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Aus dem philosophischen Leben

**International Conference “Metaphysics, Law, and History:
Research and Perspectives on Giambattista Vico”**

Zagreb, July 15–16, 2014

The Department of Italian Studies and Department of Philosophy organized an international conference at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb on the 15th and 16th of July in 2014, titled “Metaphysics, Law, and History: Research and Perspectives on Giambattista Vico”. The conference was held in English and Italian language, with participants from Brazil, Croatia, Italy and Russia, and its content spanned over two days of lengthy elaborations and following discussions regarding the crowning theme. The conference opened with warm greetings from Damir Boras, then Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, as well as three main hosting organizers Tatjana Peruško and Sanja Roić from the Department of Italian Studies, and Lino Veljak from the Department of Philosophy. Introduction was rounded up with Fabrizio Lomonaco’s observation regarding the importance of Vico and the following conference. Lomonaco represented the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy of the University of Naples Federico II.

Plenary lecture was held by Lino Veljak i Marija Selak from the University of Zagreb titled “The World as a Human-Produced World in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico”. Continuing on Vico’s classical anti-Cartesian position, Veljak and Selak discussed the issues of logical-practical loop between two great phenomena, the providence as exterior to human and free will as interior to human, in its world production, with regard to the negatively connoted techno-scientific, geo-political progress which, at some point, eventually provokes Vico’s theory of self-made human history guided by God’s will. Romana Bassi from the University of Padua considered the “The New Science of Virtues”, projecting theoretical-practical possibilities provided by Vico’s account on virtue and vice. Bassi’s comparative-philological study drew relations with Aristotle’s understanding of relation between virtue and vice as a human development *medium*, focusing on Vico’s own exemplary cases in ancient Greek mythology that eventually resulted in Christian virtues such as piety or justice. Presenting “On Giambattista Vico’s ‘Anthropodicy’”, Claudia Megale from the University of Federico II took a middle road between philosophical and philological investigations on Vico’s work. Analyzing a recently published anastatic print of Vico’s text *De Antiquissima italorum sapientia*, a relevant metaphysical study considering relations between the

body, mind, and soul, Megale criticized misconceptions present in most interpretations on Vico's *verum–factum* phenomena which is a common ground for Vico's onto-theological and epistemological divergence from the canon. Nadežda Čačinović from the University of Zagreb presented "Mainstreaming Vico – on the History of Cultural History". Čačinović questioned the capacity of cultural studies when considering human's mental capacity for different, new and otherness, and proceeded to question limits and possibilities of using thoughts, for example Vico's thoughts, in a different time and a different language code. Building on that, she explicitly outlined a problem of critically interpreting those whose work was ambivalent, like the ones Vico produced, who was at the same time an original thinker and a reactionary.

In "Viewing Vico within German Idealism: On Jacobi's Comparison of Vico with Kant and Schelling's System of Identity" Ljudevit Fran Ježić from the University of Zagreb outlined a discussion between Jacobi, Kant, and Schelling, mostly focusing on the fact that Jacobi found Kant's and Schelling's theoretical ancestors to be Vico and Pascal. In Vico's work we can find many epistemological concepts which Kant had woken once again, mainly the object as a thought construct, but other can also be found. When considering Schelling, it is Vico who introduced us to the philosophy of mythology, and similarities can be found as well in Schelling's critique of world production "through" a mind. Željka Metesi Deronjić from the Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb investigated the notion of *ingegno* in "The Meaning and Role of *ingegno* in Patrizi's and Vico's Poetics". *Ingegno* was identified as the divine resigning within us, a conjunction between epistemics and onto-logics through which we acquire the power of metaphorical thinking. This allows poetics to appear as the first form of understanding. Vico develops *ingegno* as a fundamental mode of integrating and discovering the truth, and furthermore as a tool for associative interlocking. Thus Vico finds a similarity between Man and God. It is noteworthy to consider, however, that Patrizi directly interconnects human and divine work of mind, while Vico restricts human to his world. Goran Sunajko from the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography presented "Vico's Political Philosophy as a Political Theology", a lecture in which the author considered Vico's divine providence in relation to politics. Sunajko's presentation led to a series of discussions afterwards, as Sunajko was torn between Vico's rule of providence and human's free will to build the world in fundamentality, but with specific regard to the fact Vico politically denied solutions brought to us by Bodin, Hobbes and Machiavelli. Ultimately it leads to questioning democracy, especially its actual dysfunctionality. However, another point of presentation was given for consideration if we decide not to personalize Vico's God, but to read it as a philosophical term.

The second day began with two short presentations made by young perspective students Vincenzo Piscopa and Francesco Velota, winners of *Premio Vico 2014* for relevant analysis of Vico's work, and they were followed by Tonko Maroević from the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences. His presentation was titled "Gulio Bajamonti e Vico", and it displayed a strong link, almost a bond, between the two characters, two lives, and two important scientists of 18th century. Fabrizio Lomonaco from the University of Naples Federico II presented the paper "Notes on Metaphysics and Law before the *Scienza Nuova*" in which he showed elementary assumptions regarding Vico's main work and their development up to that point, especially considering Vico's essay *De antiquissima*. The discussion was based on realizing gnoseological differences between man and god, and further, an appeal to distance any investigation from Cartesian theory turned to be an imperative. The *verum–*

factum relation was, nonetheless, a problem in considering the relationship between an abstract fact and the factual doing, an issue Vico solved years later in *De uno universi iuris principio et fine uno*. Stefania Sini from the University of Eastern Piedmont proposed an intriguing philological-comparative study “‘The Magnanimous Historian’: Dante’s Style and Thought in the Thought and Style of Vico” in which we can follow a logic of dense relation between Dante and Vico. It showed Vico’s erudite characteristics and historical knowledge on the one hand, as well as his capacity for poetics on the other. When comparing Vico’s and Dante’s style of writing, motives, and sublime, rich logic behind it, one can speak of converging authors. In essence, one can find Dante in Vico and *vice versa*. The key to this research was an analysis of a particular letter titled “Lettera a Gherardo degli Angioli” and a text titled “Giudizio sopra Dante”.

The last set of presentations began with Sertório de Amorim e Silva Neto from the Federal University of Uberlândia and his study “Vico and the Language of Jupiter: Between Poetry and Law”, focusing on Vico’s position and hypothesis regarding language and its role in shaping mind–body relation throughout the history. Since Vico considered both verbal and non-verbal language equally gesticular, he considered both of them a form of mythic thinking, that is, a (performative) metaphor. As a way of creating complex images from experience, both co-exist in language as a basic constituency of humanlike being between mundane and divine. Robert Blagoni from the University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula held a less conventional, interactively critical presentation on “Dichotomies and Teleologies in *Scienza Nuova* Yesterday and the Old Europe Today”, considering a relation between Vico’s observations in *Scienza Nuova* and modern dysfunctional society, mostly from the man–nature and particularism–integrativism dichotomy under the keen eye of teleological system which, today, is neglected and further replaced with systems that may not correspond to the truth Vico revealed and argued. Nino Raspudić from the University of Zagreb held a presentation on “Vico and Historical Pessimism” in which Vico’s theory was compared to issues brought up by Leopardi in *Lo Zibaldone*. Many compatible relations were established between Leopardi’s and Vico’s theory, e.g. how they divided the human history, but also differences, e.g. their view of the human being (Leopardi leaned to materialism). The most important difference was Vico’s tendency to see history as a cyclic model which, however, gets progressed towards ultimate utopian model through faith, while Leopardi expressed a form of pessimism lacking positive progression without resolution. Sanja Roić from the University of Zagreb presented an intriguing comparative-historical analysis “Europe seen from Naples: Vico and Jelena Zrinski”. Roić focused on *De rebus gestis Antonii Caraphaei*, a biography of Neapolitan general Antonio Carafa, because of many information regarding geopolitical events in Croatian history, that is, mostly because of Jelena Zrinski, the daughter of Petar Zrinski, who became a countess politically related to Hungary and Italy. In a conflict between Jelena and Antonio, it was interesting to see how Vico chose to back her side up even though he formally back up Carafa, and how it led him to write a meta-fictional discourse “The Cry of Jelena Zrinski” in which Vico grants Jelena a chance to speak in first person and show her pain. This made Vico a part of Croatian history. Last, but not least important was a presentation made by Julija Ivanova i Pavel Sokolov from the A. V. Poletayev Institute for Theoretical and Historical Studies in Humanities in Moscow, who elaborated on “On Some Exegetical Sources of *Scienza Nuova*”. Perhaps the most important part of this well documented, well investigated, thick exegetical analysis of *Sci-*

enza Nuova could be the biblical myth regarding the Tower of Babel and the “con-fusion” and “dif-fusion” of languages, a case in which Vico supported distribution and dispersion of languages depending on the tribal growth in particular environments.

In conclusion, the conference presentations produced rich discussions among participants, professors and students as well. As expected, they were heavily oriented to solving the issue of providence, but a number of themes, both buried and trending, were widely analysed, and ultimately, they produced a wealth of valuable information.

Luka Perušić