I. A SMALL BOOK

ON THE RATIONAL IMAGINATION

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Preface

The language of literature breaks down
precisely at the task of expressing in explicit
form the larger generalities—the very generalities
which metaphysics seeks to express.

A. N. Whitehead

My intention in the pages that follow is to consider some old themes, themes I have considered before, the fabric of thought of which, I think, still remains firm. These themes are associated with four authors—Hegel, Cassirer, Vico, and James Joyce—and with a particular work of each—*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, *La Scienza nuova*, and *Finnegans Wake*. I intend to add some new perspectives to what I have previously said on each of these works. The order in which I discuss these works is the order that I came to them in the course of my philosophical and literary education. This short work may be regarded as a semi-autobiographical philosophical pamphlet, directed to the reader who may have some passing interest in these works or who is considering studying them for the first time. It is not my aim to present a traditional academic text and so I have not attached footnotes, but in some instances I have included interlinear citations that can take the reader to standard editions or translations of the works by the four authors.

I say little about Plato, but I believe Whitehead is correct in his well-known statement: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." The figure of Plato and his sense of Socratic thinking that runs throughout his dialogues is never far from the thought of my four authors. Hegel says that Plato's *Parmenides* is the greatest artistic production of ancient dialectic. Cassirer sees Plato as the beginning of philosophical Idealism, and he regards Plato's *Seventh Letter* to be the first time in the history of thought that language is recognized as the beginning of knowledge. Vico names Plato as the first of the authors he had always before him, and he claims Plato established that there are certain eternal truths in our minds that are not of our own making. In the Classbook section of *Finnegans Wake*, Plato's name appears as "P. t. l. o. a. t. o."

which is then spelled out as "plates to lick once and turn over" (*plato*, Spanish = plate), Take a lick (a look) at Plato and turn things over. Once we have read Plato we never again see things in the same way.

I place Joyce among the philosophers because I regard *Finnegans Wake* as a literary work of the rational imagination. Heinrich Straumann, Professor of English at the University of Zurich, met for a conversation with Joyce in what turned out to be a few days before Joyce's sudden death. Straumann reported that Joyce had "an expression of friendly irony [the trope most closely associated with philosophy]" and "led the conversation with a certain light objectivity, as one who has a perfectly well-defined attitude towards most things but who is quite ready to revise his thinking with regard to their relationship to each other; almost more like a philosopher than an artist."

Joyce told Straumann, regarding *Finnegans Wake*, not to "pay any particular attention to the allusions to place-names, historical events, literary happenings and personalities, but let the literary phenomenon affect one as such. If a premise of the work must be sought, then it should be a knowledge of the philosopher Giambattista Vico, to whom he was greatly indebted." This advice concerning Vico is the same that Joyce had given, over the years, to those who asked him for guidance in reading the installments of his *Work in Progress* that became *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce's masterpiece is the greatest commentary on Vico's *Scienza nuova* written to date, and it will very likely never be equaled. Joyce has given us not only a literary version of Vico's new science of humanity, he also has given us a literary version of what Hegel ("hegelstomes") calls a "science of the experience of consciousness."

What I mean by "rational imagination" rests on my view that philosophy is a kind of literature. Poetry is the essence of literature. It is the product of the "emotional imagination." In a work such as *Finnegans Wake* these two kinds of imagination can be joined. It is possible in general to move between philosophy and poetry because they both exist only in words. Every poet, as poet, intends to give form to the emotions through words that bring forth images. Every philosopher, as philosopher, intends to give form to reason through words that bring forth ideas. We may be led to ideas through metaphors, but the ideas are presented for judgment by thought.

Every philosopher seeks a judgment on the truth of a set of the ideas that are advanced, parallel to that sought in a legal proceeding. The

philosopher intends these ideas to be found true beyond a reasonable doubt. Philosophy is jurisprudential. The imagination is the means needed to form whatever is in question so that it is present for judgment. Reason alone cannot take the mind to a point beyond doubt. Imagination preserves what first comes to the mind through perception and places it in memory. We can, by the power of imagination, call forth from memory that which applies to a given situation that involves a question. Imagination can do so with a sense of the immediate that approaches that of perception.

What is called forth by such an act of recollection can thus become a subject of thought and be placed for consideration within a structure of ideas present in the storehouse of memory. The presence of the question allows the mind to engage in the logic of dialectic. Dialectic causes the mind to turn thought back upon itself and formulate a point of view. Once the mind is in possession of a point of view formed by the rational imagination and subjected to judgment, our thought can seek a place in the Republic of Letters. Here we can think.

Introduction: Ars Poetica

Philosophers should go to school with the poets. Both philosophy and poetry require *ingenium*—a talent or genius for perceiving similarity in dissimilars. It is a natural disposition to put the world together in thought. The poets and the philosophers require the Muses because the Muses hold the secret of speech. The Muses, as Hesiod says in the *Theogony*, tell of "what is and what will be and what was before, harmonizing in their sound" (38-39). The Muses sing of all things, of gods and humans and of earth and sky. In the *Phaedo*, in the hour before his death, Socrates turns to Crito and says: "For know you well, my dear Crito, that to express oneself badly is not only faulty as far as the language goes, but does some harm to the soul" (115e).

What the Greeks call "to do philosophy" (*philosophein*) requires the trope of metaphor. In the *Poetics* Aristotle says: "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius" (1459a). In addition, doing philosophy requires the trope of irony. Quintilian, in his *Institutio oratoria*, says, in regard to irony, "we are asked to understand the opposite of what is said" (9.2.44). Irony may also be accomplished by the use of analogy or allegory to put forth the absurdity of a given claim (8.6.54-56). Socrates is the master of irony. In the first book of the *Republic* he is confronted by Thrasymachus, the noted Sophist and orator, who says: "Heracles! Here is that habitual irony of Socrates" (337a). Metaphor and irony depend upon *ingenium*. Metaphor brings things together; irony keeps them apart. In reading philosophy it is a mistake to look for the arguments. Instead, look for the metaphors that make the arguments possible and look for the way in which the arguments lead to the opposite of what was originally thought to be the case, as Socrates does in his *elenchos*.

The poet sees with the bodily eye and keeps thought in touch with it through the image. The philosopher sees with the bodily eye but then goes on to see with the mind's eye, by means of contemplation (*theōria*, *theōrein*). The philosopher does what Joyce, in *Finnegans Wake*, calls "two thinks at a time" (583.07). In the *Euthyphro* Socrates asks the religious expert, Euthyphro, if he can tell him what *hosion* is (piety, holiness, righteousnous). He meets Euthyphro near the King-archon's court, where Socrates is awaiting trial, on charges of irreligion and impiety.

Socrates does not claim to know what *hosion* is. If he can learn what it is from Euthyphro, Socrates can announce him to be his teacher. Euthyphro confidently offers some examples that can be observed, as well as some possible ways to speak about *hosion*, but he is unable to say, consistently, what it is. He is unable to see what *hosion* is with the mind's eye. Thus there is no chance he can put what is necessary into words. Socrates has shown that although he is accused of impiety, no one, not even a religious expert such as Euthyphro, can say what piety is. Socrates is brought to trial on a charge which cannot itself be explained. It is Socrates's irony that intrigues us throughout the dialogue.

Horace says, in his "Epistle to the Pisos" known as *Ars poetica*: "Poets wish either to benefit, or to delight, or to offer words pleasing and helpful to life" (333). The purpose of poetry is threefold—to benefit, in the sense of offering instruction; to delight, in the sense of offering the reader or listener repose from concern; and to be helpful to life, in the sense of moving the recipient of what is said in the poem in a good direction and indicating a way to accept what cannot be otherwise. The poet instructs, delights, and moves, in the sense of conveying some practical wisdom. What Horace claims as the purpose and value of the poet can also be claimed of the philosopher. The philosophic spirit, achieved through contemplation, should instruct, delight, and move those who possess it.

The well-known poem of the American poet, Archibald MacLeish, "Ars Poetica" shares the title with Horace's "Epistle." The final two lines of MacLeish's poem present us with a view opposite to that of Horace. These two often quoted lines are: "A poem should not mean/But be." A poem simply is what is and as it is. It need not be more or less of itself. It need not instruct, delight, and move, or in any sense have a purpose beyond the presence of itself. Whatever the reader makes of it is due to the reader. Of philosophy we might also say: A philosophy should not mean/But be. A philosophy is the result of thought thinking itself. It comes into being through contemplation and is what it is. A philosophy either has an effect on whoever takes it up or it does not. At the heart of this sense of the philosophic spirit is this form of stoicism. To pursue philosophy for pragmatic purposes is a mistake. But the philosopher may rightly attempt to find a middle between Horace and MacLeish.

The most famous consideration of the relation between philosophy

and poetry is Plato's suggestion, in the tenth book of the *Republic*, "that there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (607b). Joyce, in the middle of the first book of *Finnegans Wake*, offers an assurance regarding this quarrel, "hoping against hope all the while that, by the light of philophosy, (and may she never folsage us!) things will begin to clear up a bit one way or another within the next quarrel of an hour and be hanged to them as ten to one they will too, please the pigs, as they ought to categorically, as, strictly between ourselves there is a limit to all things so this will never do" (119.04-09). With his spelling of philosophy as philophosy, Joyce reminds us of the association it has with the Greek word for light—*phōs*—the contraction of *phaos*. Philosophy is the love (*philia*) of light or clarity. Clarity is a "fine madness" (*fine folie*). Aristotle says in *De anima*: "As sight is the most highly developed sense, the name *phantasia* [imagination] has been formed from *phaos* (light) because it is not possible to see without light" (429a). Both poetry and philosophy direct our vision—poetry with the *eikōn*, philosophy with the *eidos*.

Socrates suggests to Glaucon, in their conversation in the last book of the *Republic*, that should they need to defend the earlier expulsion of the poets from their ideal city, their city in speech, they can say that the argument (*logos*) determined their decision and that, if the protectors and lovers of poetry or the poets themselves can present a counterargument, the poets could be readmitted. If such an apology, such a defense, is not forthcoming, Socrates and Glaucon will chant, as a counter-charm, their argument that poetry, left to its own devices, is unable to teach virtue. Such action will be necessary because they agree they are still charmed by the poetic sense of things, especially through the poems of Homer.

The terms of the quarrel go back to what is described in the *Laws*, when at one time philosophers were attacked for their naturalistic doctrines of the soul and the universe and accused of not believing in the gods. These claims about philosophical doctrines "provoked a lot of hostility; poets, in particular, joined in the chorus of abuse and among other iniquities compared the philosophers to dogs howling at the moon" (967c-d). We can wish, with Joyce's comment, that the love of wisdom that is philosophy may "never folsage us!"—*saige-fol*—drive us "wise-crazy."

Plato confronts the ancient quarrel by writing poetic philosophy, dialogues that are to be performed in the theater of the mind. The dialogues are a dialectic of *logos* and *mythos*. We even see this in the last

pages of the *Republic*, when the Platonic Socrates turns from the argument (*logos*) to recounting the tale (*mythos*) of the ring of Gyges, to show that should we, as just human beings, possess such a ring—that can make its wearer invisible—would be tempted to commit acts for which there would be no consequences.

Then Socrates recites the details of the myth of Er—the warrior who came back to life on the funeral pyre and told of observing the journey of souls in the afterlife and of their need to choose what life to lead upon their rebirth. Because Er revived, and could recollect his afterdeath experience, Socrates says to Glaucon, "a tale was saved and not lost; and it could save us, if we were persuaded by it, and we shall make a good crossing of the river of Lethe and not defile our soul [*psychē*]" (621b-c). We will be careful not to defile our soul, even if, as with the ring of Gyges, we are tempted to act not always with prudence and justice, because we will eventually face the moment of choice that Er witnessed taking place in the afterlife. It is a truth that only the poetic imagination can tell, and its truth can be told only when it is joined with and presented through the rational imagination.

1.
Absolute Knowing

There is no question that Hegel wrote the most difficult book to read and comprehend in the history of philosophy, his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807). It ends with a chapter titled "*Das absolute Wissen*." It is a short chapter, similar in length to the untitled pages of introductory remarks with which Hegel begins the work, in which he warns the reader that the path his work will take can be regarded as "the way of doubt" (*der Weg des Zweifels*), and even more, as "the way of despair" (*der Weg der Verzweiflung*). Hegel's work is not difficult because of a technical vocabulary. Hegel intends to have philosophy speak German, as Socrates had philosophy speak Greek, extending the meanings of ordinary words so as to put forth new insights. Hegel's work is difficult because it is a narrative of self-knowledge, taking us back through human memory, showing the path that consciousness has travelled to gain its experience.

As the reader with fortitude begins from the sense-certainty of natural consciousness and proceeds on Hegel's path, entering each stage with the hope of superseding the illusion experienced in the stage before it, *absolutes Wissen* stands on the distant horizon. The Owl of Minerva stands ready to take flight, as it will, in Hegel's last published work, on the *Philosophy of Right*. What the reader may not realize is that "absolute knowledge," in the sense of "absolute knowing" (Hegel uses the verb *wissen* as a noun, *das Wissen*), is present as the goal of every stage of consciousness. Consciousness enters each stage thinking that it now has a grasp of the absolute in the form of that stage, only to discover that that stage falls apart, due to its internal incoherence, just as occurred in the stage before it. Consciousness forgot that the previous stage failed to unite what was in-itself with what was for-itself. Consciousness is seeking to transform the opposition of *Anundfürsichsein* into *Anfürsichsein*.

Now at this next stage it must begin all over again. It is a path of despair, as Hegel says, "aber vergißt es nur ebenso immer wieder und fa̅ngt die Bewegung von vorne an" (par. 109). Consciousness recollects one stage of itself after another, without the ability to unify the two moments of itself as it attempts to know its object. Consciousness has no choice but to go on, because how else may it put aside its propensity to doubt? Its choice, again and again, is to attempt self-determination and achieve freedom of thought or to recede into the dullness of scepticism. The purpose of philosophy is to

find a way to overcome scepticism. Consciousness repeatedly fails to accept its own ignorance as the basis of thought.

Hegel's phenomenology is a tale of melancholy. But Hegel has a sense of humor. In the Preface he tells us that the absolute of Schelling, based on the identity of opposites, is the "night in which all cows are black" (*alle Kühe schwarz sind*). The stages of Hegel's *Weg* are similar to the forms of foolishness of Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff*. Each shows us an aspect of the human. To take ourselves seriously as we pass through the portraits of consciousness of Hegel's *Weg* is not possible. Every stage is a form of human irony. From time to time Hegel reminds us that we (*wir*) are witnessing these stages. We are no longer in them.

But this is also ironic because we have not fully transcended these stages. We find ourselves still attached to them in various ways because we keep to some extent seeing ourselves in them, or in part in them. They are in our memory, to recollect, even if at the beginning of Hegel's *Weg* they were present only in the background. Hegel keeps us reading because we have no other choice if we wish to acquire a grasp of ourselves. There is no better means to acquire self-knowledge. Socrates has left us with Hegel. Hegel has the ability to take us beyond the attachment to thought as reflection to thought as speculation, to the exercise of the rational imagination instead of being absorbed in criticism, in *Kritik*.

Kant, in the "Preface to First Edition" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, says: "Our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism [*Kritik*], and to criticism everything must submit." Criticism, critical thinking, can never supply consciousness with wisdom—with a knowledge of things divine and human and acquaintance with the causes of each. Criticism can only perpetuate itself, always holding out the possibility that because of it, a perfect state of affairs will appear. Whenever criticism appears to attain a result, the result is sooner or later the subject of further criticism and in need of revision. What is arrived at is never enough. The perfect state is always yet to be achieved. Criticism can only continue itself as a form of thinking. It has no ability to bring forth absolute knowing or even partial knowing.

The alternative to critical thinking is dialectical thinking. What we may call the "critical sentence" is always negative in its form. The subject is opposed in the predicate. A negative judgment is asserted. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel explains the speculative sentence (*spekulativer Satz*) as containing a dialectic between subject and predi-

cate. The meaning of the subject is expressed in the predicate. When we move attention from the subject to the predicate we find that the meaning of the predicate depends upon its relation to the subject. When we direct attention back to the subject, the meaning of the subject is redefined. The expression of the increased meaning of the subject leads to a new predicate.

The original version of the sentence is *aufgehoben* in the subsequent version—the meaning is both cancelled and preserved. In the speculative sentence consciousness increases its grasp of its object. Consciousness, through this dialectic, moves closer to a sense of the True as the whole. The subject and predicate are not placed in opposition to each other, as occurs in the critical sentence. Instead, in the speculative sentence the difference between subject and predicate emerges as a harmony. Through this rhythm consciousness progressively engages in self-determination. Consciousness comes to know itself. Its thinking has a rhythm; it is musical.

The aim of consciousness coming to know itself is to attain absolute knowing. Absolute knowing is a state in which consciousness experiences itself as a whole—a state in which consciousness as something in-itself corresponds to consciousness as something for-itself. Consciousness is then *Anundfürsichsein*. At the stage of absolute knowing consciousness has learned how to accept the presence of "and" (*und*) as joining its grasp of its object as there before it with its grasp of its object as part of what it is—its being. The problem each stage of consciousness realizes, on Hegel's phenomenological ladder, is that there the two senses of its act of knowing cannot be transposed into one in which their opposition is eliminated in a seamless whole. The whole is an encircling of the internal opposition of in-itself and for-itself but not more.

The fundamental, decisive difference between all the stages of consciousness that Hegel describes and that of absolute knowing is that absolute knowing is the complete acceptance of the "and." It is not possible for consciousness to eliminate the opposition of in-itself and for-itself that defines its being. This acceptance is human wisdom itself. Wisdom is to accept things as they are—the self to accept the nature of itself, to accept human nature. All of what Hegel means by *absolutes Wissen* is stated in the two lines with which he concludes his *Phänomenologie*. He takes these two lines from Schiller's poem, *Freundschaft* (Friendship).

As they appear in Schiller's poem, these lines are: "Aus dem Kelch des ganzen Seelenreiches/Schäumt ihm—die Unendlichkeit" (From out of the chalice of the whole realm of the Soul/Foams for Him—Infinity). Hegel alters the lines to read: "Aus dem Kelche dieses Geisterreiches/Schäumt ihm seine Unendlichkeit" (Out of the chalice of this realm of spirits/Foams forth to Him His Infinity). Hegel substitutes "dieses Geisterreiches" ("this realm of spirits") for "des ganzen Seelenreiches" ("the whole realm of the soul") in the first line and "seine Unendlichkeit" ("His Infinity") for "die Unendlichkeit" ("Infinity") in the second line.

The infinity of Schiller's poem leaves us with Hegel's "bad infinite" (*Schlecht-Unendliche*) the infinite that is a series that goes on and on without a way to determine an endpoint. By transposing the line to "His" (*seine*) infinity, Hegel suggests the "true infinite" (*wahrhafte Unendliche*), the infinite of an existing whole that systematically and determinately recapitulates itself, as does the course of consciousness, recollected by us as a whole. The *Geisterreich* is the realm of spirit in all its moments and stages, as presented in Hegel's foregoing work. At the end of Schiller's poem the World Master, or God, is left in pathos. The Divine fails to create a companion equal to Himself. In Schiller's version pathos prevails, because God's existence as an infinite being is left in the condition of the bad infinite. In Hegel's version God's existence has a tragic face. God's relation to the forms of His creation is that of a fellow sufferer, along with human consciousness, on its path of despair. Although His being is that of the true infinite, God suffers the quest to make actual and determinate all the moments within His infinite existence. As human beings created in the image of Divine existence, we realize that we cannot resolve the opposition of in-itself and for-itself into our own unity, and absolute knowing is our acceptance of this opposition. The opposition always remains.

In Hegel's version the World Master is left with the re-collection (*Er-Innerung*) of His own creation, as in fact are we, the readers. We are given a final image to recollect as the form of our inner life, our *Innerung,* the path we have travelled. We must recall the forms of *Geist* that are really ourselves—our own infinity. The first language of infinity is the image. The whole work ends in this image, an image of the inability of the Divine to bring its own creation and its own being to a point of rest. We, the readers, like the Divine, are forced back into the forms of our creation, to seek the perfect friendship with them—with ourselves—

that makes their truth the whole.

Hegel's book, like most philosophical books, is a book of prudence. It relates the sense of prudence that the philosopher needs in order to make a way in the world. Now that, with Hegel, we have recollected all the principal forms that human beings have experienced of *Geist*, we have at our disposal a fund of knowledge for anticipating how to confront situations as they repeat themselves in the course of our life. When we encounter a particular situation we can bring it, in our consciousness, under whatever form of spirit is described in Hegel's ladder of stages.

We now possess the power of the Muses. We recognize what at present is and can recognize what has been in regard to it. And we can recognize the course it will take—its future. The ability to engage in such recognition is the key to prudence. We may take our actions accordingly. As the "we" who have comprehended Hegel's phenomenology, we know what is and what was before and what will be as we locate whatever is in question, as one of the stages of consciousness that we can recollect. There is no knowledge more valuable than this. It is the wisdom of absolute knowing.

2.
Symbolic Form

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant reaches a point where he asks: "How, then, is the *subsumption* of intuitions under pure concepts, the *application* of a category to appearances, possible?' (B177; A138). He says, further: "Obviously there must be some third thing, which is homogeneous on the one hand with the category, and on the other hand with the appearance, and which thus makes the application of the former to the latter possible" (B177; A138). This third thing must be both intellectual and sensible. Kant says he will call this thing the "transcendental schema" and that he will call the procedure of understanding the schemata, the "schematism" of pure understanding. The schema is "a product of imagination [*Einbildungskraft*]" (B179; A140). The theory of the schema—the schematism—then, is the key to the problem of knowledge. It is the "open sesame" for which Kant's reader has been waiting.

But then the reader's hopes are dashed. Kant says: "This schemetism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul [*ist eine verborgene Kunst in den Tiefen der menschlichen Seele*], whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze" (A141; B180-81). All of human knowledge depends upon the mind's ability to connect what is conceived in thought with what is apprehended in sensibility. Kant does not claim it impossible to discover the means or workings of this art, but he cautions that we should not expect to discover it. His caution is firm enough that we might conclude that to attempt to seek out the inner form of this art may be futile.

The first edition of Kant's *Critique* appeared in 1781 and its second edition in 1787. One hundred and forty years later, Ernst Cassirer, in a lecture at the Warburg Library in Hamburg, showed that it was possible to solve the riddle of the art of the schematism. To do so it was necessary for Cassirer to pass beyond Kant and his own Neo-Kantian beginnings and to look to the essay, "Das Symbol," by the Hegelian aesthetician Friedrich Theodor Vischer that appeared in 1887, in a volume honoring Eduard Zeller. Later, Cassirer will support his claim that the critique of reason becomes the critique of culture with a phenomenology of knowledge based on Hegel's conception of phenomenology.

The term *symbolische Form* is unique to Cassirer's philosophy; it is the title of his multivolume, major work—*Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923-29). According to Dimitry Gawronsky, in his biographical essay on Cassirer included in the Library of Living Philosophers volume, Cassirer said that as he entered a streetcar in Berlin in 1917, the conception of the whole plan of the philosophy of symbolic forms flashed before him. The terms *Symbol* and *Form* are not unique to Cassirer, but his synthesis of them is unique. To use the term "symbolic form" is immediately to call to mind the work of Cassirer. Vischer uses the terms *Symbol* and *symbolisch* in various combinations in his essay but he never states the precise combination of *symbolische Form*. Cassirer intends to expand Vischer's aesthetic conception of the symbol into a sense of the symbol that can encompass each form of the human spirit.

In his Warburg lecture Cassirer gives his most explicit definition of symbolic form. He says: "Under a 'symbolic form' should be understood each energy of spirit [*Energie des Geistes*] through which a spiritual content or meaning is connected with a concrete sensory sign and is internally adapted to this sign." A symbol, then, is at once inseparably "spiritual" (*geistig*) and "sensible" (*sinnlich*). There are three general kinds of symbols—images, words, and numbers. Primary sources of images are myths and the arts, of words are ordinary speech and prose writing, and of numbers are mathematics and scientific formulas and systems of notations. These are manifestations of three functions of consciousness that Cassirer describes in his volume, *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* (*Phenomenology of Knowledge*).

The *Ausdrucksfunktion* (expressive function) of consciousness is the source of the symbolic form of mythical thought. All forms of human knowledge originate in mythic thought. This first function of consciousness is followed by *Repräsentation* (representation), engendered by the *Darstellungsfunktion*, which is at the basis of natural language when used as a means to denote and classify the things of the world. The third function is the *Bedeutungsfunktion* or purely significative function that underlies theoretical thought, in which systems of symbols are produced to construct levels of meaning.

In the *Phenomenology of Knowledge* Cassirer offers a perceptual thought experiment of how symbolic form is the basis of the stances that consciousness can take on the object (vol. 3, pt. 2, ch. 5). He asks his reader to consider a *Linienzug* or graph-like drawing. We may first ap-

prehend it as something having purely sensory qualities. We react to its shape, the tension in it, the motion it suggests, and so forth. Then we may shift our attention to see it as a geometric figure showing certain proportions and relations. We may then pass from this mathematical sense of the lines and regard it as a mythical-magical sign that is intended to divide the sacred from the profane sphere. We may pass from this mythical sense to grasping the lines as an aesthetic ornament, appreciating its visual qualities as such.

We can now imagine how this object or any object can stand as a symbol and be taken by consciousness in any direction. In his discussion of "Myth and the Psychology of the Emotions" in the *Myth of the State*, Cassirer remarks that "it is a common characteristic of all symbolic forms that they are applicable to any object whatsoever" (pt. 1, ch. 3). What is before the knowing consciousness as an object is really there. It is not an invention of consciousness. The meaning the object has is what consciousness ascribes to it through its "symbolic act." How the knowing consciousness forms the object is determined by how it can be understood to fit into the order of human knowledge as a whole.

In interpreting Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms the reader's attention naturally tends toward determining what Cassirer means by "symbol." For Cassirer there is nothing in the experience of consciousness that is outside the formative power of the symbol. There is no hyletic stratum that is not also noetic. As Cassirer says in his late work, *An Essay on Man*, the human being is *animal symbolicum*. In so saying Cassirer is pointing out that what it means to be *homo sapiens*, a rational animal, is to grasp all of what is, in terms of the symbol. If we look to the second term of Cassirer's unique "symbolic form" we are taken back to Plato. Cassirer rightly regards Plato as the founder of Idealism. The true object of philosophical reasoning is *eidos*. The *eidē* are seen by the mind's eye as it looks past the features of particular things presented to the mind by the bodily eye, dependent on the senses. The Platonic *eidē* are substances the nature of which can be reached by dialectical thinking.

Plato's idealism leaves us with the question: How can we engage in dialectical thinking such that we can grasp the *eidē*? Cassirer advances the answer to this question in his early, fundamental work in the philosophy of science—*Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* (1910). We must pass beyond the logic of the substance-concept, which is a

logic of description of the object The substance-concept places the particular under the universal of a class that contains the particulars of the same type. Thought then advances, in pyramid fashion, to greater and greater inclusive classes. In so doing, the particular becomes less and less determined by the universal. The problem of determining the particular is there at the beginning of the pyramid. At the level of the *infirmae species* the class-concept shows what the particulars under it have in common, but it has no power to determine how each particular in a class differs in its particularity from any other.

The function-concept is internally dialectical. The particulars are conceived as variables that are ordered in a series by a principle of the series that is not a member of the series: F(a,b,c, . . .). The members of the series have no intrinsic meaning. Their meaning is dependent on the place they occupy in the series into which they can be placed in terms of the law or rule of the series. This law or rule has no intrinsic meaning. Its meaning depends upon how it is realized in the construction of the series. The principle of the series and the variables of the series are of two logical types that differ to each other in kind. The function-concept is held together by an internal dialectic of these two logical types.

As Cassirer says, these two elements of the function-concept are a representation of what Hegel means by his dialectical interpretation of the *Begriff*—the "concrete concept." The two elements of the function-concept can change places in relation to a system of function-concepts. Thus the principle of the order of the variables in one series can itself be a variable in a series of a different logical type and any variable in the original series can be taken up as a principle to order a series of another logical type. In this manner the function-concept can expand thought in a completely determinate fashion indefinitely. In this expansion thought can achieve what Hegel, in his *Science of Logic*, calls a "true infinity" (*das wahrhafte Unendliche*), as opposed to the infinity characteristic of the expansion of the substance-concept, in which one particular simply succeeds another in an infinite series that is unable to determine itself as a series—what Hegel calls a bad infinity (*die schlechte Unendlichkeit*).

Cassirer wrote two series of books. One expresses his views of the history of philosophy, such as his multivolume study, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, along with his other seminal studies of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. The other is addressed to his systematic philosophy of symbolic forms. He brings these two together in his late

An Essay on Man, which opens with the sentence: "That self-knowledge is the highest aim of philosophical inquiry appears to be generally acknowledged." The symbolic forms are both forms of knowledge and forms of culture. Knowledge is not something outside of culture; it is the basis of culture. Myth and religion, language, art, history, and science are each ways of thinking and ways of existing. As Plato sees the state that he describes in the *Republic* as the human being writ large, Cassirer sees the forms of culture as the human being writ large. Plato's picture is ideal. Cassirer's picture is actual.

The reader may finally ask: What is the role of philosophy in human culture? Is philosophy a symbolic form alongside the other symbolic forms? Cassirer's answer is stated in a manuscript written in c. 1921-27. Cassirer says: "It is characteristic of philosophical knowledge as the 'self- knowledge of reason' that it does not create a principally new symbol form, it does not found in this sense a new creative modality—but it grasps the earlier modalities as that which they are: as characteristic symbolic forms. . . . Philosophy does not want to replace the older forms with another, higher form. It does not want to replace one symbol with another, rather; its task consists in comprehending the basic symbolic character of knowledge itself" (*PSF* 4, Appendix).

Philosophy, for Cassirer, does not accomplish this task by building a final system of knowledge or culture. In his manner of philosophizing, Cassirer agrees with the approach of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment opposes the "spirit of systems" (*esprit de système*) but in so doing it does not give up the "systematic spirit" (*esprit systématique*). Cassirer takes up this sense of systematic spirit in the form of what he calls "systematic overview" (*systematischer Überblick*) or "systematic review" (*systematischer Rückblick*). The purpose of this sense of philosophy, for Cassirer, is to show that human culture as a whole is a process of progressive self-liberation. Philosophy has the role of showing that the various symbolic forms of culture all complement each other. Each symbolic form is inclined to attempt to dominate all of culture. In politics, as Cassirer demonstrates in *The Myth of the State*, this attempt at domination of all of culture involves taking human emotions back to the level of myth. Philosophy acts against this inclination and promotes harmony among the forms. Philosophy enters into the "inner form" of each and yet maintains its own position of seeing the truth of culture as a whole. Philosophy shows us the mentality of peace.

3.
Poetic Wisdom

The longest of the five books of Vico's *Principj di Scienza nuova di Giambattista Vico d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni* (*Principles of New Science of Giambattista Vico concerning the Common Nature of the Nations*) (1744) has the title "Della Sapienza poetica" ("On Poetic Wisdom"). Vico says: "The first gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters. This discovery, which is the master key of this Science, has cost us the persistent research of almost all our literary life" (par. 34).[2]

Among the axioms on which the new science is founded, Vico says: "Children excel in imitation [*nell'imitare*]; we observe that they generally amuse themselves by imitating whatever they are able to apprehend. This axiom shows that the world in its infancy was composed of poetic nations, for poetry is nothing but imitation. . . . for the arts are nothing but imitations of nature, and in a certain way 'real' poems" (pars. 215-17). Children first use words to reproduce things, not to represent things. This same sense of reproduction is found in the arts. Those who have a poetic sense of the world regard the things of the world not as something other but as an aspect of themselves. The world is not an "it" but a "thou." How children acquire language is exactly the same as how humanity originally acquired language—what Vico calls "poetic characters" or "imaginative universals" (*universali fantastici*).

As human beings acquire and expand poetic wisdom by means of imagination (*fantasia*, the "making imagination"), they make poetic versions of all the forms that are later articulated through reason, once philosophy has developed from poetry. Thus, in the book on "Poetic Wisdom," Vico presents descriptions of poetic metaphysics, logic, morals, economy, and politics. These are followed by the poetic forms of the natural sciences—poetic physics, cosmography, astronomy, chronology, and geography. The fields that study the forms of the civil world and those that study the natural world all begin in poetic forms of thought. Human beings form themselves and the external world first through the

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[2] The paragraph enumeration is common to all English editions and is present in most Italian editions. Of the three English translations, I recommend that of Bergin and Fisch.

power of *fantasia* and then transpose these, over time, into orders of conceptual thought.

Vico's intention is to make a science of the human world to stand alongside the science of the natural world of Newton and Galileo. The laws of nature are discovered by the makers of modern science. The laws themselves are manifestations of the divine making of God. God makes the things of the world, including human beings. Human beings have the power to make their world as an extension of human nature. Because human beings make the human world they can make a knowledge of it as history. History is human nature writ large. Each nation is a version of human nature. Since all nations are the productions of human nature they all have what Vico calls an "ideal eternal history" (*storia ideal eterna*).

Vico does not intend the word "ideal" in a normative sense. He intends it in the sense of a mental image that allows us to comprehend the actual internal development of any nation. Although nations vary in the details of their development they all exhibit a pattern of three ages—an age of gods, an age of heroes, and an age of humans. This is a sequence governed by providence. It is not determined by any power of human decision. Once a *corso* of these three ages comes to its end, providence allows for a *ricorso*, a retrial.

Vico interprets the histories of all nations in terms of *corso e ricorso*. He leaves unsaid what transpires at the end of a *ricorso*. Vico never uses these two terms in the plural—he never speaks of *corsi e ricorsi*. For Vico there is no ideal moment realized in history. In one of his axioms Vico divides each of the three ages into two phases: "Human beings first feel necessity, then look for utility, next attend to comfort, still later amuse themselves with pleasure, thence grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad and waste their substance [*finalmente impazzano in istrappazzar le sostanze*]" (par. 241).

Vico may regard the heroic age to be the most fortunate. In terms of this axiom it is a time of comfort and pleasure. The heroic age involves the realization of virtues, upon which society depends, in the form of heroes. In a late oration (1732) Vico takes up the theme of *De mente heroica* (*On the Heroic Mind*), in which he advocates the nobility of pursuing an education that would entail a sense of the sublime, and of learning that seeks a grasp of the whole of human thought. When we find ourselves in the third age, in which the pursuit of luxury that will

ultimately end in madness dominates, we can approach the heroic, at best, only through the life of the mind.

To formulate his new science of the civil world Vico had to overcome the approach of the seventeenth-century natural-law theorists, in a manner analogous to the fact that Newton and Galileo had to overcome the Aristotelian-Scholastic form of natural philosophy, and Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, had to reconceive the logic of induction in order to support empirical observation—his method of "think and see" (*cogitare videre*).

Vico takes much from Hobbes, although he cites Hobbes only four times in the *Scienza nuova*, and only in passing. Vico held in high regard Hugo Grotius's *De Iure Belli ac Pacis* (*On the Law of War and Peace*). The great flaw in Grotius's work was his inadequate grasp of the origin of civil society. This was also a flaw in other natural-law theories, such as those of Selden and Pufendorf. Grotius says: "Thus many, finding themselves weak when taken singly and apart, did for fear of being oppressed by those that were stronger, unite together to establish, and with their joint Forces to defend Courts of Judicature, to the End they might be an Overmatch for those whom singly they were unable to deal with."

Grotius's statement is similar to Hobbes's claim that, in the beginning, people found themselves in a state of nature, "a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man." The evidence for this hypothesis is the fact that people lock their doors and chests to protect themselves and their property from others. Hobbes admits that there may never have been such a time: "I believe it was never generally so, over all the world." But Hobbes is at a loss to provide a full account of the origin of society. Grotius thinks of the origin of society as a matter of contract law, an agreement that may be made in the interest of the stronger, but an agreement undertaken by the stronger and the weaker, nonetheless.

Vico, in accord with his axiom that: "Doctrines must take their beginning from that of the matters of which they treat" (par. 314), saw that a doctrine of natural law required a doctrine of the origin of society. To say what something is, is to say what its origin truly is, and how it develops from this origin. The place to begin this account is the fifth book of Lucretius's poem, *De rerum natura*. The Academy of the *Investiganti* in Naples had for its device a setting dog, with a motto from Lucretius: *Vestigia lustrat*, perhaps a reference to the comment in the first book of his poem regarding how the

reader may recognize the meaning and truth of his doctrines: "For as hounds very often find by their scent the leaf-hidden resting-place of the mountain-ranging quarry, when once they have hit upon certain traces of its path, so will you be able for your self to see one thing after another in such matters as these, and to penetrate all unseen hiding-places, and draw forth the truth from them" (1. 404-09).

Vico's early poem, of 155 lines, "Affetti di un disperato" (1692), expresses Lucretian moods. In reading Grotius, Pufendorf, and Hobbes, Vico would have thought back to his memory of reading the fifth book of Lucretius. In his autobiography Vico relates how, in developing his philosophical position, he studied Lucretius and the views of Epicurus, which are the basis of Lucretius's poem, but that he found that these views could not yield a moral philosophy suited to the Christian religion. Vico could not accept the Epicurean metaphysics of chance as at the basis of the cosmos. But the motto of the *Investiganti* is close to Vico's claim and advice to the reader regarding the proof of his science: "Indeed, we make bold to affirm that he who meditates this Science narrates to himself this ideal eternal history in so far as he makes it for himself by that proof 'it had, has, and will have to be'" (par. 349).

To establish the origin of the gentile nations Vico brings the account in Genesis of the universal flood together with the description of the emergence of human life from the acquisition of fire, and the founding of agriculture and cities described in Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. Furthermore, he joins this account of the origin of the nations with the conception of *Jus gentium*—the law of nations, which all peoples observe—of the *Digest of Justinian*.

The Lord said to Noah: "For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground. And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him" (7.4). The gentile nations arise from the offspring of two of the three sons of Noah—Ham and Japeth. The offspring of the two sons become giants and wander the great forest of the earth for two hundred years, until the atmosphere dries out sufficiently to allow thunder and lightning to emit from the sky. A few of the giants who are more proto-human than the others respond to the thunderous sky as the presence of Jove. From this experience they develop themselves in terms of the three principles of humanity—religion, marriage, and burial. They make great clearings in the forest and found families,

later cities, and later nations—the great city of the human race. The offspring of Noah's third son, Shem, do not become giants and, after one hundred years, they establish the nation of the ancient Hebrews. They remain in isolation, retain the religion of Noah, preserve themselves in normal stature, and cultivate memory, the basis of education.

Lucretius says that human beings acquired fire, from either lightning strikes or flames emitted from natural friction of the branches of trees rubbing together. They were shown new ways by "those among them who were pre-eminent in genius [*ingenium*] and strong in mind. Kings began to found cities . . . and they divided cattle and lands and gave them to each according to beauty and strength and genius. . . . Afterwards wealth was introduced and gold was discovered" (5.1091-1116). Because of the introduction of wealth, ambition was stimulated and kings were slain. Social order that had existed under kings came apart. "So things came to the uttermost dregs of confusion, when each man for himself sought dominion and exaltation." This state of affairs required the creation of laws. "For mankind, tired of living in violence, was fainting from its feuds, and so they were readier of their own will to submit to statutes and strict rules of law" (5.1136-1150). Lucretius thus provides an account of how the rule of law enters social life—what is stated only abstractly by the seventeenth-century natural-law theorists. Vico, like Lucretius, understands society as a process of development.

The *Digest* says: "*Jus gentium* is common only to human beings among themselves" (1.1.4). Vico's purpose in his new science is to show the "common nature of the nations." Common to all nations is that they develop at their own rate, independently, in terms of *storia ideal eterna* (ideal eternal history). Vico says: "What we are demonstrating in this work: that the natural law of the gentes [*il diritto natural delle genti*] was by divine providence ordained separately for each people, and only when they became acquainted did they recognize it as common to all" (par. 550). *Jus gentium* is a natural law, but it is not natural law in the sense of a rational ideal to which all law is to approximate or be assessed. *Jus gentium* is actual, natural law—law which is common to all nations and which can be so demonstrated. Only *jus civile*, or positive law, law that is the product of legislative authority, differs from one nation to another. Vico's science of history is the demonstration of the existence of *jus gentium*. The truth of *jus gentium* is verified by the fact that each nation begins from and develops from poetic wisdom. Each

nation, as Vico says, has its Jove. As physical law is the key to comprehending the natural world, so human law is the key to comprehending the civil world. Divine law is providence.

4.
A Musical Joke

Joyce takes the title of his masterpiece, *Finnegans Wake*, from the Irish ballad, "Finnegan's Wake." The ballad describes the scene of a wake for Tim Finnegan, a hod-carrier known to have a love of whiskey, to have "a sort of tipplin' way," who fell from a ladder and was presumed dead.

They rolled him up in a nice clean sheet,
And laid him out upon the bed,
With a gallon of whiskey at his feet,
And a barrel of porter at his head.

At the lunch at the wake "a row and a ruction soon began." In the row a "noggin of whiskey" is thrown.

The liquor scattered over Tim;
Bedad he revives, see how he rises,
And Timothy rising from the bed,
Says, 'whril your liquor round like blazes,
Thanam o'n dhoul, do ye think I'm dead?'

The phrase that begins the last line means: "Your soul from the devil." Tim Finnegan is revived by whiskey, the "water of life." He has only been unconscious. The joke is on us, we who thought him dead.

Joyce takes the reader of *Finnegans Wake* through a more than 600-page expansion of a forty-four line ballad. Joyce told the Swiss critic, Jacques Mercanton, that he made *Ulysses* "out of next to nothing," and that the installments of *Work in Progress* that would become *Finnegans Wake* he was "making out of nothing. But there are thunderbolts in it." All of humanity is in every moment of humanity. All of humanity is in Tim Finnegan and the musical joke of his wake. A visitor to Joyce, Terence White Gervais, asked Joyce if his book should be understood as a blending of literature and music. Joyce replied, "No, it's pure music." Gervais asked further if there were levels of meaning to be explored in it? Joyce replied, "No, no, it's meant to make you laugh." Joyce told Mercanton: "I am only an Irish clown, a great joker at the universe." Joyce's comments echo the lines in the ballad: "Wasn't it the truth I told you,/Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake." The truth is properly told in the joke. Joyce, to a drinking companion, revised "*In vino veri-*

tas" to "*In risu veritas*."

A song, a ballad, is never sung only once. It is sung again and again. Joyce, fluent in Italian, intends the reader to grasp the two parts of "Finnegan"—*fine*, "end" and *ancora*, "again" or "once more." "Hohohoho, Mister Finn, you're going to be Mister Finnagain!" (005.9-10). The title of the ballad has Finnegan's (possessive); Joyce's title does not—Finnegans (plural). We are all "Finnegans" because in *Finnegans Wake*, "Here Comes Everybody. An imposing everybody he always indeed looked, constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation" (032.19-21). Joyce can ask for "Fairplay for Finnians! I will have my humours" (521.33-34). We Finnegans should not take ourselves too seriously. It's our sense of humor that will let us keep our souls from the devil—that will make us human.

How will Joyce make this joke up out of nothing? It will need to be a "*funferal*, engraved and retouched and edgewiped and puddenpadded." It will need to be "sentenced to be nuzzled over a full trillion times for ever and a night till his noodle sink or swim by that ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia" (120.10-14). This reader can be "calling unnecessary attention to errors, omissions, repetitions and misalignments: that (probably local or personal) variant *maggers* for the more generally accepted *majesty* which is but a trifle and yet may quietly amuse" (120.15-18). A wake is not a funeral. It is a fun for all. Finnegan awakes at his wake. We are all like Finnegan because once we are awake at our birth we are at our life-long wake, until our death and funeral. "Hahahaha, Mister Funn, you're going to be fined again!" (005.12-13). During our life we will always experience "The seim anew" (215.23) and "vicereversing" (227.19).

We might expect that Joyce would have recommended the "Ballad of Tim Finnegan" whenever he was asked for advice on what to consult in order to comprehend the parts of *Finnegans Wake* that he was publishing. But time and again Joyce recommended that one should read Vico's *Scienza nuova*, which at that time did not exist in English translation. It did exist in Michelet's French translation, to which Joyce referred anyone who did not read Italian. Joyce thought well of Michelet, and the name Michelet appears in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce told Padraic Colum, who did not know Italian, that he might read Michelet's translation. He called Colum's attention to a passage in Michelet's introduction

that in Vico's work there is "une grandeur imposante et une sombre poésie qui fait penser à celle de Dante." However, the only way to comprehend well Vico's presence in Joyce's work, I think, is to know Italian. How does Vico, the eighteenth-century Neapolitan professor of Latin eloquence, enter into Joyce's great joke?

The reader who knows Vico's life and thought finds Vico everywhere in the work. Everybody is everywhere in Joyce's work, but Vico is there more than anybody else, often with Dante nearby. Both Vico and Finnegan fall from a ladder. On the first page of his autobiography, Vico describes his fall headfirst (*col capo in giù*) from a ladder, at age seven. He remains unconscious (*senza moto e privo di senso*) for a good five hours. He is expected, by the surgeon, either to die or to grow up stolid (*stolido*). Because of the grace of God (*la Dio mercè*) Vico awoke. As a result of the fall he took on the temperament characteristic of those who engage in profound thought and ingenuity (*l'ingegno*).

Giambattista Vico's temperament is melancholic. He is a child of Saturn as well as a child baptized with the name of John the Baptist. Vico's fall was providential. It is the first of various falls of various kinds that Vico undergoes in his career, in accord with Proverbs 24:16: "For a righteous man falls seven times and rises again; but the wicked are overthrown by calamity." Vico's career was an individual version of his "ideal eternal history," governed by providence.

Vico appears in his Latin name, *vicus,* in the half-sentence that begins *Finnegans Wake*. In Italian, a *vico* has the meaning of a *villaggio* (village) or a *borgo* (group of houses). In the dialect of Southern Italy (*l'Italia meridionale*) *vico* becomes *vicolo*, meaning a *via urbana di dimensioni modeste* (an alley or lane, not a main thoroughfare). The Latin root of *vicus* can denote a row of houses, a quarter of a city, as well as a street or a village. *Vicus* is cognate of Greek, *oikos* (a house, abode, dwelling), see its use when Odysseus returns home (*Odyssey*, 24.358). Cicero in *Pro Milone* says: "nullum in urbe vicum, nullum angiportum esse dicebant inquo Miloni conducta non esset domus" (64). The English word "wick" comes from *vicus.* Vico is Earwicker. Through Vico's ear we hear the thunderword of Jove that begins the speech of the gentile nations. Vico is both place and time, a village and a road. "The Vico road goes round and round to meet where terms begin." (452.21-22).

Joyce is "Shem the Penman" (125.23). Joyce's given name, James, is Shem in Irish. As the penman he is the maker of the great joke that is

Finnegans Wake. The joke brings forth letter from the litter of the dirt-dump of history. Litter becomes letter becomes literature through the pun. "When men want to write letters" they are "pen men, pun men" and are "fun men, hen men" (278.18-22). The pun man is like the hen that pecks up the letter from the dump near the beginning of the book. Joyce can make his joke through his puns, but he needs someone to deliver it. Otherwise it remains his joke and not also ours. Joyce the penman needs Vico the postman. Vico is Shem's opposite, "Shaun the Post" (206.11). Vico's given name of Giovanni is John in English and Shaun in Irish.

Joyce pens the complete physics of the human world. He needs Vico's metaphysics in order to deliver the physics to the reader. It is necessary "to twist the penman's tale posterwise" (483.02-3). The pen men are not to be trusted because their aim is "Fin for fun!" (297.04) and "patpen fun for all" (301.13). Prudence would have us "Shun the Punman!" (93.13). But Vico is the postman. He is "Old Vico Roundpoint" (260.15). He is "Johnny Post" (278.13). He makes his rounds on the road of history that "moves in vicous cicles yet remews the same" (134.16). Joyce is attracted to Vico because Vico comprehends that all ends are beginnings and all beginnings come to an end. All is a joke to be told again and again, like a song is to be sung again and again. All is the "Storiella as she is syung" (267.07-8).

The pen men, like the Muses, can sing both true and false songs, but can sing true ones when they will. "This the way to the museyroom. Mind your hats goan in! . . . This way the museyroom. Mind your boots goan out" (008.09-10.22-23). Vico says: "The decisive sort of proof in our Science is therefore this: that, since these matters have been established by divine providence, the course of the things of the nations had to be, must now be, and will have to be [*dovette, deve, dovrà*] such as our Science demonstrates" (par. 348). The proof of Vico's science, his metaphysics of history, depends upon the art of the Muses.

The Muses tell of what was, is, and is to come. Vico makes this not a contingent sequence but a necessary sequence. For the pen men, the museyroom (the term "museum" means the place of the Muses, who represent the arts of humanity) can be visited in the reverse—hats to boots. But for the postman there is one direction. From the past we become the present and from the present we become the future. Even though the future becomes the past it is a repetition, a *corso* and *ricorso*. The Muses are the origin of music. Music orders time and teaches pro-

portion. The postman's presence keeps an order to the penman's tale.

Finnegans Wake is "the book of Doublends Jined" (020.15-16)—joined to "the lingerous longerous book of the dark" (251.24). The book takes us into the night from which we are trying to awake. We are "Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of Night!" (216.04-5). But—"Tell me of John or Shaun?" (216.01). John Vico, the reliable postman, points the way toward the light. He says: "But in the night of thick darkness [*densa notte di tenebre*] 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 human beings, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind" (par. 331).

The reason Joyce adds to his comment—that he was making his work out of nothing, but that it contains thunderbolts—reminds the reader who knows Vico's *Scienza nuova* that language, made by the proto-humans that found the gentile nations, also is made out of nothing. When the world dries out after the universal flood these giants experience thunder for the first time. When they cry out, in terror (*spavento*) of this noise in the sky, they imitate it. Vico says: "These interjections of Jove should give birth to one produced by the human voice: *pa!*; and that this should then be doubled: *pape!*" (par. 448). Through this act of imitation they form the first word—"Jove." Once one thing can be named, everything can be named.

Joyce is recreating language. Vico makes his science out of nothing. This fact explains his sudden comment: "So, for the purposes of this inquiry, we must reckon as if there were no books in the world [*come se non vi fussero libri nel mondo*]" (par. 330). Like Joyce, Vico draws into his work citations to the widest number of books and expressions imaginable, but in none of these works can the reader find what is in Vico's science or Joyce's wake. Joyce is a Dubliner. With the luck of the Irish, chance furnishes him what he needs. Vico is a Napoletano. *L'arte di arrangiarsi*—the art of improvisation, of making something out of nothing—furnishes him, as it does Joyce, with what he needs. Their readers discover thoughts they otherwise would never think.

What does Joyce mean by saying that *Finnegans Wake* is pure music? He means that the text is best read aloud. It contains the sounds of human speech and by speaking its lines we can bring forth this natural music. But I think Joyce means more than this. To read the work we

must be "earsighted" (143.09). Even more, Joyce means that each word in the work is precisely where it should be. We can no more steal a line of *Finnegans Wake* than we can steal a line of Shakespeare. The reader coming to Joyce's language may have the reaction that viewers have had on first encountering abstract art: that anyone can do this. In fact, Joyce received the response that this is not literature. A musical composition, when finished, cannot be changed. In a poem each word functions completely as part of the poem as a whole. A musical composition can be and is interpreted by a conductor or soloist. But the proper interpretation of a musical composition or a poem only brings our feelings and thought further into it.

With the disappearance of classroom instruction in grammar, spelling, pronunciation, as well as diction, and the elimination of the teaching of literature and world history, there may soon be no one left to read Joyce's writings. Anyone reading *Finnegans Wake*, as well as *Ulysses*, should know that it may be among the last times these works will be read. The ability to grasp the tropes of metaphor and irony and the sense of humor needed to move through Joyce's use of language may no longer exist. Moreover, the solitude and patience that support the art of reading may no longer be part of the experience of individuals. Also missing may be education in how to extract ideas from particular expressions and to turn them into subjects for contemplation.

Those who have the ability to read *Finnegans Wake* "with the loot of learning?" (108.07) will have their sense of Night changed, along with their sense of speech and their sense of humor. They will find themselves "circling the square" (186.12), "cursed and recursed" (029.09), "in lashons of languages" (029.32), and "vicereversing" (227.19) in "Acomedy of letters!" (425.24). But despite the above forebodings, "Let us auspice it" (112.18), because "Putting truth and untruth together a shot made be made at what this hybrid actually was like to look at." (169.08-10).

Epilogue

To do philosophy requires an act of self-determination. It is an act that provides the self with a freedom of thought that only the rational imagination can achieve. Once this act is achieved we find ourselves with Dante and Virgil as they encounter the Virtuous Pagans at the beginning of their journey of the *Divina commedia*. We are greeted by a "monstrous clap of thunder." Then we encounter four figures: "It is Homer, singing master of the earth. Next after him is Horace, the satirist, Ovid is third, and Lucan is the fourth." They then include Dante and Virgil in their number. They are escorted to "a great Citadel." It is there to represent philosophy as the ancient embodiment of reason. Dante then sees, on high, Aristotle, "the master of those who know." Then appear "Socrates and Plato at his side before all others there." Then, "Democritus, who ascribes the world to chance, Diogenes, and with him there Thales, Anaxagoras, Zeno, Heraclitus, Empedocles." These were metaphysicians, followed by, among others, "Linus [likely Livy], Seneca the moralist," who tell us of human conduct in terms of history and the ethics of Stoicism.

Leaving Dante's circle of Limbo we can find ourselves at our desk, with Goethe's Faust: "I have, alas, studied philosophy, jurisprudence and medicine too, And worst of all, theology with keen endeavor, through and through—And here I am for all my love, the wretched fool I was before." But then we might recall Lavatch, in Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, in which the old lord Lafeu, who asks Lavatch (who has just said, of himself: "I have not much skill in grace"): "Whether dost thou profess thyself, a knave or a fool?" And Lavatch replies: "A fool Sir, at a woman's service, and a knave at a man's." Philosophers are sceptical of their own knowledge, and the public sees them as fools or as pursuing ideas that are of questionable value to society.

Given this uncertain position, philosophers may look to the ancient figure of prudence, Odysseus, the figure of "twists and turns driven time and again off course," but who arrives at Ithaca, initially in disguise. The practice of prudence is accomplished by the logic of the mask. The philosopher, like Odysseus, is wise to appear in a mask—to appear harmless, as Pythagoras does, when asked by Leon, the tyrant of Phlius, if he is wise. Pythagoras replies that he does not possess wisdom (*sophia*) and is only a "lover of wisdom," a *philosophos*. Pythagoras's prudent answer makes philosophy possible within the confines of soci-

ety. Philosophy is not a form of politics, nor is it poetics; it is contemplation, and an acceptance of contemplation is always difficult with society because it is the one human act that is the most difficult to control. Contemplation lifts the self out of the norm of ordinary conduct.

Polydore Vergil, in his work *On Discovery*, writes of the origin of philosophy. Taking his view from Cicero's *On the Orator*, he says that philosophy can be divided into three parts. They are: "The obscurity of nature, the subtlety of discourse and then life and morals; the first the Greeks call physics, the second dialectic and the third ethics" (1.16.4). Philosophy is concerned with three things—the world of nature, language and logic, and human nature. Philosophy, then, is concerned with what is, with being, and with human being, and with how these can be put into words in a way that is agreeable to reason. Logic is an extension of grammar. Without grammar, language, its use in discourse, is a stream of sounds, impressions, and feelings. Without grammar supported by logic we are unable to speak or think in terms of ideas. Without the ability to present ideas in words we are unable to think—to connect thoughts to perceptions. Without the ability to use words, we live in the world without theoretical comprehension, common sense, or prudence.

We can turn to Leonardo Bruni, to his letter to Lady Battista Maltesta of Montefeltro on his views of the study of literature. By literature Bruni means the world of letters and learning. By learning Bruni says he means "a legitimate and liberal kind which joins literary skill with factual knowledge, a learning Lactantius possessed and Augustine, and Jerome. . . . The person aiming at the kind of excellence to which I am calling you needs first, I think, to acquire no slander or common, but a wide and exact, even recherché familiarity with literature. . . . Study reveals and explains to us not only the words and syllables, but also the tropes and figures of speech in all their beauty and polish" (2-5). Without Socrates alive in the agora, we have before us the ongoing conversation recorded in the world of letters. As is well known, all education is self-education, and self-education is self-determination. Self-determination allows us access to the life of the mind.

We might do well to keep before the *Tablet of Cebes*, by an anonymous author of the first century A.D., held in high regard by the sixteenth and seventeenth-century humanists. The allegorical tablet depicts a series of ascending circles. These circles represent stages of human life. As the figures pass from one circle to the next above it they

must choose between virtue and vice and apprehend the difference between ignorance and error. Their ascent leads toward true education. Most people are drawn off by attachment to false education. Only a few are shown on the *Tablet* to arrive at true education and to obtain the ultimate, inner circle of happiness. They become the few among the many.

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