they do not govern from a level that
supercedes the human dimension. Horizontal transcendence is not imposed, but rather is the
product of man exercising his own free will.

Leon Pompa provides valuable insight to what has happened when he tells us that man’s
impulse to action may have depended upon a desire solely for his own improvement, but any
institutional changes that may have resulted from this were determined by normative social
beliefs that forced man to accept social arrangements which turned out to be just to all. Men’s
actions were not undertaken for the sake of common sense, but the new institutional
arrangements which they gave rise to were made in the light of common sense. Pompa points
out that Vico is not telling us that because a social structure is not to be explained by a particular
aim of an individual as such, it therefore is to be attributed to some superhuman agency. Rather,
Vico is saying because it is not to be explained by the aims of individuals as such it is to be
explained by judgments common to people who share the same beliefs. It is these beliefs which
are then institutionalized.⁴

As Vico tells us, “Common sense is judgement without reflection, shared by an entire class, an
entire people, an entire nation, or the entire human race.”⁵ Common sense is to be understood as
the way a people think, act and speak, an unreflective self-shaping of a people which makes it so
necessary and so sure a foundation for human institutions.⁶ It gives rise to a reality which exists
on the plain of men and would not exist then without men. It is this reality which we have
termed horizontal transcendence. It is indeed this that holds together and orders society, that is,
customs and common agreements that have given rise to and have, in turn, been preserved in
human institutions. According to Vico, every human society can be said to be characterized by
some form of common sense which arises by recognizing the underlying agreements that obtain
among them all despite some variations of detail.⁷ The nature of customs in a given society
reflects how the members of that society think about themselves and the world in general.⁸
Indeed, we can go beyond this and assert that common sense gives rise to this world itself.

¹Todd and Cono, 63.
²Simon, 41.
³NS, par. 1108, 425.
Univ. Press, 1990), 55-56.
⁵NS, par. 142, 63.
⁶Jacobitti, 80.
⁷NS, par. 130, 61-62.
⁸Simon, 38.
Common sense can then be thought of as the pre-condition of civilization.¹ Lest we forget what Vico has already been telling us, the fables that recount the rise of ancient civilizations and their institutions, in the final analysis can be understood as the poetic expression of the sensus communis of the people of these early emerging nations.

When we reflect upon the meaning of common sense, we can see it as the inability to reach social decisions without so doing it in a social capacity and in a sequence of communal decisions men arrive at as part of the social situations they find themselves in.² It is these social situations which, in turn, give rise to an institutional framework of self-legislation which ultimately can be seen to be acting for the preservation of mankind that we have come to view as horizontal transcendence. To reiterate, horizontal transcendence is so called because it reflects a recognition on our part that God’s providence is immanent in the workings of man as reflected in the institutions that man has created and thereby governs himself. Horizontal transcendence can be understood as Vico’s naturalistic explanation for the preservation of the human race.

Let us consider and meditate on the simplicity and naturalness with which providence ordered these institutions of men, concerning which they said truly, though in a false sense, that they were all the work of the gods. . . Then let us ask ourselves if, among all human possibilities, so many and such various and diverse institutions could in any other way have had simpler or more natural beginnings among those very men who are said by Epicurus to have been born of chance and by Zeno to have been creatures of necessity. Yet chance did not divert them nor fate force them out of this natural order. For at the point when the commonwealths were to spring forth, the matters were all prepared and ready to receive the form, and there issued from them the format of the commonwealths, composed of mind and body. The prepared matters were these men’s own religions, their own languages, their own lands, their own nuptials, their own names (clans or houses), their own arms, and hence their own dominions, their own magistrates, and finally their own laws. And because all these were their own they were completely free and therefore constitutive of true commonwealths.³

From the foregoing, we see that providence orders human affairs through the growth of commonwealths from a situation in which all the elements of such institutions are already

²Pompa, 58.
³NS, par. 630, 235-36.
present at hand, and these elements are already themselves existent because they are the creations of man.¹

Based on our preceding discussion, we can see that Vico was a highly original thinker in having established a theoretical framework for understanding the civil world of man and how it can be demonstrated to have been brought into existence. It should not cause us to wonder then that throughout the twentieth century, the most up-to-date students of culture have repeatedly found inspiration and stimulation through a renewed study of the New Science.² For a new science emergences, Max Weber tells us, “‘where new problems are pursued by new methods and truths are thereby discovered which open up significant new points of view.’”³ It is only with the development of man’s reflections in less primitive times that man can even begin to know the world of nations, and it is only with the growing sophistication of reflection in more cultured nations that this knowledge can be produced by the disciplines of philosophy and philology, and thereby allow and account for the emergence and ongoing development of a science of humanity.⁴

When Isaiah Berlin speaks of Vico’s thought as an ill-assorted mass of ideas all jostling each other in the chaos of his badly ordered and overburdened mind, it becomes abundantly clear how little attention Berlin and other thinkers of his ilk actually pay to Vico’s attempt to found a speculative philosophy based upon the priority of the imagination and image over the rational mind and concept.⁵ For as Vico has amply demonstrated, the age of innocence in which primordial man can be said to have had its origins does not share the modern fascination with a fully developed and rational logic wherein men become reflective and require “proof,” and since such “proof” is not always forthcoming for all dilemmas and situations, logic can be seen to slay at their birth all potential solutions arising from man’s imagination.⁶ Society falls victim to reason because reason forces men to discover that their origins are feral and their god mere human factum; thus, they believe themselves to have been victims of a hoax, and instead of understanding the creative power of mythos and poetry, they resolve henceforth to settle for nothing less than proof; consequently, they become immune to all solutions to their problems; and perhaps even worse, goaded by their sophist mentors they become “ironic.”⁷ And lest we forget, although Vico is oftentimes fantastic and always passionate, he is seldom if ever ironic as some commentators have made him out to be.

Vico’s ideas provide a useful middle ground for us today. He recognizes that civilized society is held together by religion, imagination, and common sense, all of which are reflective of a divine providence at work within the created institutions of man. In affording us with a new methodology for understanding the course of history, Vico has rendered an inestimable service to

¹Pompa, 60.
³Tristram, 176.
⁴Ibid., 149.
⁵Goetsch, Jr., 293.
⁶Jacobitti, 84.
⁷Ibid., 85.
modern thought. But in order to arrive at the ancestral state of man, it was necessary, as we have seen, for Vico to free himself from all of the sedimentations of civilization and to find the principles of his science within the modifications of the human mind.

Vico’s cyclical theory of history which he called “corsi e ricorsi” constitutes one of his most important insights. The “corso” starts with a “barbarism of sense” followed by an age of gods, then an age of heroes, and finally an age of men or fully developed reason; however, as this age of fully developed reason is itself liable to corruption, the way is made clear for a “ricorso” with new tribulations which appear to be worse than before because in a time of a “barbarism of reflection,” men are more inhuman than they were in the time of the “barbarism of sense.” Vico’s sensitivity to the poetic foundations out of which rationality has grown, should re-emphasize for us today the need for a critique of what he has termed the “barbarism of reflection” which has been seen to fill men with pride and make them more inhuman rather than less. “In this way,” Vico tells us, “through long centuries of barbarism, rust will consume the misbegotten subtleties of malicious wits that have turned them into beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense.”

What should be appalling to us if we have learnt anything at all from Vico is that the barbarism of reflection separates the individual from the sense of human community by turning his attention to what is deemed to be the truth as if it could be so determined devoid of any common sense grounding in the poetic imagination. If we are to learn anything at all from Vico, it is then the necessity to restore a balance between the imagination and reason. The mental activity of imagination is not to be understood as a rational process, but rather one that expresses itself in a twofold experience, that is the absence of, and simultaneously the need to be on the lookout for necessary connections on the basis of which men can and must build up the world in which they find themselves. Likewise, men should recall and henceforth keep in mind that God’s providence is at work in man’s civil customs and moral institutions.

God works man’s preservation [and we might say ultimately his redemption] through man’s continuing coming to terms with his own self-understanding as reflected in his deeds and world-makings. The triarchic patterns that Vico is so fond of evoking in Books IV and V of his New Science are perhaps symbolic of the triune Christian God we have found to be working

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1De Mas, 92.
2Battistini, 25.
3Miuccio, 98.
4Daniel, 3.
5NS, par. 1106, 424.
6Daniel, 4.
7Wilson, fn 47, 64.
8Goetsch, Jr., 289.
behind the created world of man. The triarchic patterns can be viewed this way then as a
reflection of the divine at work within the institutions of man. For it is an active providence.

In Vico’s work, we find references to providence in its role as “teacher,” “counsellor,”
and “sovereign,” and as that which “permits,” “ordains,” “institutes,” “orders,” and
“establishes.”\(^1\) All of these activities are related to and discussed within terms of developments
within the world of nations, that is, the institutions created by man.\(^2\) Divine providence is as we
have seen for Vico a logic transcending the conscious intentions of individual agents. It is not a
vertical transcendence, but rather one that is immanent and that we have termed horizontal
transcendence for the reasons discussed above. The providence that we have come to see at
work and which is said to be immanent in this horizontal transcendence has its own end and its
own goodness. Whatever it has brought about has been directed to a good superior to what man
proposes. The centrality of providence has always been believed in by man, as witnessed by his
reliance on auguries, but man has not always discerned that God’s providence is directed to the
preservation of the human race.

We can therefore say that each civilization goes through the same stages and in the same
order and same cycle and manifests the same patterns, because all individuals and all peoples
work at the same task, that is to say, the realization of God’s plan. We are all part of one and the
same whole that is existent reality. While Vico argues that it is true that man makes his own
history, he has also told us that all that happens, happens by God’s will and reason. In the end,
Vico instructs us that we should always keep in mind, the biblical injunction that man proposes,

\(^1\)Tristram, 152.
\(^2\)Ibid.
but God disposes.

To conclude, if a highly civilized society is seen to revert to a stage of barbaric reflection, it will have done so for having lost its sense of religion or “piety” which, for Vico, is the principle basis for the coming into being of all forms of government, for “he who is not pious cannot be truly wise” — words that prophetically conclude Vico’s work,¹ and our present effort as well.

¹Miuccio, 99; NS, par. 1112, 426.
**Poetry** by Eric Anthony

**Narcotic Wood** ©

Open my eyes, feel the rainshine,
Compromise.
Under the grass, men in space,
Tear my eyes.

If you want to be,
somebody today,
I recommend,
you stay that way.

Houses made of bland, narcotic wood,
Built good.
Smell the warm air, feel the sweat pour,
Down as ash.

**Thought**

At times I feel tired.
At times I feel abused.
At times I feel that I am not.
At times I feel that I am.

When or where does this end?
By or for what is there a place
Where my soul can finally rest
Where my mind can simply state "OK."

When can I be i?
What is this i that wishes to be an I?
I sleep resolute on dirt
I sleep as resolute on pillow.

**Philosophy** by Eric Anthony

Every turn, it seems, we abstract our direct experiences,
in order to distill, predict, and thus to imagine we are all the more real later,
somewhere in the mighty turn of time.
But it is apparent that we are referring bodies, quite self-enclosed?
Friends, is there such a thing as hope? What are we hoping for?
Those predictions we make or those predictions that we hope might occur?
If immortality is the gain, then what of our mortality?
Are we only redressing immortality as mortality?
Or is it the other way 'round?

Why are we so promiscuous to state either of these fates as friends of one another?

All these questions.
But so few as reduced to two
Where have I been
All the while I have been?
What can say to me,
"Son, follow your parent!"

Not only has another day done its deed, but it has rendered nothing.
Existence is the anti-artist:
Non-creating, un-original, unsung.

Death I say is the finale
Yet life is the triumph, right?
How does your set supersede mine?
I have written a poem and I want to share it with all of you. It will be published in HPS Magazine, but IIS will be the first one to have it. There are two sonnets and the last part is a quartet. It has been written in Spanish, sorry. This poem is called "maldad" (evil); it is dedicated to all innocent people who, around the whole world, are suffering right now for terrorism, poverty, slavery, chieftaincy, petrol wars and who are considered as cattle.

Maldad

Ladrón de esperanza, ligero de corazón
¿Merece lealtades quien no las vale?
¿Defensa merece quien a cazar débiles sale?
Profeta falso, falsas silvas son tu falso don

En tu vida, fútiles frutos marcan el son
¿Merece virtud quien sobre ruina y error escale?
¿Poder merece quien, en locuras, sus actos instale?
¿Merece lágrimas quien no concibe el perdón?

Del dolo ríquezas sacas; Brindar al sol es tu creencia
Gran daño adeudas, tu ser conlleva el dolor
¡Demonio! ¡delimitas el cielo con tu existencia!

Ningún progreso te hará jamás mejor
¿Merece crédito quien vive en moral insolvencia?
Dejas atrás campos yermos, eres un craso error

¿Respeto merece quien, pudiendo, te deja aparte?
¿Sacrificio merece quien, el valor, no lo entienda?
¿Merece Caridad quien, mucho teniendo, no reparte?
¿Merece cuidados quien odiando hiere?

¿Libertad merece quien desea encadenarte?
¿Razón merece quien sin razón agrediere?
¿Merece risas quien las alegrías no comparte?
¿Merece a sus hijos aquel que no los quiere?

No tienen piedad, no existe la compasión
Lamentan su vida, sufren el destino
Lapidan su ser, el odio es su acción

Ninguna condena les dará redención
Vivir en tinieblas será siempre su sino
Vendieron su alma por una ficción

De la ira hacen sayo y estandarte
Su arma cobarde es la violencia
Su mejor acto, corromper la inocencia
De su infierno, los buenos, no serán parte

Alberto Bedmar Montaño
Pretty amazing works of art!

(How do you step back and make those final touches?)

Stunning crop art has sprung up across rice fields in Japan. But this is no alien creation - the designs have been cleverly planted. Farmers creating the huge displays use no ink or dye. Instead, different colours of rice plants have been precisely and strategically arranged and grown in the paddy fields. As summer progresses and the plants shoot up, the detailed artwork begins to emerge.

A Sengoku warrior on horseback has been created from hundreds of thousands of rice plants, the colours created by using different varieties, in Inakadate in Japan. The largest and finest work is grown in the Aomori village of Inakadate, 600 miles north of Tokyo, where the tradition began in 1993. The village has now earned a reputation for its agricultural artistry and this year the enormous pictures of Napoleon and a Sengoku-period warrior, both on horseback, are visible in a pair of fields adjacent to the town hall. More than 150,000 visitors come to Inakadate, where just 8,700 people live, every summer to see the extraordinary murals. Each year hundreds of volunteers and villagers plant four different varieties of rice in late May across huge swathes of paddy fields.

Napoleon on horseback can be seen from the skies, created by precision planting and months of planning between villagers and farmers in Inakadate.

Fictional warrior Naoe Kanetsugu in fields in the town of Yonezawa, And over the past few years, other the plant designs, art venue is in the town of prefecture, the fictional 16th-century samurai and his wife, in television series Tenchijin, popped up in other rice-farming including designs of deer dancers. and his wife Osen appear Japan villages have joined in with Another famous rice paddy Yonezawa in the Yamagata This year's design shows warrior Naoe Kanetsugu Osen, whose lives feature Various artwork has areas of Japan this year,
Smaller works of crop art can be seen in other rice-farming areas of Japan such as this image of Doraemon and deer dancers. The farmers create the murals by planting little purple and yellow-leafed kodaimai rice along with their local green-leafed tsugaru roman variety to create the coloured patterns between planting and harvesting in September. The murals in Inakadate cover 15,000 square metres of paddy fields. From ground level, the designs are invisible, and viewers have to climb the mock castle tower of the village office to get a glimpse of the work. Rice-paddy art was started there in 1993 as a local revitalization project, an idea that grew out of meetings of the village committee.

Closer to the image, the careful placement of thousands of rice plants in the paddy fields can be seen.

The different varieties of rice plant grow alongside each other to create the masterpieces. In the first nine years, the village office workers and local farmers grew a simple design of Mount Iwakievery year. But their ideas grew more complicated and attracted more attention. In 2005 agreements between landowners allowed the creation of enormous rice paddy art. A year later, organizers used computers to precisely plot planting of the four differently colored rice varieties that bring the images to life.
They told me the big black Lab's name was Reggie as I looked at him lying in his pen. The shelter was clean, no-kill, and the people really friendly. I'd only been in the area for six months, but everywhere I went in the small college town, people were welcoming and open. Everyone waves when you pass them on the street.

But something was still missing as I attempted to settle in to my new life here, and I thought a dog couldn't hurt. Give me someone to talk to. And I had just seen Reggie's advertisement on the local news. The shelter said they had received numerous calls right after, but they said the people who had come down to see him just didn't look like "Lab people," whatever that meant. They must've thought I did.

But at first, I thought the shelter had misjudged me in giving me Reggie and his things, which consisted of a dog pad, bag of toys almost all of which were brand new tennis balls, his dishes, and a sealed letter from his previous owner. See, Reggie and I didn't really hit it off when we got home. We struggled for two weeks (which is how long the shelter told me to give him to adjust to his new home). Maybe it was the fact that I was trying to adjust, too. Maybe we were too much alike.

For some reason, his stuff (except for the tennis balls - he wouldn't go anywhere without two stuffed in his mouth) got tossed in with all of my other unpacked boxes. I guess I didn't really think he'd need all his old stuff, that I'd get him new things once he settled in. But it became pretty clear pretty soon that he wasn't going to.

I tried the normal commands the shelter told me he knew, ones like "sit" and "stay" and "come" and "heel," and he'd follow them - when he felt like it. He never really seemed to listen when I called his name - sure, he'd look in my direction after the fourth of fifth time I said it, but then he'd just go back to doing whatever. When I'd ask again, you could almost see him sigh and then grudgingly obey.

This just wasn't going to work. He chewed a couple shoes and some unpacked boxes. I was a little too stern with him and he resented it, I could tell. The friction got so bad that I couldn't wait for the two weeks to be up, and when it was, I was in full-on search mode for my cellphone amid all of my unpacked stuff. I remembered leaving it on the stack of boxes for the guest room, but I also mumbled, rather cynically, that the "damn dog probably hid it on me."
Finally I found it, but before I could punch up the shelter’s number, I also found his pad and other toys from the shelter. I tossed the pad in Reggie’s direction and he sniffed it and wagged, some of the most enthusiasm I’d seen since bringing him home. But then I called, “Hey, Reggie, you like that? Come here and I’ll give you a treat.” Instead, he sort of glanced in my direction - maybe “glared” is more accurate - and then gave a discontented sigh and flopped down with his back to me.

Well, that’s not going to do it either, I thought. And I punched the shelter phone number.

But I hung up when I saw the sealed envelope. I had completely forgotten about that, too. “Okay, Reggie,” I said out loud, “let’s see if your previous owner has any advice.”

To Whoever Gets My Dog:
Well, I can’t say that I’m happy you’re reading this, a letter I told the shelter could only be opened by Reggie’s new owner. I’m not even happy writing it. If you’re reading this, it means I just got back from my last car ride with my Lab after dropping him off at the shelter. He knew something was different. I have packed up his pad and toys before and set them by the back door before a trip, but this time... it’s like he knew something was wrong. And something is wrong... which is why I have to go to try to make it right.

So let me tell you about my Lab in the hopes that it will help you bond with him and he with you.

First, he loves tennis balls. The more the merrier. Sometimes I think he’s part squirrel, the way he hordes them. He usually always has two in his mouth, and he tries to get a third in there. Hasn’t done it yet. Doesn’t matter where you throw them, he’ll bound after it, so be careful - really don’t do it by any roads. I made that mistake once, and it almost cost him dearly.

Next, commands. Maybe the shelter staff already told you, but I’ll go over them again: Reggie knows the obvious ones - "sit," "stay," "come," "heel." He knows hand signals: "back" to turn around and go back when you put your hand straight up; and "over" if you put your hand out right or left. "Shake" for shaking water off, and "paw" for a high-five. He does "down" when he feels like lying down - I bet you could work on that with him some more. He knows "ball" and "food" and "bone" and "treat" like nobody’s business.

I trained Reggie with small food treats. Nothing opens his ears like little pieces of hot dog.

Feeding schedule: twice a day, once about seven in the morning, and again at six in the evening. Regular store-bought stuff; the shelter has the brand.

He’s up on his shots. Call the clinic on 9th Street and update his info with yours; they’ll make sure to send you reminders for when he’s due.
Be forewarned: Reggie hates the vet. Good luck getting him in the car - I don't know how he knows when it's time to go to the vet, but he knows.

Finally, give him some time. I've never been married, so it's only been Reggie and me for his whole life. He's gone everywhere with me, so please include him on your daily car rides if you can. He sits well in the backseat, and he doesn't bark or complain. He just loves to be around people, and me most especially. Which means that this transition is going to be hard, with him going to live with someone new.

And that's why I need to share one more bit of info with you....

His name is not Reggie.

I don't know what made me do it, but when I dropped him off at the shelter, I told them his name was Reggie. He's a smart dog, he'll get used to it and will respond to it, of that I have no doubt. But I just couldn't bear to give them his real name. For me to do that, it seemed so final, that handing him over to the shelter was as good as me admitting that I'd never see him again. And if I end up coming back, getting him, and tearing up this letter, it means everything's fine. But if someone else is reading it, well... well it means that his new owner should know his real name.

It'll help you bond with him. Who knows, maybe you'll even notice a change in his demeanor if he's been giving you problems.

His real name is Tank. Because that is what I drive.

Again, if you're reading this and you're from the area, maybe my name has been on the news. I told the shelter that they couldn't make "Reggie" available for adoption until they received word from my company commander. See, my parents are gone, I have no siblings, no one I could've left Tank with... and it was my only real request of the Army upon my deployment to Iraq, that they make one phone call the the shelter...in the "event"... to tell them that Tank could be put up for adoption. Luckily, my colonel is a dog guy, too, and he knew where my platoon was headed. He said he'd do it personally. And if you're reading this, then he made good on his word.

Well, this letter is getting to downright depressing, even though, frankly, I'm just writing it for my dog. I couldn't imagine if I was writing it for a wife and kids and family. But still, Tank has been my family for the last six years, almost as long as the Army has been my family.

And now I hope and pray that you make him part of your family and that he will adjust and come to love you the same way he loved me.

That unconditional love from a dog is what I took with me to Iraq as an inspiration to do something selfless, to protect innocent people from those who would do terrible things... and to keep those terrible people from coming over here. If I had to give up Tank in order to do it, I am glad to have done so. He was my example of service and of love. I hope I honored him by my service to my country and comrades.

All right, that's enough. I deploy this evening and have to drop this letter off at the shelter. I don't think I'll say another good-bye to Tank, though. I cried too much the first time. Maybe I'll peek in on him and see if he finally got that third tennis ball in his mouth.

Good luck with Tank. Give him a good home, and give him an extra kiss goodnight - every night - from me.

Thank you,
Paul Mallory
I folded the letter and slipped it back in the envelope. Sure I had heard of Paul Mallory, everyone in town knew him, even new people like me. Local kid, killed in Iraq a few months ago and posthumously earning the Silver Star when he gave his life to save three buddies. Flags had been at half-mast all summer.

I leaned forward in my chair and rested my elbows on my knees, staring at the dog.

"Hey, Tank," I said quietly.

The dog's head whipped up, his ears cocked and his eyes brightened.

"C'mere boy."

He was instantly on his feet, his nails clicking on the hardwood floor. He sat in front of me, his head tilted, searching for the name he hadn't heard in months.

"Tank," I whispered.

His tail swished.

I kept whispering his name, over and over, and each time, his ears lowered, his eyes softened, and his posture relaxed as a wave of contentment just seemed to flood him. I stroked his ears, rubbed his shoulders, buried my face into his scruff and hugged him.

"It's me now, Tank, just you and me. Your old pal gave you to me." Tank reached up and licked my cheek. "So what'ya say we play some ball? His ears perked again. "Yeah? Ball? You like that? Ball?" Tank tore from my hands and disappeared in the next room.

And when he came back, he had three tennis balls in his mouth.

The story you have just read is a tale that has been around the internet since August 2009. While the story may not be a literal truth, it still is a figurative truth. With so many owners of pets having to deal with going overseas to war, and finding a home for their pets there are places to help out, here are two such links.

http://www.operationnoblefoster.org/
https://www.netpets.org/netp/foster.php
If you were to meet my mother casually, you might not at first notice anything untoward. Her conversation is a little bland, but I suspect she would seem fairly normal for an old lady of 79. Were you to stay and chat a little longer, you would begin to notice the absence of any real content in what she had to say.

About five years ago, my mother moved out of London to live close to us on the south coast. It had been a long time since we had lived near to her so it was troubling when soon after the move we began to notice changes in her. She was having trouble finding words and often seemed confused. At first, we assumed this was just old age catching up on her, but in time we persuaded her to come and live with us so that we could help her with things that were becoming hard for her to cope with alone.

Once we were living together, the extent of her word-loss and confusion became clear. Mum was finding it difficult to speak to people on the phone or understand letters she received. This was more than just old-lady vagueness; this must be Alzheimer's. With as much tact as I could muster, I persuaded her to let me go with her to see her general practitioner. A few weeks and a few tests later we had a diagnosis – she has semantic dementia.

Clinical Features

Semantic dementia (SD) is a progressive degenerative condition caused by atrophy in the temporal lobe of the brain, which distinguishes it from Alzheimer's disease (AD). It is one of the variants of fronto-temporal dementia (FTD). Patients typically present with “memory problems” and trouble with word finding. The difficulties are not confined to anomia; patients (particularly those with atrophy to the right temporal lobe) may also have difficulty with recognition of names and faces (progressive prosopagnosia).

Beyond the language problems, there is a deeper semantic loss. Patients begin to substitute generic terms for specific ones; for example, “dog” might become “animal:”. Semantically related words are often substituted, like “apple” instead of “orange”. Verbs too become less specific; “do” instead of “cook” or “wash” or “mend”. Typically, speech retains its grammatical and phonetic integrity, but it becomes progressively more difficult for the patient to express thoughts, and speech gradually becomes empty of content. In addition to problems with output of language, patients show a deterioration in understanding language input. The wider group of FTDs is characterised by behaviour and personality changes, such as impaired social skills, emotional withdrawal or irritability. Rigidity of time keeping or obsession with particular activities or foods is also common. These symptoms are experienced by some SD patients, particularly in the later stages. Unlike in AD patients, orientation in time and the ability to do simple calculations are generally spared. However, the patient may lose the meaning of the numbers and therefore the means to express the time or explain the calculation. The use of objects seems to depend on familiarity. Generalisation is affected by the impaired semantic memory. Patients can use a can-opener or comb at home, but may have difficulty recognizing and using similar objects in other circumstances.

Patients with AD typically have impaired memory of recent events, but preserved earlier autobiographical memory. In SD this seems to be reversed, with recent memory being largely spared. There has been considerable research into SD since there is much still to be learned about the precise functions of the various regions of the brain and how they work together to support language production and comprehension. Researchers are in disagreement whether SD is a loss of core object processing and core language areas, or a single neurocognitive deficit; atrophy which disrupts factual memory and knowledge with a knock- on effect on language! In an article in Practical Neurology, Knibb and Hodges² describe a “fundamental deficit in semantic dementia; gradual erosion of the database that gives meaning to sensory experiences, a breakdown of the associations between and within concepts.”

There is currently no cure or treatment for SD, although antidepressants, tranquillisers and cholinesterase inhibitors (used for symptoms of AD) may be prescribed to alleviate symptoms. The median survival rate is eight years from onset of symptoms. Since social conduct and daily living are preserved longer patients tend to present later, so the median survival from diagnosis is only three years although some patients have survived for up to ten years.

Personal Experience

In my mother's case, an MRI showed degeneration in the left temporal lobe and cerebellum, along with some vascular damage. Her language and semantic loss are substantial. Her vocabulary is now very limited, and some ideas are strangely expressed. Talking of the weather, she will say, "It was up this morning, but it's come down now" – "up" and "down" being used in many contexts to convey positive and negative ideas.

One day recently, Mum announced she was going into town to the bank. She writes down what she wants before she goes and can handle getting some cash out alone for now. This was a conversation we had when she came home.

Mum - “The … eh … wasn't open yet. So I went up the … eh … top and came back and it was ok.”
Me – “Ok. They must close for training on a Wednesday morning. What time did they open?”
Mum - “It starts with a 'W'.”
Me – “Yes, that's Wednesday. That's the day it is today. What time does the bank open on a Wednesday?”
Mum – “It's a 'D'”
Me - (Think: Ah, she mixes up 9 and D in writing) “Do you mean 9 o'clock?”
Mum – “Yes, that's right.”
Me – “Yes, it opens at 9 on other days, but what time does it open on a Wednesday?”
Mum - (Triumphantly, smiling broadly) “Yes, that's it! Wednesday!”

At this point, I thought I'd just ring the bank and ask.

Names seem to be hard to find. My neighbour who visits regularly is “your friend” and the speech and language therapist is “him that comes”. Asked to name objects in any given category she performs badly and given examples she is rarely able to name the category to which they belong. Searching for the word “carrot”, she doesn't seem able to plot a detour round the missing word. She can't tell me it's orange, or a vegetable, or a food, or mime the shape. She may eventually arrive at “You put it in the … eh ...” with a vague wave of the hand, and only because of context and the fact that I've known her for half a century, I arrive at “soup” and therefore “carrot”.

The therapist encouraged us to explore gesture as a means of bypassing word blockages. Sadly, my mother’s choice of characteristic to mime is often so obscure as to defy my most creative lateral thinking. Trying to act out “fishing” for me, she held out two closed fists one in front of the other. She was sitting perfectly still holding her fishing rod and staring into the water. As a representation of how an angler spends a lot of time it was accurate, but it fell short as an effective way of communicating the idea.

It is becoming evident that my mother is taking in less and less of the meaning of what she hears. She has often no recollection of having been told of some item of family news, not because her memory is particularly faulty but because she had not understood or absorbed the meaning of what was said. It seems from discussions with carers of other SD patients that the content of speech is likely to deteriorate in time to the point of muteness. In the meantime, we get by as best we can. I am learning that even when she has not taken in the content of a conversation, she will carry away the emotion connected with it, so now I try to make sure that each exchange ends on a positive note so that is the impression she takes away with her. She is aware up to a point of her situation and the two of us often end up laughing at the convoluted journey it takes to arrive at the name of an actor or some acquaintance from family history.
Last night when she came in to say goodnight, she was smiling broadly.
Mum - “I was just watching … eh … him that died.”
Me - “Is this an actor?”
Mum - “Yes, the one you really like.”
Me - “Patrick Stewart? – but he’s not dead.”
Mum - “No. He’s very long.”
Me - (OK, tall actors I really like) “Hugh Laurie?”
Mum - “No. It’s the one that goes … (and here a little tuneless humming)
Me - “Is he in a musical?”
Mum - “No – well, yes.”
Me - “John Barrowman?” (a favourite of Mum's)
Mum - “No, no. Wait, I’ll get the … eh … thing.”
Off she goes, returns with the TV listings magazine, pointing triumphantly at “The Glenn Miller Story.”
Me - “Ah! James Stewart!”
“Oh!”, says Mum with a great hoot of laughter, “the dead one you like!”

We may be able to visualise concepts without the direct use of language, but it seems to me that when our semantic database is corrupted it becomes increasingly difficult to reason or to make choices. For example, while my mother can manage an operation requiring a short sequence of buttons to press, she is lost when trying to operate the satellite TV remote, which requires her to interact with messages on the screen and to understand that buttons on the remote are context sensitive. This is not simply an old dog having trouble learning a new trick. She cannot process the idea of reading and responding, so she manages by going through her repertoire of key stroke sequences until one of them gets her to her intended destination. Of course, she often gives up in frustration -- wouldn’t we all?

As the disease progresses patients with SD might struggle if living alone and the challenges of supporting a relative in this situation are enormous. Answering the telephone or handling personal business like banking become a problem. Sadly, when the patients can no longer express preferences it falls to the carers to guess and to live with the constant doubts and guilt which accompany that responsibility.

This is what Knibb & Hodges have to say on the lot of carers for SD patients. "Little work has been done on the practical effect of SD, but two recent studies have emphasized that the considerable burden and effect on quality of life caused by caring for patients with SD and other forms of fronto-temporal dementia is even greater than AD."

After my mother was diagnosed with SD, I comforted her with the idea that she would not, like someone with AD, lose her identity or memories. I felt then that what lay ahead of us would be less traumatic. A few months further on I feel a little differently about that. Whilst her family may be spared witnessing the living death that befalls AD patients, what lies ahead for my mother is just as daunting, but in a different way. As she retreats into a world where the rest of us have apparently begun to speak Klingon, she will retain the awareness of her own isolation. I wonder if that Alzheimer’s twilight zone provides merciful oblivion denied to patients with this other dementia.

Jacqui

A Snapshot of Contemplation and the Forgotten Mean  
- by Paul Edgeworth

The purpose of this brief outline is to arrive at a beginning understanding of contemplation in Aristotle and the role that contemplation should play in the life of a human being. Such role should reflect a compatibility with Aristotle's ergon (functionality) argument and should also be consistent with the moral life of a good citizen in the polis. It is merely an outline and it is hoped that at least some readers will be inspired to read Aristotle further on their own. Be forewarned, however, that Aristotle is an acquired taste like a fine wine.

1. Eudaimonia as the purpose of life.
   a. Often translated as “happiness”.
   b. A better translation would be “flourishing”.
   c. It is achieving one's full potential.
   d. It is an ultimate explanation.
   e. A fulfilled life is a set of actions performed by someone because they correctly see the point of so doing.

2. Fulfillment is the ultimate telos (end).
   a. It is the most complete end and is sufficient of itself.
   b. It is also the best good.
   c. It is not sought for the sake of anything further.
   i. By itself, it makes a life choice worthy.

3. In what does fulfillment consist?
   a. The well-being of any organism consists in the integrated exercise of its capabilities.
      i. We share the functions of living, nutrition, and growth with plants.
      ii. We share a life of sense perception with every animal.
   b. Human nature determines our fulfillment.
   c. The specific ergon (function) of a human being.
      i. Exercise well the capacities found in the soul.
      ii. Capacities specifically human belong to nous (reason).
   d. Fulfillment consists in performing well that activity which is the best and most characteristic of the human telos.

4. Theoria (The act of contemplation).
   a. Exercise of our capacity for human thought.
      i. Contemplation expressing sophia (wisdom) must be of the most abstract things. An intellectual grasp of the most noble objects.
         1. God's nature and that of the heavenly bodies.
         2. First principles of metaphysics.
         3. Unchanging principles of mathematics and physics.
   b. Theology is prior to and more exact than mathematics, and the latter is prior to and more exact than physics.
   c. Aristotle distinguishes between theoretical and practical.
   d. Best use of our minds is theoria.
   e. Theoria is the exercise of what is divine in us.
      i. Aristotle's picture of God – God is nous.
         1. Object of God's contemplation is Himself.
         2. The concept of God's changeless being gives us no appropriate or useable criterion for the grading of the forms of happiness open to men.
   f. A life devoted to theoria would be that of a God. We are most of all nous.
      i. Endeavor to engage in contemplation as far as possible.
      g. It is an end chosen for no further good and an end which cultivates our higher faculties.

5. Aristotle also talks of a life lived in accordance with phronesis.
   a. It is the highest skill of the mind in relation to practical matters.
   b. It consists in the observation of a mean which is defined by a logos (a thinking through) such as a wise man would use to determine it.

6. How are these two versions of what constitutes a fulfilled life to be reconciled?
   a. Ethics teaches us that we must come to terms with difficult situations.
   b. Aristotelian virtues aim at the medium and try to avoid excess.
   c. We live in a world that is related both to the material and the immaterial.
      i. It is here in which and between which we must situate ourselves. We are attached to both of them.
   d. When we engage in contemplation, we share God's function, but that just makes us God-like, it does not make us God.
   e. Because we are not God, a eudaimon person is a human being, and as such is not self-sufficient for study. We need to have a healthy body and to have food and rest as well as other material necessities provided.
   f. Fulfilled life for human being involves using our minds on both levels.
   g. Eudaimonia is a kind of life. It is a life activity, the activation of a certain potential that is uniquely human. And that is contemplation.
   h. Human perfection includes both the earthly as well as the divine.
      i. But since we are human and not God, contemplation for us must also be of things that are human. We must know what the parts of the soul are, what their functions are, and how they are related to each other.
   j. Aristotle closes the Nicomachean Ethics, by reminding us of the need to study the constitutions of a many states as possible. Such a study would be theoria before any practical use of it is made.

Afterthought – I read somewhere once long ago, but I do not remember where, that if Aristotle himself considered theoria as the highest pursuit that he could follow, it also appears on the evidence that he was oftentimes more engaged in the study of fish, to say nothing of the study of men, than in that of theology.
I am sure most have either heard about, or seen the ABC show "Extreme Makeover Home Edition" that airs Sunday nights [8PM Eastern Time]. What you may not know is that I had the chance to be part of the show which was taped June 2009 for the Hill Family of Suffield, Connecticut. The episode will be on Sunday 8pm Eastern time Oct 11th/2009.

The show is a reality TV series providing home renovations for deserving families, hosted by Ty Pennington, formerly a carpenter on the show "Trading Spaces". Since the show premiered Monday November 3, 2003 it has become one of ABC's top-rated series. To date they have built, or renovated over 150 homes...sometimes in such grand Hollywood style, the homes upon completion looked more like mansions than a working class family's home. While the home is being built, which is completed in 7 days, the family gets to go on vacation, and receives updates on the progress of the build via video messages from Ty, and his team.

My participation in the Hill family project was something I will never forget. I would like to tell you a little about what I call my "working vacation" that week. From the first day at the registration tent [all volunteers must register, and sign waivers], I saw lines of people just wanting to help. Once I had registered I noticed the tent which would be staffed for the next week 24/7 needed a large cooler for ice, water, soda, and fresh fruit...off to Sears I went. I even brought back citronella candles for the night shift workers. Each morning I would stop at the tent, and fill the coolers with supplies, then off to work the site. After working a shift I would come back, and stock the coolers again before going home for the night.

That's me in the middle....the thorn between two roses.

While at the work site we were asked to do almost anything, from tearing down forms, moving ceiling tiles into the basement, delivering water to the other workers, or just passing out hard hats to anyone who entered the site.
The materials for the house, and the furnishings are all donated by supply houses, Sears, IKEA, etc... and from the general public. I tried to donate a couple of oriental rugs, but the color scheme just did not match what they were going for. While emailing one of the design assistants [Heather] she did find a piece of the puzzle I could fill... books. Heather emailed a bio of each family member to me which I took to Barnes & Noble [13 people in this family]. The manager at Barnes & Noble was most helpful in helping me pick out books for the whole family. After dropping the books off at "BIN CITY" the storage units for donated materials I worked a shift in the rain. I don't think I heard one person complain about the rain, which it did most of the week. I even coined a phrase which caught on "Extreme Mud-Over". The mud was everywhere, people were falling in it, taking steps, and coming up without a shoe on. We all had a ball working together, general volunteers, tradesmen, and the design team.

From one day to the next you never knew who you would be working side by side with. I was working with three members of the Air Force putting together a weight bench when one of the soldiers was interviewed... I'm the one in the blue show shirt just in case I made the shot.

Heather, the design assistant I had been working with on the book donation, asked me to work inside the house the day the family came home for the big "Reveal Day"... talk about a beautiful home, wow! I can't tell you that much about the house [remember, signed waivers], but I can tell you to look at the two chandeliers over the kitchen center island [$7000.00 each]. I did get to meet Michael Moloney, and Ty while working inside the house [nice people].

The design team put their finishing touches on the interior the last 2-3 hours before the family comes home. Since I had been working with Heather on the interior furnishings from our visit to IKEA, where we picked up a U-Haul full of rugs, paintings, shelves, etc... I knew what we had in the garage, which we used as a storage area. Ty came in, called me by my first name, and asked for different items for the house. I can only assume he knew my name from Heather. It was kind of strange having the star calling me Harry, but what the hell... it was kind of nice.

While I was inside all day from 5am-5pm, I did get a chance to go out for lunch. On my way to lunch, I saw an older gent, about 65-70 years old passing out bottled water to the volunteers, and the spectators [the last day was a warm one]. When I got to the food tent, and sat down the older gent came in, and sat down next to me, we talked. I told him how nice it was of him to be passing out water on such a hot day. When we were getting ready to go back to work I helped him with a pail of bottled water, and ice. I told him my name, said it was nice to meet him. He told me his first name, but it seemed to elude me when he said his last name... Pennington, he was Ty's grandfather there to surprise him. I guess we know where Ty gets his big heart from... what a true gentleman.

Well the Hill family came home, they moved the bus, the family went crazy, and all the workers started to go their own way after completing a week of non-stop work. As we were leaving to take the shuttles back to the volunteer parking lot you could see the same smile on all the workers faces. All we wanted was to see the look on the family's faces.

I looked at some of my fellow workers, people I have never met before this week. We hugged, wished each other well, and all agreed it was worth it.

.......................... job well done my friends!!!!

Harry
Can you make consistent moral decisions without hesitation?

by ephedyn l. l. ilurie

Both your mother and spouse cannot swim. Both are drowning, and you are the only person in the position to save them. But you only have time to save one of them… (I will return to this problem at the end of this article.)

It puzzles me why some people hesitate when it comes to a moral dilemma. It also puzzles me why many are inconsistent in the application of their moral principles. I cannot provide the answers, but I believe I can at least remove one's hesitation and fortify one's moral consistency.

There are two bad habits that thus make for our hesitations.

Some are quick to denounce the ontological status of ethics as a matter of faith. “Morality is only for the man of God.” But this first bad habit leaves many loose ends untied. For one, let me ask, “So what?” We will soon find ourselves arguing the existence of God, but far afield from the original problem.

Dostoyevsky questioned this: what if God is dead? Does everything become permissible? Suppose that we come to know for certain that God is dead, is it conceivable that the world around us falls into chaos? Certainly not. After all, there are self-professed atheists whose moral beliefs remain acceptable to society without recourse to a divine source. And we know from history that a moral equilibrium is always restored, and every regime of intolerance eventually comes to an end.

This has no bearing on whether a god exists; but it demonstrates that even if such a source of ethics existed, there are at least some ethical standards which are independent of this source. As Kant puts it, “We are suitors for agreement because we are fortified by a ground common to all.” There are universal ethical reasons. And we are capable of determining them without divine intervention.

So, we've quelled one problem. But there's still a group of people who always get under your skin.

I remember once trying to solve a design problem. There was an article on whether a previous design had worked safely, but it was phrased ambiguously. The obvious course of action to me was to decipher what the article had meant.

Then someone told me not to be concerned by it and just proceed with my original design, because, “You can interpret it both ways… maybe it worked, and maybe it did not.”

“But only one thing could have happened!” I snapped.

This is very much analogous to our ethical decisions. Moral relativists suggest that a moral action is acceptable relative to a particular standard (in this case, one's opinion). And it is convenient to overlook conflicting moral opinions where they do not have immediate implications upon us, just as it is convenient to leave a mathematical miscalculation unchecked. But it doesn't mean that the problem is unsolvable, much less that there are two correct answers to the mathematical problem. The problem with the calculation surfaces when it is a necessary step to evaluating the safety of a structure. The problem with the advocacy of relativism and free choice surfaces when you have to resolve a moral issue.

In many situations, we cannot abandon ethical discourse, because a decision must be made. And as always, only one decision can be made – only one thing can happen. In the practice of law, we cannot say, “You are entitled to your opinion, I am entitled to mine. Let's agree to disagree.” So… what are we going to do to the accused? Leave him alive and put him to death at the same time? Either one is sentenced to death, or kept alive. Either we divert the train and sacrifice one in favor of two, or we let nature take its course and claim two lives.
There are no relative standards in ethics; only absolute ones. That leaves us to figure out which moral principle is truly universal and apodictic in its influence. In other words, let us determine a criterion by which we can judge a moral action. I begin with the popular thought experiment that was brought up above. Suppose we have a train approaching two persons, who for some reason, cannot escape from the track. You are in the position to divert the train onto another track, where there is another person, who will be unable to escape his misfortunate fate if you chose to do so. You can justify your decision based on these different criteria:

- **Divert the train.** Because it has the maximum utility for the greatest number of people. Utilitarianism suggests that we adopt the *summum bonum* (the greatest happiness for the greatest number) as our ethical criterion.

- **Divert the train.** Because if no one diverted the train, something would go wrong that we should feel bad about and cannot allow for. We must divert the train because we would otherwise be claiming an exception for ourselves if we cannot allow it to other people. Kantian deontology suggests that we adopt the universalization test of our categorical imperative as another plausible ethical criterion.

But the superior criterion is the one which we *must* accept if we exercised our reason; and not the one which we merely sympathize with. The greatest problem with the utilitarian criterion is that it would only work if we were omniscient of the consequences. What if the two people whom you saved eventually become mass murderers, while the one whom you sacrificed would have invented a cure to cancer? There are certain circumstances where we cannot preclude such hesitations. Furthermore, it appears to be indiscriminate: what if it creates more overall utility by ceding the benefit of slavery to someone? This does not appear to be a protocol that we can consistently adhere to.

Similarly, the deontological criterion is hardly intuitive, when instead it should be known to any reasoning creature if it was right. For instance, the consequences of a moral action should have no bearing on its moral worth, but telling a white lie in order to save a life (harboring a rebel, for example) seems more virtuous than telling the truth. We can also be honest about something, wherein honesty passes the test of universalization, but with the intention of sabotaging someone.

As such, I suggest that we follow the criterion offered by contractarianism, which offers a compromise between consequential and deontological requirements:

- **Divert the train.** Because behind a veil of ignorance, all affected individuals accept its consequences and side effects, and observing it in general is anticipated to satisfy everyone's interests.

The idea is simple. Suppose everyone is placed at the “starting point” and not supposed to know which social role they will end up occupying, we have to come to agreement as to the correct ethical principle in the particular situation. Not knowing if you will be rich or poor, male or female, black or white, everyone will agree the principle that ensures the most fairness. Sometimes, this is also the minimax decision: the one which ensures highest payoff for the least advantaged position.

Returning to the initial problem, I would have saved the spouse. Because behind a veil of ignorance, where the three of us only know that we will be randomly placed in the 3 positions, we would agree that the payoff would be higher in this way, assuming that the spouse is anticipated to have a longer lifespan. The three of us would have agreed to this contract, such that even if we had to swap places in any permutation, the morally right action remains unchanged.

However, my reasoning may not be sound. I remind that I cannot conclude which of the three criteria is truly correct. But, through consistently holding on to a single criterion, one should find no hesitation making moral decisions in the future.

*Ephedyn*
What Makes 100%? What does it mean to give MORE than 100%?
Ever wonder about those people who say they are giving more than 100%?
We have all been to those meetings where someone wants you to give over 100%.
How about achieving 103%? What makes up 100% in life?

Here's a little mathematical formula that might help you answer these questions:

If:
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

is represented as:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26.

Then:
H-A -R -D-W-O -R -K
8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11 = 98%

and
K -N -O -W-L -E-D-G-E
11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5 = 96%

But,
A-T -T -I -T -U -D-E
1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5 = 100%

And,
B -U -L -L -S -H-I -T
2+21+12+12+19+8+9+20 = 103%

AND, look how far ass kissing will take you.

A-S -S -K -I -S-S -I -N-G
1+19+19+11+9+19+19+19+14+7 = 118%

So, one can conclude with mathematical certainty, that
While Hard work and Knowledge will get you close, and Attitude will get you there,
it's the Bullshit and Ass kissing that will put you over the top.
**Paintings of my youth** by Stan Riha

*Cold Home*
60cm x 100cm

*Intelligence*
75cm x 120cm

*First Love*
110cm x 180cm

*Glass*
30cm x 50cm
Representative products for both, our IIS members and friends of the IIS.

On site  

http://www.cafepress.com/IISIQ

Depicted below is a small sampling of available products from a larger array of products and options to choose from.