Vico, Foucault and Mills:

A Curious Triangle

By C.P.Philo

The Giant Bolster striding from the Beacon to Carn Brea —
— A distance of six miles —

Introduction

A few years ago there appeared a brief exchange of papers — the authors
of which were William Mills and Donald Kunze — that introduced the ideas
of Giambattista Vico, an eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher, to a
geographical audience.[1] This exchange did not herald the emergence of a
distinctive Vichian geography,[2] but it did raise a number of important
questions regarding the acquisition of knowledge, the relationship between
human and natural sciences, the nature of myth, metaphor and imagination,
and the role of these imponderables in human history and human quests for
self-understanding. Furthermore, in Mills' two papers there was a
tantilising engagement with the thorny question of historical
periodisation — the 'slicing' up of the past into discrete stretches of
time, each of which is supposed to possess some intelligible unity — and
from this engagement emerged an intriguing series of Vichian suggestions
for a periodisation relevant to geographers studying the history of
people-nature relations. The contents of what follows should hence be
seen as an extended footnote to this dimension of Mills' thinking, and in
producing this footnote I compare the histories and attendant
periodisations employed by Vico, by Mills and by a scholar whose own
temporal demarcations have been explicitly related to those of Vico,
Michel Foucault.

Vico's 'ideal eternal history'

Vico's ambition in the New Science [3] is to discover the general principles underlying the way in which human beings of every nation live in, understand, make and remake their world, and the 'controlling methodological postulate' of this endeavour lies in the assumption

> ...that genesis, or becoming, is of the essence of that which the new science treats: that, at least for the mew science, nascence and nature are the same thing...[W]e are prepared to expect that 'the common nature of nations' will turn out to be or to involve an ontogenetic pattern exhibited by each nation in its origin, development, maturity, decline and fall.[4]

In order to pursue his chosen task, therefore, Vico has to address the common threads in the story of each nation, and in so doing to specify the 'principles of the ideal eternal history' through which all of the world's nations are compelled to pass.[5] And in specifying these principles he draws upon an old Eygptian periodisation of world time in which three ages are identified: the 'age of gods', the 'age of heroes' and the 'age of men'.[6] In numerous passages he returns to and elaborates upon this periodisation, explaining how the three ages in question correspond with three different kinds of human nature, custom, natural law, government, jurisprudence, reason, judgment, 'sects of time' and even place of abode.[7] Moreover, he occasionally refers to what some commentators see as a fourth age in the 'ideal eternal history', the ricorso ('recourse'), which is a time of 'disintegration' prompted by the over-sophistication and dissoluteness of its inhabitants,[8] and is also a return to 'barbarism' that clears the way for the people of a nation to once more pass through the three ages of gods, heroes and men.[9]

The first thing to notice here is the tendency of this vision towards totalisation, in that it aspires to reduce the rich complexity and confusion of a given historical period down to a handful of elemental features present and effective throughout every nation during this particular period. Furthermore, Vico's vision also displays a teleological tendency, in that the disparate histories of all the world's nations are supposedly fashioned by a common nature, sense or 'ground of

truth', not on account of human ideas and institutions being diffused from one origin to the rest of the world, but on account of an all-pervading 'divine providence' (a deity's beneficent power over all creation):

> [o]ur new science must therefore be a demonstration, so
> to speak, of what providence has wrought in history,
> for it must be a history of the institutions by which,
> without human discernment or counsel, and often
> against the designs of men, providence has ordered this
> great city of the human race.[10]

It should be acknowledged that Vico does recognise the great variety of customs and institutions anchored in 'particular times, places and fashions',[11] but it remains the case that his emphasis lies squarely with the essential sameness of all national histories rather than with their manifold differences.

The second thing to notice is the role ascribed to language in the New Science. In the very beginning, so Vico argues, God granted to Adam and Eve the power of 'giving names to each thing according to the nature of each', and in so doing facilitated the speaking of a divine onomatopoeic language in which words and things stood in the closest possible relation.[12] But this special language was soon lost, to be replaced by a language in harmony with the poetic wisdom by which the giants and the earliest humans strove to understand the signs of the sky (clouds, thunder and lightning) - and of nature more generally - in terms of the mythological 'imaginative universals' (notably the three divinities, Jove, Neptune and Cybele or Berecynthia) that alledgedly animated them. In this context nature became, not simply nature in and for itself, but a sign of something else much 'larger' and more intangible, and this development - this realisation of the 'possibility of signifying' [13] - had serious consequences in the realm of language. As Vico puts it:

> ...[t]he first language spoken by the theological
> poets was not a language in accord with the nature of
> the things it dealt with,...but was a fantastic speech
> making use of physical substances endowed with life
> and most of them imagined to be divine.[14]

It was a fundamentally poetic language that employed a diversity of

imaginative devices allowing words to give 'sense and passion' to what in actuality were 'insensate things'.[15]

As the 'age of gods' shaded into later ages, so this 'divine mental language' gradually decayed, and in its place Vico envisages the upwelling of a new species of language inventive of words with the power to signify abstract concepts and infused with imaginative devices that performed – not so much as ways of capturing the presumed reality of divine forces standing behind the signs of nature – but in order to somehow symbolise, represent and even simplify a demythologised reality known to consist solely of tangible natural objects. And a vital corrolary of this sea-change was a move from the so-called poetic tropes (see below) characteristic of the early languages to a prose style of speaking and writing:

> ...[the poetic tropes] were necessary modes of expression of all the first poetic nations, and had originally their full native propriety. But these expressions of the first nations later became figurative [symbolic, representational] when, with the further development of the human mind, words were invented which signified abstract forms or genera comprising their species or relating parts with their wholes. And here begins the overthrow of two common errors of the grammarians: that prose speech is proper speech and poetic speech improper, and that prose speech came first and afterward speech in verse.[16]

Here too readers arrive at the crux of the New Science, in that Vico's primary purpose is to rekindle, if not the early poetic languages themselves, then certainly the poetic wisdom that underscored their usage.[17] To achieve this aim he recognises that he must reject 'modern thought's dependence on concepts, abstraction and reason', since it is only by returning to a long-forgotten poetic way of thinking and communicating that modern thought will ever be able to 'grasp the truths of its own history'.[18]

Before leaving this Vichian historical vision, it is signal – given the direction of argument later in the paper – to say a little more about the poetic tropes apparently employed by the early poets. Vico isolates three of these tropes: mythic metaphor, involving the 'imaginative universals'

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and animating of inanimate nature mentioned above; metonymy, where a universal phenomena is described using a word - often a proper name - somehow evocative of the universal (as in the case where Achilles connotes an idea of valor common to all 'strong men', or Ulysses an idea of prudence common to all 'wise men'); and synecdoche, where a whole is identified by the name given to one of its parts (as in the use of 'head' to stand for a whole person, a state of affairs seemingly due to the fact that in ancient forests only the head of a person could be seen fron a distance).[19] Whilst there can be no doubt that Vico supposes these three tropes to have co-existed in the 'age of gods', there is also a suggestion in his writing of an historical progression whereby subsequent ages witnessed the retreat of metaphor and the increasingly widespread mobilisation - often in tandem, since they were frequently 'knotted' together - of metonymy and synecdoche. In one passage, for instance, he claims that

> ...[t]he vast imaginations [of the early poets] shrank and the power of abstraction grew, [and] the personifications were reduced to diminutive signs. Metonymy drew a cloak of learning over the prevailing ignorance of the origins of human institutions...Jove became so small and light that he is flown about by an eagle. Neptune rides the waves in a fragile chariot. And Cybele rides seated on a lion.[20]

Vico also provides some discussion of a fourth trope, that of irony, which could not have coloured the use of language until those later ages when humans began to reflect on their own condition, and began with malice aforethought to make words misrepresent - in effect tell lies about - things.[21] Despite all of this, it still cannot be stressed too highly that Vico provides no periodisation in which each of the four poetic tropes coincides neatly - yet alone in any fundamental or determining fashion - with each of the four ages specified in the 'ideal eternal history'.[22]

Mills and 'metaphorical visions' of the world

The pricipal lesson that Mills takes from Vico is an epistemological one,[23] in that the latter's 'theory of knowledge' seemingly suggests a way in which a 'positivist commitment to systematic explanation' might be fused with a 'phenomenological demand for reflexivity'.[24] In effect, though, Mills' chief manoeuvre is not to tackle phenomenology, but to criticise the positivistic call for the human sciences to be modelled upon – to be in a sense subordinate to – the natural sciences, and this he does by championing Vico's principle of verum ipsum factum: 'one may know that which one has made'.[25] The ensuing argument is that, because people have created nations, customs, institutions and so forth, these are in essence easier for the human inquirer to know than the mysterious workings of a natural world that only God can know in its entirety. And for geographers this means that a 'cultural landscape' bearing a deep human imprint is perfectly understandable, precisely because researchers can gaze inwardly upon their own experiences – their own biographies from early childhood onwards – and thereby detect clues as to what the human authorship of the landscape in question is all about.[26] There are a number of difficulties with this epistemological reading of Vico, even so, and Kunze may be correct in suggesting that Mills overestimates the importance of the verum-factum principle to the New Science, underestimates the far-reaching consequences of Vico's break from Cartesian concepts that feature – albeit in differing guises – throughout positivistic and phenomenological philosophies, and is also mistaken to equate Vico's developmental history with Piaget's theories of child development.[27] But I do not wish to become embroiled in these debates here: rather, I wish to consider Mills' historical periodisations with a special eye to how these compare with the chronologies punctuating Vico's writings.

In fact Mills provides two sets of periodisations. The first of these – in the Trans.IBG paper – follows directly from his claim that

> [o]ne of Vico's many original contributions was the idea, now commonplace, that cultures form organic 'wholes', that is to say, that all the modes of expression employed within a particular culture, whether they be in philosophy, architecture, garden

design or even fashionable dress, reveal a certain
isomorphism. There is, in other words, such a thing as
'the spirit of a time' which all of its products
reveal.[28]

Having voiced this Vichian finding, it is perhaps a little surprising that
Mills then departs from Vico's history in proposing a periodisation that
bears little resemblance to the ages of gods, heroes, men and ricorso
present in the Neapolitan thinker's schema. Indeed, what Mills identifies
in this paper is a series of phenomena - 'classicism', 'romanticism' and
'modernism' - that

...represent alternative responses to the basic human
dilemma: that the actual is never the ideal and the
experienced always falls far short of the imagined.
These alternative responses are revealed particularly
clearly in the types of cultural landscape that each
seeks to produce.[29]

Each of these 'alternative responses' displays its own distinctive
attitude to morality, knowledge, art, nature, landscape preference and the
suchlike, and - whilst it is true that Mills does not tie these 'responses'
rigidly to 'particular periods or foreign societies', claiming instead that
they are really 'common to us all' by virtue of their derivation from
'universal human experience' [30] - he evidently envisages each as being
something approaching the dominant 'spirit of the time' for a specific
ensemble of eras and places.[31] The key conclusion to be drawn is hence
that, whilst this presentation overlaps little with the details of Vico's
historical vision, in practice it loudly echoes the totalising tendency
that was identified above as a signal characteristic of the 'ideal eternal
history'.

Strangely enough, however, the converse is almost true with respect to
the second periodisation that Mills outlines - in the Annals AAG paper -
.when rewriting the tangled history of 'Western attitudes towards the
environment' in terms of three highly evocative 'metaphorical visions' -
the 'book of nature', 'man as microcosm' and the 'world as machine' - that
have run broadly in step with those historical epochs conventionally
defined as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Modern.[32] When
discussing the first of these 'metaphorical visions' he draws upon an

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impressive range of sources to demonstrate how the Medieval mind viewed nature as a book that needed to be read - to be interpreted - for the meanings implanted into its rocks, clouds and waves by powerful 'incorporeal and invisible' forces, and he thereby lays bare the Medieval belief in a intelligible 'completely systematised symbolic universe'.[33] When examining the second metaphor he casts his net equally widely in describing the Renaissance view that human beings were themselves the 'image of the cosmos', and that there were both correspondences and more direct chains of association binding the condition of people on earth to the state of the heavens above, and he then conjectures that this set of ideas reflected a 'demand' for nature to integrate human beings and the cosmos as both mirror-images and mutually-interacting entities.[34] When unravelling the final metaphor he identifies the tendency of Moderns to fashion their understanding of nature 'in terms of the most advanced human inventions', whether these be 'levers and pulleys, clocks, steam engines or computers', and he indicates that the machine - as a product that humans redesign or scrap at will - supplies a metaphor that vividly displays the Modern human desire to control and to be 'lord and professor' over the whole realm of nature.[35]

Upon pondering this periodisation further it occurs to me that, whilst Mills does suppose a 'metaphorical vision' to comprise the 'central vehicle' through which a given people in a given time and place strive to comprehend their environmental surroundings,[36] there is far less of a totalising flavour here than in his alternative 'spirit of the time' periodisation. In the first place, he is now preoccupied with the quite specific question of how the people of an era understand and display to themselves their host natural environment, and in effect he retreats from the grander project of delimiting all-encompassing and foundational 'responses to the basic human dilemma'. In the second place, he acknowledges that the three metaphors under discussion are in no sense tethered uniquely to any one historical period,[37] and he would presumably have no qualms about admitting - to give but one tiny example - that the 'man as microcosm' metaphor appeared long before the Renaissance in guises such as the 'astrological medicine' practiced by Medieval physicians:

> [This medicine] laid down that man was a microcosm composed, like the macrocosm of which he was a part, of four primary elements (earth, cold, moistness and dryness)...Indeed, his entire physical constitution corresponded to a sympathetic relationship between himself and the celestial spheres, the zodiac (or exterior belt) governing his outward anatomy, the planets (or inner cicles) dominating his inner organs.[38]

In the third place, meanwhile, his metaphoric periodisation does not posit some deeper 'ground of truth' - some a priori teleology - apparently dictating the temporal progression from one 'metaphorical vision' to another, and he thereby emphasises how

> ...the claim that is being made here should be distinguished from the decidedly 'sub-Vichian' hypothesis that Western consciousness in the past two thousand years has, in some way, evolved in an inevitable manner through the stages of the searches for intelligibility, integration and control. My suggestion is in fact only marginally developmental...[39]

And yet, whereas his second periodisation slides away from the totalisation and teleology of Vico's 'ideal eternal history', it actually ends up squaring better with the insights of Vico's own history than is the case with his previous effort. And I argue this even in the light of Kunze's scholarly objection that Mills differs from Vico in dealing, not with the deep poetic form or logic of the 'root metaphor' employed by a given people in a given age, but with the more superficial substance of 'venerable figurative metaphors that have enjoyed a long-standing popularity'.[40] This observation is entirely correct, but Kunze's mistake is to suppose that it completely disables Mills' claim to be working along Vichian tramlines. There can be no doubt that an analysis of language sits at the heart of the New Science - although this centrality is ˙prompted at least as much on grounds methodological as on grounds ontological [41] - but there is no warrant for suggesting that Vico sees the various characteristics of a particular age being determined by the apparently fundamental operations of that age's dominant poetic trope.[42] The implication is thus that Mills and other commentators can discuss all

manner of historical phenomena <u>without</u> mentioning the machinations of poetic tropes, and yet still be touching upon issues close to Vico's own concerns and tackling them in a manner wholly consistent with Vico's own framework of inquiry.

This is assuredly not to imply that Mills' historical periodisation fits at all snugly into Vico's ages of gods, heroes, men and <u>ricorso</u>, since it clearly does not, but there are nevertheless several illuminating points of contact which I shall conclude this section by reviewing. Particularly striking is the parallel between, on the one hand, Vico's description of how the 'age of gods' witnessed attempts to detect behind the signs of nature the presence of powerful, intangible, mythological beings and, on the other hand, Mills' description of how the Medieval mind sought to read the meanings etched in the 'legible characters' of the 'book of nature' by 'incorporeal and invisible' forces. Similarly, there is a parallel between, on the one hand, Vico's discussion of the metonymic and synecdochal developments that clouded the imaginations of the early poets — and which subsequently led to personifications that 'shrank' the grandeur of both nature and the ancient gods — and, on the other hand, Mills' discussion of how the Renaissance mind took 'humanity as a model' in order to cope conceptually with a 'confusing world':

> [i]f explanation consists of reducing the unfamiliar to the familiar, then what could be more natural than reducing the unfamiliar to that which, of all things, seems most familiar, the human body together with its thoughts and emotions? Consider how much of the language we still habitually employ derives from just such an anthropocentric view of the world. We speak of mountains as possessing 'brows', 'shoulders', 'backs' and 'feet', and rivers have 'heads' and flow through 'gorges' out into 'mouths'. We refer to a 'neck' of land, an 'arm' of the sea, a 'vein' of mineral ore and the 'bowels' of the earth.[43]

And, lastly, there is perhaps a parallel between, on the one hand, Vico's claim that in the later ages of his 'ideal eternal history' people began to think with abstractions and concepts — and thereby began to use poetic tropes like irony merely to represent, and possibly to misrepresent, a world composed only of tangible things — and, on the other hand, Mills'

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claim that the Modern mind uses the machine metaphor simply as an analogy to gain some purchase on a 'desacralised, secularised' environment:

> [t]oday, it is as common to understand the world in terms of the language and concepts associated with the computer as it was in the seventeenth-century to understand the world in terms of the clock. I am not arguing here that the systems analyst sees the environment merely as some form of giant computer, an anthropomorphism that any systems analyst would probably find as unacceptable as the Renaissance view of the environment as a giant man...[44]

Foucault, the deceased French post-structuralist thinker, has undoubtedly cast a long shadow over the practices of philosophy, social theory and social history during the last twenty or so years. His importance for geographers is also beginning to be appreciated, particularly because he - along with other French thinkers such as Derrida and Deleuze - provides a fresh and extremely telling theoretical focus on difference that must surely be of interest given the discipline's long-standing concern for 'areal differentiation' and the uniqueness of places.[45] But, and perhaps even more significantly, the combination of this theoretical embracing of difference with the richness of his concrete historical writings on madness and psychiatry, sickness and medicine, crime and punishment, and also sexuality is signposting the way towards a whole new generation of historical geographies concerned with substantive social issues of great moment.[46] And it is in anticipation of this development that I feel it appropriate to consider the historical periodisations that underwrite much of Foucault's concrete research, and in particular to compare his depiction of past phases and mutations in Western 'thought' with the approximately parallel depictions offered by both Vico and Mills.

The Order of Things

Foucault's best-known book is probably Les Mots et les Choses, which was first published in 1966 and later published in English as The Order of Things,[47] and it is here that readers encounter a periodisation of how 'empirical knowledge' has been dealt with in Western 'thought' that is often taken - albeit perhaps a little too easily - as a blueprint for the chronologies present in the author's other historical studies. The objective of this project is quite definitely not to describe those 'processes and products of the scientific consciousness' formally articulated by the great thinkers of a given time and place, and neither is it to disinter the unregistered influences and implicit philosophies deflecting or disturbing the 'true' path of scientific inquiry.[48] Rather,

the aim

> ...is to reveal a <u>positive unconscious</u> of knowledge: a
> level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist
> and yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of
> disrupting its validity and seeking to diminish its
> scientific nature.[49]

The object of attention is therefore quite specific, and Foucault makes
this specificity even clearer by portraying the 'positive unconscious' as
a 'middle region' lying between the seemingly 'fundamental codes of a
culture' - which establish for that culture the 'empirical orders', the
languages, ways of seeing and technical abilities, allowing members of
this culture to think, communicate, study and generally cope with their
daily lives - and a second much more tangible region of developed
philosophical and scientific reflections upon the nature of 'order in
general'.[50] As he goes on to explain:

> ...between these two regions, so distant from one
> another, lies a domain which, even though its role is
> mainly an intermediary one, is nonetheless fundamental:
> it is more confused, more obscure and probably less
> easy to analyse. It is here that a culture,
> imperceptibly deviating from the empirical orders
> prescribed for it by its primary codes, instituting an
> intial separation from them, causes them to lose their
> original transparency,... [T]his culture then finds
> itself faced with the stark fact that there exists,
> below the level of the spontaneous orders, things that
> are in themselves capable of being ordered, that belong
> to a certain unspoken order; the fact, in short, that
> order <u>exists</u>.[51]

And it is in these gloomy depths that a culture ponders upon the
primordial order supposedly preceding even the culture-bound 'ordering
codes' into which its members are socialised - and which are thereby
'encoded' into its members - and it is also from these depths that more
formal philosophical and scientific reflections are destined to emerge.

But, and before examining how Foucault brings these theoretical
constructions to substantive fruition in <u>The Order of Things</u>, I must
briefly indicate the place accorded here to <u>language</u> and to the 'play' of

words. Given the French title of the work, which translates as 'words and things', it is unsurprising that numerous commentators reckon Foucault's hypothesis to be that the use of words - the myriad ways in which words are juxtaposed, related and substituted one for another - must always and everywhere dictate precisely how things and their orderings can be apprehended, but this is surely to reverse the logic of what Foucault is really about. Indeed, he is unequivocal that the 'middle region' under scrutiny - the gloomy depths just described -

> ...can be posited as the most fundamental of all:
> anterior to words, perceptions and gestures, which are
> then taken to be more or less exact, more or less happy,
> expressions of it (which is why this experience of
> order in its pure primary state always plays a
> critical role)...[my emphasis].[52]

There is thus a very real sense in which, rather than words somehow 'making' things, he envisages the preconceptual encounter with the 'order of things' to be a key moment in the process whereby a culture can even begin to formulate the words and languages that comprise its apparently - but not actually - 'fundamental codes'.

What Foucault unveils in The Order of Things, then, are three relatively discrete historical periods - or 'epistemes' - characterised by three distinctive ways in which the inchoate experience of order has been manifested in the Western world over the past five hundred or so years. And between these large blocks of time he identifies two sharp ruptures: the first separating a sixteenth-century or Renaissance 'episteme' - which was itself very much a Medieval product - from a Classical 'episteme' that crystallised in the middle seventeenth-century and endured until the later eighteenth-century, and the second separating the latter from a Modern 'episteme' that surfaced during the early nineteenth-century.[53]

In the first of these 'epistemes' the whole of creation was thought to be organised as an all-encompassing network of resemblance in which every object was supposed to embody the likeness of something else, and in which everything was supposed to be organised into a vast chain of similarities through which changes traversing one set of phenomena could be induced in sympathy with changes traversing another set, however physically

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distant.[54] To echo Foucault's reference to plants, for instance, this sort of thinking figured prominently in Medieval legends adhering to the mandrake:

> [t]he long twisted root of the plant was often split in two. Sometimes these roots were twisted into queer shapes, which, with a little imagination, could be taken to resemble the human figure...It was thought that when the plant was torn from the earth it uttered a horrible shriek because it felt pain. Any human being who heard this cry was immediately struck dead or became insane.[55]

In the context of this network of resemblance there was little conceptual fracturing of words from the things that they purported to name, and the impression was hence of words and things jostling together on the same plane of reality and 'behaving' in such a manner that - in effect - words were things, no more and no less.[56]

In the second 'episteme' the pattern of creation began to be perceived, less in terms of similarities, and much more in terms of the myriad differences through which all things were neatly divided up into categories that could be exhaustively enumerated in the spatial grid of the 'Table'.[57] To be more precise, it was thought that the differences making possible the placement of all things within the 'Table' could be established through the act of comparison, although it was not so much the act itself that revealed the primitive order of the world as the a priori belief in a world truly ordered into 'serial arrangements' which, 'beginning from the simplest, will show up all differences as degrees of complexity'.[58] The model here was the apparent certainty and objectivity of orders established using quantitative measurements in tandem with mathematics, and this meant that, even though most empirical bodies of knowledge remained free from any taint of 'mechanism or mathematicisation', their foundations were increasingly to be found in the promise of eventually contributing to a certain and objective 'science of order'.[59] Comparison, classification and tabulation thus became - quite literally - the 'order of the day', and Gregory Zilboorg provides but one example of this when discussing eighteenth-century perspectives on mental disorder:

> [t]he classifications of mental diseases grew in
> numbers. They soon became but ponderous and unwieldy
> collections of new terms so that their very purpose –
> the clarification of clinical pictures – threatened to
> be defeated by terminological confusion. The
> classifiers revealed a great deal of ingenuity and
> inventiveness as well as a none too healthy tendency
> to become medical book-keepers, rather than
> investigators in harmony with an orderly plan.[60]

In the context of this proliferation of difference the older liason between words and things began to fall apart, precisely because – as Foucault puts it – words began to 'wander off on their own' devoid of the content that they possessed when they were things, and 'without resemblance to fill their emptiness'.[61] But, whilst it was no longer supposed that words simply resembled things, the new suggestion was that words could still stand unproblematically for – in short, could successfully represent – the corresponding realm of things, and as a result it was reckoned that the only content contained in words was 'entirely ordered upon and transparent to' the objects being represented. And this meant that, as far as the Classical 'episteme' was concerned, the 'table of signs' could indeed be nothing other than a faithful 'image of things'.[62]

In the third 'episteme' the workings of creation once more began to be interpreted differently, in that the primordial order was now thought to reside, not merely in the 'serial arrangement' of different things, but in the universality of 'internal relations' that – despite being essentially unseeable – were believed to govern the functioning of numerous foundational 'organic structures', all of which were seemingly analogous one to another and likely to operate in historical succession.[63] Foucault's arguments at this point are extremely difficult to follow, but matters can perhaps be rendered a little less confusing by considering the 'stages' that Jeane Pierre Falret – a middle nineteenth-century French physician – identifies in the history of 'madness':

> [T]he first, which [Falret] designates as that of the
> romancer or novelist, and which prevails only in the
> infancy of the art, is that which creates imaginary
> madmen, according to certain preconceived types, which
> exist in the mind of the author rather than in nature.

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> The second method is that of the narrator, and is the
> one which up to the present time has been followed by
> most authors. In adopting this method the <u>illimitable
> field of difference</u> is left, and the <u>region of
> analogies</u> is entered upon, in which facts are arranged
> in groups, species and families: the maniac, the
> melancholic and the demented are now studied as
> classes...[my emphases].[64]

With these proposals Falret speeds his readers away from the Renaissance
'episteme', through the Classical 'episteme', and thence to the brink of a
Modern 'episteme' in which the 'region of analogies' is about to be
mobilised for purposes other than simply tabulating differences. Indeed,
the 'first step in science' is about to be taken,[65] in that nineteenth-
century physicians are about to supplement their nosologies with an
awareness of the functioning and temporal development of organic disease
entities:

> [W]hen a physician acts thus [i.e. works solely with a
> nosology], he resembles the historian who, intending to
> depict some past event, merely describes an epoch,
> instead of seeking out the causes which had prepared
> the way for it - those which immediately give rise to
> it - the various facts of the same epoch which perhaps
> would have given a different colour to it - its
> <u>denouement</u> - and, finally, its consequences. Disease
> is but a series of events, more or less complex, which
> the studies ought to view in their true light, in their
> <u>natural order of succession</u> and filiation, and
> surrounded by all the circumstances which have tended
> to produce them [my emphasis].[66]

In the context of this Modern 'episteme', where the invisible logics of
structure, relation, analogy and succession needed to be teased from the
things themselves, so the gap between words and things began to widen
still further. In consequence, it was increasingly realised that human
inquirers must inject a considerable amount of their own cerebral
spadework when seeking to 'know' things, and it was thereby recognised that
the words employed by these inquirers could not readily represent the
'true' nature of things under study.[67] The upshot of this recognition was
hence the 'withdrawal of knowledge and thought outside the space of
representation',[68] or - as Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow explain when
dissecting Foucault's ideas about 'Man' suddenly becoming both an object of

knowledge and the subject that produces this knowledge -

> Man now appears limited by his involvement in a
> language which is no longer a transparent medium but a
> dense web with its own inscrutable history. Without a
> field of lights which gives direct access to the
> structure of objects and the world, the knower, insofar
> as he is enmeshed in language, is no longer a pure
> spectator...Since language no longer does the job of
> representing and thus making knowledge possible, the
> representing function itself becomes a problem. The
> job of making representation possible is taken over by
> man.[69]

Following from this 'withdrawal' the nineteenth-century witnessed an
explosion of philosophical and social theoretic attempts to establish
just how the human inquirer can legitimately acquire knowledge of - and
can in the process learn to adequately represent - the 'true' reality of
things, and this explosion paved the way towards the twentieth-century
flowering of Saussurian arguments about the word (the 'linguistic sign')
uniting, not a name and an object, but a sound-image and a concept (the
'signifier' and the 'signified'). And with this development the Modern
'episteme' finally - and formally - ripped the 'dense web' of words from its
moorings on the shadowy seabed of things.

Foucault and Vico

The historical periodisation exhibited by The Order of Things is
explicitly related to the undulations of Vico's 'ideal eternal history' by
Hayden White, a scholar centrally concerned to assess the role of - and to
promote a rather more sensitive approach towards - the linguistic or
poetic 'style' indelibly ingrained in all historical writing.[70] In
pursuing this project White turns his attention to those thinkers who,
like himself, apparently see linguistic or poetic 'style' as the
cornerstone of how whole societies apprehend, structure and reflect upon
their being-in-the-world, and as a result it is hardly surprising that
both Foucault and Vico should figure on his personal research agenda.
What is surprising, though, is the extent to which he assimilates the
complexities of Foucault's 'epistemic' history to a Vichian model by

arguing that this history is underlain by a 'tropological reductionism',
itself embedded in

> ...a tradition of linguistic historicism which goes
> back to Vico, and beyond him to the linguistic
> philosophers of the Renaissance, thence to the orators
> and rhetoricians of classical Greece and Rome.[71]

More specifically, he claims that Foucault rediscovers Vico's emphasis on
language as a creative 'poetic act',

> ...a genuine 'making' or 'invention' of a domain of
> inquiry, in which not only specific modes of
> representation are sanctioned and others excluded, but
> also the very contents of perception are
> determined,[72]

and this allows him to suggest that Foucault's 'epistemes' can be mapped
quite directly on to Vico's ages of gods, heroes, men and <u>ricorso</u>, which are
themselves presented as ages 'made' by the underlying tropes of metaphor,
metonymy, synecdoche and irony.[73] Thus, the sixteenth-century
'episteme's' preoccupation with similarity and resemblance is supposed to
reflect a language rich in metaphor; the Classical 'episteme's'
preoccupation with difference and representation is supposed to reflect a
language rich in metonymy; and the Modern 'episteme's' preoccupation with
structure, relation, analogy and succession is supposed to reflect a
language rich in synecdoche.[74] Furthermore, White detects a fourth
'episteme' in Foucault's presentation – one that is only now emerging, and
which is seemingly bound up with the structuralist 'decentring' of the
human subject [75] – and proceeds to relate this to an underlying poetic
trope of irony.[76]

This is certainly a compelling argument, but I feel that it must be
quarrelled with on a number of grounds. Firstly, and as hinted at earlier,
I am unhappy with accounts that portray Vico's history as consisting of
four distinctive ages characterised by – and in a sense determined by –
the workings of four different poetic tropes. This sort of portrayal
loses much of the richness and sublety of Vico's vision, and in addition it
misleads by substituting language for 'divine providence' as the <u>primum</u>

mobilis of Vichian history. Secondly, the identification of four Foucauldian 'epistemes' rather than three is not a manoeuvre acceptable to most authorities, and the suspicion must be that White is forced into such a manoeuvre for the purposes of 'fitting' Foucault's periodisation into Vico's four-stage history.

Yet, telling as these twin objections may be, there are three more criticisms to be made that are perhaps even more damaging to White's thesis. The first returns to the question of totalisation, and springs from the way in which White is striving to reduce the complex and confusing baggage of Foucault's 'epistemic' history down to a central and fundamental core, the theory of poetic tropes and their evolution. However, whilst this theory may be central to White's ouevre, I remain sceptical as to whether it forms any part – whether acknowledged or otherwise – of what Foucault is about, and it is surely important to notice that much of the impetus behind Foucault's writing derives from a deeply-felt desire to actively oppose the sort of totalisation that is here engulfing White's proposals. Indeed, Foucault is far from in accord with Vico's lesson that culture's exist as 'organic wholes' cemented together by the 'spirit of a time' or by any other key phenomena, and in the forward to the English edition of The Order of Things he makes this quite clear by declaring that

> [i]t was not my intention, on the basis of a particular type of knowledge or body of ideas, to draw up a picture of a period, or to reconstitute the spirit of the century...It was to be, not an analysis of [for example] Classicism in general [c.f.Mills' Trans.IBG periodisation], nor a search for a Weltanschauung, but a strictly 'regional' study.[77]

And, as indicated earlier, the focus throughout this text does remain highly 'regional', concentrating very deliberately upon that 'middle .region' between the order socialised into a culture and the order articulately reflected upon by philosophers and scientists, and it is also the case that Foucault gives no impression of this obscure 'middle region' being in any way capable of determining everything else that goes on in other societal realms during the lifespan of a particular 'episteme'. Furthermore, his analysis is restricted still further by being principally

concerned, not with all possible bodies of 'empirical knowledge', but with a 'definite number of elements: the knowledge of living beings, the knowledge of the laws of language, and the knowledge of economic facts'.[78]

The second criticism that I wish to voice follows from White's curious assertion that

> ...there is a transformational system built into Foucault's conception of the succession of forms of the human sciences, even though Foucault appears not to know that it is there.[79]

A common response to The Order of Things is to dismiss it for providing no clues as to the ground rules - or, as some commentators might say, the 'structure of structures' - governing the historical progression from one 'episteme' to another,[80] and yet White believes that certain rules of transformation can still be discerned here, and that these are the rules dictating the inevitable evolution of poetic tropes through the stages of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. But this sort of suggestion must be an anathema to Foucault for the very reason that, thanks to his being so exercised by the complexities of 'epistemic' change, he feels reluctant to reduce this change to some teleological set of principles insensitive to the many specific and situated developments that decompose and recompose to flip one particular 'episteme' over into its successor.[81] In other words, he is adament that the changes of significance to his 'epistemic' history cannot be encapsulated within the confines of an historical teleology - even a Vichian one - or the transformational laws of a Piagetian structuralism.

And this brings me to a third criticism prompted by the substance of White's thesis that, whilst on the surface Foucault's history appears to race off in many different directions and thereby kick against being reconvened in any one unitary account, in practice his history is animated by an untheorised 'tropological reductionism' and concomitant stress on the 'making' powers of poetic language:

> [a]t the centre of [Foucault's] thought is a theory of discourse based upon a rather conventional conception

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of the relation between language and experience, a
theory originating in the now discredited discipline
of rhetoric...Strangely enough, this idea of language
remains unexamined by him.[82]

Once again, then, White professes to know better than Foucault what
Foucault is really trying to do, and yet the nuts and bolts of this
argument are distinctly shakey because - and as I remarked above - there
is a definite sense in which The Order of Things describes, not words
'making' things, but a preconceptual apprehension of the 'order of things'
that actually precedes speaking and writing. White is undoubtedly correct
to spotlight the salience of language to Foucault's history, of course, but
- and as is perhaps also the case with his treatment of Vico - it does not
necessarily follow that language occupies the pivotal, totalising position
that he wishes to grant to it.

Having raised all of these objections to White's equation of Foucault
and Vico, it remains the case that several intriguing points of contact
exist between their respective histories. For instance, there are
compelling similarities between Foucault's sixteenth-century 'episteme'
and Vico's 'age of gods', in that both bear witness to a long-forgotten
vision of a universe in which near things like rocks, clouds and waves
resemble and interact with far things or with things that are not tangibly
present. In a similar vein, both authors suppose the words of these early
eras to have been dragged out of the Garden of Eden and thereby stripped
of their ability to perform as 'certain and transparent signs for things',
[83] but there is some difference of interpretation here, since for Vico
this retreat from a divine onomatopoeic language opened up the whole
'possibility of signifying', whereas for Foucault this was only a partial
retreat leading to a situation in which language

    ...is no longer nature in its primal visibility, but
    neither is it a mysterious instrument with powers
    known only to a few privileged persons. It is rather
    the figuration of the world redeeming itself, lending
    its ear at last to the true word...The relation of
    language to the world is one of analogy rather than of
    signification; or rather, their value as signs and
    their duplicating function are superimposed; they
    speak the heaven and the earth of which they are the
    image...[my emphasis].[84]

Being things themselves, words hence boasted no privileged capacity to stand in place of things: instead, in their own arrangement they could only resemble — and thereby reveal something about the analogous arrangements to be found constituting — the realm of things. And in consequence debates over signification were impossible, and would have to wait until people realised that words were fundamentally different from things, were beholden to quite different laws of distribution, and were therefore far from satisfactory as vehicles for representing the world in which things resided.[85]

There is also a similarity between Foucault describing the Classical 'episteme's' spatialisation of knowledge in the great 'Table' — a development prompted by an emergent belief in a primordial order containing 'serial arrangements' of differences — and Vico describing the rise of a world-view in which creation came to be seen, less as the playground of mythical forces, and more as an organisation of 'abstract forms or genera comprising their species or relating parts with their wholes'. Although their vocabulary is different at this point, both scholars envisage this historical progression as one accompanied by the increasing separation of words and things; Vico writing of metonymy and synecdoche replacing 'mythic' metaphor — and thereby replacing the poetic trope that had once allowed words to lend 'sense and passion' to 'insensate things' — and Foucault commentating on the appearance of a language that was known to be humanly instituted rather than read off directly from the natural 'order of things', but was still thought capable of representing this order without adding anything that would render the act of representation problematic or untrustworthy.

Finally, there is perhaps some similarity between the hypothesised happenings of Vico's later ages, during which times people began to think even more abstractly and conceptually, and the tendency of the Modern 'episteme' to think with complex notions of structure, relation, analogy and succession. For Vico, the result was that human beings became increasingly aware that their understanding of creation was indeed their own construction, rather than being God-given or an unproblematic translation from things to words, and he refers to this state of affairs as a 'barbarism of reflection' in which people became highly self-conscious

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and all too familiar with their ability to tell lies about the world. As
he suggests when discussing the role of irony during these later ages:

> [i]rony certainly could not have begun until the
> period of reflection, because it is fashioned of
> falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask
> of truth.[86]

And it seems to me that this account is paralleled by Foucault when he
discusses - in various passages - how the Modern 'episteme' witnessed the
'appearance of man' in the confused guise of both 'object of knowledge and
subject that knows'.[87] As human beings increasingly groped for the truth
of unseen 'internal relations', so they increasingly realised that they -
and they alone - were both the source of all knowledge and the judge of
what was to count as good, true and valuable knowledge. This raised the
whole problem of representation, for if knowledge - along with the
thoughts and words that bore this knowledge - could not simply reproduce
the real natural order, then intellectuals were condemned to the task of
reflecting upon the act of representation (which thus became, in
Foucault's terms, the act of signification), and this heralded

> ...the withdrawal of knowledge and thought outside the
> space of representation. That space is brought into
> question in its foundation, its origins and its limits:
> and by this very fact the unlimited field of
> representation which Classical thought had
> established...now appears as a metaphysics that had
> never stepped outside itself, that had posited itself
> in an uninformed dogmatism, and that had never brought
> out into the light the question of its right...But it
> [i.e.the Modern overturning of representation] opens up
> at the same time the possibility of another
> metaphysics; one whose purpose will be to question,
> apart from representation, all that is the source and
> origin of representation; it makes possible those
> philosophies of Life, of the Will and of the Word that
> the nineteenth-century is to deploy...[88]

Foucault and Mills

It should now be clear that I see the relationship between Foucault and

Vico as not unlike the relationship between Mills - of Annals AAG vintage - and Vico, in that, whilst moving away from the totalising and teleological aspects of the 'ideal eternal history', both Foucault and Mills continue to tackle substantive issues that are closely related to the central concerns of Vico's New Science. Unsurprisingly, therefore, a number of parallels can be detected between the contributions of Foucault and Mills, and these reside both in the non-totalising and non-teleological forms of their histories and in the substantive matters of which they treat.

It should be admitted at the outset, though, that there is a considerable difference in the datings that Mills ascribes to his three periods of 'metaphorical vision' and those that Foucault ascribes to his three 'epistemes'. Whereas Mills distinguishes between a Medieval vision that dims towards the close of the fifteenth-century, a Renaissance vision that flickers brightly during the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-centuries, and a Modern vision that scans from the seventeenth-century until the present day, Foucault seemingly neglects the Medieval period whilst agreeing on the specificity of the sixteenth-century, but then wishes to divide Mills' Modern era into two 'epistemes' - the Classical and the Modern - pivoting about the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries.

But, and despite these differences of dating, there are still some obvious parallels between, for instance, Mills' depiction of the Medieval 'book of nature' and Foucault's depiction of the sixteenth-century 'episteme'. On the one hand, Mills finds the Medieval mind seeking to read the 'book of nature' as a set of 'legible characters' revealing the Godly meaning of the universe - and in so doing 'seeing environing nature as essentially a book paralleling that other source of divine revelation, the Bible' [89] - and on the other hand Foucault demonstrates the way in which visible objects, whether natural, handmade or existing as words in a book, were interpreted as signatures 'written' by the divine forces that govern creation:

> [t]here is no difference between marks that God has
> stamped on the surface of the earth, so that we may
> know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the

> Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in
> the books preserved for us by tradition...The heritage
> of Antiquity, like nature itself, is a vast space
> requiring interpretation; in both cases there are
> signs to be discovered and then, little by little, made
> to speak...The truth of all these marks - whether they
> are woven into nature itself or whether they exist in
> lines on parchments and in libraries - is everywhere
> the same: coeval with the institution of God.[90]

Mills appears to be aware of these parallels, but they cause him a
problem because he wishes to locate this 'doctrine of signatures'
specifically in the Medieval period whilst correlating the sixteenth-
century with an alledgedly quite different vision, that of 'man as
microcosm'. As a result he is led to complain that

> ...Foucault, perhaps because his survey only begins
> with the late fifteenth-century attributes many
> Medieval characteristics to what he calls the
> 'sixteenth-century episteme' and thus appears to
> underestimate the novelty of the Renaissance view.[91]

The implied objection that Foucault's presentation of the sixteenth-
century 'episteme' is really a presentation of 'Medieval characteristics'
is of little moment, since Foucault himself is perfectly aware of the
genealogy rooting sixteenth-century thought in both Medieval and Ancient
times, but the explicit objection that he 'underestimates the novelty of
the Renaissance view' is somewhat more weighty. The problem is that,
whilst Foucault concurs with Mills in claiming that the 'microcosm-
macrocosm' construction played a 'fundamental role in the field of
knowledge' during the sixteenth-century, he sees it as far from novel - and
references its ancestory stretching way back into the Middle Ages and
beyond - and as in no way distinct from a more general Medieval and
sixteenth-century belief in sympathetic influences chasing up and down
chains of analogy and similitude.[92] And he would appear to be supported
·in this thesis by scholars such as J.B.Bamborough and E.M.W.Tillyard, both
of whom detail how the Elizabethan world-view envisaged a 'great chain of
being' or 'vast system of gradations' passing through 'every speck of
creation' from the Almighty in heaven to the meanest stone on earth,[93]
and both of whom present this world-view as - and note the dual
Foucauldian and Vichian overtones here -

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> ...a poetic universe, in that all its parts were
> related to each other; it was full of parallels,
> correspondences and symbols.[94]

But the crucial point, given Mills' position contra Foucault's, is that both Bamborough and Tillyard see this vertical 'model' as subsuming a horizontal 'model' in which a number of 'planes' – including the microcosm (the person) and the macrocosm (the cosmos) – are pictured as lying one below the other 'in order of dignity', and are then reckoned to be strongly interconnected by an all-encompassing 'net of correspondences'.[95] As Tillyard explains when seeking to illustrate the essential complementarity of these two models, vertical and horizontal:

> [s]uppose, for instance, that, impressed by its size
> and its leonine dignity, you called a St.Bernard the
> highest of the canines, you could think of it
> simultaneously as striving to become a lion [i.e.to
> ascend the 'chain of being'] and as corresponding in
> eminence to the diamond and the sun.[96]

Furthermore, both Bamborough and Tillyard echo Foucault rather than Mills in regarding the sixteenth-century view as, not a novel departure, but the last great systemisation of an ancient way of thinking that was about to be transformed by 'more accurate and scientific knowledge', by the ideas of Machiavelli, by a 'new commercialism' and by all manner of other developments.[97]

Moving forward in time, it is possible to detect many differences between Mills' account of the Modern period and Foucault's account, and as a result Mills complains that Foucault wishes to subdivide the Modern period in a fashion unwarranted if the focus is turned upon 'metaphorical visions' of the environment.[98] In one sense this is fair enough, since the two authors are embarked upon very different projects with very different objectives, but it is perhaps strange that Mills makes virtually no reference to the complex classifications, tabulations and encyclopaedic compilations by which Foucault's Classical 'episteme' sought to capture the underlying order of the natural world. Alternatively, there may be a measure of overlap between, on the one hand, Foucault's claim that the Modern 'episteme' has employed notions of structure, relation, analogy and

succession in order to penetrate the hypothetical 'abyss' where 'great hidden forces' generate the 'order of things' [99] and, on the other hand, Mills' claim that the Modern mind has endeavoured to understand the unfamiliar - because largely unseen - workings of nature by analogy with the more familiar - because humanly-created - cogs, springs and electronics of machines, be they clocks or computers.

Conclusion

In this paper I have compared both the form and the content of the historical periodisations written into Vico's 'ideal eternal history', Mills' history of 'metaphorical vision' and Foucault's 'epistemic' history, and in so doing I have touched upon a number of important issues that can perhaps be grouped into two sets of arguments.

The first concerns the way in which historical periodisations often slip all too easily into the trap of totalisation, in that they steamroller the rich complexity of a given era into a single set of simple factors that supposedly offer an adequate representation of the whole, and also into the trap of teleology, in that they portray the stages of a periodisation as following each other in some inevitable, pre-determined manner. It is impossible to completely avoid these traps, of course, since the very act of periodisation imposes a measure of order and form alien to the chaos and formlessness endemic to the world of human beings, institutions and societies, but it occurs to me that geographers - with their traditional concern for the varied nature of co-existing places and regions - have a vital role to play in highlighting spatial differences that expose the limitations of positing and working with great temporal unities. This being said, all that I have achieved in this respect here is to indicate the totalising and teleological tendencies present in Vico's 'ideal eternal history' - tendencies that I think are exacerbated in attempts to read this simply as a history of poetic consciousness - and then to outline the ways in which Mills and Foucault exorcise these tendencies by orientating their own periodisations around quite specific historical phenomena, rather than by trying to reconstruct overaching 'spirits of the age', and by acknowledging the dangers inherent in proposing elaborate a priori theories of historical transformation. I have not added anything about the geographical differentiation that might challenge the neatness of their own 'humble' periodisations, although both authors would probably appreciate the significance of this challenge, and in practice Foucault's broader project of replacing 'total history' with a 'general history' even carries with it a definite opening for a heightened sensitivity to spaces, places and geographies.[100]

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The second set of issues concerns the actual substance - the actual facts, interpretations and conjectures - of historical periodisations, and in this connection I want to argue the salience of considering the substantive research and theorising accompanying the periodisations of Vico, Foucault and Mills - as well as by other scholars such as Karl Marx, with his complex materialist analysis of sequenced modes of production - since these provide an opportunity to contextualise in a richer fashion than hithertofor studies of long-term change in the historical geography of economic, social, cultural and political phenomena. In my own research, for instance, I am investigating the ways in which past conceptions of 'madness' - and notably past conceptions of how the environment, both natural and humanly-created, can induce 'madness'- have influenced the provision of many different institutional spaces and institutional geographies designed to restrain, shelter and treat 'mad people', and in attempting to uncover and understand significant regularities and ruptures in this relationship I have been greatly aided by considering the historical 'stories' told by both Foucault and Mills.[101] And as a result I have found that - notwithstanding Kunze's objections to Mills' use of Vico or White's idiosyncratic but ultimately untenable reading of both Foucault and Vico - the details of these two 'stories' still have much in common with Vico's own substantive concerns in the New Science, and this leads me to the final conclusion that Vico does indeed still have much of value to offer for researchers interested in the geographies of past ages.

FIGURE ONE : A phlebotomy (blood-letting) table of 1480
spelling out the relationship of every part
of the human body to the signs of the zodiac.
Blood-letting was permissable only at specific
times for specific parts of the body. (Source:
Thorwald J, 1962, Science and Secrets of Early
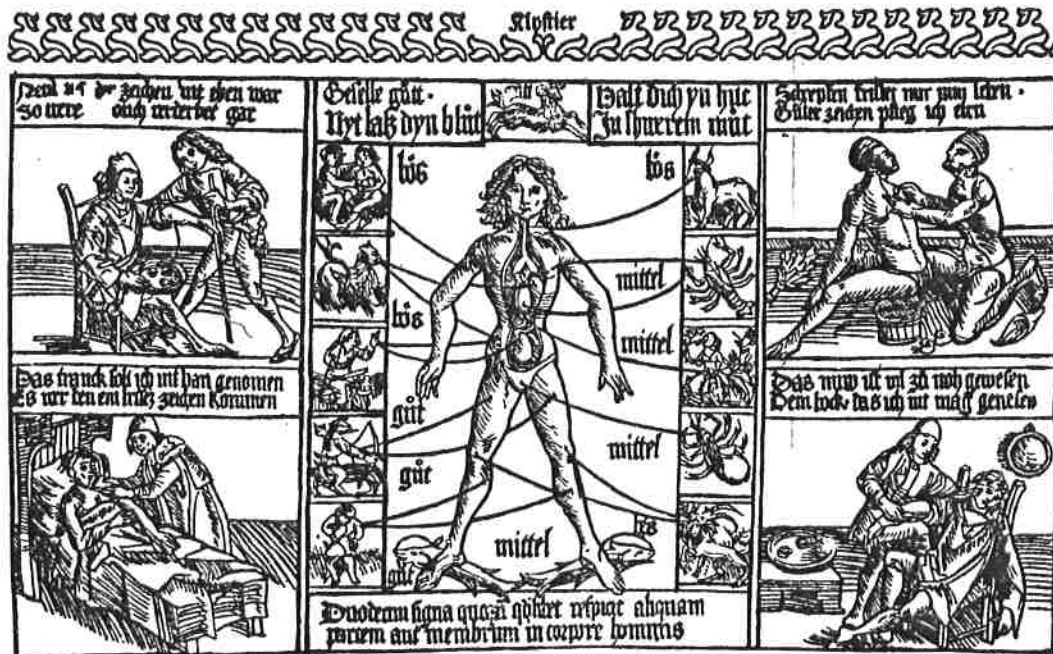Medicine (Thames and Hudson: London), p.152)

FIGURE TWO : A fifteenth-century picture of a dog
uprooting a mandrake, and note the human
form of the exposed roots. In order to
collect this plant safely the Medieval
collector would simply loosen the soil
around the roots, and then attach these
roots by means of a cord to the collar of
an unfortunate dog. In struggling to get
away, or in chasing after a piece of meat
thrown just out of its reach, the dog
would pull up the mandrake, hear the
plant's dreadful shriek and subsequently
fall dead. (Source: Walker K, 1954,
The Story of Medicine (Arrow Books:
London), Plate 5)

Notes and References

1) See Mills W J, 1982a, 'Positivism reversed: the relevance of Giambattista Vico', **Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 7(NS)**, pp.1-14; Mills W J, 1982b, 'Metaphorical vision: changes in Western attitudes to the environment', **Annals of the Association of American Geographers 72**, pp.237-253. These papers were commented upon in Kunze D, 1983a, 'Giambattista Vico as a philosopher of place: comments on a recent paper by Mills', **Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 8(NS)**, pp.237-248; Kunze D, 1983b, 'Commentary on 'Metaphorical vision: changes in Western attitudes to the environment'', **Annals of the Association of American Geographers 73**, pp.153-156. Mills replied to these comments in Mills W J, 1983a, 'Comment in reply to D.Kunze', **Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 8(NS)**, p.249; Mills W J, 1983b, 'Vico, Kunze and the theory of metaphorical vision', **Annals of the Association of American Geographers 73**, pp.157-159.

2) One commentator does suggest - in a clear reference to Mills W J, 1982a, **op.cit.** - that 'Vichian reversed postivism' comprises one amongst a number of 'ideological winds and philosophical breezes' flowing through geography in the wake of the 1960s 'quantitative earthquake' (see Darby H C, 1983, 'Historical geography in Britain, 1920-1980: continuity and change', **Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 8(NS)**, p.462).

3) See Vico G, 1968, **The New Science of Giambattista Vico**, translated from the original third edition (dated 1744) by Bergin T G, Fisch M H (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York).

4) Bergin T G, Fisch M H, 1968, 'Introduction', in Vico G, **op.cit.**, p.xx.

5) Vico introduces the phrase 'ideal eternal history' in Vico G, **op.cit.**, par.245, p.79.

6) **ibid.**, par.173, p.69.

7) See **ibid.**, esp. Book IV, which is entitled 'The Course the Nations Run'.

8) See **ibid.**, esp. Book V, where he observes that "in countless passages scattered throughout this work and dealing with countless matters, we have observed the marvellous correspondence between the first and the returned barbarian times" (par.1046, p.397). The tone of his remarks here suggest that Vico supposed himself, an inhabitant of the Western eighteenth-century, to be living in the 'age of men' on the brink of a wholesale and inevitable ricorso.

9) See **ibid..** Bergin and Fisch suggest that the <u>ricorso</u> "may mean simple recurrence, a coming back or around of some particular event or state of affairs, but the strongest and most literal meaning is a retraversing of the same stages in the same order" (Bergin T G, Fisch M H, **op.cit.,** p.xiii).

10) Vico G, **op.cit.,** par.342, p.102.

11) See **ibid.,** esp. par.346, p.103. An additional point is that, for Vico, "[t]he world of nations is a world constituted by all the gentile [i.e.not Jewish] nations taken together...All statements about the Hebrews are to be understood as asides or <u>obiter dicta</u>: they are no part of the science" (Bergin T G, Fisch M H, **op.cit.,** p.xxi).

12) See Vico G, **op.cit.,** par.401, p.127.

13) This useful way of restating Vico's thoughts regarding the task before early languages appears in Kunze D, 1983a, **op.cit.,** p.241.

14) Vico G, **op.cit.,** par.401, pp.127-128.

15) This description paraphrases a passage from Vico's discussion of the 'mythic' use of metaphor in **ibid.,** par.404, p.129.

16) **ibid.,** par.409, p.131.

17) A prime objective of the <u>New Science</u> is hence to rediscover the 'vulgar or poetic or creative wisdom' that gave rise to the first human institutions, and then to use this wisdom in an attempt to improve inquiries into the facts of the human condition and history. See in particular **ibid.,** esp. Book II, which is entitled 'Poetic Wisdom'.

18) The phrases employed here derive from Kunze D, 1983a, **op.cit.,** pp.239-240.

19) Vico tackles these poetic tropes in numerous ways in numerous places, but see in particular the systematic presentation in Vico G, **op.cit.,** Book II, Section II, Chapters I and II.

20) **ibid.,** par.402, p.128. Kunze suggests that "[t]he world was conceived first in metaphoric terms...Out of this primitive [mythic-metaphoric] mentality, metonymy and synecdoche developed as dialectically opposed tendencies of thought" (Kunze D, 1983b, **op.cit.,** p.154).

21) See Vico G, **op.cit.,** par.408, p.131. Kunze adds that "[i]rony was the final trope, logically and historically, for it was the means by which thought acquired refection and the capacity of falsehood. In this last age of thought metaphor and its products could no longer be understood" (Kunze D, 1983b, **op.cit.,** p.154).

22) Vico <u>does</u> provide a three-stage periodisation of language, however, and here a 'divine mental language' involving 'mute religious acts or divine ceremonies' coincides with the 'age of gods'; a language characterised by 'heroic blazonings with which arms are made to speak' coincides with the 'age of heroes'; and an 'articulate speech' used by all nations coincides with the 'age of men' (see Vico G, **op.cit.**, Book IV, Section V) but the relationship between this presentation and Vico's more general comments on language, its poetic tropes and its historical development is not entirely clear.

23) Kunze describes Mills' effort as an 'epistemological introduction' to Vico's thought (see Kunze D, 1983a, **op.cit.**, p.239).

24) See Mills W J, 1982a, **op.cit.**, Abstract, p.1.

25) For Vico, the 'never failing light of a truth beyond all question' is "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...[S]ince men had made it, men could come to know" (Vico G, **op.cit.**, par.331, p.96). See Mills W J, 1982a, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.3-7, and note that this argument is echoed by Yates, an historical geographer, who suggests that the attitudes and behaviour of Medieval peasants living in a fen-edge Norfolk village are knowable to the researcher because they are carried down over the years by 'Vico's stream of human consciousness', "which we can know absolutely since it is of us" (Yates E M, 1984, 'Land and life at the fen edge as described in the Medieval muniments of Methwold, Norfolk: with a methodological discussion', **King's College, London, Department of Geography, Occasional Paper No.17**, pp.31-32).

26) Mills' 'Vichian geography' depends greatly upon a concept of the 'cultural landscape' derived ultimately from Sauer, but the concept itself warrants more attention than it actually receives (see Mills W J, 1982a, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.7-8).

27) See Kunze D, 1983a, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.239-240. For Kunze the importance of Vico lies, not with his achievement of 'reversing positivism', but with his signposting of a more poetic, imaginative turn of mind capable of completely revising the 'human sense of place' (see **ibid.**, esp. pp.243-246). Vico's lesson, so Mills argues, is that this revision resides "neither in the domain of the 'phenomenological' subject or the 'scientific' object, but in the idea of humanistic wisdom that envelops a self-reflective knowledge of culture" (**ibid.**, p.246). In securing these claims Kunze draws attention to Vico's discussion of 'poetic geography' in Vico G, **op.cit.**, Book II, Section XI.

28) Mills W J, 1982a, **op.cit.**, p.9.

29) **ibid.**, p.12.

30) See **ibid..** Note that it is for these reasons that Mills supposes his presentation still to be an essentially Vichian one, and therefore quite worthy of the appellation 'Vichian theory'.

31) Mills exemplifies the spirit of 'classicism' by discussing late seventeenth-century French society, and then jumps the intervening centuries - where, by implication, 'romanticism' must have prevailed - to the 'modernism' of the contemporary moment (see Mills W J, 1982a, **op.cit.**, pp.9-10).

32) See Mills W J, 1982b, **op.cit.**, esp. p.238.

33) See **ibid.**, pp.238-241.

34) See **ibid.**, pp.241-245.

35) See **ibid.**, pp.245-248.

36) See **ibid.**, p.238.

37) See **ibid.**, esp.p.248, and see also Mills W J, 1983b, **op.cit.**, p.158.

38) Talbot C H, 1967, **Medicine in Medieval England** (Oldbourne: London), p.127.

39) Mills W J, 1983b, **op.cit.**, p.158. As he goes on to explain "[t]he precise nature of development [from one 'metaphorical vision' to another; from one period to another] will thus be determined by factors that fall largely outside the domain of the theory" (**ibid.**, p.159).

40) See Kunze D, 1983b, **op.cit.**, esp. p.154.

41) This is because a key objective here is to rediscover the poetic languages - and the poetic wisdom energising them - by which the ancients came to know themselves and their creations, and the hope is then that these rediscoveries can be pressed into a truly 'new science' through which Moderns will be better able to enhance their own self-understanding.

42) This is not to suggest that Vico's vision is, after all, neither totalising or teleological: rather, it is to stress that, for Vico, what governs both the characteristics of a given age and the overall historical progression from one age to another is not the workings of poetic tropes, but an all-pervading 'divine providence'. There is perhaps a flaw in the logic of the New Science at this point, since humans cannot know God's supreme will, and therefore cannot specify the deep logic of individual

ages and historical progressions in precisely the manner that the <u>verum-factum</u> principle suggests that they should be able to.

43) Mills W J, 1982b, **op.cit.**, p.242.

44) **ibid.**, p.247.

45) For a preliminary argument along these lines, see Gregory D, n.d., 'Areal differentiation and post-modern geography', forthcoming in Gregory D, Walford R (eds.), **New Horizons in Geography** (Hutchinson: London).

46) This is the underlying message of my own paper, Philo C P, 1986, ''The Same and the Other': on geographies, madness and outsiders', **Loughborough University of Technology, Department of Geography, Occasional Paper No.XX.** See also Driver F, 1985a, 'Power, space and the body: a critical assessment of Foucault's <u>Discipline and Punish</u>', **Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 3**, pp.425-446; Driver F, 1985b, 'Geography and power: the work of Michel Foucault', Paper read at the Annual Conference of the Institute of British Geographers, Leeds.

47) Foucault M, 1970, **The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences** (Tavistock: London).

48) See **ibid.**, p.xi.

49) **ibid..**

50) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.xx-xxi.

51) **ibid.**, p.xx.

52) **ibid.**, p.xxi.

53) See **ibid.**, esp. p.xxii.

54) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.17-25. Note the use to which this characterisation of the sixteenth-century 'episteme' is put in Sack R D, 1976, 'Magic and space', **Annals of the Association of American Geographers 66**, pp.309-322.

55) Bankoff G, 1947, **The Story of Surgery** (Arthur Baker: London), pp.92-93.

56) See Foucault M, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.34-42.

57) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.50-58.

58) See **ibid.**, esp. p.55.

59) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.56-57 and pp.71-76.

60) Zilboorg G, 1941, **A History of Medical Psychology** (Allen and Unwin: London), p.307.

61) See Foucault M, **op.cit.**, pp.47-48.

62) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.58-67.

63) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.218-220.

64) Bucknill J C, 1855, 'Review of Falret's <u>Clinical Lectures on Mental Medicine (trans.)</u>', **Asylum Journal of Mental Science 2**, p.78.

65) See **ibid.**.

66) **ibid.**, p.81. This passage is actually a quote from the translation of Falret's book.

67) See Foucault M, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.232-243 and pp.280-300.

68) **ibid.**, p.242.

69) Dreyfus H L, Rabinow P, 1982, **Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics** (Harvester: Brighton), p.28. The way in which, according to Foucault, Modern 'Man' has come to recognise himself as both an object - a constellation of organic structures and internal relations to be studied - and the subject who 'produces' the knowledge of this object, rather than simply uncovering and representing some pre-existing order, is brilliantly explained by Dreyfus and Rabinow in **ibid.**, pp.26-43.

70) See White H V, 1973a, 'Foucault decoded: notes from underground', **History and Theory 12**, pp.23-54; White H V, 1979, 'Michel Foucault', in Sturrock J (ed.), **Structuralism and Since: From Levi-Strauss to Derrida** (Oxford University Press: Oxford), pp.81-115. The scope of White's broader project is indicated in White H V, 1973b, **Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe** (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore).

71) White H V, 1973a, **op.cit.**, p.48.

72) **ibid.**, p.45.

73) White's interpretation of Vico's historical vision runs as follows: "Vico argued that there were four principal tropes, from which all figures of speech derived, and the analysis of which provided the basis for a proper understanding of the cycles through which consciousness passed in its effort to know a world which always surpassed our capacities to know it <u>fully</u>. These four tropes served as the basis of his own theory of the four-stage cycle through which all civilizations passed" (White H V, 1973a, **op.cit.**, p.48).

74) See White H V, 1973a, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.45–48. A slightly more nuanced presentation is given in White H V, 1979, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.93–95. In both of these papers White attempts to apply his Vichian reading of Foucault's 'epistemic' history to the remarkable 'story' told in Foucault M, 1967, **Madness and Civilization: A History of Madness in the Age of Reason** (Tavistock: London), and in so doing he collapses this 'story' into a four-stage history where words 'alight' in a 'tropological space' to produce four different ways – and four accompanying periods – in which the 'discourse on madness' is conducted (see White H V, 1973a, **op.cit.**, pp.39–42; White H V, 1979, **op.cit.**, pp.95–98).

75) This development is hinted at throughout Foucault M, **op.cit.**, Chapter 10.

76) See White H V, 1973a, **op.cit.**, p.49.

77) Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, p.x. Note that in a later text Foucault is even more explicit that a 'total history' designed to reconstruct past 'spirits of the time' must be replaced by a 'general history' sensitive to the differences fracturing the many components of a given time and place (see Foucault M, 1972, **The Archaeology of Knowledge** (Tavistock: London), esp. pp.9–10). Interestingly enough, Foucault actually apologises in this later text because, "in The Order of Things, the absence of methodological signposting may have given the impression that my analyses were being conducted in terms of cultural totality" (**ibid.**, p.16).

78) See Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, esp. p.x.

79) White H V, 1973a, **op.cit.**, p.45.

80) See Piaget J, 1971, **Structuralism** (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London), pp.128–135, who calls Foucault's work in The Order of Things a 'structuralism without structures'.

81) See Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, esp. p.xii.

82) White H V, 1979, **op.cit.**, p.114.

83) This phrase comes from Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, p.36.

84) **ibid.**, p.37.

85) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.65–66.

86) Vico G, **op.cit.**, par.408, p.131.

87) See Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, esp. p.312.

88) **ibid.**, pp.242-243.

89) See Mills W J, 1982b, **op.cit.**, p.241.

90) Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, pp.33-34. Foucault devotes several pages to the sixteenth-century conception of 'signatures' (see **ibid.**, pp.25-30), and Mills echoes this account when examining the Medieval 'doctrine of signatures' (see Mills W J, 1982b, **op.cit.**, p.241).

91) Mills W J, 1982b, **op.cit.**, Note 4, p.250.

92) See Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.30-32, where he suggests that the 'microcosm-macrocosm' model 'appears as a mere surface effect' when viewed 'archaeologically' in the context of the sixteenth-century's more general belief in a universe organised by similarity and resemblance.

93) See Bamborough J B, 1952, **The Little World of Man** (Longmans: London), esp. pp.13-20; Tillyard E M W, 1943, **The Elizabethan World Picture** (Chatto and Windus: London), esp. pp.23-76.

94) Bamborough J B, **op.cit.**, p.146.

95) See **ibid.**, esp. pp.20-26; Tillyard E M W, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.77-92.

96) Tillyard E M W, **op.cit.**, p.79.

97) See Bamborough J B, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.145-146; Tillyard E M W, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.2-6.

98) See Mills W J, 1982b, **op.cit.**, Note 4, p.250.

99) See Foucault M, 1970, **op.cit.**, esp. pp.251-252.

100) This is something that I intend to argue more closely in Philo C P, n.d.,'History, geography and the still greater mystery of historical geography', forthcoming in Gregory D, Martin R L, Smith G E (eds.), **Geography Amongst the Social Sciences** (Macmillan: London).

101) At present I am preparing a PhD thesis entitled **The Space Reserved for Insanity: Studies in the Historical Geography of the English and Welsh Mad-Business.** Some indication of what this project entails is given in Philo C P, 1986, **op.cit.**, esp. Part 4.