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Vico
The First New Science

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VICO: THE FIRST NEW SCIENCE

The First New Science gives a clear account of Vico's mature philosophy: the belief that certain functions which are necessary for the maintenance of human society and culture, including philosophy, also condition them historically. This challenges the traditional view that philosophy can lay claim to a historically independent viewpoint, thus bringing into question the legitimacy of the claims of universal prescriptive political theories as against the de facto political beliefs of particular historical societies. This is the first of Vico's later major books in which he wrote in Italian in order not merely to expound, but to demonstrate in practice, his conception of the philosophical importance of etymology. This Cambridge Texts edition is the first complete English translation of the 1725 text. Accompanied by a glossary, bibliography, chronology of Vico's life and expository introduction, it makes this important work accessible to students for the first time.

LEON POMPA is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Birmingham. He has published over a hundred articles and books in the fields of philosophy of history, epistemology, the history of philosophy and idealist philosophy. His works include *Vico: a Study of the New Science* (Cambridge, 1977; 2nd edn 1990) and *Human Nature and Historical Knowledge: Hume, Hegel and Vico* (Cambridge, 1990). He is also the translator and editor of *Vico: Selected Writings* (Cambridge, 1982).

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VICO

The First New Science

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY

LEON POMPA

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To Antonia and Nicholas

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Introduction

I

One of the main lessons that *The First New Science* teaches in relation to political theory is that any such theory must be located within a science that incorporates both a philosophy and a history of the whole of human nature and human practice. In what follows, I shall begin, therefore, by tracing some key points which led Vico to this conclusion, before discussing some of the issues that arise from the conception he finally reached.

Vico's earliest theoretical writings show that, from the start of his professional career, one of his primary concerns was the relationship between the education of the individual and the interests of society. In the First Oration (1699) he argues that while the goal of education is self-knowledge, this can be reached only by a true understanding of the liberal and scientific arts. The theme re-emerges in the Fourth Oration (1704), where it is extended to the claim that the individual should be educated for the well-being of the state. In the Sixth (1707), Vico focuses on the forms of corruption that we inherit from Adam, specifically inadequacies of language, belief and desire, the remedy for which lies in the development of eloquence, knowledge and virtue. These, again, require a grounding in the liberal and scientific arts.

The Seventh Oration was extended and published as *On the Study Methods of our Time* (1709). Here these themes are elaborated further in a systematic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the ancient and modern methods of approaching all disciplines in the academic curriculum. Vico begins with a brief criticism of Bacon's *On the Dignity and Advancement of Learning*, which had, he believed, failed to provide the

complete system of knowledge that it promised. The Cartesian critical method comes in for particular criticism, being seen as an obstacle both to eloquence, i.e. wisdom expressed in a language appropriate to the common man, and to an empirical approach in the natural sciences. Vico goes on to admonish the universities to develop all disciplines in accordance with the best of ancient and modern methods in order that their students should be able to acquire eloquence, knowledge and virtue. He does not, however, suggest that this is possible on a democratic basis. The stress that he lays upon the need for the development of eloquence arises precisely because it enables those who can acquire wisdom to persuade those who cannot, the vulgar, to act correctly through feeling rather than through understanding. The overall emphasis is thus on the importance of a correct relationship between the intellectuals and the general populace for the good of society. This emphasis was to re-appear, though with the intellectuals and the populace related in a quite different way, among the conclusions of *The First New Science*. Finally, in a most important section which foreshadows later developments, Vico expounds the virtues that he sees in Roman juridical practice and the history of Roman law. Whereas the Greeks had separated legal theory from legal practice and subsumed it under philosophy, the Romans, he argues, had construed jurisprudence so as to include knowledge of all things, religious and secular, thus pursuing the arts of government and justice through their positive experience of public affairs. The sequence of laws observed in Roman history constituted, therefore, the best of Roman thought embodied in actual practice. Vico's assessment of the importance of the sequence embodied in the development of Roman law was such that, together with the reconstruction of the history of the fabulous period of Greek history, it was to become one of the principal sources, and exemplifications, of the content of the 'ideal eternal history' developed in *The First New Science*.

Vico's next major work, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language*, was the metaphysical and epistemological part of an intended three-part treatise, the other parts of which were to cover ethics and physics. Though it contains no direct discussion of political theory, two points of importance were carried from it into Vico's later thought. The first is his striking endorsement, as an alternative to the Cartesian theory of knowledge, of the *verum-factum* theory: that the true and the made are identical. At this point, however, the only example that he could offer of human, as distinct from divine, knowledge, on this conception, was geometry. The second is the consequence that he

drew from this theory: that to know something requires knowledge of all that is required to make it, i.e. of all its causes. With regard to the *verum-factum* theory itself, Vico never again formulated it specifically in these terms. It is plausible, however, to see a version of it re-appearing in his later claim that the knowledge afforded in *The First New Science* was grounded in 'the unique truth . . . that the world of gentile nations was certainly made by men . . . and that its principles must therefore be discovered within the nature of the human mind . . . by means of a metaphysics of the human mind', a mind now considered, however, as the common sense of the nations or of mankind and not merely of intellectuals. With regard to the second point, however, it is quite certain that Vico never abandoned the claim that knowledge consists in knowledge of causes, though the kinds of cause brought forward in his later works were enlarged to cover everything relevant to the nature of their subject matter. This is precisely what he thought that he had achieved in *The First New Science*.

Vico's next major work, *The Life of Antonio Carafa* (1716), although somewhat of a by-way in the development of his general thought, contains one relevant point. Whereas, in *On the Study Methods of our Time,* he had emphasised the importance of wisdom, virtue and eloquence in training the intellectual to guide the masses, in his biography of Carafa he attributes Carafa's success to his natural, rather than acquired, shrewdness and suggests that formal culture is likely to hinder rather than to promote effective action. This was not a view that he was to maintain in its generalised form, but it is indicative of a decreasing confidence in the capacity of the intellectual to bring about political well-being by the methods advocated earlier.

At this point it is necessary to turn to the importance of Grotius's influence on Vico, though this is a highly debated matter. Vico may have known something about Grotius's doctrines, possibly through discussion, as early as 1708, but as part of his preparation for *The Life of Antonio Carafa*, he had undertaken a thorough reading of *The Law of War and Peace*. In the *Autobiography*, he offers his general assessment of what he had gained from Grotius in the context of a set of comments on his 'four authors', i.e. the authors by whom he considers he was most influenced up to the time of, and in connection with, *Universal Right*. The writers mentioned are Francis Bacon, who had seen the need to supplement and correct all knowledge, human and divine, but had failed to derive from this a universal system of law; Tacitus, who had realised the need to inform his

more theoretical thought with facts about human nature but had failed to provide a system for understanding these facts; Plato, who had succeeded in devising a truly universal system of philosophy but had failed to confirm this esoteric wisdom by reference to common wisdom; and Grotius, who, unlike the others, had related philosophy and philology in a single system of universal law, including under philology both the history of facts and of the three best-known oldest languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin. From all this, Vico says, he saw that he could fulfil what he had aimed at in his Inaugural Orations and *On the Study Methods of our Time*, by relating the philosophy of Plato, in a Christianised form, to a philology which introduced scientific necessity into its account of languages and things. As a result, he believed, the maxims of the academic sages and the practices of the political sages could be brought into accord.

The first fruits of this new conception were the two volumes, *The One Beginning and the One End of Universal Right*, *The Constancy of the Jurist*, and a concluding volume of *Notes and Dissertations*, all of which, following Vico, are usually referred to as *Universal Right*, published between 1720 and 1722. Much of this major work is taken up with discussions of detailed points about the nature and history of natural law, too complex to be summarised here. Its general contents, however, show that Vico was already working on many of the themes, both general and particular, that were to appear in *The First New Science*. Many of his etymological derivations, his interpretations of particular myths and of the nature of the different Roman laws, many aspects of his theory of language, particularly the poetic language of early man – versions of all this and much more appear here for the first time.

An important feature of *Universal Right* in the present context is the influence it reveals of the effect on Vico's political thought of his reading of Grotius, in particular his acceptance of the legitimacy of Grotius's appeal to historical facts as a way of establishing the legitimacy of a universal natural law. First, however, he criticises Grotius for having failed to supply a metaphysical basis for either the authority or the functions of the state. In his own account he begins with an assertion of the necessity to accept the existence of God. Given this, in one line of argument he attempts to establish the legitimacy of the state's authority over the regulation of ownership, freedom and tutelage, the importance of which for a stable civil community he had grasped from his reading of Roman history, by deducing these civil properties from the divine attributes of knowledge,

will and power. Although he abandoned the deduction itself in his later works, he retained part of the view upon which it rested: that, like the divine mind, the human mind consisted in knowledge, will and power.

Second, to substantiate the appeal to historical fact as a way of establishing the legitimacy of different historical conceptions of law, he introduces the idea that there is an eternal sequence of the order of things which, because the ideas involved in it are eternal, must be the product of an eternal mind, i.e. God. The sequence mentioned here, which anticipates the 'ideal eternal history' of *The First New Science*, is presented as constituting the inner causes of the development of nations from the state of original bestiality of fallen man to one of the highest cultural achievement. From this sequence flows, among many other things, a developing order of political states involving conceptions of law which are barely or only partially rational, until it culminates in a state in which the utilities of life are distributed in accordance with a law embodying the dictates of pure reason. Vico is careful, however, to confine the application of this sequence to the gentile nations. The history of the Hebrews, the followers of the 'one true God', takes a different course, though no systematic account of this course is given.

In connection with these claims, he introduces a further distinction between two important concepts, which re-appear in *The First New Science*: the true and the certain. The true is defined initially as the conformity of the mind with God's order of things. It is, therefore, though Vico does not explicitly say so, an objective epistemological relationship. Later, however, it is also defined as the order of ideas laid down by God, which, as stated above, constitutes the essence of the human world. Thus, it is both metaphysically and epistemologically basic. Similarly, the certain has two aspects. First, it is a state of consciousness which is free from doubt. Though its contents may be far from true, a consciousness of this sort is necessary, especially in primitive societies, to provide a solid basis of belief for communal activity. In this cognitive sense, however, the certain is not just brute consciousness, for the things about which we can be certain can be true or false, thus requiring the operation of *some* form of reason to judge them. Moreover, given the growing knowledge of the causes of things which follows from the claim about an eternal sequence of ideas, the certain can, and eventually will, attain the status of the true. Second, however, Vico uses the concept of the certain to characterise the particular institutions that arise in history from the operation of two

other factors. The first is the will of fallen man, which contributes to the creation of institutions that satisfy demands that stem from the corporeal, non-spiritual part of his being. The second is the existence of certain 'seeds of the true', the *semi eterni di vero*, which constitute a certain potential for the rationality left within man after the Fall to develop through the eternal sequence of ideas, in order that he can eventually overcome his corrupt nature and reach the stage of pure mind. The rationale for the appeal to historical fact in establishing the legitimacy of the authority of law within the state rests, therefore, on the claim that law is always the embodiment of at least a partial development of reason, and hence shares in the divine.

Third, despite his debt to Grotius's recognition of the need to establish the legitimacy of universal law by the appeal to historical fact, Vico criticises him, along with others, for having failed to understand the historically conditioned nature of human culture which results from the divine 'order of things'. Hence the law for the universality of which Grotius had argued was the law of his own day – what Vico calls 'the law of the philosophers' – leading him to misunderstand many aspects of Roman law and rendering many of his criticisms of it invalid. What he should have recognised was the universality of the divinely inspired order of things of which the historical phases of law were a part. But, as Vico himself had begun to realise, a demonstration of this would require a comparative empirical investigation of the earliest historically instantiated phases of this order. Hence, as his many new and striking re-interpretations of Homer in later parts of the work reveal, he had begun to realise the need for a systematic canon of interpretation, particularly for the fabulous periods of history, in order to be able to go back to the origins of history and to trace from them the actual historical sequences of cultural, social and political forms through which the development of the different nations has proceeded. The idea that there could be a science for all this is first made explicit in a famous chapter, entitled 'A New Science is essayed', in which Vico asserts that philological interpretation must be governed by arguments which presuppose man's corrupt nature and, on this basis, regulate it with scientific norms. Many of these ideas were to re-appear, albeit in more developed form, in his next published philosophical work, *The Principles of a New Science of the Nature of Nations through which the Principles of a New System of the Natural Law of the Gentes are Discovered* (1725).

II

One of the principal aims of *The First New Science* is to discover the causes of social and political stability in order to enable us to identify and correct instabilities should they arise. In the way in which Vico approaches these causes, however, they come forward as part of a wider conception, a science of the nature of nations, which is later described variously as a philosophy and history of humanity, or of human customs or of the natural law of the nations. Before turning to the implications of the work for political philosophy, therefore, it is necessary to form some idea of this wider conception.

The governing idea of the whole work is that, under certain conditions, the history of all nations will develop in accordance with an identical pattern of social, political and cultural change. The reason for this is that they all share the same nature, which develops through the interplay of two different features, which Vico distinguishes as the cause and the occasion of historical development. The ultimate cause of this development is a potential for an increasingly rational understanding of the true nature of things, in particular the nature of justice. Hence the reference to the discovery of the natural law of the gentes or nations in the title of the work. The occasion for the progressive development of this cause is the actualisation of a sequence of desires, beginning with a desire for the necessities of life, followed by a desire for what is useful, then for what is comfortable, and so on, which belongs to man by nature. As a result of the interplay of cause and condition, the legal, social and political conditions of life emerge from an original brutish and almost wholly irrational state to reach an *acme*, or state of perfection, from which they then descend.

This basic hypothesis is clearly related to the idea of the eternal order of things dependent upon an eternal order of ideas of *Universal Right*. It differs from the scheme in *Universal Right*, however, in two important respects. First, Vico has now included the idea, quite common at the time, that the pattern will exhibit both a rise and a fall. Second, he claims that the historical establishment of this pattern will show that the state of perfection can be reached only when certain practical maxims which have been the basis of successful human practice, above all in contributing to the relative stability of their states, can also be demonstrated by the political philosophers. Then not only will political practice and political theory cohere but, should practice begin to depart from these maxims, it can be restored to them through the advice and help of the philosophers.

In giving this as the reason for conceiving *The First New Science*, Vico is clearly attempting to fulfil the ambitions with which, as he says in the *Autobiography*, he had first been concerned in the Inaugural Orations, *On the Study Methods of our Time* and *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*.

Vico finds the underlying basis of this pattern in a metaphysics of the human mind, which he describes as 'a metaphysics . . . raised to contemplate the common sense of mankind as a certain human mind of the nations'.[1] In the way in which this claim is developed, it becomes clear that it is because it is based upon this communal essence of mind that Vico's Science can claim to be a philosophy of humanity, i.e. human nature.[2] Since no previous thinker has reached such a conception, he believes, it follows that nobody has been in a position to provide a coherent and defensible basis for the governing ideas, i.e. both the causes and the occasions, used in their interpretations of the nature and history of different nations. Conversely, nobody has yet been in a position to show that history could provide a demonstration that the principles involved in such a metaphysics were the fundamental principles of human nature.

Though the relation that Vico envisages between the philosophy and history of human affairs is circular, the circle is not vicious. Rather it is one of coherence and mutual support. It is worth noting, however, that though it can plausibly be argued that the satisfaction of such a relation may be a necessary condition of the truth of Vico's claims, whether it can be accepted as a sufficient reason for them, or whether it requires the support of some more fundamental principle, is more contentious. Vico does not, however, provide this metaphysics of human nature with any further support by deriving it, as in *Universal Right*, by deduction from some *a priori* primary truths. Instead he sees it as the universalisation of a developing series of human capacities, i.e. both ideas and volitions, which can be proven to be true of ourselves by relating them, in some way or other, to what we know is fundamental to the existence and continuation of our shared human experience.

The first point to note about the historical sequence which arises from this metaphysics is that it is based upon Vico's conviction that nothing – customs, languages, social or political institutions – can start initially from some kind of consent or contract. Such a theory, he argues,

[1] *The First New Science*, 40; *The New Science* (1744), 331, 347. Hereafter references to paragraphs in *The First New Science* will be given solely by a paragraph number.
[2] 23.

would require us to attribute implausibly rational powers to primitive man. Instead of rational choice, therefore, his account of early society is given in wholly naturalistic terms. This can be seen with regard to three things that become central to his social and political theory. The first is belief in a provident divinity, a belief which arises without human intent, through the natural workings of the imagination. This alone, he argues, can provide the context of normative belief in which any initial form of society can arise. From this belief comes the second basic institution, the development of legalised marriage, required as an indication of divine approval of human behaviour. This is equally basic because it secures the identity of children and their parents, which is necessary for establishing hereditary fortunes, hereditary claims to political power and the formation of the clans and great ruling families. The third institution is burial of the dead, which, starting from the sheer physical disgust caused by unburied bodies, leads to the development of genealogies, which constitute the first form of history, and, later, to public monuments which commemorate the glories of families and nations. All this, Vico insists, arises from natural, non-rational features of human nature.

The second point to note is the role of certain governing beliefs in the different forms of society in the sequence Vico offers. The sequence itself which, in so far as it deals with anything remotely social, begins with isolated family units, proceeds first to primitive sacerdotal societies. These are the societies of the 'theological' or 'poetic' age, in which everything is governed by the imagined belief that the sky is a god, Jove, who issues commands and warnings to man through thunder and lightning. On this basis idolatry and divination become structural features of these societies which take on their sacerdotal character through the need to placate Jove with sacrifices. Accordingly, law consists in Jove's commands and political power rests with the priests and priestly kings through whose mediation his will is interpreted in the auspices. Next comes the 'heroic' age, the age of the great aristocratic republics, in which political power lies with the leaders of the aristocratic families on the basis of the belief that they are of semi-divine origin and, as such, superior in nature to the bestial plebeians. Finally, however, with the greater development of reason, doubts begin to arise about this semi-divine origin, the plebeians begin to realise that they are equal in nature to the aristocrats, and democracies arise on the basis of belief in the equality of nature of all human beings and of their entitlement to equal status under the law and to participation in social and political decision-making.

Vico does not believe, however, that the development of human societies and different political structures on the basis of the interplay between these governing beliefs and the sequence of natural desires is a smooth and easy process. On the contrary, a central component is what would now be called the class war. Holding to his claim that individual man is corrupt, he sees every change in the sequence as involving a contest between those who are favoured by its political structure as embodied in the law and those who suffer from it. Ultimately, however, the increasingly rational governing beliefs will prevail over their less rational predecessors. Throughout the series, therefore, there is a tension between the way things are and the way, more rationally, they ought to be, i.e. between the certain and the true, in the ontological sense explicated in *Universal Right*.

The conviction that in giving this changing series of beliefs he has given the sequence of causes, be they naturalistic or, later, more rational, upon which social, cultural and political development rests, is the basis of Vico's claim that his science contains a philosophy and history of human customs. In perhaps his clearest statement of this conception he describes the philosophical aspect of it as consisting in a linked series of reasons, and the historical aspect as a continuous sequence of facts of humanity which are in conformity with these reasons. Thus, he concludes, his Science comes to be 'an ideal eternal history, in accordance with which the histories of all nations proceed through time'.[3]

The 'ideal eternal history' is one of the crucial conceptions in *The First New Science*. It is plainly related to the order of eternal ideas, deriving from an eternal mind, i.e. God, which was said to govern the divine order of things in *Universal Right*. There is, however, a major change in that Vico has now subsumed the whole notion of an order of ideas which governs the historical order of things within his concept of a metaphysics of the human mind.

It is clear, therefore, that in developing the 'order of ideas' of *Universal Right* in this way Vico has abandoned the idea that what makes the order eternal is that its author must be God, i.e. the god of Christianity, in favour of the idea that what makes it eternal is that it springs from the nature of man. This does not mean that the Christian God disappears entirely from the philosophical framework of *The First New Science*, for Vico makes frequent references to the Christian God by characterising the generally beneficial nature of the sequence as the outcome or realisation

[3] 90.

of a providential plan. Yet he realises that he cannot consistently maintain that all societies must rest on belief in *a* god, which must therefore arise from certain *universal* features of human nature, and identify this god with the God of Christianity. His solution, which looks distinctly question-begging, is to propose a different account, barely specified, for Hebrew history and its dependence upon revealed knowledge of the one true God. The crucial question of where this leaves his references to some supra-historical activity by the God of Christianity, as implied in the idea of a providential plan, is, however, too complex to be taken further here.

Three final points about the 'ideal eternal history' should be made here. First, although Vico often talks as though its existence is independent of the physical world in which man lives, it is clear that when he applies it he is thinking of it as embodying the causes of human activity in the real world. The necessities and utilities, for example, which provide the occasions for change, are often physical and biological. So, as he insists, his Science must take account of the *whole* of human nature and this includes its relation to all aspects of the physical world.

Second, and partially as a result, Vico does not believe that the histories of all nations will follow the pattern outlined in the 'ideal eternal history'. For since it outlines a sequence which will obtain in what may be described as normal conditions of the world in which we live, where abnormal causal conditions obtain, as, say, in the case of massive floods or plagues or aggression by other more powerful nations, the history of some nations will not conform to the pattern. Thus in Latium, for example, only Rome, upon which, understandably, he relies heavily, exhibits the full pattern. But where some fail to conform to it, he gives a further causal account why this is so.

Finally, and most noticeably, he never gives a description of the total contents of the 'ideal eternal history'. This is because, since it consists in the eternal sequence revealed in the evolving history of each nation, its detail is shown in what is common to those histories.

III

Given that one of Vico's intentions in *The First New Science* is to make a contribution to political theory, book IV, in which he directly addresses this contribution, is often seen as a distinct disappointment. By far the shortest book in the work, it is also, in the eyes of many scholars, the

most puzzling. The book mentions two arts which derive from the work as a whole. Although the first, a new critical art, i.e. a canon of rules of interpretation, which has been employed throughout in Vico's historical investigations, is one of his crowning achievements, it need not detain us here. The second, however, is quite different, and refers us back to the original aim of the whole Science. Vico explicitly likens it to a 'diagnostic art', the purpose of which is to enable us to discern the sequence of stages of necessity and utility in the order of human affairs and thus to fulfil the point of the Science: knowledge of the signs of the state of the nations. But the sequence of stages itself is that which has been mentioned frequently before: first, the need for belief in a provident god; next, the need for the institution of legal marriage by which to establish the continuity of families, from which arise so many practices in the structure of civil life, such as the inheritance of property; and, finally, the need for ownership of lands for burial of the dead, which leads to the citizens' pride in the glory of their ancestry, and their wish to give it immortal public expression. Thus the common sense of mankind consists in its grasp of the need to maintain these practices in order not to relapse into the bestiality in which it started. The sequence of stages of the utility of recondite wisdom, i.e. philosophical wisdom, on the other hand, is determined by that of common sense. For the end of philosophical wisdom is to support common sense when it is weakened and to guide it when it goes astray.

But if these pronouncements seem disappointing, this is, to some extent, because they are mere summaries of what Vico has already exhibited, in great detail and throughout the whole work: the indispensable nature of the institutions of religion, marriage and burial of the dead. For what he has shown is not only that they are necessary for the internal cohesion of any society but that, as they change in character in accordance with the slow development of human rationality, in addition to performing these indispensable functions, their effects spread out to have many further effects on institutions that are crucial to the development of social and political structures. A single example, that of ownership and the aristocracy, must suffice to illustrate this point. According to Vico, ownership begins as simple use of the land, common to everybody. Ownership as property arises when those who first occupy the land have their right to occupancy made legitimate through their auspices. For this to become permanent, however, it is necessary to be able to certify hereditary ownership, which can be done only through the genealogies which arise from burial of the dead. When others later enter these lands for food and

shelter, they enter lands already legitimately owned and, consequently, can enjoy food and shelter only on the basis of an exchange of work for rural commodities. The owners of the land are thus in a position to build up, with full legal approval, their vast private fortunes which leads to the division between the aristocrats and the plebeians. This will endure in history until the plebeians are in a position to take the auspices and to belong to legally recognised families. At this stage, of course, the whole concept of ownership as such must change. Thus when Vico's claims about the necessity for religion, marriage and burial of the dead are read in the light of his actual account of the ways in which social and political structures change, they become much more illuminating.

Vico's pronouncements about the way in which his basic institutions should be recognised and supported by the philosophers represent the fulfilment of his original thoughts about the role of the intellectual in public life, a wish that is implied by the fact that the whole work is, if not dedicated, at least addressed, to the academies. There is, however, an obvious difference in that, whereas, in his earlier writing, he had enjoined the intellectuals to develop the knowledge and rhetorical capacities necessary to persuade the people to act in ways to which their understanding could not lead them, he now suggests that the people have a grasp of the need to act in certain ways and the task of the intellectual is confined to giving philosophical justification and support for these forms of activity when they are weakened. Thus where philosophical wisdom originally took precedence over common belief, it is now secondary to it.

In these general remarks Vico is also clearly thinking of his criticisms of philosophers who had provided prescriptions that were inimical to the requirement to maintain certain socially cohesive practices: the Epicureans, with their doctrines of the rule of chance in human affairs and pleasure as the guide to individual activity; the Stoics, with their demand for ways of life so harsh as to discourage people from trying to live good lives; and even Plato, with his suggestion that the women of a nation should be held in common, a suggestion which Vico takes to be destructive of the conditions for the education of children within institutionalised family life necessary for social and cultural development.

Nevertheless, it would seem that Vico has little else to say about many of the problems with which political philosophy, including that of some of his chosen opponents, has traditionally been concerned. Indeed, the fact that he does not at this point produce any substantive prescriptions either of a moral nature or about the traditional question of the nature of

the best kind of state, has led many to the conclusion that the historicist nature of his science is such as to preclude it from fulfilling its original aim. This raises a number of issues, to which I shall briefly turn.

To deal with the simplest first, Vico's failure to produce general or universal *moral* prescriptions can hardly be a serious criticism. For one of his central themes is that, because of the prevalence of standards determined by common sense, and in virtue of the fact that it is a 'common' sense, most people already know how they ought to live their lives in the societies in which they live. Changes in prescriptive standards of behaviour are therefore, in a sense, part of the developmental ontology of any given historical society. Vico certainly lays great stress on the necessity for people to exercise prudence in their daily lives, i.e. good judgement based upon a wide appreciation of the nature of the factors operative in their situations. But he does not, nor should he, lay down prescriptions for the standards to which they should appeal, for the very fact of the difference in the governing beliefs in the different historical eras in which people live means that there can be no general standards common to all. This is not to say that he is agnostic with regard to the commendation or criticism of different courses of action. But his commendations and criticisms are dependent upon the general norms of correct action, and particularly the conception of equity, that have issued from common sense in different historical situations. Thus, though he emphasises the cruelty of many of the practices and laws, say, of the 'heroes' of the second age, he insists that such practices were appropriate to the mentality and institutional conditions of that age. Hence his judgements about the behaviour of different individuals within these historical societies are always relative to the standards of the society in which they live and not to those of his own society. The behaviour of Penelope's suitors was reprehensible because it is unjust by the standards of the day; that of Ulysses, who frames his promises in such a way that there is an element of deceit in how he achieves his ends, may seem equally reprehensible, but it is not, because in his age it was the letter of the law that he must observe. To say that certain punishments were cruel is to say something with which the people involved in them would have agreed, but to say that they were unjust is not. As Vico points out, Brutus was unhappy with the fate that he meted out to his own two sons, yet he did not dispute the justice of that fate. This is not to deny, of course, that Vico recognises that, from the later standpoint of a person living in a more enlightened age, some of these punishments will seem excessively cruel, but that is an inevitable consequence of the

development of the more humane standards and feelings that come with an appreciation of the equality of human nature that the development of reason provides. Such judgements, made from such viewpoints, cannot invalidate the standards of earlier times, though they can bring out their different character.

The question of Vico's failure to produce recommendations with regard to the traditional question of the best form of state and the best form of government does, however, raise greater difficulties. Although Vico knew Bodin's work, in which a clear distinction between state and government had been drawn, he does not himself distinguish them in these terms. For the first two ages, the poetic or theological and the heroic, he talks as though the form of government is determined by the form of all the things that would normally be considered as contributing to the nature of the state. In Vico's case these are constituted by the particular hierarchical set of power relationships that derive from the governing conceptions or beliefs about the nature of the people, which govern the kinds of legal relationships in which these power relationships are entrenched. Thus the beliefs about the difference in nature between the heroes, with their semi-divine origin, certainty of descent, and ability to build up, and pass on to their descendants, massive private fortunes, and the plebeians, with their bestial origins, uncertainty of descent, and inability to treat, and build upon, anything as 'theirs', is reflected in a power structure in which the nobles are the masters and the plebeians, in a certain sense, part of their possessions. And for this form of state, the 'aristocratic republic', there can be only one form of government, the aristocratic oligarchies with their kings, whose role as rulers is dependent solely upon their ability to convince their peers, if necessary by force, that they are the most fit to protect their common interests against those of the plebeians.

In the third age, on the other hand, in which belief in the semi-divine origin of the aristocrats has been exposed for the myth it was, the state takes on a democratic form, based upon the recognised equality of nature of all the people. Accordingly, both their universal right to equal status in justice, and their right to contribute to the creation of specific laws, is recognised. But here Vico distinguishes two forms of government, either of which is appropriate to a democracy understood in these terms: the 'free republics' and the 'monarchies'. In the 'free republics', the state is governed by assemblies of citizens, in which laws are formulated according to natural equity, which, Vico insists, 'is the only form of equity the people understand'. The principle of natural equity also underlies the other

possible form of government, i.e. the monarchy. This is not, therefore, a despotic monarchy, such as would have been appropriate in the age of the early priestly kings, but a form of monarchy whose rulers, assisted by a council of sages, will want to produce laws that the people will welcome, and, therefore, laws, like those of the free republics, that conform to natural justice. In both cases, therefore, the appropriate form of the state is democratic but the difference between the two forms of government depends upon different ways in which the will of the people can be transformed into laws which respect their equality.

This raises the question why it should be the case that in each of the first two eras there is only one form of state and only one form of government. Vico does not offer a direct answer to this question, but it almost certainly lies in the naturalistic character of the whole structure of the societies of the first two eras. The poetic era is one in which everything – custom, language, ownership and sovereignty – arises naturally and without human intention. There is thus no possibility of a form of state or of government other than those which these natural causes produce. The second era, that of the heroes, allows of much more inner dissent, as the plebeians both resent their lot and begin to doubt the alleged semi-divine status of the heroes upon which it is based. But as long as that belief endures, which it will for a considerable time given other natural propensities, such as the natural desire of fallen man to retain such privileges as he has for as long as possible, there is still no possibility of a form of state or government other than that which, through changes in governing belief, customs and practice, has arisen historically from its predecessor. For the only possible form of government is that which exists to protect the interests and rights of the few against those of the many. Even in the third era the possibility of any form of state other than a democracy is precluded, for the form of state now depends upon people's realisation of the equality of their nature, in which, Vico claims, their true nature consists. Hence, the very essence of their nature requires a democratic form of state. Nevertheless the reason why there is now the possibility of two forms of government, either of which is appropriate in a democracy, is that with the full development of reason, and the decline of the influence of the purely natural factors which determined earlier forms of government, there is now scope for a rational choice as to which form of government is best suited to facilitate the people's wishes. It is true that, of the two possible forms, Vico suggests that monarchy is the form of government best suited to a democratic state. But the explanation that he gives, that it must be the best since reason was

the cause of the development of the conventional language required for a democracy, is not very convincing. For this amounts to little more than the assertion that a democracy requires a language which enables free, rational discussion among all the people, and this is also a precondition, in Vico's view, of the possibility of government by a free republic. It may be, therefore, that the judgement in favour of monarchy reflects a certain caution about seeming to be too anti-monarchical in the Naples of his time.

A number of conclusions may therefore be drawn from the points considered so far. The first is that, with regard to the earlier periods of a nation's history, Vico adopts an extremely historicist view. With regard to these periods there are no real political possibilities other than those that arise naturally and historically. The second, however, is that while the rise of democracy is also more or less inevitable, provided always that people have had the ability to maintain their own sovereignty, once it has arisen there is the possibility of a choice of government. But this carries its own dangers, amongst which is that of following untried philosophical prescriptions that may, or even will, lead to the ruin of the three essential conditions through which any historically developed form of state has managed to flourish.

This brings us, however, to what may well be the most important implication of Vico's political philosophy. This is that since fair and stable social and political structures develop only through a long and arduous historical process, the beliefs and practices on which they rest should be accorded greater value than any alternative philosophical possibilities. This is most strikingly confirmed by his warning to philosophers, with Descartes possibly uppermost in his mind, to be careful lest, in their enthusiasm for their own prescriptions, they should contribute to a neglect of the study of the ancient languages and, accordingly, to a diminishment of the culture of their own age.[4] Ultimately, therefore, Vico is arguing for the necessity to value and preserve what has been achieved, particularly in the creation of democracy, rather than for the need to try to go beyond it. If this seems a somewhat conservative message, it must be understood against the background of his view that there has been social and political progress in history but that there is no possibility of endless progress. The best we can hope to achieve may well be maintenance of a stable democracy.

[4] 69.

IV

The final feature of Vico's political philosophy to be considered briefly is the theory that the pattern exhibited in the history of each nation will recur. This means that not only will almost all nations undergo an identical process of development, but that, after the decline from their *acme*, they will relapse into a state of barbarism very similar to that from which they first arose, after which, as a result of the operation of the same causes as before, the same process will occur again.

It must be noted first that Vico's commitment to this thesis is distinctly ambiguous. In *The First New Science*, he thinks that such a recurrence has happened at least once, since he frequently describes the feudal institutions of the mediaeval period after the collapse of the Roman empire as a return of what he sees as similar kinds of institutions in early Roman history. He does not, however, draw the conclusion that, if his general causal theory is correct, such a recurrence must happen in every case. By the time of *The Second New Science* of 1730 and continuing in *The Third New Science* of 1744, however, the idea of yet further recurrences of the cycle is much more prominent. This possibility is connected with a change both in mood and theory between the first and the later editions of his Science. *The First New Science* concludes on a note of considerable optimism. Despite the dangers to which democracy may lead, Vico says nothing to suggest that these will actually occur and, of course, if attention is paid to the general lessons he draws about the conditions which favour the stability of the state, there is no reason why they should. In the later editions, however, this optimism has given way to considerable pessimism and he actively considers the possibility of a further recurrence of the whole pattern, at least in the Europe of his day. This development is accompanied by the introduction of the concept of the 'barbarism of reflection', a form of corruption of human nature, and hence of society, from which he sees little hope of any easy redemption. While he does not show any change of mind with regard to the view that democracy, supported by his three basic institutions, constitutes the best political structure for his age, he is much less sanguine about the possibility of any long-term continuation of this state of affairs and seems to see the corruption responsible for the 'barbarism of reflection' as a very likely, if not absolutely inevitable, consequence of the freedom of thought involved in democracy. Thus he foresees the possibility of philosophy descending

into scepticism, eloquence becoming a tool for any form of self-serving persuasion rather than an expression of wisdom, wealth becoming an instrument of power rather than the basis of civil rank, and religion losing its restraining power, with the whole situation finally collapsing into civil anarchy. Indeed, he considers this possibility seriously enough to propose three remedies for this 'great disease', all of which are dependent upon Providence and the final one of which is, indeed, a return to the barbarism of poetic man and a recurrence of the whole cycle.

The difference between the comparative optimism of the conclusion of *The First New Science* and the pessimism of that of the later editions raises the question, therefore, as to which, if either, is justified by Vico's political theory. In fact, however, it is difficult to see how *either* can be a legitimate consequence of it. It is true, of course, that his initial description of the pattern in *The First New Science* involves the idea of a rise to an *acme* followed by a decline and a fresh start. But this is accompanied by the claim that the decline can be averted by adherence to his three basic institutions and, indeed, were this not to be a possibility, it is quite unclear what would be the point of knowledge of his whole Science. Such a possibility cannot entail, of course, that, as he believes, there will not be a recurrence. But it is at least compatible with it.

When we turn to the comparative pessimism of the later editions, precisely the same conclusions must be drawn. If the maintenance of the three basic institutions is required to sustain a stable democratic state, should they fail to be maintained social and political stability will be lost. Then, given the rest of Vico's account of the 'ideal eternal history', there is no reason to preclude the possibility that the whole pattern will recur. Equally, however, there is nothing in Vico's theory that entails that the three basic institutions will or will not be retained. Thus it is quite compatible with the necessity for their retention, if a stable democracy is to be maintained, that they will not endure and that democracy will not be maintained. And it should perhaps be pointed out here, in view of the frequently advanced claim that Vico is committed to a recurrence, that his more pessimistic remarks about the 'barbarism of reflection' and the recurrence of the historical pattern are presented as likely possibilities rather than inevitabilities. These conclusions, if correct, follow from the fact that Vico's Science cannot be a predictive science. It could, of course, be a predictive science if it laid down what absolutely and necessarily must occur in the case of the history of every nation. And it is true that in the

later editions of the work he does make such a claim.[5] But it is difficult to see how this can be maintained, given the fact that the operation of the causes outlined in the 'ideal eternal history' in the actual world depends upon contingent circumstances in the world. Vico's Science can, like most other sciences, claim to predict what will happen if certain circumstances occur, but it cannot predict that these circumstances must, or even will, occur. Only history can show whether or not they have.

This suggests that the concept of a necessary, rather merely than a possible, recurrence of the pattern of the 'ideal eternal history' cannot validly be derived from Vico's social and political theory. Vico is entitled to claim that his philosophy and history of human nature can teach us what we need to do if we see that a democratic society is becoming unstable and wish to do something to stabilise it. But there is nothing in it that deprives us of the responsibility to decide for ourselves what we actually want to do. In these circumstances it is most plausible to regard the vacillations in Vico's attitude towards the future of the Europe of his age as expressions of his own different subjective assessments of the situation at different periods of his life rather than as valid conclusions of his Science. As such, they should not be allowed to detract from what he achieved in his great work.

[5] *The New Science* (1744), 348, where he asserts that, in virtue of common sense, and given the order of things laid down by Divine Providence, the course of the nations 'had, have and will have to proceed'.

Chronology

1509–1707	Naples is under Spanish rule.
1668	Vico is born in Naples on 23 June. The Academy of the Investiganti is suppressed by the Spanish viceroy.
1670	Marchetti is prohibited from publishing his edition of Lucretius.
1671	The activities of the Inquisition increase as the influence of Descartes and Gassendi spreads in the Neapolitan academies and nourishes interest in earlier naturalists such as Lucretius, Epicurus, Telesio, Bruno and Campanella.
1672	The Academy of the Infuriati is suppressed.
1675	Vico falls and fractures his skull, an accident from which it takes him three years to recover.
1678–86	Vico pursues his education, partly in the Jesuit School, the Collegio Massimo al Gesù Vecchio, partly at home, and partly under private tuition and in unofficial attendance at the university. His studies include grammar and humanities through Alvarez's *Three Books on Grammar*, metaphysics through Suaréz's *Metaphysics*, civil law through the works of Vulteius and Canisius, canon law as taught at the university by Felice Aquadies, and legal procedures by work in a legal practice.
1683	The Academy of the Investiganti re-opens.
1686	Vico successfully defends his father in a court case.

1686–95	Vico tutors the children of the wealthy Rocca family at nearby Vatolla, Cilento and Portici. He maintains his contacts with Neapolitan intellectual life and pursues a course of self-tuition in the works of, amongst others, the classical Latins, Virgil, Lucretius, Cicero and Horace; the Italian humanists, Boccaccio, Dante and Petrarch; the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle; and Descartes.
1689–92	Vico matriculates in the Faculty of Jurisprudence of the University of Naples.
1692	The Academy of the Infuriati restarts under the name 'The Academy of the Uniti'. Vico is elected to its membership. His friends, De Cristoforo, Galizia and Gianelli, are arraigned by the Inquisitors and subsequently imprisoned in 1693.
1693	Vico's Lucretian poem, 'Affetti di un disperato' ('The Feelings of One in Despair'), written in 1692, is published. Also his 'Canzone in morte di Antonio Carafa' ('Ode on the Death of Antonio Carafa'). From now on he is well known as a writer of honorary and celebratory verse.
1694	Vico graduates as Doctor of Civil and Canon Law.
1695	The Academy of the Investiganti holds a meeting in commemoration of the death of Leonardo di Capua.
1697	Vico fails to secure the post of Secretary to the City of Naples.
1698	The Academy of Medinaceli is founded.
1699	Vico is appointed Professor of Rhetoric of the University of Naples, a post he holds until 1741. In his capacity as Professor he delivers his First Inaugural Oration. He is elected to the Academy of Medinaceli. Vico marries Teresa Caterina Destito, by whom he has eight children.
1700	Vico's Second Inaugural Oration. The War of the Spanish Succession begins.
1701	The Macchia conspiracy, which tries to end Spanish rule in favour of the Hapsburgs, fails, and its leaders Sangro and Capece are executed.

1702	Philip V visits Naples, for which occasion Vico writes a panegyric. Vico's Third Inaugural Oration.
1703	Vico writes his unpublished *Principum neapolitanorum coniuriatonis anni MDCCI historia* (*History of the Conspiracy of the Neapolitan Princes of 1701*), in which he adopts a pro-Bourbon viewpoint.
1705	Vico's Fourth Inaugural Oration.
1706	Vico's Fifth Inaugural Oration.
1707	Naples is taken by the Austrians, who rule it under the Hapsburgs until 1734. Vico gives his Sixth Inaugural Oration.
1708	Vico contributes to a memorial volume in honour of Sangro and Capece. His Seventh Inaugural Oration is given.
1709	*De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (*On the Study Methods of our Time*), a revised and enlarged version of the Seventh Inaugural Oration, intended to augment Bacon's account of knowledge, is published. Vico possibly begins to read Grotius.
1710	Vico is elected to the Academy of Arcadia. *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia ex linguae latinae originibus eruenda libri tres* (*On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language*) is published. This is the metaphysical section of a projected, but never completed, system of philosophy.
1711	The fifth and eighth issues of the *Giornale de' Letterati* contain critical reviews of *On the Ancient Wisdom*. Vico responds to the first with *Risposta nella quale si scelgono tre opposizioni fatte da dotto signore contro il Primo Libro 'De antiquissima Italorum sapientia'* (*A Response to Three Criticisms Made by a Learned Gentleman on Book I of On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*'). The manuscript of his annual course on rhetoric, *Institutiones oratoriae* (*The Art of Rhetoric*), is completed.
1712	Vico publishes his reply to the second critical review of *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, *Risposta*

all'articola X del tomo VIII del Giornale de Letterati d'Italia (*A Response to Article X of Volume VIII*, *of the Giornale de Letterati d'Italia*).

1713–16 In considerable ill health, Vico researches his *De rebus gestis Antonii Caraphaei libri quatuor* (*The Life of Antonio Carafa*), published in 1716, for which he undertakes a serious reading of Grotius. In this period he made notes, now lost, on part of *The Law of War and Peace*, but left them unfinished on the grounds of Grotius's hereticism.

1719 An anonymous edition of Grotius's *The Law of War and Peace*, probably prepared by Vico, is printed. Vico delivers his Inaugural Oration on universal right.

1720 Vico prepares a first draft, never published and now lost, of *Il diritto universale* (*Universal Right*). To prepare the way for the publication of the full three-volume work, he issues a brief, untitled work, now called *The Synopsis of 'Universal Right'*. The first of the three volumes of the whole work is published, under the title *De uno universi iuris principio et fine uno* (*The One Beginning and the One End of Universal Right*).

1721 A long epithalamium in verse, entitled *Giunone in danza* (*Juno in Dance*), is published as part of a volume to celebrate the marriage of a member of the Rocca family. The second part of *Universal Right* is published, entitled *De constantia iurisprudentis* (*The Constancy of the Jurist*). Vico sends a copy of both volumes to Jean Le Clerc, from which a short, appreciative exchange of letters ensues. The idea of a series of autobiographies of eminent intellectuals, to include one by Vico, develops in Venice.

1722 The third volume of *Universal Right* is published, under the title, *Notae in duos libros* (*Notes and Dissertations*).

1723 Vico applies for, but fails to gain, the Chair of Civil Law. He receives a copy of the *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*, issue viii (1722), containing a favourable review by Le Clerc of *Universal Right*. He works on an early version of *The First New Science*, never

published and subsequently lost, now known as *The New Science in Negative Form*. He sends an early version of what later becomes the first part of his autobiography to Venice. A poem entitled *Origine, progresso e caduta della poesia* (*On the Origin, Development and Decline of Poetry*) is published.

1724 Vico secures Cardinal Corsini's agreement to finance the publication of *The New Science in Negative Form*.

1725 Cardinal Corsini withdraws from this agreement. Unable to finance the publication himself, within six weeks Vico produces a new, shorter version of the work, published under the title, *Princìpi di una scienza nuova intorno alla natura delle nazioni per la quale si ritruovano i princìpi di altro sistema del diritto naturale delle genti* (*The Principles of a New Science of the Nature of Nations through which the Principles of a New System of the Natural Law of the Gentes are Discovered*), the publication of which he finances by selling a family ring. Following Vico, this is often now referred to as *The First New Science*.

1728 Vico's *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo* (*The Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself*), updated to 1728, and including a summary of *The First New Science*, is published. This is now usually referred to as the *Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*.

1729 Vico publishes a pamphlet *Notae in 'Acta eruditorum lipsiensia'* (*Notes on the 'Acta Eruditorum Lipsiensia'*), in which he defends *The First New Science* against criticisms made in a hostile review published in that journal in 1727. This work is usually referred to by the rest of its title, *Vici vindiciae* (*In Defence of Vico*).

1730 Vico is elected to the Academy of the Assorditi. The second edition of *The New Science* is published under the title *Principi d'una scienza nuova d'Intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni* (*The Principles of a New Science of the Common Nature of Nations*). This is significantly different from *The First New Science* both in form and parts of its content. Following Vico

	again, this is usually referred to as *The Second New Science*. Between 1730 and 1733, he produces three series of 'Corrections, improvements and additions'.
1731	Vico continues work on his *Autobiography,* bringing it up to date and including an account of the genesis of *The Second New Science*. It was not published in its final form until 1818, together with a third part written by the marquis of Villarosa, taking it up to Vico's death.
1732	Vico delivers and publishes his Inaugural Oration, *De mente heroica* (*On the Heroic Mind*), dedicated to the viceroy of Naples.
1734	The Spanish re-conquer Naples. Vico dedicates a sonnet to Charles of Bourbon.
1735	Vico is appointed royal historiographer by Charles of Bourbon, to whom he dedicates three more sonnets. He is elected to the Academy of the Oziosi, where he recites a sonnet in praise of St Augustine.
1735–6	Vico continues to develop more material relevant to *The Second New Science*.
1736	Vico gives over some of his teaching duties to his son, Gennaro.
1741	Gennaro succeeds to Vico's Chair, with the support of the viceroy.
1743	Vico begins the preparation of a third version of *The New Science*, incorporating into *The Second New Science* much of the extra material developed earlier. This version was published posthumously in 1744. It is sometimes referred to as *The Second New Science (1744)* and sometimes as *The Third New Science*.
1744	Vico dies on 22–23 January.

Editor's note

The translation

It may be helpful to explain first the choice and character of the edition upon which this translation of Vico's *Princìpi di una scienza nuova intorno alla natura delle nazioni per la quale si ritruovano i princìpi di altro sistema del diritto naturale delle genti*[1] (1725) is based. The most comprehensive edition of Vico's works is still Fausto Nicolini's which, with some help from Giovanni Gentile and Benedetto Croce, was issued in eight volumes, some of which were reprinted and enlarged in later printings, by Laterza, Bari, between 1911 and 1941. Although Nicolini's scholarship and editorial abilities were of exceptional quality by the standards of his day, the series is neither comprehensive nor accurate enough to constitute a definitive edition of Vico's works. In the case of *The First New Science*, for example, in the interests of clarification, Nicolini introduced directly into the text a number of corrections and changes that Vico worked upon after its publication, as well as some of his own with the aim of clarifying Vico's syntax. The lack of a definitive edition of Vico's work was noted in 1972 by Pietro Piovani, the then editor of the *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani*: since that time the *Centro di Studi Vichiani* has been engaged in the production of such an edition. Much material has subsequently emerged, but so far no definitive versions of any of the three editions of the New Science.

In these circumstances, therefore, I have chosen to follow Andrea Battistini's edition in his two-volume *Giambattista Vico: Opere* (Arnaldo

[1] Vico himself often referred to this work as the *Scienza nuova prima*. Hereafter, following his practice, I shall refer to it simply as *The First New Science*.

Mondadori Editore, Milan, 1990). For reasons given below, this edition is based upon Nicolini's rather than Vico's own first edition but, on the basis of Vico's edition, Battistini has removed from the main text the many additions and changes that Nicolini made, with the exception of some misprints and obvious typographical errors in Vico's original. In some important respects, however, Battistini's edition differs from Vico's original. The first, and most important, is that it adopts the system of numbered paragraphs which Nicolini invented, in the interests of making the text more comprehensible by dividing many of Vico's exceptionally long paragraphs into shorter ones. The justification for following this somewhat unscholarly practice, as used both in Battistini's edition and in this translation, is that Nicolini's system of numbered paragraphs has now gained such widespread currency as to constitute the main reference system currently in use. It would therefore deprive readers of this translation of access to the textual references in much secondary material were it not to be adopted. Second, in the interests of clarity of meaning, Battistini has frequently altered the punctuation, and sometimes the length, of Vico's extremely long sentences. For the same reason, given the structural differences between English and Italian, I have also had to diverge, at times considerably, from Battistini's edition.

Vico's Italian poses two difficulties for translation. First, his syntax is extremely complex and, as mentioned, this leads to sentences that are often of greater length than any reader of eighteenth-century English texts would expect to encounter. I have, accordingly, shortened the length of some of these sentences, sometimes following Battistini's changes and sometimes introducing others to make the text more intelligible in English. I have tried to do so, however, in a way that would make it possible for the reader to check the translation against Battistini's and Nicolini's editions. In this connection, however, there is one complicating factor. Vico was always keenly aware of connections between the main matter in hand and some related historical or linguistic point. As a result, he frequently inserts references to these related points, at times at considerable length and at others in the briefest of allusions, in the middle of the sentences in which the main argument is being presented. Although I have tried to some extent to follow him in this, I have found it necessary at times, again in the interests of clarity, to move some of these associated points into separate sentences, particularly where they seem important enough to be able to stand in their own right.

Second, Vico's terminology is both highly personal and extremely important. These features derive largely from the fact that it is an integral aspect of the way in which he presents his philosophy that the etymological connections between words, upon which he places great methodological emphasis, should, to some extent, be reflected in the terminology of his own text. This is something which is much more easily achieved in Italian, given its close connections with the Latin from which he draws by far the largest number of his etymological derivations, than in English. In order that these connections should not be lost, therefore, I have translated as many of his terms with words retaining the same Latin roots as possible, even though this leads at times to something that might more accurately be described as Vichian rather than orthodox English. Nevertheless, this has two possible advantages. First, it should enable the reader to come to a deeper understanding of Vico's method of philosophising by being able to trace his use of these terms better than would be the case if they were replaced by more idiomatic but etymologically opaque alternatives. Second, Vico's use of these phrases and terms is so frequent as to give his writing a flavour and strength that is entirely its own, some of which may be conveyed by the retention of these etymologically related equivalents. It remains to add here that, in some cases, where there are no English equivalents to some of Vico's Italian versions of Latin terms, I have simply used the original Latin itself. The explanation of some of this terminology is given in the glossary. Vico's text is well enough organised to allow him frequently to refer back to points established or forward to points yet to be established. Since he did not use the system of numbered paragraphs employed here, I have adopted the practice, used by Bergin and Fisch in their translation of the 1744 edition of *The New Science*, of indicating the relevant paragraphs to which he is referring by inserting a number in square brackets directly into the text. Vico also tended to cite extensively from memory, thus introducing a number of slips. With regard to those that are very obvious, I have put the correct version directly into the text, rather than extend the already very long series of notes, some of which correct less obvious ones of this nature.

Ultimately, therefore, my main aim has been to produce a text that is, above all, faithful to Vico's meaning, written in a clear but not wholly idiomatic English, which may permit a deeper appreciation of one aspect of Vico's method of philosophising, while conveying some sense of the character of his writing.

The notes

The notes in this translation are almost exclusively concerned with the sources of Vico's etymological and historical claims. The reasons for this are twofold. First, despite the enormous significance that Vico attached to etymology, he often either makes no references to his own sources or supplies references that are so general that it is difficult to know, simply from the evidence of the text, even the century in which the poets, etymologists, and political and philosophical writers to whom he is alluding, lived. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that where he does cite sources, these are often inaccurate. Thus, for even a surface understanding of the text, some idea of the subjects of these references is required. Second, however, for any deeper understanding not merely of the context in which Vico worked but of the very way in which his mind worked, an idea of the subjects of these references is equally necessary. As explained in the acknowledgements, I have been greatly assisted by being allowed to use the notes in Battistini's edition for this purpose.

In addition to the notes on Vico's sources, I have added some further material to alert the reader to some general problems of interpretation. Here, however, I have adopted an agnostic attitude because of the degree of disagreement that exists in relation to the interpretation of almost any aspect of Vico's thought. I have also omitted all reference in the notes to any secondary literature. This is now so extensive that any attempt to give a balanced picture of the range of views available in relation to any of the myriad topics that Vico deals with would expand the size of the present volume beyond any reasonable bounds.

Finally, it must be mentioned that there are a number of passages in Vico where the nature of the argument is far from clear. In these cases, rather than try to incorporate an interpretation into the text itself, I have chosen to translate the passages fairly literally and have added a footnote suggesting a possible interpretation of the argument.

With regard to the notes themselves, I have adopted the following conventions. Where a work cited is sufficiently well known as to have an accepted English title, such as Grotius's *The Law of War and Peace*, I have used that title or, if references to it are very frequent, an abbreviation of it. Elsewhere, where the works cited are not well known, and in many cases have very long Latin titles, I have given the Latin title, rather than an English translation of my own, which would be useless in enabling

anybody to trace the work. Finally, with regard to Vico's own earlier works, I have either cited versions of the titles of the present English translations, as given in the chronology and in the bibliographical note, or used the standard system of abbreviated references to their Latin titles. Similarly, in the case of the works of well-known Latin writers such as Cicero, I have either given the English translation of the title of the work, where such a title is widely known, or used the standard system of abbreviated references to its Latin title.

Bibliographical note

Introduction

The literature on Vico is now so vast that in this note I shall be concerned only with works relevant to understanding and evaluating his thought, and will omit the many others that concentrate on his influence on, or thematic similarities with, later writers. Three academic journals are devoted exclusively to Vico studies: *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani* (hereafter *BCSV*), published largely in Italian, *New Vico Studies* (hereafter *NVS*) published in English, and *Cuadernos sobre Vico*, published in Spanish. In addition to the original articles they contain, all three have extensive sections of reviews of books and articles on Vico or on subject matter to which his theories are relevant. The reader is recommended to consult these journals for the massive amount of varied material they contain, in addition to the four large volumes of essays cited below, of which Giorgio Tagliacozzo was either the editor or co-editor. To these should be added his *Vico and Marx* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1983).

Bibliographies

The principal historical, descriptive and analytic bibliography in Italian is the enormous *Bibliografia vichiana*, by Benedetto Croce, revised and enlarged by Fausto Nicolini (Naples, 1947–8). A more detailed but less wide-ranging bibliographical work on Vico's references and influences is Fausto Nicolini's two-volume *Commento storico alla seconda scienza nuova* (Rome, 1978). Though this is a commentary on the 1744 *New Science*, much of the material contained in it relates to figures mentioned also in

The First New Science. The *Bibliografia vichiana* has subsequently been up-dated by a list of publications on Vico in *Contributo alla bibliografia vichiana* (*1948–1970*) by Maria Donzelli (Naples, 1973), *Nuovo contributo alla bibliografia vichiana* (*1971–1980*), by Andrea Battistini (Naples, 1980), and further supplements issued in 1987–8, 1994 and forthcoming in 2000–1 by *BCSV*. For the latest bibliographical survey of all aspects of Vico studies, I would recommend readers to consult the bibliography with which Andrea Battistini has concluded his two-volume *Vico: Opere* (Milan, 1990). In English there is *A Selective Bibliography of Vico Scholarship* (*1948–1968*), by E. Gianturco, issued as a supplement to *Forum Italicum*, 2(1968), n. 4; *Vico in English*, by R. Crease (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1978); 'Contemporary Trends in Vichian Studies', by Andrea Battistini, in *Vico: Past and Present*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1981); *A Bibliography of Vico in English* (*1884–1984*), by G. Tagliacozzo, D. P. Verene and V. Rumble, which has been regularly up-dated in the annual volumes of *NVS*.

English translations of other works by Vico

Affetti di un disperato [1693], translated by the author, in *The Life and Writings of Giambattista Vico*, by H. P. Adams (Woking, 1935).

On Humanistic Education (Six Inaugural Orations, 1699–1707), translated by Giorgio A. Pinton and Arthur W. Shippee (Ithaca, 1993).

On the Study Methods of our Time [1709], translated by Elio Gianturco, with, as an addendum, *The Academies and the Relation between Philosophy and Eloquence* [1737], translated by Donald Phillip Verene (Ithaca, 1990).

On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language [1710], including *The Disputation with 'The Giornale De' Letterati D'Italia'* [1711], translated by L. M. Palmer (Ithaca, 1988).

Universal Right [1720–2], translated by Giorgio Pinton and Margaret Diehl (Amsterdam and Atlanta, 2000).

A Factual Digression on Human Genius, Sharp, Witty Remarks, and Laughter (an excerpt from *In Defence Of Vico*, 1729), translated by Antonio Illiano, James T. Tedder and Piero Treves, in *Forum Italicum*, 2 (1968), n. 4.

The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico [1725, 1728, 1731], with the *Continuation by Villarosa* [1818], translated by Max Harold Fisch

and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca, 1944; slightly revised, Ithaca, 1963).

On The Heroic Mind: An Oration, 1732, translated by Elizabeth Sewell and Anthony C. Sirignano, in *Vico And Contemporary Thought*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Michael Mooney and Donald Phillip Verene (London, 1980).

The Art of Rhetoric (1711–1741), translated by Giorgio A. Pinton and Arthur W. Shippee (Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1996).

The New Science Of Giambattista Vico [1744], translated by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca 1948; significantly revised, Ithaca, 1968).

Practic of the New Science (paragraphs written in 1731 but withheld from publication in the 1744 edition), translated by Thomas G. Bergin and Max H. Fisch, in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene (Baltimore, 1976).

Reprehension of the Metaphysics of René Descartes, Benedict Spinoza and John Locke (paragraphs written in 1731 but withheld from publication in the 1744 edition), translated by Donald Phillip Verene, *NVS*, 8 (1990).

Works on Vico

The most important work tracing the historical and contemporary intellectual context within which Vico worked is undoubtedly Nicola Badaloni's *Introduzione a G. B. Vico* (Milan, 1961). Nothing on this scale has since been written, but Harold Samuel Stone's *Vico's Cultural History: The Production and Transmission of Ideas in Naples, 1685–1750* (Leiden, 1997) provides an excellent account of the more immediate cultural currents operative within Vico's Naples. The introduction to Bergin and Fisch's translation of Vico's *Autobiography* contains a clear, if relatively short, account of the intellectual milieu within which Vico worked. *Italy in the Age of Reason, 1685–1789*, by Dino Carpanetto and Giuseppe Ricuperato (London 1987), is also very helpful.

There is a comparative scarcity of introductory, intellectual biographies of Vico, but the following, all of which give some account of his intellectual context, are to be recommended: *Vico*, by Robert Flint (Edinburgh, 1884); *The Life and Writings of Giambattista Vico*, by H. P. Adams (Woking, 1935); Paolo Rossi's 'La vita e le opere di Giambattista Vico', in his *Le sterminate antichità* (Pisa, 1969); Nicola Badaloni's rather

more specialised introduction to Paolo Cristofolini's *Vico: Opere filosofiche* (Florence, 1971); and *Vico*, by Enrico Nuzzo (Florence, 1974).

Turning to specific thinkers by whom Vico was influenced, the following valuable works are in the *Studi Vichiani* series produced by Guida Editori, Naples: *Il 'verum-factum' prima di Vico* (for Campanello, Galileo and Hobbes) by Rodolfo Mondolo (1969); *Vico e Bayle: premesse per un confronto,* by Gianfranco Cantelli (1971); *Vico e Grozio*, by Guido Fassò (1971); *Bayle, Leibniz e la storia*, by Antonio Corsano (1971), *Vico e Le Clerc: Tra filosofia e filologia*, by Mario Sina (1978). For Vico and St Augustine, see A. Lamacchia's *Vico e S. Agostino. La presenza della 'De civitate Dei' nella 'Scienza nuova'*, in *Giambattista Vico. Poesia logica religione*, ed. G. Santinello (Brescia, 1986). For Vico's 'four authors' (Bacon, Tacitus, Plato and Grotius), see 'Vico's Four Authors', by Enrico De Mas, in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Hayden V. White (Baltimore, 1969), and in the same volume, for Tacitus, Bodin and Descartes respectively, Santo Caramella's 'Vico, Tacitus and Reason of State', Girolamo Cotroneo's 'A Renaissance Source of the "Scienza Nuova": Jean Bodin's "Methodus" ', and Yvon Belaval's 'Vico and Anti-Cartesianism'. Also on Vico's anti-Cartesianism, see Alberto Mario Damiani's *Giambattista Vico: La Cienca Anticartesiana* (Buenos Aires, 2000). For Plato, see *Vico and Plato*, by Nancy du Bois Marcus (New York, 2001); for Machiavelli, see *La politica e la storia. Machiavelli e Vico*, by R. Esposito (Naples, 1980), and James Morrison's 'Vico and Machiavelli' in *Vico: Past and Present*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1981); for Hobbes, *Vico e Hobbes*, by F. Focher (Naples, 1977), and E. Garin in his *Dal Rinascimento all'illuminismo* (Pisa, 1970), and *A proposito di Vico e Hobbes* (*BCSV*, 1978); for Vico and Locke, Gustavo Costa's 'Vico e Locke', in *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 49 (1970); for Vico and Voss, Andrea Battistini's *La degnità della retorica. Studi su G. B. Vico* (Pisa, 1975); for Vico and Malebranche, Mario Agrimi's 'Vico e Malebranche', in *Giambattista Vico nel suo tempo e nel nostro*, ed. Mario Agrimi (Naples, 1999); for Vico and Spinoza, J. Samuel Preus's 'Spinoza, Vico and the Imagination of Religion', in *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 1 (1989); and for various aspects of Vico's relationship to Renaissance thought, 'Vico and the Humanistic Concept of "Prisca Theologia"', by Emanuele Riverso; 'G. B. Vico and the "Artes Historicae" of the Italian Renaissance', by Linda Gardiner-Janik; and 'Vico and the Heritage of Renaissance Thought', by Eugenio Garin, all in *Vico: Past and Present*.

For general monographs seeking to locate the coherence of Vico's later thought on the basis of certain fundamental principles, the following gives an indication of the range of viewpoints developed: for the most famous of all idealist interpretations, Benedetto Croce's ground-breaking *La Filosofia di G. B. Vico* (Bari, 1911); for the best and most influential Catholic (Thomist) interpretation, F. Amerio's *Introduzione allo studio di G. B. Vico* (Turin, 1947); for an existentialist interpretation, E. Paci's *Ingens Sylva* (Milan, 1949); for an interpretation centred on Vico's Platonism, A. Robert Caponigri's *Time and Idea* (London 1953); for two works stressing Vico's naturalism and covert atheism, *The Political Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, by F. Vaughan (The Hague, 1972), and, in more detail, Gino Bedani's *Vico Revisited* (Oxford 1989); for a work stressing the humanistic character and jurisprudential origins of Vico's philosophy, Isaiah Berlin's *Vico and Herder* (London, 1976) (re-issued in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, 2000)); for a detailed historical work which lays more weight on the importance of Vico's non-juridical, humanist predecessors, *Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric*, by Michael Mooney (Princeton, N.J., 1985); for a work stressing some of the same sources but philosophically nearer to Berlin's viewpoint, Donald Phillip Verene's *Vico's Science of Imagination* (Ithaca, 1981); for a more wide-ranging discussion of the value of myth from a different point of view, Joseph Mali's *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico's New Science* (Cambridge, 1992); for a work examining the nature of Vico's 'science', Leon Pompa's *Vico: A Study of the 'New Science'* (Cambridge, 1975; revised 1990); and for a work presenting Vico as a transcendental philosopher, in the Kantian sense of 'transcendental', Stephan Otto's *Giambattista Vico. Grundzüge seiner Philosophie* (Stuttgart, 1989).

Turning to works that deal more specifically with Vico's political philosophy and philosophy of law, in addition to the volume by Bedani cited above, see *Diritto società e stato in Vico*, by Dino Pasini (Naples, 1970), and *Truth and Authority in Vico's Universal Law*, by Mirella Vaglio (New York, 1999). The importance of Vico's political theory within his overall philosophy is stressed in Guido Fassò's 'The Problem of Law and the Historical Origin of the "New Science"', in Tagliawzzo and Verene (eds.), *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity.* In this connection Dario Faucci's well-balanced 'Vico and Grotius: Jurisconsults of Mankind', in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, should not be overlooked. Mark Lilla's *G. B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), emphasises the theological roots of Vico's anti-sceptical

political philosophy, while Bruce Haddock, in *Vico's Political Thought* (Swansea, 1986), traces the growth of Vico's political philosophy from the rhetorical and jurisprudential traditions of Italian thought. For excellent discussions of the nature and ramifications of Vico's theory of the forms of governments see Norberto Bobbio's *Vico e la teoria delle forme di governo* (*BCSV*, 1978) and A. C. 't Hart's *La teoria vichiana sulla successione delle forme e le sue implicazioni politiche* (*BCSV*, 1987–8). The problem of Vico's apparent lack of prescriptive political conclusions is discussed by Max H. Fisch in 'Vico's "Pratica"' and Alain Pons in his 'Prudence and Providence: 'The pratica della Scienza nuova and the Problem of Theory and Practice in Vico', both *in Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, and addressed at length by Enrico Nuzzo in *Vico e 'l'Aristotele pratico': la meditazione sulle forme 'civili' nelle 'pratiche' della Scienza Nuova Prima* (*BCSV*, 1984–5). More recently, the problem has been re-addressed by Alberto Mario Damiani in *La dimensión política de la 'Scienza Nuova' y otros estudios sobre Giambattista Vico* (Buenos Aires, 1998). The related problem of Vico's attitude to political action has been discussed by Pietro Piovani in his 'Apoliticality and Politicality in Vico', in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, by Giuseppe Giarizzo in *Vico, la politica e la storia* (Naples 1981), and by Giuseppe Galasso in *Il Vico di Giarizzo e un itinerario alternativo* (*BCSV*, 1982–3).

Vico's conceptions of Providence, a metaphysics of the human mind and common sense are all related to the nature of his political philosophy and have been widely discussed. Views on these topics will be found in all the works cited above which offer synoptic accounts of Vico's thought. To these, however, the following should be added: on common sense, Giuseppe Modica's *La filosofia del 'senso comune' in Giambattista Vico* (Caltanisetta and Rome, 1983), and *Sensus communis: Vico, Rhetoric and the Limits of Relativism*, by John D. Shaeffer (Durham, N.C., 1990); and on Vico's 'metaphysics of the mind', José Manuel Sevilla Fernandez's *Giambattista Vico: metafisica della mente e historicismo antropologico* (Seville, 1988), and Cecilia Castellani's *Dalla cronologia alla metafisica della mente. Saggio su Vico* (Bologna, 1995).

The literature on Vico's linguistic theory is, again, too large to cite in any detail here, but readers should begin with A. Pagliaro's important 'Lingua e poesia secondo G. B. Vico', in *his Altri saggi di critica semantica* (Messina, 1961), Giovanni A. Bianca's *Il concetto di poesia in Giambattista Vico* (Messina, 1967), and Gianfranco Cantelli's detailed and highly influential study, *Mente corpo linguaggio* (Florence, 1986). Vico's attitude

towards the fables is put into context in Frank E. Manuel's *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). Finally, given the obvious importance of Vico's account of Roman history, see Arnaldo Momigliano's 'Vico's "Scienza nuova": Roman "bestioni" and Roman "eroi"', *History and Theory,* 5(1966), and, more widely, Santo Mazzarino's *Vico, L'annalistica e il diritto* (Naples, 1971).

Glossary

celebrate, celebrated, *celebrare, celebrato, celebre* Vico talks of 'celebrated' persons or events, and of 'celebrating' certain institutions, almost invariably of a religious nature. In the first case I have retained 'celebrated' to indicate his own slight preference for this term over the synonym 'famous', which he also uses. In the second, however, I have retained it to capture the two aspects involved when a nation both practises certain institutions and does so accompanied by solemn, religious, ceremonies, i.e. practices them in a manner that reflects their religious nature.

certain, *certo* This can have any of the meanings that 'certain' has in English: thus, 'a certain man', i.e. a particular but unspecified man, or 'certain Roman history', i.e. the parts of Roman history about which there is no doubt. Vico also, however, applies it in one particularly important context, i.e. when he is referring to a developing sequence in which, once monogamy has become a prevalent practice, the certainty of parents leads to the certainty of the parentage of children and this in turn, when certain institutions have arisen, to the certainty of the lineage of families, thence of gentes or clans (q.v.), and nations. Vico applies *certo* to each element in the sequence, 'certain fathers, certain mothers, certain children, certain families etc.', and in many similar sequences, in order to emphasise the certainty that is conferred from one element in the sequence to the next. These are in contrast with 'natural' relationships between men, women and children, which are relationships between people which obtain either in the state of bestial communion, where mating is casual and parentage unknown, or between those, such as the plebeians, who lack the right to legal marriage and the further rights to inheritance of property that

this confers, in societies in which these institutions have been established. Vico's use of *certo* is such a general characteristic of his style that I have translated it as 'certain' throughout in order to maintain his emphasis. The noun c*ertezza* also means 'certainty' in the sense of 'being known with certainty', but he uses it only seven times in contrast to the great number of times he uses *certo* in this context.

clan, *attenenza* A group of families, or a house or gens (q.v.), stemming from some single original stock, with its own religion and name, such as the branches of the gens or family Cornelius.

clientes, clienteles The Italian *cliente* and *clientela* derive from the Latin *cliens* or *cluens* and *clientela*. They can mean either a client and clientele, in the sense of a customer and group of customers, or a retainer, bound in some legal relationship of dependence and service, and a group or band of such retainers. Since Vico uses the Italian words exclusively in this latter sense, which he also derives from Latin, I have translated them as 'clientes' and 'clienteles', in order to avoid the associations of the words 'clients' and 'clientele', which are now used almost exclusively in the former sense.

common, *comune* The importance of what is common to, or shared by, a social group is fundamental to Vico's thought. A people is held together by a common religion and a set of shared beliefs, laws and institutions, together with a general shared understanding of what these involve. I have translated *comune* as 'common' throughout, rather than use alternatives such as 'shared' since, like *certo*, Vico uses it almost continuously in order to emphasise the importance of the relationship between what is common to one area of activity with what is common to a different but structurally related area of activity.

common sense, *senso comune* This is Vico's term for the beliefs common to a society upon which its institutions and social order must stand. These vary at different points in the development of a nation. Thus it is part of the common sense of the heroic age, accepted by the heroes and the plebeians alike, that the heroes, being of semi-divine origin, i.e. born of gods and humans, are different in nature from the plebeians, who are born of mortal unions. On the basis of this belief, both classes accept a system of justice in which there are severe differences in their respective legal rights. Later, when this belief has died out, a new conception of justice will rest

on a new common belief about the equality of the human nature of all. In accordance with Vico's theory of the non-rational origins of everything human, however, common sense does not arise initially as some kind of rational reflection but as a set of inner feelings shared by all.

communicate With its root in *comune*, *comunicare* has the same meaning as the English 'to communicate', as in 'to communicate ideas', a sense in which Vico himself uses it. He uses it most frequently, however, as a way of saying that the plebeians are either seeking or have gained access to the auspices, or the right to marriage, which were initially confined to the patricians. I have translated his expression *comunicare gli auspici* quite literally, if somewhat unidiomatically, as 'to communicate the auspices' for two reasons. The first is to capture the emphasis that Vico lays on the religious nature of the whole context within which the auspices were taken and of the practices that followed from them. Thus communicating the auspices to the plebs involves more than allowing them common access to an institution. It is more like allowing them to be communicated into a religiously based institution, as though they were being communicated into the church, a meaning which the Italian *comunicare* retains. Vico himself indicates this when he refers to the execrations of the Greeks as 'a certain kind of excommunication'. Second, it retains the idea, which Vico undoubtedly had in mind, that in using *comunicare* for admission to this right he was indicating the transition from the 'bestial communion', i.e. unlicensed mating, of the plebs to 'human communion', i.e. legitimate mating, for which holy sanction through the auspices is required.

fatherland, *patria* This can mean one's own city, country, homeland or fatherland. I have translated it as fatherland because of the etymological connections with which Vico connects the conception, through the patricians, *i patricii*, with the fathers, *i padri*, of early history.

Gens, gentes, *la gente, gentes* The Italian *gente*, meaning 'people in general' or 'members of a family' is derived from the Latin *gens*, the plural of which is *gentes*. In the singular this meant a clan, or a group bound together by ties of blood and shared institutions. In the plural it usually meant peoples, races or nations. Vico often uses the words *gente* and *genti* in either of the second senses, and I have translated them in these ways according to context, though most frequently as 'peoples'. He also, however, uses the Italian *gente* in the singular sense of the Latin *gens*, when he refers

to those who belong to *la gente*. Since he is here giving an Italian word a technical Latin meaning, I have translated *gente* and the plural *genti* in these contexts by using the Latin *gens* and *gentes*, but leaving them without italics in order to avoid conflating this usage with his etymological discussions of the original Latin words. Thus I have translated *avere la gente* as 'to belong to a gens', and *il diritto natural delle genti* as 'the natural law of the gentes' (q.v.).

humanity, *umanità* This sometimes refers to our shared human nature and I have occasionally translated it in this way. But in its most important sense it refers to what it is that is human, rather than bestial, in the context of a properly human mode of living. These are the practices that can come about only by living in a society in which Vico's three basic principles are observed, such as being brought up and educated within the context of a shared religion and an orderly family life, which can arise from the practice of burial of the dead but is impossible in the world of promiscuous and bestial communion, or, again, the whole set of institutions through which property and wealth can be acquired and passed on in the form of inheritance, or the institutions through which cultural developments can take place. For the most part I have translated *umanità* as humanity.

ingenuity, *ingegno* There is no precise English equivalent of this word as Vico uses it. In *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, he defines it as 'the power to connect separate and diverse elements', i.e. as the faculty of discrimination. Elsewhere, however, he also describes it as the ability to perceive similarities, and as the source both of human inventiveness and of the ability to make discoveries, as in discovering the use that certain natural objects can have. It can also have the meaning of 'genius', but I have avoided this because of the more specific sense that that term now has. Ingenuity is a more basic human capacity than the power to reason, since it is one of the sources of the natural growth of language, which reason cannot provide. It is important, however, that the word 'ingenuity' should not be understood as carrying the connotations of deviousness which are sometimes attached to it. Though Vico himself occasionally suggests that some 'ingenious' scholars are devious, this is a description of the way in which they use their ingenuity rather than of the general capacity itself.

to meditate on, meditation Vico uses the verb *meditare* and the noun *meditazione* very frequently. In both cases these refer to a serious thinking,

pondering or consideration of something, but without any suggestion of the religious or mystical connotations that the English 'meditation' and 'to meditate on' often have. In a few contexts he also uses them as though they were alternatives to 'reflection' and 'to reflect upon', which certainly lack these connotations. Despite this, however, I have translated them as 'meditation' and 'to meditate on' rather than the more idiomatic 'reflection' and 'to reflect on' in order to preserve his more specific use of these terms in the extremely important sequence: men 'sense first, and then reflect, first with souls perturbed by passions, then finally with pure mind', as in paragraph 298. At no point does he qualify 'meditation' in the same way. Occasionally, where he uses *meditare* in an obviously less important context, I have translated it as 'to consider'.

metaphysics of the human mind, *metafisica dell'umana mente* This refers to the innate order in which the properties of mind, taken in its wider sense (q.v.) change both in themselves and in their relative importance within the structure of the mind as it develops. Vico uses the expression only once, but illustrates it with great frequency.

mind, *mente* This is used in a wider and a narrower sense. In its wider sense it includes all human cognitive and volitional capacities, of which will, perception, imagination, ingenuity, memory and reason are modifications (q.v.). In its narrower sense it refers to intelligence or understanding. Thus when Vico talks of primitive man as being of limited mind, he is referring to his limited powers of understanding but not to limited powers of perception. In its wider sense, however, the development of mind is the subject of the metaphysics of the human mind.

modification, *modificazione* This has the same general meaning as the English 'modification', i.e. a change in the structure or character of something. Vico's most important use of it is in the expressions 'modifications of our human mind' and 'of our human soul', through which he refers to the sequence of changes in the structure of mind, as it moves from being governed by basic sensual desires to desires based upon more rational states of the understanding, as traced in his metaphysics of the human mind.

nature, natural, *natura, naturale* Like the English 'nature', *natura* can refer to nature or the physical world as such, or to the essence of something. Vico uses it in both ways, in the second largely in connection with the

essence of 'human things'. A crucial feature of his use in this context is his connecting 'the eternal properties of things' with 'the mode and time of their birth'. The suggestion here is not that the two are identical but that the eternal properties of things cannot be understood without discovering the historical circumstances in which they arise and continue to change. Thus the essence of human things is a historical essence, in which different properties arise as the mind develops in the course of history. For his use of the word 'natural' in connection with men, women and children, *see* certain.

natural law of the gentes, natural law of the nations, *il diritto natural delle genti* and *il diritto naturale delle nazioni* These expressions are synonymous but since Vico uses them both I have translated them in both ways. They are complex in meaning. At the most basic level they refer not to enacted law but to the common conceptions involved in the private law of all peoples at a certain stage in their development. For Vico these conceptions reflect, and are dependent upon, people developing a grasp of the true, i.e. in law, of the idea of equity. The Italian *diritto* can mean 'a right' or 'what is right', but I have avoided translating *il diritto naturale delle genti* as 'the natural right of the gentes' in order not to assimilate it to the ahistorical, and wholly rational, natural right of the natural law theorists, such as Grotius, to whom Vico is opposed. In contrast to their conception, Vico's expression 'the natural law of the gentes' brings out the historical and developing nature of this conception of law by suggesting the connection between the law of the nations and its early manifestation in that of the early clans or gentes. In this sense the expression 'the natural law of the gentes' brings out the historical character of the law more clearly than 'the natural law of the nations'. What makes it 'natural' is that, because of the presence in man of the 'the seeds of the true', its identical development everywhere is both spontaneous and yet conforms with the 'natural order of things'.

necessities of nature, *necessità di natura* These arise in connection with both the physical and human senses of 'nature' (q.v.). Sometimes, but not always, Vico indicates the second kind of necessity by using the expression 'necessities of human nature'.

occasion, *occasione* Vico draws a clear distinction between occasion and cause when referring to any major development in the sequence exhibited

in the development of a nation. The 'occasion' refers to one of the features that he lists in his sequence of what mankind finds to be necessary, useful, or comfortable as human nature develops. Though such occasions are necessary to human development, they are not presented as its cause. The cause is Providence's plan, evincing itself through the dictates of human will, regulated by vulgar wisdom, which becomes active on such occasions. The history of different nations follows the same course, therefore, as a result both of the uniformity of the sequence of occasions and of the eternal nature of this plan. I have retained 'occasion' for *occasione* in order to leave open possible associations with Malebranche's occasionalism which may underlie Vico's own use.

principle, *principio* This can mean either 'principle' or 'origin'. Vico uses it in both senses. Sometimes he offers *principio* and *origine* as explicit synonyms, while at others it is clear from the general context that *principio* means 'origin'. In other contexts he is equally clearly using *principio* to refer to some governing conceptual or substantive assumption either in some historical subject matter or in his own science. In yet others, however, he plays on the two meanings to indicate that the principle needed to understand the development of something consists in the nature of its origins.

sect, *setta* As Vico uses it this is a technical term. In its primary meaning it applies to philosophers, jurists and other kinds of thinkers, in which case it means a sect holding some shared doctrine. In its secondary sense, however, he applies it, more unusually, to parts of time, when he wants to characterise these parts of time in terms of the beliefs of some such sect of thinkers. Since there is no English word which captures the dependence of this second sense upon the first, I have left his *sette di tempi* as a technical term and translated it literally as 'sects of time'.

senses, meanings, to feel, to sense, *sensi, sentire* These words can have any of the above meanings, which I have used in accordance with the context. *See also* common sense.

socius Vico uses the Italian *socio*, which normally means an associate, and is derived from the Latin *socius*, which can mean either a companion, as it is usually translated in connection with Virgil's Misenus, or an ally. Vico, however, gives it quite a different meaning, equating it with someone

bound to his lord in an early feudal relationship. Since he is therefore offering a new interpretation of the normal meaning of the Latin *socius*, I have substituted the Latin term for his Italian term.

things, *cose*, the Latin *res* This is a very general word which Vico uses with great frequency. Sometimes, following a comparatively rare Latin usage, he means it as a synonym for 'institution', but, because of its generality in Italian, I have translated it much more widely, to include 'practices', 'affairs', 'matters' and 'things' as well as 'institutions'. Where it occurs in the context of very early history, I have often preferred 'practices' to 'institutions', to avoid the suggestion of things that are instituted, i.e. deliberately set up, since Vico believes that many things that become institutions arise naturally and without deliberate intention.

the true, the truth, truths, *il vero, i veri, la verità, le verità* In *Universal Right* Vico defines the Latin *verum* as 'the true', which, somewhat unusually, in Italian would be *il vero*, both as 'the conformity of the mind with God's order of things' and as 'the order of ideas laid down by God'. The second of these expressions corresponds to the plan laid down by Providence. Nevertheless, it is clear that in the majority of cases Vico uses the Italian *il vero* and *i veri* as synonyms for *la verità* and *le verità*, i.e. 'the or a truth' and 'truths', and much less frequently in the technical sense given in *Universal Right*. I have accordingly translated them mostly as 'truth' and 'truths' in the ordinary sense of these words and only occasionally as 'the true'.

words of settled meaning, *parlari convenuti* This could be translated as 'words with an agreed or conventional meaning'. But while Vico uses the expression *parlari convenuti* in contexts in which words are given meaning by convention, he also uses it in the context of the beginnings of language, where he is referring to the language of gestures and objects that arises through natural causes. I have therefore translated *convenuti* as 'of settled meaning' in order to allow that the meaning has become settled or fixed either naturally or, later, by agreement or convention. In later editions of *The New Science* Vico was more explicit and introduced the expression *a placito* for words given meaning by agreement.

The First New Science

The principles of a New Science[1] of the nature of nations through which the principles of a new system of the natural law of the gentes are discovered

A Iove principium Musae [The Muses descended from Jove][2]
Virgil

[1] From the start Vico makes it clear that his work is intended to be a 'science', complete with its own metaphysical and substantive principles and methodology, as distinct from works which he characterises as products of the undisciplined use of imagination and traditional memory. Cf., for example, paras. 79–82 and 88–9 below. Hereafter, as in the body of the text, cross-references to other paragraphs will be given simply by citing the paragraph numbers.

[2] Virgil, *The Eclogues*, III, 60.

1. To the academies of Europe, in this enlightened age in which not only the fables and vulgar traditions of gentile history but all the authority whatsoever of the most esteemed philosophers is submitted to the criticism of severe reason, for the supreme praise with which their illustrious professors adorn the natural law of the gentes, this work is respectfully addressed. Since the natural law of the gentes of Sparta, Athens and Rome comprised as small a part of this law as Sparta, Athens and Rome were themselves parts of the world, the principles of a new system are herein meditated on through the discovery of a new science of the nature of the nations from which this law undoubtedly arose. For the origins of the sciences, disciplines and arts are certainly to be found in the humanity of this nature, within which their life proceeds and to which they are primarily indebted in all their practices. Hence, such is the height of perfection to which the doctrine of the academies is raised when it embodies the excellence of their erudition and wisdom, as corrected and amended by the discoveries made here, that Giambattista Vico is encouraged to devote his whole being to honouring the profession of the law. And such are the expressive qualities of the venerable language of Italy, to which alone, given the weakness of his ingenuity, he owes such learning as he has, that his work is written in Italian.[3]

[3] With the exception of the two *Responses* to the hostile reviews of *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians* and the *Synopsis* of *Universal Right*, all of Vico's previous academic prose works were written in Latin. His decision to write in Italian, a practice continued throughout the different versions of *The New Science*, was inspired by a wish to free himself from the constraints of a traditional, and often theoretically loaded, vocabulary and to enable him to express himself in a manner that captured the flavour of his subject matter. To this end he not only frequently uses words that were already antiquated by his time but also chooses increasingly antiquated variants of the spelling of these words.

Idea of the Work

2. Wherein we meditate on a science of the nature of the nations from which their humanity arose, beginning everywhere in their religions and coming to completion in their sciences, disciplines and arts.

Book[4] *I*

3. *Ignari hominumque locorumque erramus* ['We wander ignorant both of men and places']: Virgil.[5]
– The necessity of the end and the difficulty of the means of discovering this science in the ferine wandering of Thomas Hobbes's licentious, violent men,[6] or Hugo Grotius's simpletons,[7] solitary, weak and lacking all their needs, or Samuel Pufendorf's men,[8] thrown into this world without divine care or assistance, from whom the gentile nations came.

[4] In the text of 1725, Vico divides the whole work first into sections under 'capi' or headings, and each of these subsequently into sub-sections which are indicated by a title and a number. In order to help clarify the text Nicolini, followed by Battistini, has treated each heading as a book, and each sub-section within the book as a chapter.

[5] Virgil, *Aeneid*, I, 332–3 (henceforth *Aen.*).

[6] There is no evidence that Vico's knowledge of Hobbes was based on any first-hand reading of his texts. Such knowledge as he had may have come from earlier Italian writers or discussion in the Academies. The reference to 'i violenti' of Hobbes was, however, a commonplace in general philosophical discussion.

[7] Hugo de Groot (1583–1645), *The Law of War and Peace*, II, II, 1–2 (henceforth *The Law*). Grotius was one of the most important influences on Vico. See introduction, pp. xxi–xxiv.

[8] Samuel Pufendorf (1632–94), *De jure naturae et gentium*, II, 2, 2.

Book II

4. *Iura a diis posita* ['The laws laid down by the gods']: a common expression of the poets.
– The principles of this science drawn from men's ideas of a provident divinity from whose warnings or commands, as they were believed to be, all the gentile nations arose.

Book III

5. *Fas gentium* ['The divine law of the gentes']:[9] an expression used by the Latin heralds.
– The principles of this science drawn from a language common to all nations.

Book IV

6. *Leges aeternae* ['The eternal laws']:[10] an expression of the philosophers.
– The ground of the proofs which are established here by showing how and when, in certain particular modes and certain determinate first times, the customs that constitute the entire system of the natural law of the gentes were born with certain eternal properties, which demonstrate that the nature or mode and time of their birth was thus and not otherwise.

Book V

7. *Foedera generis humani* ['Treaties of mankind']:[11] an expression of the historians.
– The order of development through which, in diverse places and times, on the basis of the identical origins of their religions and languages, the nations share the same birth, progress, state [of perfection], decay and end, and are gradually spread throughout the world of human generation.

[9] Tacitus, *Annals*, I, 42, 2 (henceforth *Ann.*).
[10] Cicero, *De natura deorum*, I, 15. 40 (henceforth *De nat. deorum*).
[11] Livy, *The History of Rome*, IV, 19, 3 (henceforth Livy).

BOOK I

THE NECESSITY OF THE END AND THE DIFFICULTY OF THE MEANS OF DISCOVERING A NEW SCIENCE

[Chapter] I
Reasons for our meditation on this work

8. The natural law of the nations was certainly born with the common customs of the nations.[1] Furthermore, there has never been a nation of atheists in the world, because all nations began in some single religion.[2] The roots of these religions all sprang from man's natural desire for eternal life, a desire, common to human nature, which arises from a common sense, concealed in the depths of the human mind, that the human soul is immortal. But however hidden this cause, its effect is equally evident: that, when faced with the final afflictions of death, we wish for a force superior to nature by which to overcome them, a force that is to be found only in a God who is not identical with, but superior to, nature herself, i.e. an infinite and eternal mind. And when men stray from this God, they become curious about the future.

[1] One of Vico's constant targets is any form of natural law theory which rests the foundations of society upon some kind of rational insight into the desirability of social life. His basic objection is that the attribution of such insight is incompatible with recognition of the 'simple and rough' nature of primitive man. Cf. 27. Hence, he consistently argues for law beginning in the customs of such men. Cf. 20.

[2] The reference here is to Bayle, who had maintained the possibility of a society of atheists. Cf. 476. The apparently limited nature of the point which Vico contests conceals a much larger issue. For Bayle had argued that it would be impossible to understand the history of societies which had no beliefs in common. Vico accepted this claim but was therefore concerned to show that there could be no societies with no beliefs in common, since all were based upon religion. This position is fortified by his further claim that there could be no societies without the institutions of marriage and burial of the dead. Cf. 10.

9. This curiosity, which is forbidden by nature, for [such knowledge of the future] belongs to a God who is an infinite and eternal mind, precipitated the fall of the two great originators of mankind. Accordingly God both founded the true religion of the Hebrews upon worship of His infinite and eternal Providence and punished the first authors of the human race for their desire to know the future, thus condemning the whole race to toil, pain and death. Whence the false religions all rose from idolatry, i.e. from the worship of imaginary deities, falsely believed to be bodies with supernatural force, who give succour to men in their final afflictions. Idolatry shared her birth with that of divination, which was a vain science of the future, through which men believed that the gods sent them certain sensory warnings. Yet this vain science, in which the vulgar wisdom of all the gentile nations must have begun, hides two great principles of truth: first, that there is a divine Providence which governs human affairs; second, that men possess freedom of the will, through which, if they so choose, they can escape that which, without their foreseeing it, would otherwise befall them. It follows from this second truth that men can choose to live in justice, a common sense that is confirmed by the common desire men naturally have for laws when they are not moved otherwise by the passion of some self-interest.
10. This, and no other, is certainly the human nature whose practices, always and everywhere, have been governed by these three common senses of mankind: firstly, that Providence exists; secondly, that certain children be bred by certain women with whom they share at least the principles of a common civil religion, in order that they be brought up by their fathers and mothers in a single spirit and in conformity with the laws and religions amidst which they were born; and thirdly, that the dead should be buried.[3] Hence not only has there never been a nation of atheists in the world, but neither has there been a nation in which women did not adopt the public religion of their husbands. And if there has never been a nation that lived in total nakedness, even less has there been one in which people practised canine or shameless venery in the presence of others or indulged it, like beasts, only in stray matings. Nor, finally, has any nation, no matter how barbaric, ever left the corpses of its members to rot

[3] These three conditions provide the basic hypothesis of the whole of the New Science, which Vico later claims to have proved. Cf. 526.

unburied on the ground, for this would be a nefarious state, i.e. one that sins against the common nature of men. Hence, to avoid falling into such a state, the nations protect their native religions with inviolable ceremonies, celebrating marriage and burial, above all other human institutions, with elaborate rites and solemnities. This is the vulgar wisdom of mankind, which began in religions and laws and reached its perfection and completion in the sciences, disciplines and arts.

[Chapter] II
Meditation on a New Science

11. But though the sciences, disciplines and arts have all been directed towards the perfection and regulation of man's faculties, none of them has yet contained a meditation upon certain origins of the humanity of nations, from which, beyond doubt, they themselves all arose. Nor, starting from such origins, have they established a certain ἀκμή [*acme*], or state of perfection, with which to measure the stages through which the humanity of nations must proceed and the limits within which, like all else mortal, it must terminate. Had they done so they would have gained scientific apprehension of the practices through which the humanity of a nation, as it rises, can reach this perfect state, and those through which, when it declines from this state, it can return to it anew.[4] The only possible form that this state could take would be that in which the nations stand fast on certain maxims, both demonstrated by immutable reasons and practised in their common customs, so that the recondite wisdom of the philosophers would aid and support the vulgar wisdom of nations and, in this way, the distinguished members of the academies be in agreement with the sages of the republics. Thus the science of civil things, divine and human, i.e. of religion and law, which constitute a theology and morality of command acquired through habit, would be supported by the science of natural things, divine and human, which constitute a theology and morality of reason,

[4] This substantial hypothesis is part of the methodological basis for Vico's claim that this is a 'new' science. What makes it new is not that the histories of nations exhibit this sequence, which was common to many writers in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and is repeated frequently by Vico, but the claim that it can be shown that nations proceed through the sequence because, given certain conditions, they must do so, i.e. because, as Vico's Science will demonstrate, the sequence is necessary.

acquired through reasoning.[5] Hence, a life beyond such maxims would be the true [state of] error, i.e. of wandering, of man and beast alike.

[Chapter] III
The defect of such a Science if based upon the maxims of the Epicureans and Stoics or the practices advocated by Plato

12. But, following paths that were not merely different from but quite opposed to one other, the Epicureans and the Stoics unfortunately set themselves at a distance from, and abandoned, vulgar wisdom. For the Epicureans taught that chance rules blindly over human affairs; that the human soul dies with the body; that, since only body exists, the bodily senses must regulate the passions through pleasure; and that utility, which changes by the hour, is the rule of justice. The Stoics, on the contrary, decreed that everything, including human will, is dragged along by a fatal necessity. True, they conceded a temporal life to the soul after death, but, though they preached that there is an eternal and immutable justice and that honesty should be the norm of human actions, their desire to render human nature wholly insensitive to the passions would annihilate it completely; while their maxim, harder by far than iron, that all sins are equal, and therefore that it is as sinful to beat a slave even slightly in excess of his deserts as it is to kill one's father,[6] would drive men to despair of the possibility of exercising their virtue. Hence, the Epicureans, with their ever-varying utility, would destroy the first and most important foundation of this science, the immutability of the natural law of the gentes; and the Stoics, with their iron severity, would dismiss the benign interpretation [of law], in which interests and punishments are adjusted in accordance with the three celebrated categories of fault. So closely, then, do these sects of philosophers agree with the principles of Roman jurisprudence, that one uproots its most important maxim, and the other denies its most important practice!
13. The divine Plato alone meditated on a recondite wisdom through which man would be regulated in accordance with maxims taken from

[5] Despite the apparent parallelism between sound practice acquired through habit, i.e. training, and philosophical wisdom, by insisting that by demonstrable maxims philosophy should support sound practice, Vico is giving priority to the role of practice in the development and maintenance of the humanity of a nation.

[6] The morality of this is raised by Plato in *Euthyphro*.

the vulgar wisdom of religion and the law. Wholly committed both to Providence and the immortality of the human soul, he located virtue in moderation of the passions and taught that it was the proper duty of a philosopher to live in conformity with the laws, even where, for some reason, they had become excessively harsh. His model here was that which his master, Socrates, gave with his own life, when, despite his innocence, he chose to accept his punishment and drink the hemlock because he had been condemned as guilty.[7] Yet even Plato lost sight of Providence when, through an error common to the human mind, whereby it measures the relatively unknown nature of others in accordance with itself, he raised the barbaric and rough origins of gentile humanity to the perfect state of his own exalted, divine and recondite knowledge, whereas he ought, on the contrary, to have descended from his 'ideas' and sunk down to those origins. Thus, through a scholarly error, in which he has been followed to the present day, it became necessary for him to prove that the first authors of gentile humanity were sages, replete in a recondite wisdom, whereas, since they came from races of impious and uncultured men, such as those of Ham and Japhet must once have been, they could only have been huge beasts, wholly bewildered and ferocious. And, as a result of this erudite error, instead of meditating upon an eternal republic and the laws of an eternal justice, on the basis of which Providence ordained the world of nations and governs it through the common needs of mankind itself, Plato meditated on an ideal state and an equally ideal justice, wherein not only would the nations not be ruled and led by the common sense of the whole of mankind but, alas, be required to distort and abandon it. As, for example, in the case of that [rule of] justice enjoined in his *Republic*:[8] that women should be [held in] common.

[Chapter] IV
This Science is meditated on the basis of the Roman jurisconsults' idea of the natural law of the gentes

14. In the light of the foregoing, what is now required is the science of the natural law of the gentes which the Roman jurisconsults defined, exactly as they received it from their predecessors, as 'the law ordained

[7] See Plato's *Phaedo.*
[8] Plato, *Republic*, V, 457d.

by divine Providence through the dictates of human necessities or utilities, observed equally in all nations'.

[Chapter] V
The defect of such a Science if based upon the systems of Grotius, Selden or Pufendorf[9]

15. Our own times have seen the rise of three celebrated men, Hugo Grotius,[10] John Selden[11] and Samuel Pufendorf,[12] of whom Grotius was foremost, each of whom meditated on a system of the natural law of the nations of his own devising, for Boecler,[13] van der Meulen[14] and the others did little more than comment on Grotius's system. But all three princes of this doctrine fell into error, because not one of them thought of establishing the natural law of the nations on the basis of divine Providence. Hence they were not beyond giving offence to the Christian people, whereas the Roman jurisconsults, in the midst of their paganism, acknowledged that great principle.
16. Grotius was led by his positively over-zealous concern for the truth into the quite unpardonable error, whether in this kind of subject matter or in metaphysics, of claiming that his system would hold good and stand firm even were all knowledge of God set aside,[15] whereas men have never united in a nation without some worship of a divinity. For, just as it is impossible to have a certain science of

[9] Vico habitually brackets these three scholars together. Though he makes certain criticisms specific to each, his general reason for grouping them together is to criticise all three for not having realised that the first requirement for a movement out of the state of nature is men's fear of a god who was wholly the product of their own imagination. Hence, as below, the failure of these thinkers to appreciate the importance of men's early idea of Providence.

[10] Vico's main specific criticism of Grotius is that in his criticisms of Roman law, he treated it as though it was equivalent to the 'law of the philosophers' rather than as a manifestation of an earlier conception of law. Cf. 20, 194.

[11] John Selden (1584–1645), author of *De jure naturali et gentium iuxta Hebraeorum* (1640), in which he derived the law of the gentiles from that of the Hebrews, and did not, as would Vico, allow a special course for Hebrew law.

[12] In *De jure naturae et gentium* (1672), Pufendorf adopts a highly rational approach to natural law, employing a series of deductions from a fundamental law decreed by divine will but discovered by observation and a priori truths of human nature.

[13] Johann Heinrich Boecler (1611–92), author of *Commentatio in Grotii librum 'De jure belli ac pacis'*, (1704).

[14] Willem van der Meulen (1658–1719), author of three volumes of commentary on *De jure belli ac pacis*, (1696–1703).

[15] Grotius admits this possibility in *The Law*, Prolegomenon, 11–12.

physical things, i.e. of the movement of bodies, without the guidance of the abstract truths of mathematics, so it is impossible to have a science of morality without the guidance of the abstract truths of metaphysics and, therefore, without a demonstration of God. Furthermore, since he was a Socinian, Grotius posited that the first man was good rather than wicked, and therefore solitary, weak and in need of everything and, consequently, that he entered society when he became aware of the pains of bestial solitude. Hence, our thinker concluded, mankind initially consisted of solitary simpletons who entered social life later under the dictate of utility. This, in fact, is identical with Epicurus' hypothesis.

17. Next came Selden, whose excessive passion for Jewish erudition, in which he was extremely learned, led him to locate the origins of his system in the few precepts that God gave to the sons of Noah.[16] But, omitting here the objections raised against him by Pufendorf on this score, from one of these precepts Shem, who alone continued in the true religion of the God of Adam, derived a law that, rather than being common to the races which descended from Ham and Japhet, was so particular [to his own race] that it gave rise to the celebrated division between the Hebrews and the gentiles, which lasted until the Hebrews' final times, in which Cornelius Tacitus called them 'unsociable men'.[17] And though they were destroyed [as a nation] by the Romans, the Hebrews remain exceptional in living dispersed among other nations without becoming part of them.
18. Finally, however much he may have intended to serve and make use of Providence, Pufendorf advanced a wholly Epicurean or Hobbesian hypothesis, for in this respect the two are identical, in which man was cast into the world bereft of divine care and assistance.[18] Thus, Pufendorf's 'destitutes',[19] no less than Grotius's simpletons, must be classed with those 'licentious, violent men' on the basis of whom Thomas Hobbes taught his 'citizen' to disregard justice and to pursue utility. Thus fit are the hypotheses of Grotius and Pufendorf to establish an immutable natural law!
19. Hence, since none of them took account of Providence when establishing his principles, all three failed to discover the true, hitherto

[16] See footnote 11, p. 14.
[17] Tacitus, *Ann.*, XV, 44, 3.
[18] Pufendorf, *De jure naturali et gentium iuxta*, II, 2, 2.
[19] *Ibid.*

hidden, origins of any of the parts that compose the whole system of the natural law of the gentes, i.e. their religions, languages, customs, laws, societies, governments, kinds of ownership, trade, orders, powers of command, judiciaries, punishments, wars, [conditions of] peace, surrender, slavery and alliance. And as a result of their failure to discover these origins, all three were at one in making the following three very grave errors.

20. Their first is the belief that, since the natural law that they established on the basis of the reasoned maxims of moral philosophers, theologians and, in part, jurisconsults, is, in truth, eternal in its idea, it has never been practised in the customs of nations. But their reasoning concerning the natural law was inferior to that of the Roman jurisconsults, who acknowledged the principal point that it is a law ordained by Providence. Accordingly they failed to consider the possibility that the natural law might have arisen with the customs of nations and yet be eternal in the sense that, beginning in all nations from the same religious origins, it proceeds through certain 'sects of times', as the jurisconsults themselves often call them, and through the same stages, to reach a certain limit of clarity, for which, to attain its perfection, or [perfect] state, there is need only for some sect of philosophers to complete and consolidate it with maxims reasoned in accordance with the idea of an eternal justice.[20] Hence, in all those matters in which Grotius[21] criticised the Roman jurisconsults over so many minute instances or cases of this law, cases propounded in disproportionate number and more than becomes a philosopher, who should reason about the principles of things, his blows fell on empty air. For the Roman jurisconsults were concerned with the natural law of the nations as it was celebrated by the sect of their times, but Grotius with the natural law as it appeared in the reasoning of the sect of moral philosophers.

21. Their second error is that the authorities with which each supports his system, in respect of which Grotius, more erudite than the others, was fastidious to a fault, provide neither science nor necessity with regard

[20] Vico does not deny that the natural law is an eternal law. His criticism is that the natural law theorists had failed to realise that it is an eternal historical or developmental law. Hence, they had also failed to realise that, in its early stages, it must reflect the character of primitive man and cannot have the character of the completely rational law into which it eventually develops.

[21] Grotius, *The Law*, Prolegomenon, 53–5.

to the origins, at least, of the historical era, origins which, in all nations, because of their barbaric nature, are heavily cloaked in fable, though this is even more true of the fabulous era of the nations and, most of all, of their obscure era. For they failed to consider how, on the occasion of certain human necessities or utilities and in certain modes, each arising in its own proper time, Providence ordained this universal republic of mankind according to the idea of its eternal order. Nor did they consider how she dictated a law that is universal and eternal [in this sense]: that, wherever the occasion of the same human needs occurs, it is uniform in all nations, no matter how different the times in which they arose and began, as a result of which their origins and progress are constant. Accordingly, they lacked knowledge of definitions that were indispensable if the authorities they had collected were to be used with the certainty of science. Thus, by way of example, [they lacked a definition] of the natural law of the gentes that obtained in the times when the Law of the Twelve Tables arose among the Romans, [though this is indispensable] for scientific knowledge of the [distinction between the part of] Roman law that was common to that of other nations in those times and that which was specific to Rome; or, similarly, [a definition] of the natural law of the gentes that was current in the times of Romulus, [which is equally indispensable] for scientific knowledge of the [distinction between the part of] the natural law that Romulus introduced into his new city from the other nations of Latium and that which he established that was specific to it. For, [possessed of these definitions], they would then have seen that the Roman customs observed in Rome in the period from Romulus to the decemvirs, and set down in the Twelve Tables, constituted the whole of the law that was common to the peoples of Latium in that sect of times, and that the law specific to the Romans consisted in the formulae and interpretations appropriate to that law. Hence it continued to be called 'the civil law', or the law proper to Roman citizens, not so much for its excellence, as has hitherto been believed, as for its ownership, as we have shown in a previously published work.[22]

22. Their third and last common error is that they treat of much less than half of the natural law of the gentes, for their reasoning omits the

[22] *De universi iuris uno principio et fine uno* CX–CXVIII (henceforth *De uno*). This is the first book of *De universi iuris uno principio et fine uno* (1720), which is itself the first book of the whole of *Il diritto universale*.

part concerned with the individual preservation of the nations and deals only with that concerned with the preservation of the whole of mankind in common. But the natural law that arose individually in the [different] cities must have been that which gave these [different] peoples customs and habits such that, on the occasions when they later came into contact with one another, they found themselves sharing a common sense, without one nation having acquired it from another, through which they had made and received laws conforming to the whole of their human nature and, through this same common sense, recognised that these were laws dictated by Providence and, therefore, revered them in the true belief that they were laws dictated by God.

[Chapter] VI
Reasons why this Science has hitherto been lacking among the philosophers and philologists

23. The unfortunate reason for all these problems is that we have hitherto lacked a science that is both a history and philosophy of humanity.[23] For on the one hand the philosophers meditated on a human nature already civilised by the religions and laws from which, and nowhere else, they themselves arose, but failed to meditate on the human nature that gave rise to these religions and laws amidst which they had risen. And on the other hand, as a result of that fate common to antiquity, that things very distant from us become lost from sight, the philologists received vulgar traditions so disfigured, torn and dispersed, that, unless their proper appearance, composition and place is restored to them, it will seem quite impossible to anyone who applies any degree of serious thought to them that they could have been born thus, whether that be in the [form of the] allegories that have [subsequently] been imposed on them or of the vulgar beliefs with which, after many long years, passing through the hands of rough, wholly illiterate, peoples, they have reached us.

[23] This is the governing, methodological premiss of the whole work: that philosophy and history should be brought into a relation of reciprocal support, in which, via the 'metaphysics of the human mind', philosophy gives the sequence of states of mind which underlie human development, and historical research shows that this provides the most universal basis for a consistent and continuous understanding of the history of the different nations.

24. This reflection assures us in our affirmation that the fables, from which the whole of gentile history takes its beginnings, could not have been invented all at once by the theological poets. For, from Plato down to our own times, i.e. those of the celebrated Bacon of Verulam in his *De sapientia veterum*,[24] it has been assumed that the theological poets were particular individuals, steeped in recondite wisdom and skilled in poetry, the first authors of gentile humanity. But 'vulgar theology' is nothing other than the beliefs of the vulgar concerning divinity. Hence, since the theological poets imagined the deities, if each gentile nation had its own gods and, [as we have demonstrated], all nations began from one such religion, they were all founded by the theological poets, i.e. by the vulgar who founded their nations upon false religions. These, then, are the true origins of the theology of the gentiles. More appropriate than others based on the ideas aroused by the words that have survived from them, they are more suited to the beginnings of nations, wholly barbaric in origin, than the magnificent and enlightened beginnings imagined by the likes of Voss in his *De theologia gentilium*,[25] in which he follows all the mythologists who discussed them earlier. [Their illusory beginnings arose] because, when men of ambition aspire to become lords in their cities, they open the way by siding with the masses and flattering them with some semblance or illusion of liberty, for thus is it necessary to act when dealing with men already civilised and accustomed to the servitude of the laws and to the misgovernment meted out by the powerful. Or, [if we are not prepared to accept this], and omitting other insuperable difficulties raised elsewhere,[26] are we willing to believe that, to the sound of the lute and songs of the highly scandalous deeds of the gods, such as the likes of adulterous Jove, his abused wife, the chaste and sterile

[24] 1609. This work consists of a series of interpretations of classical myths, based on the principle that 'beneath no small number of the fables of the ancient poets there lay from the very beginning a mystery and an allegory' (Bacon's preface to the work). Bacon makes the assumption that prior to Homer there existed a period of high intellectual cultivation, thus conflicting with Vico's thesis that these myths constituted the literal way in which primitive peoples, lacking the sophisticated mentality required to create allegories, understood their world. Cf. 249 ff.

[25] Gerhard Johann Voss (1577–1649), a major influence in Vico's etymological arguments. Vico's reference is to his *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idolatriae* (1641, reprinted 1668), in which he argued that all the myths derived from originals in the Bible. This thesis led him to find theological and metaphysical theses in the myths themselves.

[26] *De uno*, LXXV, 4.

Juno, the fecund prostitute, Venus,[27] and others foul and filthy, men of total savagery, born and accustomed to an unbridled liberty, would be led to cast off their natures and be received from their state of bestial lust into the modesty of marriage, in which, as the philosophers all agree, the first human society began? Moreover, since these models were drawn from the gods, ought they not to have had the effect of simply confirming men in their native bestiality?

[Chapter] VII
The necessity, both human and doctrinal, that the origins of this Science be derived from sacred history

25. But all gentile histories had similar fabulous beginnings. This is certainly true of Roman history, which began with the rape of a Vestal virgin,[28] for which the Romans later substituted a great defeat. Hence, in despair of discovering the first common origin of humanity from Roman belief, which is young in relation to the antiquity of the world, or the vainglorious claims of the Greeks, or the ruined remains of the Egyptians, such as their pyramids, or, finally, the utter obscurities of the East, let us seek it in the origins of sacred history. We derive support for the need to proceed in this way from the fact that, from their earliest days, the philologists have agreed that, since it is a human religion, sacred history is older than the fabulous religion of the Greeks. This common judgement is confirmed by the following demonstration: that sacred history provides a more complete exposition than any gentile history of a state of nature at the beginning of the world, i.e. of a time in which families were ruled by the fathers under the government of God, which Philo[29] elegantly called Θεοκρατία [*theocratia*]. And we know that such a state and time must certainly have been the first in the world, because, in their reasoning concerning the principles of politics, i.e. the legitimacy of governments, the philosophers

[27] Vico considers these ideas of an adulterous Jove, a sterile Juno and an impure Venus to be corruptions of the original meanings of the fables which arise in the age of 'reflective lust'. Cf. 286–7.

[28] Rhea Silvia, mother of Romulus and Remus. See Livy, I, 4, 2.

[29] Philo, the Platonic Alexandrian academician (20 BC to circa AD 45), from whose works Cicero drew his account of the Academy.

all agree that the cities were all founded on family states.[30] Further support for this comes from the fact that, because of the two periods of slavery suffered [by the Hebrews] among the Egyptians and Assyrians, sacred history offers a much more serious account of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities than that given by the Greeks. Finally, since it is beyond all doubt that the nations that spread themselves to populate the whole earth came from the East, they must have taken the same routes as the worshippers of the God of Adam when they fell into impiety. Hence, just as the first monarchy in history appears in Assyria, the first sages in the world, the Chaldeans, also appear there.

[Chapter] VIII
The difficulty of discovering the progress or continuity [proper to this Science][31]

26. But how did the impiety of the worshippers of the God of Adam lead them to the state of Grotius's man, in which he was solitary and, accordingly, weak and in need of everything, or that of Hobbes's man in which, on the contrary, all was allowed to all against all,[32] or that of Pufendorf's man, in which he was thrown into the world and abandoned there alone, without the care and assistance of God?[33] [This difficulty must be resolved] since it is a principle necessary to any Christian philosopher or philologist and, therefore, since it is Christian, is given not as hypothesis but as fact. And how, later, through their false religions were they received into civil life from their bestial liberty? Here, indeed, the very nature of antiquity itself, that in all things it must conceal its origins, makes us fear for the recovery of the modes that would constitute the origins of the world of the gentile nations. For thus was it disposed by nature: that men first did things

[30] Despite his criticisms of many philosophers and philologists, Vico did not want to divorce his work completely from the conventional world of learning. Hence he is quite happy, as here, to call on support from it when it suits him.

[31] Vico is here referring to the necessity of showing the continuity of the biblical account of the Fall with the origins of gentile history.

[32] This is a conventional expression of the time, though there is a somewhat similar expression, 'of everyone against everyone', in Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 14.

[33] Though Vico dissents from these thinkers with regard to their explanation of man's emergence from such a bestial state of nature, he does not wish to deny that humanity originated in some such state.

through a certain human sense, without attending to them, and then, much later, they applied reflection to them and, by reasoning about their effects, contemplated their causes.

[Chapter] IX
[The difficulty of discovering the origins of humanity] from the philosophers

27. Hence it is possible to imagine two and no more modes in nature through which the world of the gentile nations began: either a few sages established it through reflection or some bestial men joined together through a certain human sense. But the first possibility is denied us by the very nature of origins: that in all things they are simple and rough. Thus, simple and rough must have been the origins of the gentile humanity in which the likes of Zoroaster,[34] Hermes Trismegistus[35] and Orpheus[36] arose, replete, as scholars have hitherto believed, in the highest of recondite wisdom, with which they founded the humanity of the Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Greeks. Thus unless we are prepared to accept that the world is eternal, which we ought not,[37] it is necessary to establish a science of humanity, i.e. of the nature of nations, by meditating upon certain first origins beyond which it is foolish curiosity to seek others earlier, which is the true characteristic of a science.
28. Neither the Oracles attributed to Zoroaster, nor the Orphics, the fragments of verse purporting to be creations of Orpheus, provide any obligation whatsoever to believe that their authors were identical with the men who were the authors of the humanity of their nations.

[34] The reformer of the Magian religion. A number of forgeries bearing his name had survived and been published in the sixteenth century.

[35] The mythical founder of Egyptian wisdom. A large number of works on philosophy and religion, written by the Neo-Platonists of the fourth century AD were ascribed to him, the most important being the *Poemander*. It was also claimed that Pythagoras and Plato derived their knowledge from him.

[36] The most celebrated Greek poet before Homer, about whom there are many Greek legends, including the tale of how, with Apollo's lyre, he enchanted the wild beasts and the very stones and rocks of Olympus, so that they followed him. Many apochryphal stories survived, some of which were inventions of the fourth-century Neo-Platonists. Late Renaissance thinkers were divided about the authenticity of these texts. Voss had denounced them as forgeries, whereas others, including Gravina, still accepted their authenticity. For Vico they could only be inauthentic. But the original myths about Orpheus still needed to be reinterpreted in accordance with his general theories of myth and the order of development of human nature.

[37] This would amount to a denial of the truth of the biblical account of creation.

We have raised many grave doubts concerning this elsewhere,[38] including, among others, the [problem of the] great difficulties that were encountered and the long period of time that elapsed before articulate languages were formed in nations that were already founded. Furthermore, as will be shown in this book, it is impossible to understand how a language can express abstract conceptions in equally abstract terms unless it belongs to a nation in which skilled philosophers have flourished for a very long time. A proof of this is afforded by the Latin language, which expressed itself in the sciences in an extremely impoverished and little less than miserable fashion because it was so late in coming into contact with the reasoning of the Greek philosophies. This leads us to advance the important thesis that Moses made no use of any recondite wisdom of the Egyptian priests, because his story was woven in words that have much in common with those of Homer, who, since we located him at the time of Numa, existed some eight hundred years later. Yet while Moses often transcended the priests in sublimity of expression, at the same time he concealed meanings that transcend all metaphysics in the sublimity of their understanding: as in the expression in which God describes himself as *Sum qui sum* ['I am who I am'],[39] which Dionysius Longinus,[40] that prince of critics, admired as the height of sublimity in poetic style. But Greece needed to arrive at the peak of her culture and at that point to produce a Plato, who reached the height of metaphysical sublimity with the abstract idea which he expressed as τὸ ὄν [*to on*] or '*ens*' ['being'] when he wanted to refer to God.[41] The Latins were so late, however, in coming to understand this idea that their word for it belonged not to pure Latin but to low Latin, i.e. to the times in which Greek metaphysics was celebrated among the Romans. This comparison provides an invincible proof of the antiquity and truth of sacred history.

29. For such reasons it must be concluded that the other similar verses were fabrications of the last Greek metaphysicians,[42] for they contain

[38] *De uno*, CLXXXIII, 1.

[39] Exodus, 3:14.

[40] In fact, in *On the Sublime*, 9, 9, the reference is to Genesis, 1:3: 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.'

[41] This assimilation of doctrines of Plato with those of Christianity, though not uncommon, had dangerously heretical overtones. For Vico, however, the assimilation ought to have been impossible, given his distinction between the governing principles of Hebrew and gentile history.

[42] The Neo-Platonists of the third to the fifth century. See footnotes 34 and 35, p. 22.

nothing about divinity that goes beyond the thought of Plato and Pythagoras,[43] which should serve as a warning both of the determinacy of the limits of human knowledge and of the vanity of the desire to discover the wisdom of the ancients. The verses more or less declare themselves to be written in the same style as we find in the [so-called] *Carme aureo* of Pythagoras, which was a ploy used by writers who wanted their doctrines to be accredited with the virtues of antiquity and religion,[44] yet if we compare them with Girolamo Benivieni's *Dell'amore*,[45] a work worthy of notes by Pico della Mirandola, we will find this Platonic lyric to be more truly poetic in character.[46] Thus we can see how much knowledge [of any ancient school of Pythagoras] such verses contain! For all these reasons we must conclude that they were all scholarly forgeries, as has certainly been shown in the case of the [works of] Trismegistus[47] and the Berosus[48] of Annio.[49]

30. Hence, since the nature of their language denies it and criticism is opposed to it, there is no need whatsoever to maintain, on the strength of these verses, that the founders of the gentile nations were sages in some recondite wisdom. Consequently, it is impossible to think about the origins of the humanity of nations in terms of the reasons hitherto adduced by the philosophers, beginning with Plato. For, perhaps because he believed that the world was eternal, Plato pre-supposed [the eternity of the standards of] his own part of time, in which philosophers from other refined nations had domesticated mankind, which elsewhere lay in a state of savagery. This could well be the reason why scholars still imagine a succession of schools through which learning was transmitted from Zoroaster, through Berosus,

[43] This is to contradict the views of those who claimed that they expressed an earlier and higher wisdom from which the doctrines of Pythagoras and Plato themselves were derived.

[44] At the start of his preface to *De sapientia veterum* Bacon mentions this as a longstanding practice.

[45] Girolamo Benivieni (1453–1542), Florentine Platonist and author of *Canzona all'Amor celeste e divino*, written around 1486. Pico's comments were not published until they were inserted, together with the poem, in an edition, *Opere* of Benivieni, of 1519.

[46] The argument is that the verses of the Neo-Platonists must be fraudulent since, though they purport to be written in the style of Pythagoras' Golden Verses, these are themselves fraudulent. Thus, stylistically, they are even less convincing than a poem by a much later Platonist with no such pretensions.

[47] See footnote 35, p. 22.

[48] As conceived in Vico's time, Berosus was generally inserted between Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus in the succession of teachers of the esoteric wisdom to which Vico is opposed. Cf. 30, 47.

[49] Annio da Viterbo (1432–1503), linguist and theologian.

Trismegistus and Atlas,[50] to Orpheus. Or why the Christian critics, whom Selden must have followed, and of whom Peter Daniel Huet,[51] in his *Dimostrazione evangelica*,[52] though second to none in erudition, is the latest, believe that the founders of the gentile nations came from the school of Noah in a state of complete learning. The wholly irrational nature of these beliefs will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

31. Here we shall say only that, placing too much trust in the vulgar fame of Greece, Plato failed to reflect on the fact that this presented Greek humanity as deriving from Thrace, when it was rather the likes of cruel Mars who came from there. Indeed, such was the ability of that country to produce philosophers that a proverb survived in Greece in which the word 'Thracian' was used to indicate 'a person of obtuse ingenuity', thus providing a public judgement by an entire nation. All this amounts to a philological demonstration, contrary to Plato and the whole of gentile philosophy, that the religion of the Hebrews was founded with the creation of the world in time by the true God.

[Chapter] X
[The difficulty of discovering the origins of humanity] from the philologists

32. Having rejected the sages [of the philosophers], we are left with the great beasts, the first men posited by Grotius and Pufendorf, as those from whom gentile humanity must have arisen. And since we cannot accept the reasoning adduced by the philosophers, we must turn our attention to the authorities gathered by the philologists, under which term we include here the poets, historians, orators and grammarians, the last of whom are called 'scholars' in the vulgar. But nothing is so shrouded in doubt and obscurity as the origins of language and the principle of the propagation of nations. So great, indeed, is the uncertainty born of these matters that the philologists still openly confess that neither the beginnings of universal gentile history nor its continuity, i.e. its established continuity with sacred history, are certain.
33. For the world was certainly not born with Rome, which was a new city founded in the midst of a large number of small, older peoples

[50] Atlas, the son of Neptune, is included here for his astronomical and nautical wisdom.
[51] Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630–1721).
[52] Published 1679 and 1694, in which Huet argued that Moses was the basis of both biblical and gentile history.

in Latium. Hence, in his Preface,[53] Livy did well to excuse himself from guaranteeing the truth of the whole of ancient Roman history. Indeed, later in his work, he states quite openly that his writings about Roman matters are more truthful after [the start of] the Carthaginian wars,[54] while still making the candid admission that he is ignorant as to where in the Alps Hannibal made his great and memorable passage into Italy, i.e. whether it was over the Cottian Alps or the Apennines.[55]

34. The Greeks, from whom we have all that we have concerning antiquity, were also grossly ignorant of their own antiquities. On this point we have three weighty proofs, two of which relate to Homer, the first certain Greek author and the first certain father of the whole of Greek erudition. The first of these is a public confession, on the part of all the Greek peoples, that none of them knew Homer's native land, since they all claimed him as their own citizen, a long dispute that was finally decided in favour of Smyrna. The second is another public confession, this time by all the philologists, whose beliefs about the time in which Homer lived vary so greatly that a difference of four hundred and sixty years can be calculated between those who locate him at the time of the Trojan War, and their most extreme opponents, who would put him at the time of Numa. Indeed, given ignorance of this order in relation to Homer, the most famous figure of all, we cannot fail to pity the vain diligence of the critics who determine with such minute precision not merely countries as a whole but their very stones and fountains, not merely their centuries and years but their very months and days, the very where and when of the occurrence of things in the furthest, most obscure antiquity. The third proof is provided by the testimony of Thucydides, the first serious and truthful historian of Greece, who states, at the beginning of his history,[56] that the Greeks of his time knew nothing of their own antiquities before the age of their fathers. And this in her most enlightened period, when Greece, with her two empires of Sparta and Athens, engaged in the Peloponnesian War, of which Thucydides was a contemporary writer, and some twenty years before the Law of the Twelve Tables was [supposedly] given to the Romans! What more, then, need be said to show that up to this time the Greeks knew little or nothing of anything foreign?

[53] Livy, I, 1.
[54] Livy, XXI, I, 1.
[55] Livy, XXI, 38, 6.
[56] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* I, 1, 2 (henceforth Thucydides).

35. The first nations must certainly long have retained much of their savage origin and, consequently, to have been accustomed to remaining within their own boundaries unless provoked by insult or forced by wrong. The cause of the Tarantine War proves that their nature was like this, for when the Tarantines heaped abuse upon the Roman ships and their ambassadors as they drew up on the shore, believing that they might be pirates, they excused themselves with the claim, in the words of Florus, that *qui essent aut unde venirent, ignorabant* ['they knew neither who they were nor whence they came'].[57] And this within a stretch of mainland Italy as short as that between Taranto and Rome, and at a time when the Romans already had a powerful empire on land and their fleets had the run of the whole of the Tyrrhenian sea and were scouring the Adriatic! But far more than a single people, entire nations, such as the Spanish, provide confirmation that the nature of their oldest customs was like this, for neither the ferocious burning of Sagunto, that caused Hannibal so much sweat,[58] nor the long, heroic defence of Numantia, which had already given the Romans so much consternation,[59] taught them to unite in a league against [their enemies]. Hence the Roman historians[60] later acclaimed the unhappy virtue that 'the Spanish did not understand their invincible forces until they had been vanquished'.
36. This public evidence from entire peoples adds considerably to the strength of Livy's private judgement concerning the vulgar tradition that Pythagoras may have been Numa's teacher. For, although he locates Pythagoras in the time of Servius Tullius, which is a hundred and fifty years before the Tarantine War, Livy nevertheless believes that it would have been impossible for him in such times, not only in person but even by name, which was that of the greatest philosopher, to have penetrated to Rome from Crotona,[61] passing through so many nations diverse in language and custom. Livy's private judgement gains further substantial support from another most enlightening piece of public evidence concerning the Roman people. This comes from St Augustine's *City of God*, in which he cites Sallust as saying that under the kings the Roman people engaged in wars for a period of

[57] Florus, *Epitomae de Titius Livius*, I, 13, 5.
[58] Livy, XXI, 6–15.
[59] Numantia was destroyed, after a long siege, by Scipio Africanus in 133 BC
[60] Florus, *Epitomae*, I, 33, 4.
[61] Livy, I, 18, 2–3.

two hundred and fifty years and subjugated a good twenty or more peoples, without extending Roman rule by more than twenty miles, which, of course, were very much shorter than our miles.[62] This passage demonstrates just how impenetrable the first small nations were, even though they were situated very close to one another; accordingly, it subverts all the grandiose ideas we have hitherto held about the origins of Rome and, in similar mode, about all the other empires of the world.

37. The combination of this passage from Livy and these facts of Roman history prove beyond argument that it was characteristic of nations in their beginnings to be savage and withdrawn. They therefore remove much of the credibility of Pythagoras' many voyages, including his voyages to Thrace, to visit the Orphic school, to Babylon, to learn from the Chaldeans at the school of Zoroaster, to the Indies, to learn from the Gymnosophists, from the Near East into Egypt, where he was taught by the priests, and through Africa to the school of Atlas in Mauretania in the Far West, after which he returned across the sea and learnt from the Druids in Gaul. For these voyages are entirely imaginary, arising from the later discovery of resemblances between some of Pythagoras' doctrines and those of the vulgar sages of nations that were separated from one another by immense stretches of land and sea. A good example of this is the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul, which still occupies an important place in the religion of the Brahmins, who were the ancient Brachmani or Gymnosophists, the philosophers of the Indies. Such grave doubts concerning the voyages that Pythagoras made in order to collect and take back to Greece the very best of the world's humanity force us to abandon all trust whatsoever in the voyages made by Hercules, some seven hundred years earlier, in which, for the sake of glory alone, he travelled around slaying monsters, exterminating the tyrants of nations, and spreading Greek eloquence to the Gallic peoples[63] and Greek humanity into the others. Even greater reason are we given to doubt Homer's voyages in Egypt by a passage in his own writings in which he describes the island of Pharos as lying as far from the part of the mainland where Alexandria was later founded as an unladen Greek ship could travel in a whole day with the north wind blowing, that is to say, with the

[62] Sallust is not, in fact, cited in this context but the claim is made, independently of Sallust, in Augustine, *City of God*, at III, 15.

[63] For Vico's account of the correct interpretation of this traditional tale, see 465.

wind at her stern.[64] And this, the little island so close to the mainland that the port of Alexandria later ended up on it, as can still be seen! But had Homer ever seen Egypt, he would certainly never have told a lie of such magnitude, and had the Greeks of his time enjoyed trade with Egypt, the rest of his tale would have lost all credibility.

38. In addition to the consideration that at first nations knew one another only upon occasions of war, there is a further point which upsets and confounds the above belief. For the scholars all agree that Psammetichus was the first king to open Egypt to the Greeks, though not to all of them but only to those from Ionia and Caria. But if, in the times of Tullus Hostilius, which are those in which Psammetichus lived, a nation of such high humanity had hitherto observed the custom of keeping its boundaries closed to overseas nations, what are we to believe of other, wholly barbaric, nations? Hence, it has rightly been said that the first person to write about Persian matters with some distinction was Xenophon, the immediate successor to Thucydides, who was himself the first to write about those of the Greek with certainty. For Xenophon was the first captain of Greece to lead Greek armies into Persia, from which he made that memorable retreat. Similarly, the Greeks knew nothing about Assyrian matters until the conquests of Alexander the Great, and Aristotle, whom he took with him, observed, as he later wrote in his *Politics*, that what the Greeks had previously written about them were just fables.[65]

39. We conclude these many difficulties with the most relevant of all: that in all the ancient nations the priestly orders kept all religious things secret from the plebs of the cities in which they lived. Hence, they continued to be called 'sacred things', that is to say, things kept secret from the profane. The Greek philosophers themselves also long hid their wisdom from the vulgar of their own nation, so that only after many years did Pythagoras admit even his own disciples to his secret audience. Are we then to believe that individual foreigners made safe, swift journeys within the forbidden boundaries of very distant nations, in order that, in the absence of either interpreters or any longstanding linguistic intercourse between them, the priests of Egypt or the Chaldeans of Assyria should profane their religions and recondite wisdom? And are we to believe this, above all, of the Hebrews, ever unsociable towards the gentile nations?

[64] Homer, *Odyssey*, IV, 355–7 (henceforth *Od.*).
[65] Aristotle does not mention the Assyrians in his *Politics*.

[Chapter] XI
The necessity to seek the principles of the nature of nations by means of a metaphysics raised to contemplate a certain common mind of all the peoples

40. But many are the uncertainties by which we are constrained. How, for example, after liberating themselves from servitude to the religion of God, the creator of the world and of Adam, which alone could hold them within duty and, therefore, within society, did the impious life of those first men from whom the gentile nations arose bring them to disperse in a ferine wandering through the great forest of the earth, grown dense through saturation by the waters of the Flood? And how, constrained to seek food and water and, even more, to save themselves from the wild animals in which the great forest must unfortunately have abounded, with men frequently abandoning their women and mothers their children, and with no way of reuniting, did their descendants gradually come to forget the language of Adam and, without language or any thought other than that of satisfying their hunger, thirst and the foment of their lust, deaden all sense of humanity? Hence, in meditating upon the principles of this Science it is necessary, not without the most violent of efforts, to clothe ourselves to some degree in such a nature and, therefore, to reduce ourselves to a state of the most extreme ignorance of all erudition, human and divine, as if there had never been either philosophers or philologists to help in this research. For it is essential that anyone who wishes to profit from this Science should reduce himself to such a state, in order that, in meditating upon it, he should neither be confused nor distracted by preconceptions long held in common. For all these doubts combined can in no way cast doubt upon this unique truth, which must be the first in such a science, since, in this long, dense night of darkness, this one light alone gleams forth: that the world of gentile nations was certainly made by men. Hence, in this vast ocean of doubt, there appears this one isle upon which we may stand firm: that the principles of this world must be discovered within the nature of our human mind and through the force of our understanding, by means of a metaphysics of the human mind. Hence metaphysics, which has hitherto contemplated the mind of individual man in order to lead the mind to God as eternal truth, which is the most universal theory in divine philosophy,

must now be raised to contemplate the common sense of mankind as a certain human mind of the nations, in order to lead the mind to God as eternal Providence, which would be the most universal practice in divine philosophy. Thus, without a single hypothesis, for metaphysics disowns hypotheses, we must search for this metaphysics in fact, among the modifications of our human mind in the descendants of Cain before the Flood, and in those of Ham and Japhet after it.[66]

[Chapter] XII
On the idea of a jurisprudence of mankind

41. We shall proceed, in accordance with [the method of] division, from cognition of the parts, thence of their composition, to cognition of the whole that is in question. By way of example, let us take the most enlightening of all the parts that compose the whole that we seek, i.e. Roman jurisprudence. This was both a science of the mind of the decemvirs concerning civil utilities in the severe times of the Roman people, and, at the same time, a science of the language in which they expressed the Law of the Twelve Tables, which Livy called the 'source',[67] and Tacitus the 'end',[68] of the whole of Roman law. For, upon the occasion of new civil needs, both public and private, in times of more clarified ideas and, therefore, in more human times, this science continued to develop the mind of the decemvirs ever further, by complementing the omissions in the law, thus rendering its [former] words inappropriate to it, and amending its rigour, thus giving its words ever more benign meanings. And all this always in order to preserve intact the same identical choice or selection of the public good proposed by the decemvirs: the salvation of the Roman city. Thus the jurisprudence of the natural law of the nations should be considered to be a science of the mind of man, [starting from] man placed first in solitude, like the man of Grotius and Pufendorf, but understood by us, as observed above [15–19], in the sense of Catholic doctrine, i.e. a state of man in which he seeks the salvation of his nature. Such a science teaches how, upon the occasion of new human necessities or utilities, as it passed through various customs and, hence, various times and states, the mind of solitary man developed through the primary

[66] For a brief discussion of this fundamental principle, see the introduction, p. xxvi.
[67] Livy, III, 34, 6.
[68] Tacitus, *Ann.*, III, 27, 1.

end of wanting to conserve his nature, first through the conservation of the families, then that of the cities, next that of the nations, and finally through the conservation of the whole of mankind. Moreover it demonstrates that it was Providence which, for this end, drew impious man from the state of solitude, through certain marriage, into the state of the families, from which the first gentes were born, i.e. the clans or houses that later gave rise to the cities. Hence it must begin by treating of these first and oldest gentes, since that is where its theme or subject matter began. And in all this [it must proceed] in accordance with the celebrated rule, the universal foundation of all interpretation, that the jurisconsult proposed in that wisest of sayings: *Quotiens lege aliquid unum vel alterum introductum est, bona occasio est cetera, quae tendunt ad eandem utilitatem vel interpretatione vel certe iurisdictione suppleri.* ['Whenever something or other is introduced by law, the occasion is good for introducing other things that tend towards the same utility, either through the interpretation or the certain administration of justice.'][69] The jurisconsult[70] did not speak of *caussa* ['cause'] here [but of *occasio*], for the cause of the just is not variable utility but eternal reason which, in immutable geometric and arithmetical proportions, measures the variable utilities upon the different occasions of these human needs.[71] Thus our reasoning about the natural law of nations must proceed, with indispensable necessity, in accordance with the natural order of ideas, and not as other writers imagined they were doing as they bestowed magnificent titles upon enormous tomes in works that contained nothing that is not common knowledge.

[Chapter] XIII
The severe difficulties of discovering [the mode of men's first ideas]

42. But it seems a hopeless undertaking even to begin to understand the mode [of these ideas], while to explain them we would need the

[69] *Digest*, I, 3, 13. The *Digest* (AD 533) is the compilation of the best work of Roman jurists on private law that the Emperor Justinian ordered to be drawn up. It includes excerpts from the works of many earlier jurists and some items drawn from remnants of earlier laws.

[70] Ulpian. The Roman jurist Ulpian lived in the third century AD. Although only fragments of his original work survive, about a third of the *Digest* is known to have been drawn from it.

[71] Vico is particularly severe with the Epicureans for having based their conception of justice on considerations of utility (cf. 12), but he is also hostile to those who made the mistake of conflating what he claims are the 'occasions' with the cause of justice, i.e. all who have failed to appreciate that the cause of justice lies in the developing concept of equity.

science of a language common to all the first gentile nations. For we need to measure the life of mankind, which is that of men who grow old with the passage of years, so that it is we who are the old while the founders of nations were the young. But it has been found that, by the age of seven at most, children born in nations where language has already developed, have already acquired a large vocabulary, such that when some vulgar idea is awakened in them, they quickly run through the whole vocabulary and immediately alight on a word of settled meaning with which to communicate it to others, while any word they hear arouses the idea to which it is attached. Hence, when engaging in discourse, they employ a certain [kind of] geometric synthesis, by means of which they run through all the elements of their language, simultaneously choosing and combining those that they need. Thus language is a great school for rendering the human mind quick and deft. Children with such minds also learn to count much better than those of less civilised nations, for counting is a highly abstract activity, so spiritual, indeed, that in virtue of a certain excellence it was called 'calculation'. Hence Pythagoras located the whole essence of the human mind in number. Another practice of a different kind, though still akin to geometry, is literature, or the school of reading and writing, which, by means of those slender, refined forms called 'letters', has a wondrous effect in disciplining the imaginations of children. For when reading or writing a word, they run through the elements of the alphabet, select the letters they need and combine them in order to read or write them. But literature is more corporeal and stable than words, and numbers are more abstract than either letters or sounds: because letters leave vestiges of the impressions they have made on the eye, which is the sharpest sense for learning and retention, words consist of air, which strikes upon the ear and then disperses, but the even and odd numbers, for example, affect no sense whatsoever when making numerical calculations. Hence we can scarcely understand, and are quite unable to imagine, how those first men of the impious races must have thought, or the crude manner in which they formed their thoughts, or the confused way in which they connected them, in that state in which they had never yet heard a single human word. For with regard to all this, it is impossible to draw a single comparison, either with our idiots and peasants who are ignorant of letters, or with the most barbaric inhabitants of the lands near the poles or in the African and American

deserts, whose customs, according to reports given by travellers, are so extravagant by [the standards of] our own refined natures as to excite horror in us. For even they are born in the midst of a language, however barbaric, and will have some idea of numbers and calculation.

43. All these many severe uncertainties, allied to the well nigh hopeless difficulties of a project in which we know nothing about the first men from whom the gentile nations began, nor, consequently, the first parts of the world in which these nations arose, explain why, in the 'Idea of the Work' [3], we summarised the theme of this Book in the saying *ignari hominumque locorumque erramus* ['We wander ignorant both of men and places'].[72]

[72] See footnote 5, p. 4.

BOOK II

THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS SCIENCE CONCERNING IDEAS

[Introduction]

44. In our quest, therefore, to discover this first world of gentile nations, of which we have hitherto had no knowledge and can form no idea from the world known to us, we now propose the following principles divided into two classes: ideas and language. And just as spirit governs each and every part of the body, these principles, singly or in numbers, sub-divided or in groups, directly or through their consequences, in parts or as a whole, inform and establish this Science as a system, to be comprehended either in its entirety or in its parts, down to the smallest sub-divisions of which it is composed. Accordingly, it will become possible to understand, one by one, all the things that we have already set forth, as well as many others which, given the opportunity, we shall set forth below, even to the point of locating them in the confused forests of the dictionary, and to do so without suffering the discomforts of attention that arise from the need to follow works that are either laborious in method or lacking in any method whatsoever, provided that the things considered in this book are studied in the exact order in which it is written. We make the one proviso that, when confirming our principles through their effects, we shall adduce as examples one, two or, at most, three effects appropriate to each principle, in order that the principles be understood as a system. Hence, should anyone wish to see them confirmed in their almost innumerable consequences, it will be necessary to consult other works that we have already published[1] or that are ready to appear in

[1] *Il diritto universale* (1720–2).

print.[2] To pass judgement on the rest, it must suffice that our principles are reasonable as causes and the examples a system of correctly derived effects, for the principles that underlie doctrines are the most difficult part of reasoning and therefore comprise, as Socrates said, the half of any science.

[Chapter] I
The first principle of the nations is Providence

45. We begin our principles with the idea that is the first in any work whatsoever: divine Providence, who is the architect of this world of nations.[3] For men cannot unite in a human society unless they share a human sense that there is a divinity who sees into the depths of their hearts,[4] since a society of men can neither begin nor remain stable without a means whereby some rely upon the promises of others and are satisfied by their assertions in secret matters. For it frequently happens in human life that promises need to be made and accepted, and actions undertaken, with regard to things for which, though not wrong in themselves, others need some assurance, but which lack the support of any human documentation. It might be argued that such assurance could be gained through the rigour of penal laws against lie-telling, but while this could obtain in the state of the cities, it would not have been possible in the state of the families from which the cities arose, where there was as yet no civil or public rule under which two family fathers, for example, would be equally subject in justice to the armed force of the law. Those who think along such lines, of whom John Locke would be one, could fall back on the suggestion that men would grow accustomed to the need to believe something as soon as somebody asserts that what they are promising or recounting is true. But this would presuppose that they already understand an idea of truth such that the revelation of a truth would suffice to oblige others to believe it without [the support of] any human documentation. But this can be nothing other than the idea of God in the attribute of Providence, i.e. an eternal and infinite mind that penetrates

[2] This is probably a reference to *The New Science in Negative Form*, which was the only other work that Vico had ready for publication.
[3] Vico's language here is undoubtedly reminiscent of Plato's *Timaeus*.
[4] Cf. 8–10.

and foresees everything. And, since it is relevant to our argument, [let us here reflect how], through her infinite bounty, Providence disposes the things that particular men or peoples order for their own particular ends, things that would lead them principally to their own ruin, towards a universal end, beyond, and very often contrary to, their every intention; and how, through this universal end, but using these same particular ends [of men and peoples] as her means, she preserves them. It will be shown throughout the whole of this work that, with this foresight, Providence governs the natural law of the nations in its entirety.

[Chapter] II
The rule of the world of nations is vulgar wisdom

46. This divine architect sent forth the world of nations under the rule of vulgar wisdom. This is a common sense, possessed by all peoples or nations, that regulates social life, in all our human activities, in such a way that they accord with what everyone in each people or nation senses in common. The concordance of the common senses of all peoples or nations is the wisdom of mankind.[5]

[Chapter] III
The artificer of the world of nations is human will regulated by vulgar wisdom

47. Subservient to this divine architect, the artificer of the world of nations is human will. Though uncertain by nature in particular men, it is here determined by the wisdom of mankind concerning the measure of human utilities and necessities uniformly common to all the

[5] Although Vico accepts that this common sense can be acquired from another people by, for example, being conquered by it and living under it, this would be an exceptional occurrence. His general view is that the fact that there is such a concordance is a consequence of the natural growth of an identical common sense within each nation and something which different peoples discover when they come into contact through external events such as commerce or war. Nevertheless his wish to establish the compatibility of his historical account with the biblical story, by arguing that the nations spread from Mesopotamia, means that he does not adhere consistently to this view. Cf. 211 and 241 below.

particular natures of men. These human necessities and utilities, thus determined by the wisdom of mankind, are the two sources of the whole natural law of the gentes of which the Roman jurisconsults spoke. Hence we are led to meditate on the state of solitude in which Grotius placed man, in which, because he was alone, he was weak and in need of everything. This is the state into which the race of Cain must have fallen immediately before the Flood, preceded more gradually by that of Seth. Similarly it is that into which the races of Ham and Japhet must have fallen immediately after the Flood, followed more slowly by that of Shem, when, with the sole aim of liberating themselves from the servitude of religion, which alone could preserve them in society, and, lacking any other restraint, they turned their backs upon the true God of their fathers, Adam and Noah, and descended into a bestial liberty in which, dispersed throughout the great forest of the earth, they lost their language and weakened every social custom. This would be the state of Pufendorf's man, come into the world but abandoned on his own, without prior care and assistance from God. We continue by meditating upon those first necessities and utilities, common to the nature of such savage and bestial men, by which they must have been roused in order that they be received into human society. Selden completely neglected all this because he proposed origins that were common to the gentile and Hebrew nations alike, thus drawing no distinction between a people assisted by God and others completely lost. Pufendorf, [it is true], gave the distinction some consideration, but he did so erroneously, for he proposed a hypothesis that runs counter to the facts of sacred history. And Grotius sinned most of all, because he proposed the Socinian hypothesis of man as a simpleton, and then utterly failed to work out its consequences.[6]

[Chapter] IV
The natural order of human ideas of an eternal justice

48. Thus far we have demonstrated that Providence ordained the natural law of the gentes through the dictate of human necessities or utilities. Now, to complete the remaining part of the definition left by the

[6]Cf. 15–22.

Roman jurisconsults, that this law was observed equally among all nations, let us consider its two principal properties: its immutability and universality.

49. As for the first, the natural law of the gentes is an eternal law that proceeds through time. But, just as within us lie buried a few eternal seeds of the true, which are gradually cultivated from childhood until, with age and through the various disciplines, the fully clarified notions that belong to the sciences arise, so within mankind, as a result of our sin, the eternal seeds of justice were buried, which, as the human mind gradually developed from the childhood of the world in accordance with its true nature, developed into demonstrated maxims of justice. But the following difference must always be preserved: that this proceeded in one, distinctive way among the people of God, and in a different, normal way among the gentile nations.

50. In this connection, let us consider the following example. In the oldest period of Greece, when, as the history of her obscure period tells us, the Athenians had consecrated all the lands of Athens to Jove and were living under his rule, it was necessary to gain permission to become the owner of a farm through Jove's auspices. In a different and later age, such as that of the ancient Romans in the age of the Law of the Twelve Tables, a solemn consignment, known as 'the consignment of the bond', was needed.[7] But in a further age, which still endures among the nations of our times, the actual consignment of the farm itself suffices. All three of these ways of acquiring ownership rest upon this [principle of] eternal justice: that a man cannot become the owner of something that belongs to another without securing in advance the will of the lord of that thing. [Finally], when the philosophers came, it was understood that in its essence ownership depends absolutely on will, for which it is enough to have sufficient signs that the owner has decided of his own will to transfer the ownership of some particular thing to another person, whether these signs be in straightforward words or mute acts.

51. It will be one of the continuous tasks of this Science to show in detail how, with the development of human ideas, rights and reasons emerged first from the scrupulous nature of superstitions, then from the solemnity of the legitimate acts and the strictness of their wording, and finally from any of the corporeality in which the very substance

[7] Cf. 202 for Vico's full statement of the formula used for this method of consignment.

of the matter was first believed to lie. Thus they were led to their pure and true principle, which is both their proper substance and our human substance: the will, determined in our mind by the force of the true, which is called 'conscience'. And all this occurred because the natural law of the gentes is a law that came forth with the very customs of the nations, based on their ideas of their own nature.

52. To this example, drawn from private justice, let us add the following, drawn from public justice. If there were ever some very ancient time in which men were of disproportionate bodily strength and equal feebleness of mind, their idea of their own nature would have dictated the need to fear divinity as a force superior to their every human force. Hence they would have believed that this superior force constituted their divine law and, consequently, that it was necessary to base the whole of their system of justice upon force. This is precisely what we see in the case of Achilles, the greatest of the Greek heroes, whom Homer, with his invariable use of the epithet 'irreproachable', sets before the Greek people as the paradigm of heroic virtue. For it is in virtue of this divine law that Achilles professes to Apollo that he believes that he is a god because of his superior force, [a belief implied] in his assertion that were his own force equal to that of a god he would not hesitate to enter into combat against Apollo.[8] Nor do these words of Achilles appear to express greater reverence for the gods than those of Polyphemus, who also claims that had he the ability he would join battle with Jove himself.[9] [And we should note here that] the giants also had augurs such as could not have existed among atheists, since one of them predicted to Polyphemus the fate that he later suffered at the hands of Ulysses.[10] Indeed, it is this same divine law that leads even Jove to judge himself in the same manner as Achilles and Polyphemus. For his offer of the great chain from one end of which he would singlehandedly drag behind him all men and all gods were they attached to the other, is made in order to prove, through his superior strength, that he is the king both of men and gods.[11]

[8] Homer, *Iliad*, XXII, 19–20 (henceforth *Il.*).
[9] *Od.*, IX, 275–8.
[10] *Od.*, IX, 507–12.
[11] *Il.*, VIII, 18–27.

53. It is a further consequence of this same divine law, we would claim, that when Hector wants to reach agreement with Achilles over his burial, in the event of his being killed in the battle in which he later died, Achilles replies that there is no equality of right between the weak and the strong, for men have never made pacts with lions nor have lambs and wolves ever shared the same desires.[12] This was the law of the heroic gentes, based on the belief that the strong were of a different and more noble nature than the weak. Hence arose that law of war through which, by force of arms, the victors deprive the defeated of all their rights of natural liberty, so that the Romans took them as slaves in place of material things. This custom was administered by Providence in order that, since these ferocious men had not been domesticated by the rule of justice, they should at least fear divinity for its force and thus measure justice by force, so that, in times of such ferocity, killing should not breed killing, which would lead to the extermination of mankind. Precisely this would constitute the history, as it does the philosophy, of what Grotius calls 'the external justice of wars'.[13]
54. If, finally, in the times of fully developed human ideas, men were no longer to believe that their nature was different from and superior to that of others through a difference in force, recognising that all are equal in respect of their rational nature, which is their proper and eternal human nature, the law of the human gentes would obtain among them all, dictating to them the need for equality in the distribution of the utilities, saving only a just difference according to desert, which is itself necessary to preserve this equality. This is discovered to be the natural law of the gentes that the Roman jurisconsults worked out, to which Ulpian referred when he defined the law of the gentes of his time, with the full weight of words, as '[the law of] the human gentes',[14] not to distinguish it from the law of the barbaric gentes beyond the Roman empire, with which the Roman laws of private justice had nothing to do, but from that of the barbaric gentes who had been absorbed into the empire.

[12] *Il.*, XXII, 256–64.
[13] Grotius, *The Law*, III, VII, VII.
[14] *Digest*, II, 14, 7, 1. The quotation is from memory and not directly from Ulpian's text.

[Chapter] V
The natural order of human ideas of a universal justice

55. Since the foregoing principles have enabled us to establish one of the two most important properties of the natural law of the gentes, its immutability, we shall now use these same principles to establish the other, its universality. We shall proceed by meditating upon the utter impossibility of understanding how human ideas of a natural justice could have progressed when in a state of solitude, i.e. the state of Grotius's man, alone, weak and in need, or Pufendorf's man, lacking the care and assistance of others, other than by beginning with the most innate of necessities which, uniquely in such a state, was [the need] to continue his species by cohabitation with a woman who would provide him with company, care and aid. This was a natural, monastic or solitary, and hence sovereign, law. In this Cyclopic law, which Plato[15] also noted fleetingly in connection with Homer's Polyphemus, it was just for men to use force both to seize vagabond women and to keep them in their dens, each in his own. This was the time in which the first principle of just wars and the first just acts of plunder began to emerge, since the wars waged to found gentile mankind were no less just than those waged later to preserve it. Thus here the first outlines of what Grotius calls 'the internal justice of wars'[16] began to appear, which is the true and proper justice of arms.
56. Through these first just acts of plunder, the first men acquired a Cyclopic power over their wives, and thence over their children, precisely as Homer's Polyphemus tells Ulysses,[17] thus preserving the first custom of bestial communion, in which children inherit the status of their mother. For this custom could not have changed all at once into the quite contrary custom of the peoples, which we still retain, whereby children born in marriage inherit the status of their father. Whence, in the state of the families, upon the occasion of the utilities and necessities of families, this monastic law developed into a natural law of the whole [family] system. Next, these original stocks ramified into yet more families, upon the occasion of the common needs of whole clans, i.e. the ancient houses or tribes that were first

[15] Plato, *Laws*, III, 678c–681e.
[16] Grotius, *The Law*, III, VII, VII.
[17] *Od.*, IX, 112–15, where, however, Ulysses is the narrator.

and properly called *gentes* by the Latins. These families preceded and were the basis of the cities, in which the law of the whole [family] system was disseminated into a natural law of the gentes, as it was for the first time properly called, these being the gentes whom the Latins called *gentes maiores* ('the greater gentes']. Later, when the houses or tribes had united in the cities, the natural law of the greater gentes was elevated into a natural law of the lesser gentes, i.e. the private law of the people concerning the civil necessities or utilities of each city. This must be the natural civil law which, because of the uniformity of its causes, was born in common in each age in each part of the world, as, for example, in Latium, where it was the law belonging to each of the cities, many though they were, among which Romulus later founded Rome. Finally, after the cities had become known to one another through the common business of war, alliances and commerce, [the identity of] their natural civil laws was recognised, but with a much wider extension than anything earlier, in a natural law of the second gentes, i.e. a natural law of nations united as in one great city of the world. This is the law of mankind.

[Chapter] VI
The natural order of gentile human ideas of divinity through which, depending upon whether they have been kept distinct or communicated, the nations are isolated or in communication with one another

57. The Roman jurisconsults established worship of God as the first and foremost part of the natural law of the gentes. For where there is neither rule of law nor force of arms, and men are accordingly in a state of complete freedom, they can neither enter nor remain in society with others except through fear of a force superior to them all, and, therefore, through fear of a divinity common to all. This fear of divinity is called 'religion'.
58. Now, since we began this Science with man in solitude, and were therefore in agreement with Grotius and Pufendorf, though with regard to the origins only of the gentiles, it becomes quite impossible to understand how the idea of divinity was first aroused and then

developed in the minds of the gentile nations, other than in the following natural order: first, before all else, these men, separate and all alone, should imagine the idea of a force superior to anything human as a deity, each believing that this force was his own particular god. Hence the first human society brought together through religion was that of marriage, into which certain men must have entered when their fear of a god caused them to withdraw from their ferine wandering. In the grottoes in which each had hidden, they must have kept the women they had dragged in by force, so that they could mate with them free from the fear aroused by the appearance of the sky, which, on certain occasions to be demonstrated below in their proper place [105, 411], they had imagined as divinity. For fear diverts from venery the spirits needed to indulge it. In this mode, from this sense of bestial lust, Providence began to tinge the face of these lost men with the blush of shame. And certainly there has never been a nation in the world which did not feel this shame, for [properly] human mating takes place in all nations. In the case of Adam and Eve, however, this came about in a distinctive way, for since, as punishment for their sin, they had already fallen from contemplation of God, at the very moment of their fall they became aware of their corporeal nature, saw themselves in their nakedness and covered those parts that are unseemly to mention, let alone see.[18] And Ham, who, in jest, insisted upon seeing the private parts of his father Noah, as he lay asleep, carried God's curse with him into the bestial wilderness for his lack of piety.[19] This is one of those origins beyond which it is foolish curiosity to seek others earlier, which is the most important mark of the truth of origins. For if, going back beyond Ham and Japhet, we do not stop our enquiry with Noah after the Flood, and if, going back beyond Cain, we do not stop with Adam and a God who is the creator both of him and of the world, the question arises: at what point in the world did men begin to be ashamed of themselves in that state of bestial freedom in which they could neither be ashamed before their sons, to whom they were by nature superior, nor before one another, when they were equal to one another and equally afire with the foments of lust? Hence, if we do not come to a halt at shame before a divinity, but not divinities such as naked

[18] Genesis, 3:7.
[19] Genesis, 9:21–2, 25–7.

Venus and naked Hermes, i.e. Mercury,[20] or shameless Priapus, humanity could never have begun among the men of Hobbes, Grotius and Pufendorf.

59. With such beginnings to human things, the first men must have held the first women within the religion of a divinity who forbade the practice of indulging in venery under the open sky. Hence it remained the custom in all nations that women should adopt the civil religion of their husbands, as the family sacrifices of the Romans clearly tell us. From this first and oldest principle of all humanity, men began to communicate ideas among themselves, starting when husbands communicated to their women the idea, before all others, of the goddess, who was certainly the goddess of marriage, who had united them in the first society. Next, in the state of the families, which were by now united in whole clans, the particular deities of each father became the gods of the fathers, the *divi parentum*, as they were still all called in the chapter *De parricidio* ['On Parricide'] in the Law of the Twelve Tables.[21] Later, when the families were united in the cities, these particular deities became the gods of each fatherland, the *dii patrii*, who were therefore believed to be the gods belonging to the fathers, i.e. to the order of the patricians. Hence, when the uniformity of ideas within a single language led numbers of different cities to unite in whole nations, they became the gods of the nations themselves, such as the gods of the East or Egypt or Greece. Finally, in times when the nations came to know one another through wars, alliances and commerce, they became the gods common to mankind. As such, however, they were not the Juno of the Greeks or the Venus of the Trojans, but that which, in their mutually exchangeable oaths, the Greeks understood through their Juno and the Trojans through their Venus: *a god who is Jove to all*.[22]

60. Hence two things are demonstrated: firstly, that humanity is wholly contained within the unity of God, for it begins with a single god born separately in each nation and ends in a single universal God; and secondly, the truth, antiquity and continuity of the Christian religion, for it began with the world created by a single God, and never, with the passing of the years, nations and customs, contained any proliferation of divinity.

[20] Cf. 465 for Vico's alternative explanation of the nakedness of these classical figures.
[21] See footnote 160, p. 215 for the context of this remark.
[22] This is a paraphrase of *Aen.*, X, 112.

[Chapter] VII
The natural order of ideas concerning the law of the nations [as it proceeds] through their own religions, laws, languages, marriages, names, arms and governments

61. But if the gentes were, first and properly, original stocks that had ramified into many families, it becomes quite impossible to understand how the law of the gentes could have developed other than through this natural order of ideas. First, after the first fathers of the world had ramified from certain stocks into many families, but before these were composed into cities, it was, above all else, a law that arose with the customs of these stocks, the clans of which were called the 'greater gentes'. Thus Jove, for example, was called the god of the greater gentes because he had been imagined by the first fathers and was believed to be god by the entire families of which these fathers comprised the common stock and sovereign princes. Hence each clan necessarily had its own language, which it had discovered for the internal communication of its laws, which, in such a state, following our claim in the preceding chapter, could have been none other than the laws, supposedly divine, of the auspices. And, as a result, in all the gentile nations, Providence was originally named 'divinity', from *divinari* ['to divine']. Each clan must therefore have believed that its own laws were divine for they all came from the Jove whom each had imagined to be its own god, commanding to it all their human institutions, of which marriage was certainly the first and foremost. So, by dint and reason of their own religions, laws and languages, the clans must naturally have celebrated marriage with the auspices of their gods.
62. Now let us for a moment assume what will soon [116] be shown in fact: that much later others were received from the state of bestial communion into that of social life, on the lands first occupied and cultivated by men who had halted their ferine wanderings an equal length of time earlier. Lacking both religion and language when they were received, these foreign vagabonds must naturally have been forbidden to contract marriages with members of the clans that already had their own languages, laws and gods, as also must their offspring, as long as they remained ignorant of the religions, languages and laws of those who had given them shelter. This must have been the first and oldest natural law of the gentes in the state of the families, common

to gentiles and Hebrews alike, though observed much more by the Hebrews because the people of God had the true virtue of not profaning their true religion [by extending it] to the impious vagabonds who had recourse to them.

63. Meanwhile when, on certain occasions to be demonstrated later [81, 186–8], the clans had united in the first cities, the natural law of these gentes must have become a law safeguarded by the customs of orders of the clans, now called the 'lesser gentes'. This is why, for example, after this order had imagined that Romulus was a god, he was referred to as the god 'of the lesser gentes', as Proclus Sabinus,[23] a member of the order of senators, certainly referred to him in a public pronouncement to the Roman plebs. Consequently, as before, so now, long after the cities were founded, the law of the gentes must have belonged to the orders of the noble families. This is narrated all too clearly in Roman history, in which we are now following Livy before all others, which, based as it has been on different erroneous theories of the origins of humanity, has hitherto lain bereft of science or any possible utility.

64. But, to see how Roman history fares on the basis of the foregoing considerations, it would be helpful now to attend briefly to the vulgar belief[24] that large masses of men of unknown marriages, unknown languages and unknown gods, were admitted to Romulus' asylum in copious numbers from Arcadia and Phrygia overseas,[25] leaving aside countless others, wholly devoid of gods, languages or any feature of humanity, who repaired from their bestial solitude to the small cities founded earlier in Latium, rather in the way in which wild animals sometimes take refuge in inhabited places to save themselves from the cold or the pursuit of hunters as a result of certain ultimate necessities, as described below [225]. [This vulgar belief coheres with] certain Roman history when it tells us that the plebs sought marriage, or the right to contract marriage, for that is what the word *connubium* meant in good jurisprudence, wanting to celebrate it with

[23] Livy, I, 16, 5–8.

[24] Cf. 266, where Vico asserts that all traditions, no matter how fabulous, must have some grounds of truth. His intention here is not therefore wholly to discredit this 'vulgar tradition' but to show that, on one interpretation, it is compatible with, and supports, his account of the ongoing dispute between the nobility and the plebs.

[25] The reference is to the tradition that, after the fall of Troy, Aeneas and his followers escaped and finally ended up in Latium, where Aeneas founded Rome.

the auspices of the gods in the same way as the fathers or nobles, but that the nobles refused to let them do so, opposing them with reasons stated in the full propriety of the words of such times, as faithfully reported by Livy: *confundi iura gentium*,[26] *se gentem habere*[27] and *auspicia esse sua*.[28] By these expressions they meant first that the rights of kin would be adulterated. Second, that they alone had certain descendants, and were therefore safeguarded by marriage from those nefarious relationships in which sons lie with mothers, fathers with daughters, or a number of brothers with a single sister. For solemn marriage alone can demonstrate certain fathers, hence certain sons and certain brothers, as the young know as soon as they start to learn Roman law. Consequently the nobles were innocent of that nefarious incest through which, rather than propagating itself, mankind would hasten to its end: for incest returns children to the origins from which they came; it restricts [stock] rather than ramifying it; and it compounds close blood relations. This, indeed, is the natural evil of such incestuous unions, for which, in this very dispute, the nobles censured the plebeians with the expression, *agitarent connubia more ferarum* ['they mated in the manner of wild animals'].[29] And third, that they understood the language of their gods, who prescribed all human institutions to them, of which marriage was the first and most important, by issuing warnings and commands, supposedly divine, through the auspices.

65. On the basis of this natural order of ideas, the natural law of the heroic gentes is discovered to rest on a difference in nature that the nobles thought distinguished them from the plebs of the first cities, a difference as great as that between men and wild animals, corresponding precisely to the superiority between the strong and the weak that Achilles believes to hold between lions and men.[30] Here we discover the natural origin of the secrecy with which religions and laws were held within the orders of nobles, sages or priests, and of the sacred or secret languages that existed throughout all nations, as against the belief, hitherto held by the Romans, that all this was part of a deception practised by the patricians or nobles.

[26] Livy, IV, 1, 2.
[27] Livy, X, 8, 9.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Livy, IV, 2, 6.
[30] *Il.*, XXII, 262.

66. Much later, after being admitted to the first cities, these strangers or, to speak more accurately, their descendants, gradually grew accustomed to worshipping and fearing the gods of the lords of these cities and, after long periods of subservience, learnt the language of religion and the law. Then, taking the nobles as their model, they contracted natural marriages with women who were naturally, i.e. in fact, certain. So, just as through certain verities of nature they had already entered humanity, their [now more human] nature led them to aspire to equality with the nobles in their right to share their marriages and gods through the natural law of the gentes. Hence, nine years after the Law of the Twelve Tables was set down by the Romans, the nobles finally communicated their gods and marriage to the plebs by law, as Roman history clearly tells us.[31] In this mode, as the light of certain Latin history disperses the shadows which have hitherto enshrouded the fabulous history of the Greeks, it is discovered that it was through fear of the gods that the likes of Orpheus domesticated the wild animals and subjugated them in the cities. Hence, from [the time of] this state onwards, the natural law of the gentes became a law common to all who were born of free men in the same city, and from such a 'nature', or kind of birth, it was then called 'the natural law of the nations'. Thus we can understand how solemn marriage belonged to Roman citizens but not to the peoples they had conquered, just as earlier it had belonged to the Roman patricians but not to the plebeians, and how it must have been this that distinguished the civil law of the Romans [from that of other nations], rather than that the citizens of other nations, in full enjoyment of their own lordship and civil liberty, should have failed to celebrate solemn marriage among themselves.
67. In more recent times, after enduring long periods of subjugation by dominant nations, defeated nations gradually grew accustomed to living in ignorance of their own defeated gods and in fear of the victorious gods. Thus as, over the long passage of years, they allowed their own religious language to fall into disuse and began to celebrate the language of the dominant religions, they naturally reached a state in which it was possible for the gods and the marriages of the ruling peoples to be communicated to them. And with this extension, the

[31] Livy, IV, 1, 4, where Livy recounts the tale of the introduction, by the tribune, C. Canuleius, of the law permitting intermarriage.

natural law of the gentes was judged according to ideas of the human necessities and utilities of entire nations, each of which was unified by the bond of sharing one and the same religion and one and the same sacred language.

68. Such a sacred language of worship, in this case that of the Latin and Greek Church, unites all the Christian peoples in one nation, distinct from the Hebrews, Mohammedans and gentiles. This is the reason for the natural evil that attaches to unions between men and women from these different nations. But a very high degree of venial sin attaches also to the natural evil contained in carnal unions with Christian women which lack the solemnities of marriage, for these must give birth to children whose parents are unable to teach by example the first of all the laws of humanity, that fear of religion that ought to be present when man and woman unite, from which humanity itself took its beginnings. Thus those who indulge in such uncertain venery sin naturally by sending their offspring, insofar as they are theirs, into a state of bestiality.
69. All this is founded on the second of the three principles of the whole of humanity proposed above [10]: that men should unite with women only within the principles of a common civil religion, through which, together with a common language, children can learn the things that pertain to their religions and laws and thus preserve and perpetuate their own nations. Hence, let some of the distinguished philosophers of our age beware lest, in their unbridled enthusiasm for philosophy, they condemn the study of the learned languages, in particular Greek, Latin and those of the East, upon which our holy religion and laws are founded, and thus, without realising it, contribute to the ruin of the most highly cultured of all the nations of the world. For the sole cause whereby this summit of culture has been reached is the cultivation of the most enlightened languages of antiquity that the Christian peoples found necessary for their religious and legal practices.
70. Finally, after wars, alliances and commerce had brought more nations of diverse languages to share uniform beliefs, the natural law of mankind was born from the uniformity of the ideas of all nations concerning the human necessities or utilities of each of them.
71. For all these reasons the principle of natural law is that of a single justice, i.e. the unity of the ideas of mankind concerning the utilities or necessities common to the whole of human nature. Hence Pyrrhonism

is destructive of humanity because it fails to provide such a single justice; Epicureanism dissipates it because it would leave judgements of utility to the sense of each individual; and Stoicism annihilates it because it disregards the utilities or necessities of our corporeal nature and recognises only those of the mind, upon which only the Stoics' own sage is allowed to pass judgement. Plato alone promotes a single justice, for he believes that the rule of the true must be based upon what seems one or the same to everybody.

72. We have now seen how the natural order of ideas concerning the law of the gentes must have proceeded through their religions, laws, languages and marriages. In the remainder of this chapter, therefore, let us consider the names by which the gentes were distinguished and the arms and governments by which they were preserved.

73. Names were first and properly applied to the gentes, as in Rome where the names of the gentes all terminated in [the suffix] *ius*, such as *nomen Cornelium*, which had ramified widely into many of the noblest families, the most distinguished of which was that of Cornelius Scipio. Among the ancient Greeks, they developed through patronymics, which were properly the names of the fathers, the antiquity of which is all too easy to prove because they have been retained by the poets. If all this is so, the first gentes must have consisted solely of the descendants of noble houses, for only the nobles were born of just or solemn marriage. It follows that when, for example, names such as 'Roman', 'Numantian' and 'Carthaginian' were used to signify a people, they must first have applied only to the noble orders of these nations for, since they alone understood the divine language of the auspices, they alone must have controlled the administration of all public business concerning peace and war. Roman history has sung of all this at almost too great a length, in its account of the dispute between the plebs and the fathers over the communication of marriage, consulship and priesthood.

74. All these things, including the right to names among the Romans, to patronymics among the most ancient Greeks and other equivalents among other nations, contributed to the birth of the natural law of the first gentes and its being safeguarded by all three principles from which, as suggested above [10], humanity emerged. The first of these was the true universal belief that Providence exist. The second was that men should contract lawful marriages with certain women, with whom they have religions, laws and languages in common, in order

to beget certain children, whom they can bring up in religion and instruct in the native laws that children need in order to demonstrate the certainty of their fathers by names and patronymics and thus to perpetuate their nations. Such children were therefore first and properly called *patricii* by the Latins and εὐπατρίδαι [*eupatridai*] by the ancient Greeks, in both cases in the sense of 'nobles'. Hence, according to what is numbered as the eleventh of the Twelve Tables, in the chapter entitled *Auspicia incommunicata plebi sunto* ['The auspices should not be communicated to the plebs'],[32] the Roman patricians confined the auspices exclusively to themselves. The third principle was that the dead should be buried in their own lands, devoted to that purpose. Hence their tombs, with [the record of] their genealogies, or series of ancestors, should ascertain their sovereign ownership of the lands, which had been recognised through the auspices of the gods of their original stock when it first occupied them. Thus ownership of land, which had formerly been common to all mankind as use, was now distinguished as property; and ownership as property is the original ownership, the source of all sovereign ownership and hence of all sovereign authority, all of which, through these first and oldest auspices, come from God.

75. All this gives us reason to believe that some of the men of Grotius and Pufendorf were received into humanity earlier than others. A further discovery is the great principle of the first division of fields, which Providence ordained by means of the religion of auspices and tombs, and hence the principle whereby the cities all rose on the basis of two orders, the nobles and the plebeians. But a yet more sublime discovery is that the world of nations was ordained by God, observed principally in the attribute of Providence, through which He is everywhere worshipped in the idea of divinity, i.e. the idea of a mind that sees into the future, for such is the meaning of *divinari*. Thus was the important custom of burying the dead, the Latin for which is *humare*, taught to humanity. From these last two great principles the science of things human and divine must take its start.

76. It follows from the fact that in the earliest times the name 'Roman', for example, applied only to the fathers or nobles, that this custom must have been received in Rome from a law common to the peoples of

[32] The formula is not to be found in the Twelve Tables. But see Livy, VI, 41, 6 and X, 8, 9.

Latium, which entitled the nobles alone, in the oldest clans, to be called 'quirites'. This word was derived from *quiris*, which meant 'spear', and 'quirites' undoubtedly meant 'men of arms in the assemblies', just as in our barbaric times the nobles alone were called 'men of arms', since not only was it never applied to those not in assembly but it was never used in the singular. This convinces us that since only the nobles had the right to bear arms, and therefore the right to use force, which is called 'civil authority' in the cities, because they alone belonged to a gens, they should naturally treat the law of the gentes as belonging to them. We have shown elsewhere that this law of the Romans lasted until the law of the dictator Philo.[33] Since, after many a long struggle, the fathers had already communicated marriage, sovereign command of arms and [the right of] priesthood to the plebs, with this law the title of Roman majesty was finally communicated to all the people in the great assemblies in which, thenceforth, all were called 'Roman quirites'. Hence, from this time on, the word 'Roman' signified 'the nation of those born of free men in Rome, with the right to decide peace and war in the assembly'. The provinces proper had no name for this right because, as a result of their defeats by the Romans, they had been deprived of their sovereign right of arms. Thus, also, their inhabitants had no indigenous name for Roman citizens, just as earlier the Roman plebs had had no name for the fathers. Here we discover the origin of the law of the Roman people which, with some differences to be discussed below [228–31], spread to the lands they conquered in Latium, Italy and the provinces.

77. It remains, finally, in accordance with the proper order of nature, to explain our ideas concerning the law of the gentes in the extremely important part concerning governments, which is the last of the seven aspects proposed above [72]. This has cost us the greatest effort of all in these meditations, as much, indeed, as was necessary to enter, through the force of our understanding, the nature of the first men in whom all language was mute. This was the sacred language of hieroglyphics or mute characters, as will be explained more fully below [317–28], upon which the oldest laws, supposedly divine, known only to the nobles and not to the vulgar who were the plebeians, were dependent. For we

[33] *De uno*, CLXI, 5 and CLXII. This is the law of 339 BC, in which Quintus Publilius Philo came near to equalising the nobles and the plebs by ordaining that one of the censors should be a plebeian and making the decrees of the plebs binding.

finally discovered that it was through the same causes of this sacred language that it naturally came about that the first governments in the first world of nations were wholly aristocratic, i.e. composed of orders of nobles. These are shown to have been the heroes – Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Asian – in their barbaric times. But as the nations gradually came to form vocal words and to enlarge their vocabularies, which constitute a great school for rendering the human mind quick and deft, as we argued earlier [42], the plebeians came by reflection to recognise that they were of the same nature as the nobles and, as a result of this knowledge of their true human nature, lost their belief in the vanity of heroism and came to want equality with the nobles in their right to the utilities. Hence they were increasingly unwilling to tolerate the bad government that the nobles had meted out to them on the basis of the vain right derived from their supposedly heroic nature, until finally, on the ruins of the natural law of the heroic gentes, [in which justice was] estimated according to superiority in force, the natural law of the human gentes, as Ulpian named and defined it,[34] [in which it is] estimated according to equality of right, was erected. Consequently, at the same time as the peoples had already naturally, i.e. in fact, come to be composed of nobles and plebeians, with a larger proportion of plebeians than nobles, they became the masters of languages that incorporated the ideas of the multitude, and, as they did, they themselves either naturally became the masters of the laws in the popular republics or they passed naturally into monarchies in which the laws were dictated in the common language of the people.[35]

78. Thus in the persons of the monarchs were united the oldest auspices, called 'the fortune of the guides', the names of nations, called 'the glory of their exploits', and, as a result of their auspices and names, the supreme command of arms, with which they defended their own religions and laws and separated and preserved their nations. Mastery of the hieroglyphic language of the first peoples was preserved intact, however, both among the free peoples in the assemblies and later among the monarchs, but restricted to a certain language of arms used by the nations for communication with one another in wars, alliances and commerce, which, as we shall show below [317 ff.], came to

[34] See footnote 14, p. 43.

[35] Vico here asserts the need, in a fully rational or fully human age, for laws to be framed in a language accessible to the people. See the introduction, pp. xxxiv–xxxv.

constitute the principle of the sciences of blazonry and medals. This is the underlying reason why, when nations are already furnished with languages of settled meanings, governments can change from monarchies to popular governments and vice versa, whereas, in the certain history of all nations in all times, we never read that, in any human or cultivated times, either of them changed into an aristocratic government. How much science, then, we are left to wonder, is there in the philosophers' meditations upon the principles of civil governments or how much truth in Polybius' reasonings about the mutation of governments?[36]

Corollary
A practical test comparing [the results of] our reasoned principles with the vulgar tradition that the Law of the Twelve Tables came from Athens

79. The foregoing alone should suffice to alert us not to place our trust in future on authors whose reasoning about the origins of the natural law of the gentes and of Roman civil law is based upon vulgar traditions.[37] But since anyone who criticises the entire systems of others has a duty to replace them with an alternative of his own, containing principles that provide a more felicitous support for the totality of effects [to be explained], we shall extend our meditation further in order to fulfil this duty. Hence, before recommencing our journey, we believe it worthwhile to test the truth and utility of this new Science, in order to decide whether we ought to proceed further with it or abandon it at the outset.
80. Our test takes the form of asking whether, in the foregoing reasoning, which is based upon principles laid down solely by the force of our understanding, we have succeeded in entering the nature of the first men who founded the gentile nations, from which, by means of the order of ideas we have devised, they should have been led to their completion in that state in which we have received them from

[36] Polybius, *History of the World*, IV, 22, 4–5, where it is stated that a Spartan government changed from monarchic to aristocratic.

[37] Despite the sweeping nature of this remark, Vico is far from opposed to using vulgar traditions but he is strongly opposed to taking them over simply as received and without subjecting them to critical interpretation. Cf. 88, 266.

the hands of our ancestors. So let us make the following comparison. [Let us see] whether, [by proceeding] in this mode, which runs contrary to our common habits of long standing and requires us to cast off, with the most violent of efforts, so much of that humanity of nations hitherto employed in the reasoning and accounts of both the philosophers and philologists, we have found principles that are reasonable as causes and suitable in their effects. Or let us see whether, on the other hand, in an alternative effort that runs counter to these few, new and singular notions, and which ought, by comparison, to be very slight, we can forget these principles, and thus, in what follows, continue with current practice and allow ourselves to rely with tranquil mind upon the vulgar traditions that the ancients have left us in written form. For if we find ourselves unable to do so, this will be a true test that the things expressed here are identical with the innermost substance of our soul, i.e. that we have done nothing more than let reason unfold, so that we would need to abandon our human nature in order to deny these things. Thus this would constitute that innermost philosophy from which Cicero[38] wished to produce the science of this law. It will, moreover, be a true test that the principles conceived so far were truths hitherto enclosed within us which have either been overwhelmed by the burden of remembering so many innumerable and unsystematic things that are of no use whatsoever to the understanding, or have been transformed into fantasy because they have been imagined in accordance with our present ideas and not the very ancient ideas that belong to them.

81. So let us set to one side the arguments presented thus far concerning the origins of the false religions, the gods to which they gave birth, the laws and their first sacred language, and the heroic customs and governments, as though they are completely unknown, as, for so many thousands of years, they have in truth lain unknown, and agree on the following things belonging to certain Roman history. The most certain of these is the dispute between the plebs and the fathers over contracting marriage with common auspices. This is the divine law whose communication the jurisconsult Modestinus[39] took as the first and most important part of the just or solemn marriages contracted

[38] Cicero, *De legibus*, I, 5, 17.

[39] The third-century Roman jurist and pupil of Ulpian, Modestinus made many contributions to the *Digest*.

by the Roman citizens, when he defined them as *sunt omnis divini et humani iuris communicatio* ['the communication of all rights, divine and human'].[40] This dispute took place in Rome three hundred and six years after she was founded and thus three years after the Law of the Twelve Tables was given to the plebs. Hence we must here reflect that in those times the plebs had no gods in common with the fathers, which is tantamount to saying that the plebs was a completely different nation from the order of nobles, since it is certainly the unity of a religion that unites a nation.

82. But what dense nights of darkness must our minds not enter, in what abyss of confusion must they not be lost, when, unable to draw upon any likeness, no matter how remote, with our own nature, customs and governments, we go in search of the nature, customs and kinds of government that ancient Rome must have had! Let even the most ingenious of our scholars employ all their sharp wit or, rather, cunning, in support of the reliability of our memory, already very old, with regard to the following claims: that under the kings the government of Rome was an admixture of monarchy and popular liberty; that Brutus founded complete popular liberty in Rome when he drove out the kings; and that the Law of the Twelve Tables came from Athens, certainly a free city at that time, and that with it complete equality was established in Rome. For, in contrast to all this, we have the public evidence of incontestable history that, until six years after the Law of the Twelve Tables, not only were the plebeians not Roman citizens, since they did not share the divine institutions of the nobles, but they were not even part of the Roman nation. For the fathers opposed them on the grounds that they alone belonged to a gens, which was certainly Roman, and, astonishing though it may seem, held the plebeians to be of a different species from men, because *agitarent connubia more ferarum* ['they mated in the manner of wild animals'],[41] a state which continued only as long as [natural] cohabitation with their women continued. So, unless we are able to criticise Modestinus for providing a false definition of marriage, unless we can deny that it was a common custom of nations not to divide cities into regions on the basis of having different gods, for a city divided by religion is either already in ruins or close to it, and unless we can disregard the all too strident evidence of certain Roman history regarding a

[40] *Digest*, XXIII, 2, 1.
[41] Livy, IV, 2, 6.

law that was in dispute in public debates and popular movements for a good six years, the foregoing points oblige us or, perhaps better, allow us the freedom, not to repose too much trust in the accuracy with which the critics have affixed headings of their own to each of the laws of the [Twelve] Tables: thus, the heading whereby the plebeians were the fathers of families, when this was possible only for citizens; or that whereby the plebeians made solemn testaments and created guardians for their children, when this was permitted only to the fathers of families; and again, that whereby the plebeians' inheritances descended *ab intestato* to their heirs or, failing that, to their male relatives or, finally, to those of the same gens: for these, we say, were the inheritances of those very plebeians who, until six years after this law was set down, belonged neither to a gens nor a house!

83. But what perverse diligence have we here, when the doubts about the law that came from Athens to Rome are such that it is quite impossible not to heed them? For, from within our own minds, warnings press in on us as to the savage and isolated nature of the first nations, between whom linguistic intercourse was possible only after the occasion of wars, alliances and commerce. Hence, like claps of thunder in our heads [these questions ring out]: if, as Livy resolutely asserts,[42] it was impossible, only eighty-six years before his own time and within a small region of Italy, for a name as famous as that of Pythagoras to have penetrated to Rome from Crotona, passing through so many nations diverse in language and custom, how could the fame of Solon's wisdom have crossed over the seas to Rome all the way from Attica, the part of Greece furthest from us? And how could the Romans have had such detailed knowledge of the quality of the Athenian laws as to judge them adequate to settle the disputes between the plebeians and the nobles, and this at a time when, no more than twenty years earlier, Thucydides wrote that the Greeks themselves knew nothing about their own institutions beyond reach of their fathers' memories?[43] And how had the Greeks come to be known to the Romans, and by means of what linguistic commerce and through which embassies, when, a hundred and

[42] Livy, I, 18, 2–3.
[43] Thucydides, I, 1, 2.

seventy-two years later, the Roman ambassadors, unknown within Italy itself because of the lack of any linguistic commerce, were maltreated by the Tarantines in that very war in which the Romans and Greeks began to know of one another?[44] Or could it have been that, since there was no linguistic commerce, the Roman ambassadors – but these would be Grotius's true simpletons or Accursius' utterly ridiculous ambassadors,[45] who bring such discredit upon the highly renowned wisdom of the decemvirs – brought the Greek laws home knowing nothing of what they might contain, so that, had the authors of this fable not, in the meantime, also imported Hermodorus the Greek to spend his exile in Rome,[46] the ambassadors would not have known what to do with these imported laws? And how, then, did it come about that Hermodorus could translate the laws into a Latin of such purity that Diodorus Siculus judged it to be 'lacking the faintest trace of Greek',[47] and we can ourselves assert that no subsequent Latin author, no matter how well versed in Greek, translated any Greek writers with equal elegance? And how, then, could Hermodorus have clothed Greek ideas in words so properly Latin that the Greeks themselves, including Dio [Cassius],[48] claimed that in the whole of Greece there were no similar words with which to express these ideas, such as, for example, the word *auctoritas*, which, as we shall show below [167–73], contains one of the most important parts, if not possibly the whole or sole content, of that law [in the Twelve Tables]?

84. We have demonstrated the fabulous nature of this vulgar tradition elsewhere, in two complete books,[49] in which we revealed that the advice given out by the embassy, under the pretext of [being in the interest of] Rome, was, in fact, intended to hold the plebs at bay for three

[44] Florus, *Epitomae*, I, 13, 5.

[45] *Digest*, I, 2, 2, 4.

[46] Hermodorus of Ephesus, expelled by his fellow citizens, was said to have been sent to Rome, where he explained Greek law to the decemvirs and thus assisted in drawing up the Law of the Twelve Tables.

[47] Diodorus Siculus, *The Historical Library*, XII, 26, 1, where there is mention only of the simple style of the Law of the Twelve Tables.

[48] Dio Cassius, *History of Rome*, LV, 3, 4.

[49] *De constantia philologiae*, XXXVI–XXXVII. This is the second part of the second book of *Il diritto universale*, entitled *De constantia iurisprudentis* (1721). See note 22, p. 17. Henceforth *De const. philol.*

years. Here, however, faced by attack from those who would prefer to lack understanding than to be forgotten, let us place ourselves in the shadow of Cicero, who was never prepared to believe this fable and openly said so.[50] For prior to Cicero, no Greek or Latin author mentions any such fact in Roman history, unless we are willing to give credence to the letter written by Heraclitus to Hermodorus, in which Heraclitus rejoiced in Hermodorus' dream that all the other laws of the world had come to adore his laws.[51] But the letter is the real dream, written by a person in a part as remote as Ephesus, i.e. the desert into which Heraclitus later withdrew to escape the unjust hatred of the Ephesians, and sent to another in Rome, via those places through which, as we said above [37], Pythagoras had [supposedly] made his farflung voyages throughout the world. Moreover, the letter is utterly unworthy either of such a serious philosopher as Heraclitus or of Hermodorus, a prince of such merit that Heraclitus thought that the Ephesians deserved to be strangled to a man for driving him from their city. For whatever the one says in it is received by the other with such delight and shameless adulation [as if] the glory for good laws ought to belong to their translator, which is like saying that the glory for a great peace ought to accrue to its interpreters! Furthermore, if this praise was bestowed upon Hermodorus because he was the author sent to Athens to obtain the laws of liberty, as Pomponius believed,[52] he would seem to have been utterly unworthy of it. For, as Diogenes Laertius tells us,[53] though Hermodorus was the most important citizen of Ephesus, he knew, at his own cost, of no laws of liberty, since it was in [the absence of] any such laws that he was driven out by the Ephesians, as was the righteous Aristides by the Athenians, and, similarly, a few years earlier, the valiant Coriolanus, who had also been exiled from Rome. Hence this vain boast must be judged to be fraudulent like the Oracles of Zoroaster and the Orphics or fragments of verse of Orpheus.

[50] Cicero, *De oratore*, I, 44 (henceforth *De orat.*).

[51] This tale, which appears in the eighth of an apocryphal series of letters purporting to be sent by Heraclitus to Hermodorus, was used by some critics to maintain that the Law of the Twelve Tables was derived from Greek law.

[52] *Digest*, I, 2, 2, 4.

[53] Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives of the Philosophers*: Heraclitus, IX, 1, 2.

85. Of other authors, the earliest to mention any such fact are Livy[54] and Dionysius of Halicarnassus,[55] so that none of those who came later is deserving of more trust than these two writers. But here [we must take account of] Cicero, who was certainly more of a philosopher or philologist than either Livy or Dionysius, who undoubtedly lived before them and, governing as a most learned consul of the republic, was altogether better informed about the history of its laws than either of them, one a private citizen from Padua and the other a Greek interested in the fame of his vainglorious nation. In an erudite argument, which constitutes the subject matter of the three books of *Dell'oratore*,[56] he introduces Marcus Crassus to discuss Roman law in the presence both of Quintus Mucius Scaevola, prince of the jurisconsults of his age, and Servius Sulpicius, who, as the jurisconsult Pomponius mentions in his short history of Roman law,[57] was criticised by Scaevola himself for the fact that, although he was a patrician, he was ignorant of the laws of his own country. Ever the most careful in observing the decorum appropriate to dialogues, Cicero has these men present in order to allow Marcus Crassus, for it would otherwise have been an unbelievable solecism, to state that the wisdom of the decemvirs, who gave the Law of the Twelve Tables to the Romans, was far in advance of that of Lycurgus, who gave the Tables to the Spartans, or of Draco, or even of Solon himself, who gave them to the Athenians![58]
86. We shall reveal below [204–7] the grounds of truth whereby, with gross inconsistency, the Law of the Twelve Tables was said to come now from some cities of Latium, such as those of the Aequi, now from the Greek cities in Italy, now from Sparta and lastly from Athens, where, because of the fame of her philosophers, this wandering was finally halted. We shall see there [204] that the Law of the Twelve Tables suffered the same fate as the voyages of Pythagoras, which came to be believed in because the Greeks later found ideas similar to those of Pythagoras in nations scattered throughout the length

[54] Livy, III, 31, 8; 32, 1; 33, 5.
[55] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The History of Rome*, X, 51, 5; 54, 3, in which Dionysius recounts the tale of the sending of the embassy to Athens and its return with the laws.
[56] Cicero, *De orat.*, I, 44.
[57] *Digest*, I, 2, 2, 43.
[58] Cicero, *De orat.*, I, 44, 197.

and breadth of the universe. But though some Attic scholars have drawn parallels between some slight points in the Law of the Twelve Tables and some Athenian customs, others between other unimportant points in the Law and the customs of Sparta, and the Christian scholar[59] between other equally minor laws and the Mosaic laws, we shall demonstrate in this book that the whole body of Roman law provides the most complete and certain public testimony in the whole of gentile antiquity, hitherto misunderstood through the foregoing vulgar belief, with which to establish the law of the gentes of Italy, Greece and the other ancient nations. Roman pride has been a source of great damage in this matter, because the Romans wanted to match the vainglorious Greeks, who vaunted as the founder of their nation an Orpheus rich in recondite wisdom and, to enhance his wisdom yet further, ascribed an abundance of such wisdom to Trismegistus and Zoroaster, from whom, by way of Atlas, Orpheus the philosopher came. For, as we shall show below [193, 356], because the Romans lacked such a founder in Italy, for Livy denied their earlier boast that Numa was taught by Pythagoras, they ascribed the authorship of the laws that Providence dictated to them to Solon, prince of the sages of Greece.

87. Hence, as a result of this false belief, the Law of the Twelve Tables shared the same fate as the wisdom of Zoroaster, Trismegistus and Orpheus, who were laden with works containing a recondite wisdom that both came much later than, and as a result of, their vulgar wisdom. For, after it was imagined that the Law of the Twelve Tables had come all at once from Athens, which was then a city of the most complete liberty, many rights and reasons were attached to it which the nobles communicated to the plebs only after much time and many disputes. These included, for example, the right of marriage, [which came] six years later [than the Law], which, along with the auspices, the fathers had reserved to themselves in Table XI, and upon which paternal power, testaments, guardianship, full juridical rights, agnation, and the right to membership of a gens were all dependent.

88. Hence we must make a choice. Should we, in this dense night, in these rough seas and surrounded by so many treacherous reefs, continue to sail in this cruel storm in which all human reasoning is subverted, in

[59] Tyrannius Rufinus (fourth century AD), the probable author of a systematic *Collatio rerum mosaicarum et romanorum.*

order to defend the shadows of an obscure age and the fables of a heroic age that were invented later rather than born thus and all at once? Or should we apply our reason to the fables, whose every interpretation has hitherto been quite arbitrary, give them the meanings that reason demands and thus take possession of the things of the obscure times, ownership of which, since they have hitherto belonged to nobody, can legitimately be conceded to their occupant, and, in this mode, through the principles of heroic nature proposed above [44–8], illuminate these nights, calm these storms and escape these treacherous reefs? The heroic nature [of which we here speak] is not that which we find in the reasoning of the philosophers, nor that imagined by the romance authors, but that which, in accordance with our principles, Homer, the first author of all profane erudition, narrated to us faithfully and uniformly in the likes of Achilles and Polyphemus. Thus it is a nature that conforms rather to a law of Lycurgus, or it may have been a Spartan custom, which forbade the Spartans all knowledge of letters,[60] as a result of which they remained in their [state of] ferocity and their government continued to be aristocratic, as the political thinkers in general recognise. It was a republic, however, quite unlike any of our own, even those that have endured from the last barbaric age, which must therefore, in our present [state of] highly cultured humanity, be preserved with consummate wisdom. For, because of its ferocious nature, the Spartan republic retained a great many of the oldest heroic customs of Greece, since the philologists all agree that there was a ruling order of Heraclids or Herculean races, under two kings, whom this order elected for life. It will be discovered that this was precisely the form of the Roman government in the period when, with absolutely no letters, or as long as only the nobles were literate, the [state of] ferocity endured in Rome.

89. This heroic nature, which lies halfway between the divine and human institutions of the nations, has hitherto lain unknown, because we have either relied solely on our memory of it or imagined it other than it was. This ignorance has concealed from us the divine institutions to which the nations adhered in their origins, and left us without a science of their human institutions, all of which were born from the divine. In this way the subject matter not merely of the systems of the natural law of the gentes but of the whole science of human erudition,

[60] Plutarch, *The Life of Lycurgus*, 13, where, however, it is the keeping of written laws that is forbidden.

divine and gentile, has come down to us altered and spoilt. But now that we have submitted our thoughts about the objects of our earlier meditations to a severe examination with this example, let us return to the journey upon which we set out.

[Chapter] VIII
The idea of an ideal eternal history in accordance with which the histories of all nations proceed through time with certain origins and certain continuity

90. Through the foregoing properties [48–9, 55] we have established the eternity and universality of the natural law of the nations. But since this law arose with the common customs of peoples, which are invariable creations of nations, and since human customs are the practices or habits of a human nature that does not change all at once but always retains an impression of some former practice or habit, this Science must provide, at one and the same time, a philosophy and a history of human customs, which are the two parts required to complete the kind of jurisprudence which is our concern, i.e. the jurisprudence of mankind. And it must do so in such mode that the first part unfolds a linked series of reasons while the second narrates a continuous or uninterrupted sequence of the facts of humanity in conformity with these reasons,[61] [just] as causes produce effects that resemble them, and in this way lead to the discovery of the certain origins and the uninterrupted progress of the whole universe of nations. Thus, in conformity with the present order of things that Providence laid down, this Science comes to be an ideal eternal history, in accordance with which the histories of all nations proceed through time. From this alone can we acquire scientific knowledge of universal history, with the certain origins and certain continuity that until now, have constituted its two most important desiderata.

[61] This is the crucial notion of a relationship of mutual support between philosophy and philology or history. As the need for a new critical art, introduced in the next chapter, intimates, however, the 'linked series of reasons' mentioned here is not a series of logically linked ideas, since the series moves from the imaginary ideas of poetic man to the fully developed ideas of rational man. Accordingly, though the innate urge towards the fulfilment of the series in an understanding of equity is the ultimate cause of the development exhibited in the series, the actual course of this development is always influenced by earlier and less rational conceptions of equity, instantiated in systems of institutions which have been influenced by desires that emanate from less informed and less rational states of human will.

[Chapter] IX
The idea of a new critical art

91. This same Science can also furnish universal history with a critical art concerning the authors of the nations themselves, providing it with rules for discerning what is true in all the gentile histories, which, in their barbaric beginnings, became intermingled, to a greater or lesser degree, with fables.
92. For even knowledgeable historians must narrate the vulgar traditions of the peoples whose histories they write, in order that they should be accepted as truths by the vulgar and thus be useful to the republics for whose continuity they are written, leaving the judgement of their truth to the scholars. But when the facts are in doubt, they should be taken in accordance with laws, and when the laws are in doubt they should be interpreted in accordance with nature. Hence it is necessary to accept such [interpretations of] laws and facts that are in doubt as give rise neither to absurdity nor confusion, much less impossibility. Again, peoples in doubt must have acted in conformity with the forms of their governments, forms of governments in doubt must have suited the nature of the men governed, and the natures of men in doubt must have been governed in accordance with the nature of their locations. Hence there will be a difference between those who live on islands and those who live on mainlands, for people who come from the former are more withdrawn and those from the latter more sociable. Again, there will be a difference between those who live inland and those in maritime countries, for farmers thrive in the former and merchants in the latter. And finally there will be a difference between those who live in hot, volatile climates and those in cold, sluggish climates, for the ingenuity of those born in the former is sharp but that of those in the latter, obtuse.
93. With these rules for the interpretation of laws, which apply also to new laws and recent facts, the vulgar traditions of the humanity of the obscure and fabulous periods that we have received, which have seemed absurd or even impossible in the form in which they have hitherto lain, will become intelligible. But the reverence to which they are entitled by their very antiquity is preserved in the following maxim: that, in all communities, men are led naturally to preserve the memory of those customs, orders and laws that held

them in this or that society. Hence, if every gentile history has preserved its fabulous origins, as, above all, has Greek history, from which we have all that we have concerning gentile antiquity, the fables must be unique in containing historical narrations of the oldest customs, orders and laws of the first gentile nations. The foregoing [methodology] provides the principal way of proceeding in the whole of this science.

[Chapter] X
First: through certain kinds of evidence synchronous with the times in which the gentile nations were born

94. First, then, when the fabulous traditions in which the origins of all gentile histories are scattered are found to be uniform among many ancient, gentile nations, separated from one another by immense stretches of land and sea, they must be born of ideas that were by nature common among these nations. Traditions of this sort must therefore constitute evidence that was synchronous or contemporaneous with the origins of the natural law of the gentes. Thus, for example, the fable of the heroes born of unions of gods and [mortal] women, which, since it is found to have been uniform among the Egyptians, Greeks and Latins, according to whom Romulus was the son of Mars by Rhea Silvia,[62] must cause us to think about the idea, by nature common to these three nations, from which their heroic age took its origin.
95. But here the first particular difference between the origins of sacred and profane history comes to light. For although, when it talks about the giants, sacred history contains the expression 'the sons of God',[63] whom Bochart[64] takes to be the descendants of Seth, it is a world apart from the filth to be found in profane histories, with their tales of the lascivious ways of the gods with women. Hence the suggestion that the giants were begot by incubic demons must emphatically be rejected, for sacred history is untainted by the slightest trace of the paganism that possibly led the Greeks to name their incubic demon Παν, i.e. the god Pan, who signified a poetic monster with a nature

[62] Livy, I, 4, 2.
[63] Genesis, 6:4.
[64] Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), author of *Geographia sacra seu Phaleg et Chanaan*, (1646). Despite Vico's claim, however, in this work Bochart traces the tribe of Seth from the giants.

composed of man and goat. As will be shown later [271, 279], this referred to the community of men born of nefarious unions.

[Chapter] XI
Second: through certain kinds of medals belonging to the first peoples, with which the Universal Flood is demonstrated

96. And as public medals are the best ascertained documents of certain history, so, for fabulous and obscure history, a few surviving marble remains must take their place as the public medals of the first peoples and as proof of their common customs, of which the following is the most important.
97. A poverty of words of settled meaning led all the first peoples to express themselves by means of objects. At first these must been [natural] solid objects but later they were carved or painted objects, as Olaus Magnus[65] stated in his account of the Scythians and Diodorus Siculus[66] in the writings he left about the Ethiopians. We certainly have the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, which are depicted on their pyramids, but other fragments from antiquity, with characters of carved objects of the same sort as the magical characters of the Chaldeans must first have been, are everywhere to be found. The Chinese also, who vainly vaunt an origin of enormous antiquity, write in hieroglyphics, which goes to show that they originated no more than four thousand years ago. This is confirmed by the fact that, because they remained closed to all foreign nations until a few centuries ago, they have only some three hundred articulate words with which, by articulating them in various ways, to express themselves. This demonstrates both the length of time and the great difficulty that nations had to endure before they could furnish themselves with articulate languages, as we shall discuss more fully below [book III]. Meanwhile, in our most recent times, travellers have observed that the Americans write in hieroglyphics.
98. This poverty of articulate words in the first [gentile] nations, which was common throughout the universe, proves anew that the Universal Flood occurred before them. And with this demonstration we provide

[65] Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), author of *Historia delle genti e della natura delle cose settentrionali* (1565), see IV, 5.
[66] Diodorus Siculus, *The Historical Library*, III, 4.

also a true dissolution of the capricious dissolution of the earth dreamt up by Thomas Burnet,[67] a fantasy that originated first with van Helmont,[68] from whom it then passed into Descartes' *Physics*.[69] According to this account, the Flood dissolved the earth in the south more than in the north, hence the north retained more air in its bowels and, being more buoyant, remained on a higher plane than the south, which then sank into the ocean, causing the earth to decline somewhat from a plane parallel to that of the sun. [But our thesis enables us to refute this] because, [had there not been a poverty of articulate words among the gentile nations after the Flood], Idanthyrsus, the king of Scythia, would not have replied in hieroglyphics when Darius the Great sent his men to declare war on him.[70] In addition, however, as we shall prove later [198], the fact that in all the ancient [gentile] nations the science of such characters was kept secret within the order of priests, whereas Moses gave the law that God had written to all of his people to read,[71] provides us with a proof of the truth of the Christian religion: because Noah and his family were preserved from the Flood and their antediluvian writing was preserved by the people of God, even during the period of slavery in Egypt.

99. With proofs of this sort, which are drawn from the whole of human nature itself and are not dependent solely on the authority of writers to whom the traditions of the profane came in highly altered forms, both the principles of this Science and the truth of the Christian religion are established.

[67] Thomas Burnet (1635–1715). A self-professed Cartesian, in his account of the physical development of the world in his *Telluris theoria sacra* (1681) he introduced a series of catastrophes, including the Flood, which led him to attribute the inclination of the earth's ellipse to the relative proportions of earth, water and air it contained.

[68] Vico's reference here is uncertain. One suggestion, Jean-Baptiste van Helmont (1577–1644), is thought improbable because it is difficult to see the relevance, in this cosmological context, of his largely medical writings. A more probable reference is to his son, Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1618–99), who wrote a number of cosmological and chronological works, including *Quaedam praemeditatae et consideratae cogitationes super quatuor priora capita libri primi Moysis, Genesis nominati*.

[69] Descartes, *Le monde ou traité de la lumière*, written between 1630 and 1633. Galileo's experience with the Inquisition caused Descartes to withhold it from publication. It was finally published posthumously in 1664.

[70] The tale of Idanthyrsus, sixth century BC, to which Vico attaches much importance, see 319–24, appears in Herodotus, *History of the East and the West*, IV, 131, (hereafter Herodotus).

[71] Exodus, 24:7.

[Chapter] XII
Third: through physical demonstrations which prove that the first origin of profane history lay in the giants and that profane history is continuous with sacred history

100. Continuing further, proofs can be provided by demonstrations taken from physics, as in the following proof concerning the nature of the first nations.

101. Thus, nothing in nature precludes the existence of giants, men of huge body and disproportionate strength, as, in fact, were the ancient Germans, who retained much of their oldest origins, both in their customs and language, because they never allowed any foreign civilised nation to take command within their boundaries. Also, giants are still born today at the foot of America. Hence arose those thoughts about physical and moral causes that first Julius Caesar[72] and then Cornelius Tacitus[73] produced in connection with the ancient Germans, which, in sum, reduce to the ferine upbringing of the German children. For this left them free to wallow naked in their own filth, even if they were the children of princes, utterly free from fear of any master, even if they were children of the poor, and free in their ability to exercise their bodily forces. We discover, however, that these same causes operated much more strongly within the races of Cain before the Flood, and of Ham and Japhet after it, when their authors were sent into that impious state, from which, some time later, they were themselves responsible for their descent into bestial liberty. For even the ancient Germanic children feared the gods, who were their fathers.

102. Thus the giants become true. Sacred history relates that they were born of the confusion of the human seed of the sons of God with the daughters of men.[74] According to Samuel Bochart these sons of God were the descendants of Seth and the daughters of men were the descendants of Cain, all living before the Flood. But to the sons of God we would add the descendants of Shem and to the daughters of men those of Ham and Japhet, all living after the Flood. Sacred history describes these giants as 'the famous strong men of their

[72] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, IV, I.
[73] Tacitus, *Germany*, 20.
[74] Genesis, 6:4.

age', and goes on to relate that Cain founded cities before the Flood and that the giant Nimrod erected the great tower [of Babel] after it. Thus it provides a full explanation in which the whole world, both before and long after the Flood, was divided into two nations. One was a nation whose members were not giants because they had been brought up in cleanliness and fear of God and the fathers. This was the nation of those who believed in the true God, the god of Adam and Noah, whose members were scattered through the immense lands of Assyria, as, later, were the Scythians, a most lawful people. The other was a nation of idolatrous giants, divided by city like the ancient Germans, who were then gradually reduced from their inordinate size to our correct stature, through their fearful religions and terrifying paternal commands, as described below [182, 211], but finally through the cleanliness of their upbringing. This may be the explanation why the Greek πόλις [*polis*], or 'city', and the Latin *polio* and *politus* ['polished'] have the same origin.[75]

103. These considerations open the only way, hitherto closed, by which to discover the certain origins of universal profane history and its continuity with sacred history, which is older than any profane history. The two histories are connected through the beginning of Greek history, from which we have all that we have concerning profane antiquity, which narrates, before all else, the story of Chaos.[76] As we shall see below [299], Chaos must first have meant the confusion of human seed, and only later the confusion of the seeds of the whole of nature. Greek history also places the giants near the time of the Flood and, through the giant Prometheus, it tells us of Deucalion, the grandson of Iapetus and father of Hellen, the founder of the Greek race,[77] who gave his name to the 'Hellenes'. This must have been the Greek race, descended from Japhet, that went on to populate Europe, just as [that of] Ham populated Phoenicia and Egypt, and then Africa. But because of the ruined nature of the traditions that had been handed down to Homer, Chaos was taken to be the confusion of the seeds of nature, the Ogygian[78] and Deucalionian[79] Floods were thought to be individual floods, whereas they could

[75] Voss, *Etymologicon linguae latinae*, hereafter *Etymologicon*, p. 461.
[76] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 211–32.
[77] Pausanias, *Itinerary of Greece*, X, 38, 1
[78] A flood of the valley of Boeotia, named after Ogyges, traditionally the first ruler of Thebes.
[79] The mythical nine-day flood that destroyed all the inhabitants of Hellas, with the exception of Prometheus' son, Deucalion, after whom it was named, and his wife.

only have been mutilated traditions of the Universal Flood,[80] and the giants to have had bodies and strength that were believed to have been impossible in nature. Hence the origins of profane history and its continuity with sacred history have lain unknown until now.

[Chapter] XIII
Fourth: by interpreting the fables in the light of physics, it is discovered that the principle of idolatry and divination common to the Latins, Greeks and Egyptians was born at a certain determinate time after the Flood, and that idolatry and divination were born at an earlier time and of a different principle in the East

104. Our account of these origins gains further support by interpreting the fables themselves in the light of physical history. [Our knowledge of] physical causes makes it reasonable to believe, for example, that for a long period after the Flood the earth sent into the air neither the exhalations nor the igneous matter necessary to generate thunderbolts,[81] and that whether the sky thundered earlier rather than later depended upon whether the regions in which it thundered were nearer to the equinoctial heat, as in the case of Egypt or further from it, as in those of Greece and Italy.
105. Hence, the gentile nations, of which there was a great number, began with the worship of an equally large number of Joves, the earliest of whom was Jove Ammon in Egypt. The problem of this multiplicity of Joves, which has been the source of so much wonder among the philologists,[82] is resolved by our principles, because all the gentile nations imagined that there was a divinity thundering in the sky. At the same time, the large number of these Joves provides physical

[80] This is part of the argument whereby Vico wished to establish the continuity of gentile and Hebrew history through Greek history.

[81] Originating with Aristotle, this theory is also to be found in Voss, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana sive de origine ac progressu idolatriae*, III, 5, and Jean Le Clerc, *Physica, sive de rebus corporeis libri III priores* [1696], in *Opera philosophica* (1722), III, 4.

[82] The similarities between the gods of different ancient nations was a major problem for many late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers. Some explained them by diffusion from some original people. Vico, however, while not denying a diffusion of names from one nation to another, maintains that the same gods were born in each nation because of the identity of their causes, in this case their physical environment and the innate psychological traits mentioned in the next chapter.

confirmation of the Universal Flood and proves the common origin of the whole of gentile humanity, since Jove drove the impious giants underground in the sense of our [Italian] verb *atterrare*, which means 'to drive underground'. Hence, as will be shown in general below [145, 481], the war in which the giants piled mountain upon mountain, in their attempt to drive Jove from the heavens, was a fantasy created by poets who certainly came after Homer, because in his time it sufficed that the giants should only shake Olympus, upon whose peak and ridge he constantly placed Jove and the other gods.

106. It is possible, and [we shall show] from the effects to be worked out below [112–16] in connection with the mode of the division of the fields that this happened in fact, that when Jove's first thunderbolts struck, not all the giants were driven underground, but only those who were more roused from their stupor, and therefore more noble, who hid in caverns through fear of the thunderbolts. There they began to sense a human or modest venery, for, since they were too terrified to mate under the gaze of the sky, they used force to seize their women and drag them into the grottoes where they kept them confined. Hence the first virtue in men begins to stand out, through which they correct the natural fickleness of women, and with it, therefore, the natural nobility of males, the cause of their first power, which was their power over females. This first human custom was the cause of the birth of certain children, from whom came certain families, through which the first cities, and thence the first kingdoms, arose.

107. An identical kind of divination is born here among the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, through observation of the thunderbolts and eagles, which are the arms and birds of Jove, and are certainly the two things most observed in Roman divinity and thus the first and most important divine things in Roman law. Hence the Egyptians, followed, it is believed, by the Etruscans and then the Romans, retained eagles at the top of their sceptres, the Greeks retained Mercury's winged sceptre, and both the Greeks and Romans had carved or painted eagles on the insignia of their arms. But among the peoples of the East a more refined kind of divination was born, based upon the observation of shooting stars. The reason for this difference lies solely in the fact that, because they came from the disavowed descendants of Shem, who until quite recently had been worshippers united in a religion, the Assyrians were able to understand the strength of

society before the thundering of the sky. Hence the Chaldeans became sages more rapidly than the Egyptians and, as the philologists agree, the use of the quadrant and the height of the celestial pole passed from the Chaldeans to the Egyptians via the Phoenicians. Thus, if the first sages of the gentile world were the Chaldeans and their recondite wisdom passed into Phoenicia and Egypt and thence into Greece and Italy, since the whole of mankind spread through the world from the East, at least the occasion, if not the origin, of all recondite wisdom must lie in worship of the true god, that is of God, the creator of Adam.

[Chapter] XIV
Fifth: with metaphysical proofs through which it is discovered that the whole theology of the gentiles owes its origins to poetry

108. For the most part we use metaphysical proofs, but we do so without exception when deprived of any other kind of proof: as, for example, in the following cases.
109. The false religions can only have been born from the idea of a force or power superior to anything human, a force which men who were by nature ignorant of causes imagined to be intelligent. This is the origin of all idolatry.
110. In conformity with such a human custom, when the wonder of men who are ignorant of causes is aroused by anything extraordinary in nature, their natural curiosity awakens in them a desire to know what this thing wants to signify to them. This is the universal origin of the whole of divination, throughout the innumerable different kinds practised by the gentile nations.
111. As can be seen, both of these origins are based upon this metaphysical truth: that when man is ignorant he judges that of which he is ignorant in accordance with his own nature. Thus idolatry and divination were discoveries of a poetry that was, and had to be, wholly imagined, both arising from this metaphor, the first to be conceived by the human civil mind and more sublime than anything formed later: that the world and the whole of nature is a vast, intelligent body, which speaks in real words and, with such extraordinary sounds, warns men of that which, through further worship, it wants them to understand. Herein lies the universal origin among all the gentiles

of the ceremonial sacrifices with which, in their superstitious way, they procured or sought omens.

[Chapter] XV
Through a metaphysics of mankind the great principle of the division of the fields and the first outlines of kingdoms are discovered

112. But just as [an account of] the particular jurisprudence of a people, such as that of the Romans, for example, must, by dint of a civil metaphysics, enter the mind of its legislators and gain knowledge of the customs and government of that people in order to reach a proper understanding of the history of the civil law by which it was previously, and still is, governed, so a jurisprudence of mankind must proceed from a metaphysics of mankind itself, and thence from a system of morals and politics, in order to acquire scientific knowledge of the history of the natural law of the nations.

113. And before all else, this metaphysics of mankind reveals the great principle of the division of the fields. This is the source of what Grotius calls 'original ownership',[83] from which all the dominions and kingdoms in the world derive. Thus it will be discovered that the [origin of] kingdoms occurred in the same mode as that of the division of the fields. Hence it is to his credit that Hermogenianus begins his account of the entire history of the natural law of the gentes with the division of the fields.[84] But the manner in which he and the other Roman jurisconsults received this history from earlier jurisconsults, and then transmitted it to us, makes for infinite difficulties in seeking the mode whereby they were divided. Did the first men, for example, divide them among themselves when there was an abundance of the uncultivated fruits of nature or when there was a scarcity of them? If they did so when there was an abundance of these fruits, how, in the absence of any harsh necessity, did they cast off that equality, and hence that liberty, that was natural to them, and which, in this veritable servitude to laws in which we are born and grow up, feels to us as sweet as nature herself? But if they did so when there was a scarcity of such fruits, how could this have

[83] Grotius, *The Law*, II, III, I.
[84] *Digest*, I, 1, 5.

happened without even greater quarrelling and killing than is said to have given birth to community itself? For just as an abundance of the necessities of life makes men naturally prudent and tolerant of one another, since they are concerned with nothing more than these necessities, so, on the contrary, a scarcity of them, particularly of the ultimate necessities of life, turns them, be they human or savage, such as Hobbes's violent men, into wild animals, because they must fight for life itself.

114. These grave difficulties may explain why it has hitherto been possible to imagine that the division of the fields took place in only one of three modes: either Grotius's simpletons voluntarily allowed themselves to be ruled by some sage of the sort advocated by Plato;[85] or Pufendorf's desperate souls were constrained to agree to the division through fear of one of Hobbes's violent men; or men enriched by the virtues of a golden age in which justice reigned on earth, foreseeing the disorders to which community could give birth, were themselves benign arbiters who divided their boundaries in such a way as to ensure that not all the fertile lands went to some and the infertile to others, nor all the absolutely arid lands to some and those rich in perennial springs to others and, having established such boundaries, then preserved them in supreme justice and good faith until the birth of the civil kingdoms. Of these three modes, the last is wholly poetic, the first wholly philosophical, and the other the product of wicked politicians wishing to establish tyrannies, who would seek to secure a following by favouring liberty and inducing the disinterested to accept the idea of the common good. But, as Polyphemus tells Ulysses,[86] it was the custom of each Cyclops, already separate from one another, to remain alone and isolated in his cavern, where he looked after his family of wife and children, and had no concern whatsoever with the affairs of others. Hence, the Romans retained the practice that, in matters of utility, nobody should obtain justice through some extraneous person, so that only very belatedly were contracts by proxy understood. [And in the same vein], even when the resounding defeats of Sagunto and Numantia were imminent, the Spanish failed to realise the strength they could gain by uniting in alliances against the Romans.[87] These customs

[85] Plato, *Republic*, V, 473c–d.
[86] See footnote 17, p. 44.
[87] Livy, XXI, 6–15. See also footnote 59, p. 27.

are wholly in accord with their first origins in bestial solitude, when men had no understanding or sense of the strength of society and were able to attend only to what belonged specifically to each of them.

115. As a result of all these difficulties, [the solution to the mode of] the division of the fields must be sought exclusively in religion. For when men are ferocious and wild, and their only equality consists in the equality of their ferocious and wild natures, should they ever have united without the force of arms or the rule of law, the only possible way in which they can have done so is through belief in the force and strength of a nature superior to anything human and through the idea that this superior force has constrained them to unite.

116. This leads us led to meditate on the long and deceptive labour of Providence, whereby those of Grotius's simpletons who were more awakened from their stupor, were roused by the first thunderbolts after the Flood and took them to be the warnings of a divinity who was the product of their own imagination. Hence they occupied the first empty lands, where they stayed with certain women and, having settled on them, begot certain races, buried their dead and, on specific occasions afforded them by religion, burnt the forests, ploughed the land and sowed it with wheat. Thus they laid down the boundaries of the fields, investing them with fierce superstitions through which, in ferocious defence of their clans, they defended them with the blood of the impious vagabonds who came, divided and alone, for they lacked any understanding of the strength of society, to steal the wheat, and were killed in the course of their theft. Unlike those from whom the lords of the fields were descended, these vagabonds were the impious descendants of those who had not at first awakened to awareness of divinity. Hence, since they were unaccustomed to understanding the warnings of divinity, they came to humanity only after much and lengthy experience of the great evils born in the [state of] bestial communion from the violence of Hobbes's licentious men, through which Pufendorf's destitutes were led naturally to seek shelter within the boundaries of the fields established by the pious. Thus, through the grace of Providence, the pious already had the advantage of being lords of the fields and sages of the imagined divinity. This is precisely what

Pomponius tells us in the elegant assertion with which he describes the origins of the lords in the history of Roman law: *rebus ipsis dictantibus regna condita* ['kingdoms are founded at the dictation of things themselves'].[88]

[Chapter] XVI
The origin of nobility is discovered

117. In such a state, a natural difference between two human natures must therefore have arisen: one was noble, because it was composed of the intelligent, the other base, because it was composed of those of feeble mind. This first nobility was justly regarded as being of recondite intelligence, i.e. intelligence of divinity, wherein lies the true [essence of] man. But lest some should be surprised by the use we make of metaphysics, as we seek to ascertain the origins of the natural law of the gentes, and hence of Roman civil law, amidst these shadows and fables, let us see, in order to set their minds at rest, whether by the use of imagination, aided only by memory, we can find our way out of the labyrinth of inextricable difficulties enclosed within the boundaries set to the fields by the imagined [mode of] division as we have hitherto received it.
118. For what reply does this offer us in response to the following questions? How did the cities all arise on the basis of two orders, the nobles and the plebeians, if they all arose from the families, when, prior to the cities, the families were so many extremely small republics, free and sovereign, as we heard Polyphemus tell Ulysses just now [114]? And how could it have come about that some were fortunate enough to be lords in the cities, while others must have fallen into the unhappy state of the plebs? Were it suggested that this was because some found themselves richer than others in possessing fields, the richer would need to have been the more numerous of those who cultivated them after some earlier just division, since the wealth of states has never arisen from fields lying waste but always from those under cultivation. It would follow that, although they were equal in fields, the families whose numbers had multiplied would have possessed the cultivated fields and those of lesser number, the

[88] *Digest*, I, 2, 2, 11.

uncultivated ones. But in the cities it is the less numerous who are rich and the multitude which is poor. Hence it is the former who are the lords and the latter, in their numbers, the plebs.

119. Next, it is impossible to understand how, in the nature of human things, man can descend into poverty other than through the following causes: by squandering his fortunes; or neglecting them so that others take possession of them and, through long possession, become owners of them; or losing occupation of them by deceit or force. But, [to consider the first possibility], men could not have been prodigal in this first state of things, in which they earned the necessities of life, and in which there could not as yet have been any commerce of the fields, because they had no use for [items of] comfort, far less those of luxury, since they had as yet no understanding of these two causes of the introduction of commerce of the fields. Or, [to consider the second possibility], if the poor had left their fields abandoned, how, in the meantime, could they have managed to live and multiply in great numbers, without fields to give them sustenance? If, [in accord with the third possibility], they did so through some impoverishing deception, for what other utilities could they have been deceived [into giving them up], in that life, simple and frugal, in which they were content with nothing more than the fruits they bought from their own fields? Hence, let Carneades, and the sceptics,[89] see how the kingdoms could have begun from a deception, whose daughters, he claimed, were the laws. [Finally], if the rich occupied the fields of the poor by force, how could this have happened when those who were rich in fields were few and those who were poor in them were many? Hence, let Hobbes see how the kingdoms could have begun in that violence in which he would turn arms into the law.

120. The nature of civil life renders it impossible for us to understand any other ways whereby, on the basis of fantasies about the vulgar division of the fields, the cities could come to be composed both of nobles and plebeians. Hence the force of this reasoning must shake and disperse these beliefs, longstanding and habitual, whose roots flourish only in imagination and memory.

[89] Cf. Grotius, *The Law*, Prolegomenon, 5, in which Carneades is chosen as spokesman for the sceptics of the Academy.

121. If the origins of the kingdoms could lie neither in disorderly behaviour or sloth, nor in deception or force, [we must conclude that] they were established by some other mind, not by Epicurus' chance, which wanders about between the dissolute and the slothful, nor the Stoics' Fate, which reigns either through the open force of violence or the secret force of deception, both of which rule out free will, but by Providence by means of religion. For, notwithstanding its prejudged nature, only an understanding of Providence could have produced nobility through the beautiful civil arts that adorn all that is best in humanity. These civil arts are shame of the self, which is the mother of nobility; [respect for] the chastity of marriage conjoined with piety towards the dead, which are the two perennial springs of the nations; the industriousness with which to cultivate the fields, which is the inexhaustible mine of the riches of the peoples; the strength with which to defend these riches from robbers, which is the impregnable rock of the empires; and, finally, the generosity and justice with which to receive the ignorant and unfortunate, and educate and defend them against oppression, which is the solid basis of kingdoms.

122. It will be shown below [412, 488] that, because of their understanding of divinity, these first nobles were the likes of Orpheus, who, by giving the example of veneration of the gods in the auspices, led the wild animals to humanity through civil wisdom. So worthy of veneration was this civil wisdom as it passed down to posterity, that it was later the reason why the scholars came to mistake it for recondite wisdom.

[Chapter] XVII
The origin of heroism is discovered

123. This origin of nobility is discovered to be identical with the origin of the heroism of the ancient nations, of which ample evidence has been passed down to us in the Greek fables. Further intimations of it are to be found in the great fragments of Egyptian antiquity and the Latin [account of] the origin of Romulus. But when it is fully brought to light within ancient Roman history, as will be shown below [174], it explains the fabulous history of the Greeks, fills out the fragmentary history of the Egyptians and reveals other completely hidden things in those of all the other ancient nations.

[Chapter] XVIII
This New Science proceeds through a morality of mankind, from which the limits within which the customs of the nations proceed are discovered

124. The first daughter of such a metaphysics [of mankind] is a morality of mankind, through which, starting with the divisions whereby the fields began to become distinct from one another, we can penetrate to the limits, which are as follow, within which the customs of the nations proceed:

I

125. Men commonly attend first to the necessary, then to the comfortable, next to the pleasant, later to the luxurious or superfluous, and finally, in a frenzy of abuse, they lay waste to their substance.

II

126. Men who understand only the necessities of life are, in virtue of a certain sense, i.e. by nature, philosophers. Whence comes the moderation of the ancient peoples.

III

127. Men who are rough and robust find pleasure only in the exercise of their bodily forces. Whence come the origins of the Olympic Games among the Greeks, the campaign exercises among the Romans, the jousting and other chivalric games of the latest barbaric times, and, in short, all games connected with skill in the practices of war. Men who exercise reflection and ingenuity, on the contrary, enjoy the comforts and pleasures of the senses for restoration.

IV

128. Peoples are first wild, then fierce or withdrawn, either through restraint or government, next they become tolerant, and finally they are even inclined to put up with burdens and labour.

V

129. Customs are first barbaric, then severe, next noble, later refined, and finally dissolute and corrupt.

VI

130. First come those of feeble mind, then the rough, next the docile or those capable of being disciplined, later the perspicacious, afterwards the acute and inventive, and finally the sharp-witted, crafty and fraudulent.

VII

131. First come the wild and solitary, then those tied to a few in faithful friendship, next those who side with the many to attain civil ends, and finally, in pursuit of particular ends of utility or pleasure, the wholly dissolute, who, amidst the great multitude of bodies, return to the first solitude of the soul.

[Chapter] XIX
This New Science proceeds through a politics of mankind, from which it is discovered that the first governments in the state of the families were divine

132. A similar pattern to that which, as we have just seen [124], proceeds through a morality [of mankind], proceeds also through a politics of mankind. For in the state of the families, the fathers, as the most experienced, must have been the sages, as the most worthy, the priests, and thus, occupying a position of highest power above which there was nothing higher in nature, the kings of their families. Hence, in the persons of these fathers, wisdom, priesthood and kingship must have been one and the same thing. From Plato onwards,[90] however, [those who favoured] the tradition of the recondite wisdom of the first founders of Greece have wished in vain for a state of affairs in which philosophers ruled or kings philosophised. But both the

[90] Plato, *Republic*, V, 473c–d.

kingship and priesthood of these fathers were consequences of their vulgar wisdom, because, as sages in the divinity of the auspices, they had to make sacrifices in order to procure them, and, given knowledge of the auspices, they needed command of the things that they believed the gods wanted. Above all, as we shall see below [197, 204–5], this applied to the penalties required when they consecrated the guilty to the gods, even where innocent children were declared guilty or deemed necessary as votive offerings, such as in the offering that Agamemnon made in the case of the unfortunate Iphigenia.[91] This very old custom was incorporated in its entirety in the Law of the Twelve Tables in the chapter *De parricidio* ['On Parricide'].[92] But in the case of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac, the true God expressly declared that he took no pleasure whatsoever in innocent human victims.[93] [It is true that] the Fathers [of holy doctrine] all confess that the mystery of Jephthah's sacrifice[94] is still hidden in the abyss of divine Providence, but it suffices for the differences between the Hebrews and the gentiles to be proved in this work, that it was Abraham and not Jephthah who founded the people of God.

[Chapter] XX
The first fathers in the state of the families are discovered to have been monarchical kings

133. Among the Romans the fathers of families long retained the last of these three properties. The Law of the Twelve Tables gave them the right of life and death over the persons of their children and, in consequence of this infinite power over their persons, a further power, also infinite, over their acquisitions. Thus, they owned everything that their children acquired and, in virtue of this despotic ownership, made testaments in which they disposed the guardianship of the persons of their children like chattels. This power was reserved in its entirety to the fathers of families in the Law of the Twelve Tables entitled *De testamenti: Uti paterfamilias super pecuniae tutelaeve rei suae*

[91] Lucretius, *On the nature of the universe*, I, 84–101 (henceforth Lucretius).
[92] Vico is here incorrectly referring to a passage in which Festus mentions this practice. See footnote 160, p. 215.
[93] A combination of Genesis 22:12, and Jeremiah 7:31.
[94] Judges, 11:30–2.

legassit, ita ius esto ['On testaments: whatever the father of the family disposes by testament concerning his patrimony and guardianship, shall be law']. These are all highly expressive vestiges of their free and absolute monarchy in the state of the families.

134. Ignorance of this form of Cyclopic kingship, which arose from the nature of the first noble fathers in the state of the families, was the reason why, when he formulated his idea of the recondite wisdom of the founders of humanity, Plato failed to make his great founding work of the whole of political science conform to what had already been indicated by Homer's Polyphemus, when the state of the families is described.[95] It was also the reason why Grotius attempted to explain the mode of the first monarchies by basing them on [rational] justice, and why wicked practical politicians tried to found them either on force, with Hobbes's violent men, or on deception, with Socinus's simpletons. But, given the insuperable difficulties raised above [114] concerning the division of the fields, through no contract made by force or by deceit could the first monarchies have been born into the world. Hereafter, however, we shall confirm our criticism of these beliefs by the discovery of further facts [135–6] concerning the monarchies that were born of their own nature in the persons of such fathers in the state of the families.

[Chapter] XXI
The first kingdoms in the state of the cities are discovered to have been heroic

135. When men have newly passed from an unbridled liberty to a liberty regulated only by [their fear of] divinity, a liberty which therefore remains infinite with respect to other men, precisely as was that of the fathers in the state of the families under the government of the gods, they must for long retain the ferocious custom whereby they have this liberty of life and death. And, if such an infinite liberty is preserved for them by their fatherland, which preserves the gods through whom they have this infinite power over other men, they will naturally be brought [to be prepared] to die for their fatherland and for their religion. This is the nature of the ancient heroes through which the first heroic kingdoms arose.

[95] Plato, *Laws*, III, 678c–681c.

136. Here we discover the principle of the effects that are narrated in Roman history, the cause of which neither Polybius, Plutarch nor Machiavelli uncovered:[96] that religion was the cause of the whole of Roman greatness. For it was the religion of the auspices, which the fathers had confined to themselves in Table XI of the Twelve Tables, that brought Roman magnanimity to completion, when the plebs wanted equality with the fathers with regard to the rights of the heroes at home, i.e. the rights to solemn marriage, command of arms and of priesthoods, all of which were dependent upon the auspices, and, accordingly, equality also to engage in valorous exploits in war, in order to merit these rights. Thus it was that in peacetime the members of the Curtius family threw themselves into the fatal ditch, and in wartime the Decius family dedicated their lives, two by two, for the salvation of their armies, in order to prove to the plebs, by the sacrifice of their lives, that they ruled in virtue of the auspices. For the common custom of the ancient nations in all wars was *pro aris focisque pugnare*:[97] to conquer or to die with one's own gods.

[Chapter] XXII
The principle of heroic virtue

137. This brings us to the discovery of the principle of heroic virtue. For when human nature is of limited ideas and men have little capacity to understand the universal and eternal, they will be barbaric and ferocious, for these are indivisible properties of such a nature. Hence it has been utterly impossible to understand how men with such a nature could have consecrated themselves to their nations through a desire for the immortal fame that can be gained only by bringing great benefits to entire nations. Thus, however, have the actions of the ancient heroes hitherto been regarded by the scholars who came soon after the philosophers. But, rightly understood, the heroes of ancient times performed these actions only through an excess of individual feeling for their own sovereignty, which was preserved for them by their fatherland through their families. Hence, with

[96] Polybius, *History of the World*, I, 3, 7, and Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, II, 1, attribute Roman greatness to the wisdom of the people. Plutarch, on the other hand, puts it down to good fortune, *Opera moralia*, XLIV.

[97] Livy, V, 30, 1.

the word *res* ['concern'] understood, the fatherland was called 'the concern of the fathers'. Similarly, in the popular states it was later called *respublica* ['the public concern'], which is almost *respopulica*, or 'the concern of all the people'.

[Chapter] XXIII
The principles of all three forms of republic

138. To such a politics of mankind belong these maxims or, rather, human sentiments concerning governing and being governed. Men first want liberty of the body; then liberty of the soul, i.e. of the mind, together with equality with others; next superiority over their equals; and finally, to be placed under their superiors. From these few human sentiments come the first outlines of each form of government: the tyrants from the last, the monarchies from the penultimate, the free republics from the second, and the aristocratic form of the heroic republics from the first. Thus, on the basis of this sequence of human sentiments, the heroic republics in their aristocratic form later passed, by means of the heroic disputes to be described below [161–7, 188], into the free republics and finally came to rest in the monarchies, before returning to their first origins in the monarchical fathers. With these principles the whole of ancient Roman history takes on a completely new appearance.

[Chapter] XXIV
The principles of the first aristocratic republics

139. But men are disposed to adopt [the ways of] humanity only when its benefits promise an increase in their own individual utilities. And when this has happened the strong are induced to relinquish their acquisitions by force alone, even then conceding as little as possible and doing so intermittently and not all at once. Furthermore, the multitude desires laws and equality, whereas the powerful tolerate even their superiors, let alone their equals, with difficulty. Hence an aristocratic republic, or republic of nobles, can be born only through some extreme common necessity that forces the nobles to become equal and subject to the laws. Finally, no form of government can either rule or endure, if those who lack nobility

have no part whatsoever to play in it, unless they enjoy at least security in the natural commodities necessary for the maintenance of life. On the basis of these principles it is discovered that the heroic kingdoms were aristocratic governments, born of the clienteles through the two oldest agrarian laws, as will be discovered below [161, 164].

[Chapter] XXV
The discovery of the first families that include others than just their children

140. The five political sentiments of mankind just enumerated [138] lead us to the discovery that the first and oldest families included members other than just their children, members who were appropriately called *famuli*, i.e. servants, or κῆρυκες [*kerukes*] as the Greeks continued to call the servants of the heroes. It has hitherto proved to be quite impossible to understand these families on the basis of the received account of the division of the fields, because of some very serious difficulties to be raised below [142–3, 436]. But it will be found that the *famuli* consisted in those who, amidst the quarrels of bestial communion, and in truth it was bestial communion that gave birth to these quarrels, took shelter in the lands of the strong to save themselves in their hour of need.

[Chapter] XXVI
Determination of the first occupations, usucaptions and mancipations

141. These lands of the strong had been occupied a long time earlier, i.e. since the first thunderbolts of Jove, as they supposed him to be, in Egypt, Greece and Italy, by those whose fear of divinity had brought them to abandon their bestial wandering, and had then been cultivated by their descendants. Thus, through religion, these settlers had already become chaste and strong. And here we discover the first occupations, the first usucaptions and the first mancipations of the peoples. For, in addition to the first women whom these first men had dragged into their grottoes by force, i.e. the first wives *manucaptae*, these were also the first lands *manucaptae*,

i.e. lands taken by force. And occupations, usucaptions and mancipations, or acquisitions taken by force, are certainly the three modes through which sovereign lordship becomes legitimate among all nations.

[Chapter] XXVII
The discovery of the first duels or the first private wars

142. The strong also had to defend their crops against the impious vagabonds who wanted to steal them, though, since these vagabonds, with no understanding of the strength of society, came all alone to do so, the spirited settlers and their clans killed them with ease in the very act of theft, as will be explained below [179, 197]. This very ancient custom reveals the origins of the duels common to the Hebrews, Greeks and Latins, though it must have been practised more by the Hebrews than the Greeks and Latins, because, since the true religion is certainly older than any of the gentile religions, the Hebrews must have defended their fields longer than the others against theft by the impious vagabonds. This is the law that makes it permissible to kill a thief who comes by night by any means whatsoever, but to do so by day only if he defends himself with arms.[98] But the discovery of this law offers no support to those commentators who would derive Roman law from Athenian law in Greece or from Mosaic law in Palestine, which was but a short crossing to Rome, for it is a law that nature dictated in all nations. The first outlines of war as such therefore lay in these wars, which were private, with the result that, up to Plautus's time,[99] the Latins called public wars *duella* ['duels'].[100] And when the barbaric times returned, this first form of war spread anew from Scandinavia throughout all Europe.

143. Thus were these first boundaries of the fields, boundaries that had to be defended by force, laid down. What, then, can be said for the ease with which, as the interpreters of Roman civil law all tell us, the fields came to be divided?

[98] *Digest*, XLVII, 2, 55.
[99] Plautus, *Amphytrion*, 189.
[100] This claim was widely accepted. See Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 181.

[Chapter] XXVIII
The origin of the genealogies and the nobility of the first gentes

144. Finally, when they were possessed of their own lands, becoming aware of the filth of the corpses of their clansmen as they lay rotting on the ground, these settlers must have buried them according to the 'order of mortality',[101] as Papinianus[102] elegantly put it, placing certain posts above the corpses, as we have shown in another work.[103] Hence the Greek φύλαξ [*phylax*] and the Latin *cippus* both mean 'sepulchre'. And through the same act of piety the Latin word *humanitas* ['humanity'] first came from *humare* ['to bury'].[104] This may explain why the Athenians, whom Cicero[105] asserted were the first to adopt the custom of burying the dead, were the 'most human people in the whole of Greece', and why Athene was the mother and nurse of philosophy and of all the beautiful arts born of ingenuity.

145. Later, with the passing of the years, these rows of burial posts, spread far and wide as they were, must have caused subsequent generations to attend to the genealogies of their ancestors and, through these genealogies, the nobility of their lineage. From this connection between a lineage and a burial post, which they called φύλαξ [*phylax*], the Greeks must have used the word φύλη [*phyle*] for a tribe, and, with expressions proper to language in its infancy, the nobles must have been described as the children of those lands in which their genealogies were placed. Hence, as the poets[106] tell us, the giants were called 'the sons of the Earth' and the Greeks called the nobles 'those generated by the Earth',[107] for that was what the word 'giant' meant to them. Similarly the ancient Latins called the nobles *indigenae* ['natives'], which is almost *inde geniti* ['those born of that place'], from which the abbreviation *ingenui* survived for 'nobles'.

[101] *Digest*, V, 2, 15.
[102] Aemilius Papinianus, Roman jurist, third century AD.
[103] *De uno*, CLXXXV, 7.
[104] This derivation, Vico's own and almost certainly wrong, is reiterated frequently.
[105] Cicero, *De legibus*, II, 25, 63.
[106] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 211–32.
[107] Servius Marius Honoratus (fourth century AD), *Ad Aen.*, VIII, 314.

[Chapter] XXIX
The discovery of the first asylums and of the eternal origins of all states

146. And here we discover the origin of the first asylums. Livy[108] threw a large and very old fragment relevant to this subject into Romulus' sacred grove, where it has hitherto lain buried. This was the definition he gave of the asylum as *primum urbes condentium consilium* ['the first expedient of the founders of the cities'], in connection with the incident in which Romulus and the [other] fathers told those who sought refuge in their new city that they had been born in the sacred grove or wood where the asylum was open to them. But Livy's belief that this was an expedient or artifice perpetrated by the founders of cities was based on the false view that kingdoms were all founded by deception. Hence his misplaced attribution of another deception to Romulus, the utter absurdity of which he ought to have realised, which had Romulus pretending that he and his companions were the children of a mother capable of giving birth only to males, to justify the claim that the rape of the Sabines was necessary if they were to mate with women. But there was no deceit in the first founders of the cities of Latium or any of the other cities in the world. There was [only] their nature, and that the magnanimous nature of heroes who were incapable of lying, which is a base and cowardly artifice, for they truly understood themselves to be the children of the buried, from whose ranks their women still came. Thus, in addition to the first feature of heroism, which was to annihilate the thieves, here lay the second, which was to give succour to the endangered who sought their aid. Hence the Romans became the heroes of the world through these two arts: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* ['of sparing the conquered and subduing the proud'].[109]

147. Thus the eternal origin of kingdoms is vindicated against the two vulgar charges: of [resting upon] deception or force. For generous humanity alone gave rise to those first origins of kingdoms, to which all others, whether acquired by deception or force, must later be recalled in order to stand fast and preserve themselves. But the political philosophers failed to see these origins when they established their celebrated maxim: that 'states should preserve themselves through

[108] Livy, I, 8, 5.
[109] *Aen.*, VI, 853.

the arts by which they have been acquired'. For, always and everywhere, states have been preserved by justice and clemency and these, beyond doubt, involve neither deception nor force.

[Chapter] XXX
The discovery of the first clienteles and the first outlines of surrender in war

148. The foregoing discoveries were all needed to allow us to discover the first, true origins of the clienteles, which were all founded in the following way: that when the weak vagabonds took refuge in the lands of the strong, they were received in accordance with the just law that, since they had come there to save their lives, they should sustain themselves by rural works, the art of which the lords would teach them. Hence the clienteles observed the universal custom of all the ancient nations, whereby hordes of vassals served under their own particular prince or chief. Roman history in particular, through Caesar[110] and Tacitus,[111] explains clearly that this was a custom widely practised throughout Gaul, Germany and Britain, which were then still young nations. We also read explicitly that this was the custom through which the patriarchs of the people of God, a more just and magnanimous people than the gentiles, must have given refuge in Assyria to the clientes whom the Chaldeans had maltreated, there to enjoy a more benign servitude. For Abraham and his family, which must have consisted solely in those descended from his own ancestors, waged war against their neighbouring kings.[112]

[Chapter] XXXI
The discovery of the fiefs of the heroic times

149. This leads us to the discovery of the universal law of a certain kind of fief of the heroic peoples, shown most clearly of all in two passages in Homer. One is the passage in the *Iliad*[113] where, through his ambassadors, Agamemnon offers Achilles the choice of whichever of

[110] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, VI, 4, 5.
[111] Tacitus, *Agricola*, 12 and *Ann.* XII, 30, 2.
[112] Genesis 14:13–17.
[113] *Il.*, IX, 286–98.

his daughters most pleases him as his wife, together with a dowry of seven villages populated with ploughmen and shepherds. The other passage is in the *Odyssey*,[114] where Menelaus tells Telemachus, who is searching for his father, Ulysses, that had Ulysses arrived in his kingdom, he would have created a city for him and brought vassals from some of his other villages into it to honour and serve him. Thus a kind of fief must have existed from the beginning, exactly like those which the northern peoples spread again throughout Europe, with the same properties that such fiefs still retain in Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Norway. These properties survived in the Roman laws concerning those vassals who were said to be *glebae addicti* ['assigned to the land'], a*dscripticii* ['registered to the land'] and *censiti* ['under the census of the land']. We have shown in other works[115] that the civil law of all the nations began with such fiefs. Hence it was that Cujas[116] found the most elegant expressions of Roman jurisprudence so well suited for signifying the nature and properties of our own fiefs. But not even Grotius could see the reason why this was so, for he believed that feudal law was new to the peoples of Europe,[117] whereas, in fact, it was a very old law which was renewed throughout Europe in the last barbaric times.

[Chapter] XXXII
The point at which the heroic republics were born from the clienteles

150. This brings us to the point at which the first republics were born, all three accounts of which have hitherto proved to be completely beyond our powers of imagination. These first republics arose through the rebellions of families of clientes who, when they tired of perpetually cultivating the fields of lords who were guilty of maltreating them to [the depths of] their souls, revolted against their lords and, having united in this way, gave rise to the first plebs in the world.

[114] *Od.*, IV, 171–7.
[115] *De uno*, CCCXXIX and CLXXXXII.
[116] Jacques Cujas (1520–90), French jurist and expert in feudal law, whose works were well known in Naples from the end of the seventeenth century and particularly in the 1720s, when they were being published there. Vico does not, however, refer to them in any detail, despite their relevance to his own interests.
[117] Grotius, *The Law*, I, III, XXIII, I.

Hence, to resist them, the nobles were led by nature to unite in orders, the first in the world, under chiefs, who, given the need to govern them, were naturally the most robust, and, given the need to encourage them, the most spirited, among them. These were the kings who, even tradition tells us, were elected by nature.

151. Here, in the desire of the multitude to be governed with justice and clemency, we discover both the common origin of the civil governments and the first basis of all cities, with their two orders of nobles and plebeians, a basis that has hitherto been impossible to work out on the basis of families understood as consisting of children alone. This is the reason why the origins upon which the philosophers have hitherto based their theories of politics or civil doctrine have been so confused and obscure.

[Chapter] XXXIII
The discovery of the first [forms of] peace and the first tributes in the two oldest agrarian laws, which are the respective sources of natural law and civil law and the joint source of sovereign ownership

152. This oldest kind of republic began to function on the basis of the oldest agrarian law, which the nobles had to cede to the plebeians in order to satisfy them. This was the law through which the plebeians were assigned fields with which to sustain their lives, paying [in return] a part of their produce or a contribution in labour as a census [tax] to their lords which, among the Greeks, is found to have been the tithe of Hercules. Here also we discover the first men who had to contribute a day's labour to their lords, the *capite censi* of the Latins.

153. But with the passage of the years, this law ceased to be observed until finally these republics came to an end and were replaced by others based upon a second agrarian law. This was the law whereby the plebeians should enjoy the certain and secure ownership of fields assigned to them, which the lords were obliged to sustain, but be burdened in turn with the requirement to serve the needs of the lords at their own cost, above all in war. Hence the unhappy complaints of the plebeians under the consuls in Roman history.

154. On the basis of these two laws the origins of all three kinds of ownership are discovered. The first was natural or bonitary ownership,

i.e. the ownership of commodities or produce. The second was civil or quiritary ownership, or ownership of landed property, i.e. of land that can be held with arms. It is possible that the Italians derived their word [*podere*] for such land from [their word *potere* for] force, and that the Latins called it *praedia* from *praeda* ('booty').[118] Both of these kinds of ownership were private. The third kind, however, was what is now called 'eminent' ownership of the land, i.e. the truly civic or public ownership, sovereign in the cities, that resides in the heart of the civil powers that govern them and is the principle of all tributes, stipends and taxes. In these two laws the first outlines of peace are found.

[Chapter] XXXIV
The discovery of the heroic republics that were uniform among the Latins, Greeks and Asians, and of the different origins of the Roman assemblies

155. With the aid of two great fragments from the ancient history of the obscure times of the Greeks, we can now discover the oldest heroic kingdoms, which were spread throughout all the ancient nations under the name 'the kingdoms of the *Curetes*' and throughout the whole of ancient Greece under the name 'the kingdoms of the Heraclids'.

156. The first fragment concerns the *Curetes*, or priests armed with spears, from which the Latins called them *quirites*. These were the priests who clashed their arms to create a great din so as to conceal the cries of the infant Jove from Saturn, who wanted to have him devoured.[119] This is the concealment, [the Latin for which is *latere*], from which the Latin philologists claimed, though it was but a guess, Lazio [*Latium*] took its name.[120] The fragment relates that the *Curetes* came from Greece into Saturnia or Italy, into Crete, where they long remained because they were isolated, and into Asia, which must be understood as Grecian Asia, i.e. Asia Minor. For when the Greeks came out of Greece, they found, throughout these ancient nations of the world, kingdoms of the same form as those described in Homer,

[118] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 470.
[119] Among many other sources, Lucretius, II, 633–9.
[120] *Aen.*, VIII, 319–23.

complete with two kinds of heroic assemblies, in one of which, the βουλή [*boule*],[121] the heroes alone gathered, and in the other of which, the ἀγορά [*agora*],[122] the plebeians assembled in order to learn what the heroes had decided. It was to an assembly of this second kind that Telemachus called his subjects, after he became their leader, in order to let them know what he had resolved to do in the case of the suitors.[123] The history of Latin words conforms very closely with these heroic governments of Homer: the assembly of priests which defined sacred things was the *comitia curiata* ('the assembly of the *curiae*'], because at first everything human, and not just the laws, was regarded as having a divine aspect, as we shall explain below [198–9]; the assembly in which the laws were commanded was the [*comitia*] *centuriata*, from which captains of a hundred men are still called *centuriones*, because the assemblies in which the laws were commanded were composed only of those who had the right of arms, i.e. they were of the kind that Homer called the βουλή [*boule*], in which only the heroes met; finally, there was the assembly of the plebeians who lacked the right to use arms but were obliged to pay the tribute, i.e. the assembly called the *tributa comitia*, because it was composed of those who paid the tribute but had no sovereign right of arms, and who came together only to learn what was commanded by law. Hence, emanating from such assemblies, i.e. Homer's ἀγοραί [*agorai*], these laws must from the start, and with complete propriety, have been called *plebiscita* ('plebiscites'], rather in the sense that Cicero expressed in his *Laws* as *plebi nota* ['things made known to the plebs'].[124] Hence the Latins did not originally derive the name *curia* from *curanda republica* ['having care of the state'], which would have been an improbable derivation from times in which men were of a practical rather than reflective bent, but from *quiris*, or 'spear', for the *curia* was the assembly of nobles with the right to be armed with a spear,[125] just as we have shown elsewhere[126] that from χείρ [*cheir*], 'the hand', the word κυρία [*curia*] must have had the same meaning

[121] *Il.*, II, 53.
[122] *Il.*, II, 207.
[123] *Od.*, II, 40–79.
[124] Cicero, *De legibus*, III, 3, 10.
[125] Terentius Varro Reatinus (116–28 BC), 'the most learned of Romans', according to St Augustine, was the author of some hundreds of books, of which only two survive. The present reference is to his *De lingua latina*, VI, 7, 52. Cf. also Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 199.
[126] *De const. philol.*, XXI, 9.

among the ancient Greeks. And by thus taking Latin institutions in combination with Homer's Greek institutions, new origins can be provided for the intricate subject *de comitiis Romanis* [of the Roman *comitia*], as we shall demonstrate below [187]. As a result of all this, we find that the law of the Roman citizens, upon which the origins of Roman government rested, was not merely identical with the law of the gentes of Lazio but with those of Greece and Asia, and that, as can be seen, it was a law of a very different nature in its earliest times from that which the last Roman jurisconsults inherited.

157. The second great fragment tells us that the Heraclids, or those of the race of Hercules, spread first throughout Greece, including Attica, where the free republic of Athens later arose, but were finally confined to the Peloponnese, where the republic of Sparta continued to exist. The political philosophers all accept that this was an aristocratic republic and the philologists all agree that it retained many more of its heroic customs than the other peoples of Greece. It was, moreover, a kingdom of the Heraclids, i.e. of the Herculean races who preserved the patronymic 'Hercules', with two kings, elected for life, who were responsible for administering the laws under the custody of the ephors.

[Chapter] XXXV
The discovery of the heroic or aristocratic nature of the Roman kingdom

158. We find that the first Roman kingdom shared this same heroic form at the time of the indictment of Horatius, when the king, Tullus Hostilius, administered the law of parricide against the offender under the custody of the duumvirs. Though the duumvirs had advised Tullus against the punishment that they themselves believed justice required, Tullus first condemned Horatius in accordance with it, but then, by way of appeal, permitted him to have recourse to an assembly of the people.[127] For just as a monarch would be the last kind of king to want sovereignty to be subject to the multitude, so it is characteristic of an aristocratic king to want the ruling order to be subject to the multitude. And, as history relates, it was the duumvirs who ought to have contended with the offender

[127] Livy, I, 26, 9–12.

before the people concerning the justice of the sentence they had given. But Tullus was a man of warlike disposition, in which respect, Livy tells us, he was not unlike Romulus. He claimed that he wanted to free all the lands of the West, where the governments of optimates were suspicious lest the kings, who had established military factions, should turn against their states the arms they had received to defend them, but his real wish was to rule with arms. This explains his unworthy condemnation of this illustrious offender, valorous and wise, who had set such a rare example when he singlehandedly saved Roman liberty and subjected the kingdom of Alba to that of Rome. For Tullus grasped this as a plausible opportunity to secure his own future, since he had no wish, through a similar fear [of his ambitions] to share the treatment the fathers had meted out to Romulus.[128] However, given his rather harsh character, this was not an easy thing for them to do.[129]

159. This, then, is the extent to which the Roman kingdom had the monarchical character in which the philologists have hitherto led us to believe. Let us now see how far these same philologists have also mixed [elements of] popular liberty into [their account of] the Roman kingdom, on the basis of the census of Servius Tullius.[130]

160. What is almost impossible to doubt here is that it was a tithe of Hercules that was imposed on the fields of the lords rather than an evaluation of patrimonies as in the case of the census appropriate to the free republic. For a monarch was the last kind of king to want to establish the kind of census that is the first and principal foundation

[128] Livy, I, 16, 4.

[129] The argument depends upon the assumption, not made explicit, that both the duumvirs and Horatius were members of the aristocratic class. Hence, in using the accusation against Horatius as an opportunity to over-rule the duumvirs' advice, which he legally ought to have accepted, and allowing the people to hear the appeal which the duumvirs ought by rights to have heard, Tullus was, in effect, minimising the standing of the aristocracy. Similarly, by granting Horatius the right of appeal to the people, and not to the duumvirs, he was making the fate of an aristocrat dependent upon a decision of the people, rather than his equals. Vico's account does not, however, agree with Livy, who simply says that Tullus shrank from the responsibility of what, in the light of Horatius' great feats, would have been a highly unpopular death sentence.

[130] Livy, I, 42, 4–5. Contrary to the philologists, Vico wants to establish that the census was intended to consolidate an aristocratic form of government. Livy offers an account of Servius' census of the sort that Vico wants to deny was possible at this stage, i.e. that it was administered on the basis of wealth, compensated by political privilege and involved the abandonment of universal suffrage which, Livy says, had obtained since Romulus.

of the popular liberty of states, i.e. the census through which, in virtue of a determined wealth of patrimony, citizens should be elevated to the ability to partake of the highest honours in their cities. And even the census that began to make its presence felt in Rome, forty years after the kings had been driven out, originated in some idea completely different from that of the plan, as it later became, of popular liberty. For, as history also tells us, the nobles first disdained to administer even this census, holding that it was beneath their dignity, whereas the office of the censor later came to be the most highly regarded in terms of dignity. Moreover the plebeians had not yet seen that this was the door through which they could gain admittance to all the highest offices, while it was in order to keep this door closed that the nobles were later so strongly opposed to them in the dispute over the communication of the consulship to the plebs and, even after they did communicate it, resorted to so many stratagems to prevent the plebeians from growing rich, with the intention of excluding them from these offices, all of which is fully narrated in Roman history.[131] Thus, when Junius Brutus, every bit as wise as history relates,[132] established the state after the kings had been driven out, he found it necessary to restore it to its original [aristocratic] form, which he proceeded to do. He reinforced the senatorial order, which had been much diminished by the killing of senators under Tarquin the Proud, greatly increasing it in number and, because of the hatred with which the kings were regarded, he abolished the royal laws, including even the right of appeal to the people, which, since the intercession of the tribunes, had been another rock of Roman liberty. Hence, after his death, Valerius Pubblicola reinstated it.[133] Indeed, it was the popular fate of the house of Valerius that, after the nobles had suppressed the law of appeal, they restored it to the plebeians twice again during the same period of popular liberty, the second time as soon as the decemvirs had been driven out, and the third, in the sixth hundred and fifty-sixth year of the foundation of Rome. But the severity of the laws, which was the cause of such complaint among the youths

[131] Livy, VIII, 12, 17.
[132] Livy, I, 56, 7.
[133] Livy, II, 8, 1.

who conspired to reinstate Tarquin the Proud,[134] was appropriate to a government of nobles, a fact that these wretched youths, in the very period of liberty imagined by the philologists, experienced with [the loss of] their heads. Indeed, so severe were these laws that Brutus, that strongest of consuls but most unfortunate of fathers, had to behead his own two sons, who had joined these wretches,[135] with which splendid act of parricide he closed his house to nature and opened it to immortality. For benign punishments are proper only to monarchical kings, who enjoy being praised for their clemency, or to free, [but not to heroic or aristocratic], republics. Hence, in the case in which the private Roman knight Rabirius was found guilty of rebellion, Cicero[136] criticised the punishment, *I, lictor, colliga manus*, ['Go, lictor, bind his hands'],[137] on grounds of cruelty. Yet this was the same punishment that had been pronounced when Horatius, guilty of a truly heroic anger, refused to tolerate the sight of his sister weeping on the remains of her husband, Curiatus, during the period of public rejoicing. And even when the people to whom Horatius appealed absolved him, they did so, in Livy's noble expression, *admiratione magis virtutis quam iure caussae* ['more in admiration for his valour than for the justice of his cause'].[138] Finally Livy himself expressly wrote that the ordination of annual consuls did nothing at all to change [the nature of] Roman government, asserting that *libertatis originem inde magis quia annuum imperium consulare factum est, quam quod deminutum quicquam sit ex regia potestate* ['the origin of liberty lay in the limitation of the consular power to one year, rather than in any diminution of royal power'].[139] So what Brutus established was [the equivalent of] two Spartan kings,[140] who remained in office not for life but for a year. And in his *Laws*[141] Cicero referred to the consuls whom he established in his republic, taking the Roman republic as his model, as *reges annuos* ['annual kings'].

[134] Livy, II, 3.
[135] Livy, II, 5.
[136] Cicero, *Pro Rabirio perduellionis reo*, 4, 11–13.
[137] Livy, I, 26, 11.
[138] Livy, I, 26, 12.
[139] Livy, II, 1, 7.
[140] Since Vico is insistent on the heroic nature of Sparta, this means, in effect, the equivalent of two aristocratic kings.
[141] Cicero, *De legibus*, III, 3, 7–8.

[Chapter] XXXVI
The discovery of the truth concerning the Law of the Twelve Tables as the basis of the greater part of the law, government and history of Rome

161. Hence we find that the clienteles with which Romulus established his city were quite other [than has hitherto been thought] and that he did not find them there but received them from the oldest peoples of Latium; that the census that Servius Tullius established was quite other than that which was introduced, and remained in operation, in the free republic; and that the Law of the Twelve Tables treated of everything in a manner quite other than has hitherto been believed. For Romulus established the clienteles within the asylum open to the sheltered on the basis of the law of the bond of cultivation, through which the clienteles sustained their lives by rural work; Servius Tullius established the first agrarian law on the basis of the law of the bond of 'bonitary ownership', as it is called, through which, under the burden of the census, the clientes had to make payments to the lords of the fields that were assigned to them, i.e. the Greek tithe of Hercules; and, finally, the Law of the Twelve Tables was established on the basis of the bond of 'optimum law', as it is called, i.e. the civil or solemn and certain law through which the plebeians were burdened with service in war at their own expense, later to become the source of such unhappy complaint among the plebs.

162. The whole content of this law was contained in that celebrated but hitherto misunderstood chapter, expressed in words that have lain obscure in the shadows of the barbaric antiquity of the Romans: *Forti sanati nexo soluto idem sirempse ius esto* ['A stranger free of the bond should share absolutely the same law']. On the basis of guesswork, this was summarised as *De iuris aequalitate* ['On the equality of the law'], for, dazzled by some hundred vague and uncertain authorities collected by the philologists, the otherwise highly erudite interpreters thought that the chapter provided for the equality of the Roman citizens with the Latin *socii* who, having rebelled against them, were later reduced back to subjection. But these were the times of the highest aristocratic rigour, times in which, as we saw above [76], the Roman plebs was a multitude lacking citizenship. Could these, then, truly be times in which the aristocrats would feel

it proper to communicate citizenship to strangers? And in fact, in a time in which liberty was not merely well established but had, indeed, already begun to descend into corruption, when Livius Drusus, for the sake of his ambitious designs, promised citizenship to the Latin *socii*, he died under the weight of the huge pile of business involved, leaving as his heritage the Social War, the most dangerous that the Romans were ever to experience, either before or after.

163. When Servius Tullius ordered the fields to be assigned to the plebeians with the burden of the census, he did so after they had finally grown weary of perpetually cultivating the fields of their lords, which they had been doing since Romulus. But, from the year two hundred and fifty-six onwards, the nobles gradually deprived them of these fields, until those who held them in bonitary or natural ownership enjoyed only as much of them as their bodies could occupy. Hence, scarcely had news spread of the death of Tarquin the Proud, who had kept the insolence of the nobles in check, than the dispute over the bond was set alight. Thus, those Attic commentators who swallowed the bond like some piece of merchandise brought over from Athens ought to be ashamed of themselves, for the nobles had already been exploiting it against the plebeians with avarice and cruelty, not only depriving them of fields previously assigned to them, but, as a result of their debts, making them toil miserably in their service in underground places of work. The fire of the dispute abated somewhat when the furious and ungrateful plebs brought about the exile of the meritorious Coriolanus.[142] This occurred because, not content with the natural ownership secured by the census of Servius Tullius, in the course of the ongoing dispute the plebs had laid claim to civil ownership of the fields, whereas Coriolanus wanted to reduce them to the quite contrary state of the bond established by Romulus, in which they sustained their lives by rural work. This is the true import of the saying, for which Coriolanus was sent into exile, that the plebeians should return to the hoe. For otherwise, in addition to their vast ingratitude, which, as everybody knows, gave rise to the danger, as great as any Rome confronted later, that they would have faced through Coriolanus' revenge, had he not been placated by the pitiful tears of his mother and sister, [we would need to believe] the plebeians guilty of the most foolish pride, by resenting the suggestion

[142] Livy, II, 34.

that they should engage in rural labour at a time when that was the proud boast of all the great nobles of Rome!

164. The fire of the dispute was rekindled in the year two hundred and sixty-six, when Spurius Cassius promulgated the second agrarian law, assigning the fields to the plebs with the full solemnity and security of civil law, for which he was then condemned to death by the senate[143] on the grounds that he was proposing to disseminate the law of the fathers to the plebs and, as some also said, to impose impious burdens on the fathers themselves. This is a true example of the severity of the laws so hated by the youths who conspired to restore Tarquin the Proud. A vulgar belief exists, according to which these riots were alleviated by means of a colony of plebeians sent out by Fabius Maximus.[144] But, like Spurius Cassius' agrarian law, Fabius' colony was not of the kind that belong to the Roman times, certain and known, in which the Gracchi could boast of setting up colonies to enrich the impoverished plebs, as will be shown later [226 ff.]. Hence the colony was sent, but the insurrections still did not cease.

165. Meanwhile it is necessary to reflect that this agrarian law, which was the cause of so many movements and revolts, and through which Coriolanus posed such a dangerous threat to Rome, belongs to a period when her people could be counted by sight, her customs were simple and frugal, and the very short boundaries of her nascent empire, which a few years later spanned no more than twenty miles, could be surveyed from the rock of the Campidoglio. Only after Rome had extended her conquests to the provinces beyond Italy and overseas, did the number of her people increase immeasurably and bring about an increase in the number of the poor. And it was only then, when, if the people had not yet experienced luxury, they admired magnificence, and if they had not yet sunk into corrupt habits, they at least took pleasure in gallant customs, that it was found necessary to unburden the city of the poor, who were a source of shame, fear and trouble to the nobles, and turn them into [sources of] strength in the provinces by setting them up comfortably in their own fields. And all this [is supposed to have happened] within a period of some two hundred years leading up to the Gracchi, a family that

[143] Livy, II, 41.
[144] Livy, III, 1, 45.

acquired its very name at a different time, a time [so much later] that no trace of [Tullius'] agrarian law was retained in Roman memory! For Fabius' colony came after Servius Tullius' agrarian law, and it was as far from the colonies known to have been led after the agrarian law of the Gracchi as it was close to those earlier colonies that came after Romulus's clienteles which Coriolanus wanted to restore. [The nature of] these [later] kinds of colony will be revealed below [226–32]. Thus it was by chance that Fabius led this colony at this particular time, but, because it was then assimilated to the idea underlying later colonies, the belief arose that the agrarian dispute had been settled by setting up this colony. For it was not known that the dispute was over the Law of the Twelve Tables and that it did not terminate with Fabius' colony.

166. For after the famous embassy returned [from Athens], carrying her laws in a sack, the plebeians continued to be subject to the abuse, some of it public, that the senate and consuls piled upon the tribunes of the plebs, with the intention of bringing the plebs to an end. Whereupon, in desperation, they were reduced, in Dionysius' phrase,[145] to offering power to Appius Claudius, which is tantamount to saying that they offered him a tyranny, into which, indeed, with nine other companions, he entered with relish. For Claudius came from a very proud family, ever ambitious for sovereign command, ever guilty of harassing the plebs and ever hostile to its desires, as Livy puts it in his eulogies![146] Hence it is clear whether the truth lies with the embassy or with the decision to hold the plebs at bay!

167. We must conclude, therefore, that only one chapter [of the Law of the Twelve Tables], and that the least understood of all, was the subject of this dispute: whether there should be equality in justice between those who were free of the bond, the nobles, and the *forti sanati*, ['the strangers'], i.e. the plebeians, who, as we shall see [183, 227], were the first *socii* to be called 'Roman', after they had rebelled and then been reduced to homage in the same way as, in this same dispute over the bond, the wisdom of Menenius Agrippa had reduced them to homage in the city.[147] Hence the whole and sole, or at least the principal, business with which this law and its annexes was concerned was the law called *auctoritas* ['authority'],

[145] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The History of Rome*, VIII, 81, 3–4.
[146] Livy, IX, 34, 5.
[147] Livy, II, 32.

which was contained in the celebrated chapter entitled *Qui nexum faciet mancipiumque* ['Whoever makes a bond or solemn transfer of property'],[148] to which, as we saw above [83], the Greek, Dio Cassius, believed there was no corresponding word in the whole of Greece. The 'authority' that is frequently mentioned in this law is the ownership, solemn, certain and civil, that the Latins called 'optimum', which, in ancient Latin, means 'the strongest'. Hence if this kind of ownership were to be translated into Greek, it would need to be referred to as δίκαιον ἄριστον [*dikaion ariston*] or ἡρωϊκόν [*heroicon*], thus employing words that were used for naming an aristocratic or heroic republic, such as, above all, Sparta.

168. Hence, with this authority, thus created and named, the Romans regulated all their practices, public and private, at home and abroad, in peace and in war.

169. First, in conformity with the form of their aristocratic governments, came the authority of the ownership through which the fathers were sovereign lords of the whole field of Rome. Then, during Romulus' interregnum, the fathers allowed the plebs to make elections *deinde patres fierent auctores* ['to be ratified by the fathers'][149] for the creation of the king. These elections by the plebs were rather in the manner of exercising a preference for, or nomination of, certain subjects, but if they were to succeed, these subjects needed to have been proposed by the fathers, so that the plebs nominated in order that approval should follow. Hence the Fortune of Rome, which Plutarch, somewhat envious of Roman virtue, imagined was a goddess,[150] was wholly due to the wisdom of the Roman fathers concerning the election of the kings who were needed for the origins of Roman greatness.

170. Next, in conformity with the form of the free popular governments, came the authority of guardianship, introduced through the law of Quintus Philo,[151] which may be why Philo was called 'the popular dictator'.[152] This was the authority through which the senate, which conceived the laws and took them to the people, this being the one

[148] In the sixth of the Twelve Tables.
[149] Livy, I, 17, 9.
[150] Plutarch, *Opera moralia*, XLIV.
[151] This is the Publilian law, which allowed popular assemblies to formulate decrees that had the standing of laws.
[152] Livy, VIII, 12, 14.

and only form in which it could command laws, were the fathers as *auctores in incertum comitiorum eventum* ['authors who did not know the outcome of the assemblies'].[153] Thus they were the guardians of the people, rather as if they were the guardians of a pupil who was the lord of the Roman empire.

171. Finally, in accordance with the monarchical form of government, came the authority of the council under the emperors.

172. In the same way, and in exactly the same order, the lords regulated all private matters concerning the clienteles. First, as lords of the plebeians, the nobles defended them in holding their fields. Next, they acted as their 'approved authors', a term that survived in commerce. Finally, they were their 'prudent' [authors], a term that survived in the 'authors' [of jurisprudence] called 'jurisconsults'.

173. We shall explain below [226–32, 354–8] how the Romans used this same authority to regulate their conquests and affairs in the provinces. But it was the certainty of private justice that the plebs wanted and received through the Law of the Twelve Tables. It is this that gave rise to the error whereby Pomponius[154] thought that the plebs wanted the Law in order to confine the liberty of the royal hand to ongoing administrative necessities. But the real need was that the laws should no longer be hidden and uncertain, but certain and fixed in the Tables, because the decision whether or not to create the duumvirs to administer the law against Horatius had earlier depended [solely] upon the will of Tullus. For throughout the whole period of the free republic, the consuls retained the royal hand in public affairs, including the decision whether or not to refer public emergencies to the senate in order that the senate should there determine the matter by decree or conceive the laws that were to be commanded by the people. Indeed, it was because the consuls chose to read Caesar's letters aloud in the senate but not to refer to the senate in accordance with [the request contained in] the letters, all of which they did in virtue of the royal hand, that the great war arose.[155] Similarly, in private matters the royal hand was retained in the forum by the praetors, who were therefore called 'the ministers and live voice of civil law', for the Romans could not experience as justice anything not dictated in the praetors' formulae.

[153] Livy, I, 17, 10.
[154] *Digest*, I, 2, 2, 3.
[155] Caesar, *The Civil War*, I, 1, 1.

[Chapter] XXXVII
The eternal principle of human governments in the free republics and the monarchies

174. But with regard to these historical discoveries about Roman government, since Rome was but a small part of the world it becomes all the more important to discover the eternal principle through which all republics are born, ruled and preserved, which consists in the desire of the multitude to be governed with equality of justice and in conformity with the equality of their human nature. Hence heroism lasted within the order of nobles as long as the nobles kept the multitude satisfied with it, but when the heroes changed from being chaste to dissolute, from being strong to slothful, from being just to greedy, and from being magnanimous to cruel, they became so many minor tyrants. Then they either spread into free republics, where [the essence of] heroism is reunited in one body in the assemblies in which the free peoples exercise a mind empty of feeling, as Aristotle[156] divinely defines good law, for such a mind, devoid of passion, is, in the full propriety [of the expression], 'the heroic mind', with which the free republics should preserve the liberty with which to command their laws; or, alternatively, they were set free to become monarchs, with an undertaking to protect the multitude, and [the essence of] heroism was then united in their persons, as if they alone were of a nature superior to [that of] their subjects and, consequently, were subject to none but God, thus preserving heroism by allowing their subjects equal enjoyment of the law.

[Chapter] XXXVIII
The natural law of the gentes that proceeds in constant uniformity among the nations

175. But all jurisprudence everywhere, and not just that of Rome, for example, requires knowledge of the history of the justice commanded by the laws of their republics, which must have varied according to their varieties of government. Hence this jurisprudence of mankind requires knowledge of the history of the law uniformly dictated by

[156] Aristotle, *Politics*, III, 1287a.

nature to all the nations, which, though they exist in diverse times, are constant in the varieties of government with which they are born and propagated.

[Chapter] XXXIX
The discovery of the divine nature of the first natural law of the gentes

176. But when men are superstitious and fierce, they will judge divinity according to force and not yet according to reason. Hence, in accordance with this divine law, they will believe that it is just that the likes of imprudent Agamemnon should make a victim of innocent Iphigenia by offering her to the victorious Greek gods, or equally just and approved by the gods that the likes of treacherous Theseus should lay curses upon chaste Hippolyte, his slandered son. They will believe that it is even more just to sacrifice to the gods those violent and unjust people they have killed in the act of being wronged by them, in order to protect their own justice against the force of these unjust ones. Hence, because they were enemies, such people were called *hostiae*, and, because they had been vanquished,[157] *victimae*. Thus, among the ancient Latins, *supplicium* meant both 'victim' and 'punishment'.

[Chapter] XL
The principle of the external justice of war

177. This brings us to the origin of duels, which is found in a property with regard to which argument has died out, taking with it, therefore, any correct understanding of the justice of duels: for whereas today, after public empires have been founded, duels are forbidden, before the establishment of laws, they were necessary. They must therefore have been born in those times in which it was permissible to take part in a duel only with a divine judgement, in which the insulted party called upon some divinity as testimony to the use of unjust violence. Here, for the first time, the Latin peoples expressed the formula *Audi, Iupiter* ['Hear me, Jupiter!'],[158] which then became *Audi, fas*

[157] *Vinti*, in Italian. For the Latin derivations, see Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 643.
[158] Livy, I, 32, 6.

['Hear me, divine law!'], in which they understood 'law' as 'Jove'. Here the first outlines of the celebrated *Fas gentium* ['The divine law of the gentes'], which provides the motto for the whole subject matter of this Science [5], begin to emerge.

178. With the advent of public wars and the return of the state of force, divine governments also return, bringing with them a divine law of the gentes, whereby, in their proclamations, the sovereigns would both call upon God as testimony to the necessity to take up arms in defence of their justice and appeal to him as judge and vindicator of the violated law of the gentes. As a result of this continuity of human custom, the Romans long continued to call wars *duella* ['duels'];[159] and in the last barbaric times, because civil purges under a judgement of God were deemed just, these private wars spread again from the nations of the north throughout the whole of Europe. But what is of greater importance is that we here discover both parts of the principle of the external justice of wars: first, that wars should be waged by civil powers which recognise no superior other than God; second, that they should be preceded by declarations of war.

[Chapter] XLI
Optimum law as the principle of revenge and the origin of heraldic law

179. In these oldest duels we find the common origin of this natural law of the gentes, to which we alluded earlier [142, 164] and which the commentators on Mosaic, Greek and Roman law have observed was common among the Hebrews, Greeks and Latins: that thieves could be killed with propriety. We must now note, however, that the propriety of the practice consisted in the requirement that if one defended oneself against a thief by day, it was necessary first to shout 'Stop thief! Stop thief!', a custom that must by nature have been common both to the nations mentioned above and to all others. Such shouts were the first *obtestationes deorum* ['invocations of the gods'] to defend the crops and harvests against the impious thieves, pleas which, after the advent of public wars, passed into the proclamations of the lords, as shown above [178]. Hence we here discover the origin of the declarations of war that the heralds made in

[159] See footnote 100, p. 89.

a natural language through which nations with different articulate languages could communicate with one another. This is a certain language of arms, proper to the law of the gentes, in which, as we shall find in the next book [317–49], lies the origin of the heroic emblems, blazons and medals.

180. The principle of revenge is also discovered here, founded in the optimum law of the fields of the Latin peoples. In the ancient language this meant 'the strongest law', but it was called 'optimum' from the practice of imploring *opem deorum* ['the help of the gods'],[160] which the strong did by praying to them for the force with which to kill the thieves. This is the law, which cannot be more eloquently rendered in Greek than by the δίκαιον ἡρωϊκόν [*dikaion heroicon*] or ἄριστον [*ariston*], upon which the first heroic republics, the 'aristocratic' republics of the Greeks and 'republics of the optimates' of the Latins, later arose.

[Chapter] XLII
The law of the bond as the origin of obligations and the first outlines of reprisals and slavery

181. The second principal part of this divine law was that 'of the bond', which even the Attic commentators dared not say was shipped over from Greece to Rome. This bond was the Latin *nexus*, which, as we shall discover below [465–6], was called the 'nexus' even in the fabulous history of Greece. It survived among the Romans in the meaning of the words 'prisoner' and 'slave' in the famous chapter of the Law of the Twelve Tables, *Qui nexum faciet mancipiumque* ['Whoever makes a bond or solemn transfer of property'], in which, with the first and proper *implorare deorum fidem*,[161] the creditors had first implored the protection of the gods, where by 'protection' they meant 'force'. In those very rough times the nexus must have been a rope made of withe, which the Latins continued to call *vimen* ['withe'], from *vi*, ['force', 'strength'], for the nexus must have been born in a period when the only arts were rural. This was the rope with which debtors were dragged along by force and literally tied to certain fields, in order to discharge their debts through labour. In these first outlines of reprisals the origin of obligations is discovered,

[160] *Aen.*, XII, 780.
[161] Cicero, *De nat. deorum*, I, 6, 13.

beginning with private imprisonment at home and then developing through slavery in war abroad.

[Chapter] XLIII
The religious aspect of the first laws of the nations

182. Finally it is discovered that all human laws were suffused with fearful and cruel religions, which the people defended through terror of the gods and by force of arms. Hence we find expressions such as, for example, 'the hospitable gods' for the right of asylum, 'gods of the home' for the law of matrimony, *sacra patria* or *paterna* for the power of the fatherland, *dii termini* for ownership of a farm, *dii lares* for that of houses, and, in the Law of the Twelve Tables, *ius deorum manium* for the right of burial. And in the returned barbaric times, a great many of the villages and castles that arose were named after saints, while innumerable bishoprics were erected in the seigneuries, for in these times in which the barbarism of arms had extinguished the support of laws, the people safeguarded their human rights with religion, which was all that was left to them.

[Chapter] XLIV
The discovery that heroic law was the second natural law of the gentes

183. But when men believe that they are of divine origin and that they are therefore above others whom they disdain as being of bestial origin, they will keep these others in place of wild animals. In a similar manner, though none of the experts in jurisprudence have hitherto realised it, through the natural law of the gentes, the Romans kept slaves in place of wholly inanimate things, referring to them, in an expression that occurs in Roman law, as being *loco rerum* ['in place of things']. Hence we should cease to be surprised by the way in which Ulysses treats Antinous, the dearest of all his *socii*, when, as a result of a single remark in which it seems as though Antinous has not to paid due deference to him, and even though it is meant for his own good, Ulysses flies into a heroic rage and wants to behead him.[162] Nor,

[162] *Od.*, X, 438–41.

similarly, should it be a matter of surprise that Aeneas kills his *socius,* Misenus, as a sacrifice.[163] For these *socii* of the heroes were the clientes of the ancient nations. This natural law of the barbaric peoples still survives in Norway, Sweden, Lithuania and Poland, where nobles pay very little for the lives of any of their plebeians whom they kill.

[Chapter] XLV
The discovery that ancient Roman law was wholly heroic and the source of Roman virtue and greatness

184. On the basis of the principle that its law was heroic, a major aspect of ancient Roman history becomes intelligible. This concerns the way in which the Roman patricians publicly oppose the plebs' desire to share in their solemn marriages on the grounds that *agitarent connubia more ferarum* ['they mate in the manner of wild animals']. [There is considerable evidence that this is how they thought of them]: in St Augustine's *City of God*,[164] for example, Sallust certainly tells us that the century of Roman virtue lasted until the Carthaginian Wars, and also, in the same part of the book, that within this same century the nobles were beating the naked shoulders of the plebeians with rods in a truly tyrannical manner, so that the Porcian law was finally needed to drive these rods from Roman shoulders;[165] in addition, the plebeians were drowning in a sea of usury, from which they received some relief first in a chapter in the Law of the Twelve Tables and later in the Unciarion law;[166] they were also made to serve their lords at their own expense in times of war, for which they complained as much in Livy[167] as the vassals whom we call 'villeins'; and [finally], as a result their debts, they were buried in their lords' private prisons, from which, following a popular uprising much later, the lords were forced to liberate them under the terms of the Petelian law.[168]
185. All this leads us to wonder how we can understand the Roman virtue of which Sallust talks, if not as the heroic virtue that we demonstrated

[163] *Aen.*, VI, 160–74. But it is Triton who kills Misenus.
[164] St. Augustine, *City of God*, II, 18.
[165] Livy, X, 9, 6.
[166] Livy, VII, 37, 3.
[167] Livy, III, 66, 3.
[168] Livy, VIII, 28, 9.

through Achilles [52–3], based on the belief that natures of the strong and the weak were different in kind. For what kind of virtue can there be where there is so much pride? What clemency where there is so much ferocity? What frugality where there is so much greed? What Roman justice where there is so much inequality? And, on the other side, with what foolish magnanimity could the Roman plebs claim marriage in the manner of the nobles and aspire to consulates and empires, pontificacies and priesthoods, when they were the most miserable of men and treated as the basest of slaves? Finally, how perverse the sequence of desires! [On the one hand] we have men endowed with our own human nature, who first desire wealth, then honours and offices, and finally nobility; [on the other] we have the Roman plebeians, who first desire nobility through solemn marriage in the manner of the nobles, then posts and honours through consulates and priesthoods; and then, much later, come the Gracchi, who seek a wealthy plebs through the agrarian law of popular liberty! All this, which is to be found even in certain Roman history, has the appearance of a series of fables yet more incredible than those of the Greeks themselves, for although we have not hitherto understood the meaning of the latter, we understand from within our human nature the total falsity of the former. Nor are Polybius in his reflections, Plutarch in his *Problems,* or Machiavelli in his lessons on Rome, successful in lending them any probability whatsoever.[169]

186. Hence, the following principles alone make it possible to settle these otherwise hopeless difficulties. In order to free their bodies from the heroic law of the bond, i.e. from private imprisonment, the plebeians sought to share the heroic law of the auspices that the nobles had kept to themselves in Table XI. But this was impossible unless the rights to marriage, consulships and priesthoods, to all of which the auspices of the nobles were attached, were also communicated to them. Thus should we understand Livy's saying[170] that has hitherto caused so much confusion, that, with the Petelian law, in which the bond was untied, *aliud initium libertatis extitit* ['liberty began to arise'].

187. For heroic law held sway among the Romans for a period of four hundred and nineteen years, i.e. from the foundation of Rome until the passing of the Petelian law. After Romulus had established

[169] See footnote 96, p. 86.
[170] Livy, VIII, 28, 1.

Rome on the basis of the clienteles, [the ownership provided by the bond changed character]. First, as a result of some uprising, Servius Tullius granted the plebs natural ownership, with [the burden of] the census or tribute. Then, as a result of further large-scale civil movements by the plebs, some slight vestiges of which have been preserved in Dionysius of Halicarnassus,[171] the decemvirs granted the plebeians private optimum ownership of the fields, together with the things that were dependent on that ownership. Next, as a result of the successive heroic disputes over the communication of the rights to marriage, consulships and priesthoods, they granted them the things that were dependent on public heroic law, all of which centred upon the public auspices. And, as a result of the priesthoods, they communicated to them the science of the laws which, in such times, constituted a large part of religion: hence the first [plebeian] to give instruction in law was Tiberius Coruncanius, who was also the first great plebeian pontiff. In the year four hundred and sixteen came the law of the dictator Philo,[172] the last remaining senatorial magistrate. In the [first part of] this law the right to the censorship was also communicated to the plebs; in the second part the form of government was changed from aristocratic to popular and, in accordance with this change, the authority of the senate thenceforth became that of guardianship, as was demonstrated above [170]; and in the third part, the nature of the plebiscites was also changed, so that, in the tribunitial assemblies, in which the plebs prevailed in number, the Roman people commanded as absolute lord of the empire, without requiring the authority of the senate. Thus, *plebiscita omnes quirites tenerent* ['the plebiscites were binding on all the quirites']. But because they failed to notice that the word *quirites* was here used with the full propriety that it still retains, the Roman critics were unable to see that with this law the whole form of Roman government changed. Hence the fathers were right when they complained that through it they had lost more in a year of peace at home than they had acquired through the many outstanding victories they had recorded in wars abroad. For this was the law which established that the plebiscites could not be annulled by laws commanded by the nobles in the assemblies of hundreds, where, through their patrimonies, the nobles prevailed in number over the plebeians. [The critics are open to censure in this

[171] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The History of Rome*, VIII, 76 and 81.
[172] See footnote 33, p. 55.

matter] for to take the word *quirites* as referring to Romans outside the assemblies is an error that even a child just learning Latin should not make, let alone a Roman legislator, for the word *quiris* was never used in the singular. Finally, three years later, through the Petelian law, the heroic law of the bond was completely untied, thus allowing popular liberty to arise, which is the true meaning of the word *existere*.[173] And all this was necessary in order to untie completely the bond with which Romulus established his city on the basis of the clienteles!

188. Thus, under Romulus' bond, the Roman plebs waged war for the life that he saved them in his asylum. Then, under Servius Tullius' bond, it waged war for the natural liberty that it had gained through natural ownership of the fields under the census, but of which it would have been deprived through slavery. Thus, it waged war most obstinately for life and liberty. Finally, under the bond of the Law of the Twelve Tables, in which the fathers had ceded optimum ownership of the fields to the plebs but confined the public auspices within their own order, it waged war for civil liberty and for truly magnanimous ends. For, fired by the heroic disputes at home, the plebs was forced abroad to engage in heroic exploits of war, in order to prove to the fathers that it was worthy of the rights of marriage, public office and priesthood, as, according to Livy,[174] Lucius Sextius, tribune of the plebs, once put it to the fathers. For the heroic disputes were all about justice, which the plebeians wanted to gain both by public declaration from the nobles themselves and with the authority of the nobles' own laws. Hence, they were the cause of the growth of Roman virtue at home and of her greatness abroad. In this respect they were quite different from the disputes that took place around the time of the Gracchi, for they were disputes about power, in which liberty was first set alight in the factions, then flared up in the riots and finally burnt itself out in the civil wars.

189. Hence the true summit of Roman happiness came at the time in which Rome both brought civil liberty to completion at home and, through her Carthaginian victories, took command of all the seas and laid down the external foundation of her command of the world. Throughout all her earlier times, in order to keep the impoverished plebs at home, the senate was magnanimous, clement and just in its treatment of the vanquished, whom it deprived of no more than the

[173] Livy, VIII, 28, 1.
[174] Livy, VI, 36, 11–37.

freedom to inflict damage by removing their sovereign right of arms. Thus, by communicating optimum private law to the plebeians but restricting public law to the nobles, the Law of the Twelve Tables was the source of all Roman virtue and, through that, of Roman greatness. Hence it should be clear whether Cicero[175] placed the single booklet of the Law of the Twelve Tables ahead of all the libraries of the philosophically minded Greeks as a matter of convention or on merit.

190. The things discussed above provide us with a clear knowledge of [the nature of] Roman liberty in the period between Brutus and the Petelian law, whether it be the popular liberty of the plebs from the nobles, as is found in Holland, or the liberty of the lords, i.e. the liberty of the nobles from monarchical dominion, as is found in Venice, Genoa and Lucca.

[Chapter] XLVI
The discovery that human law is the final law of the gentes

191. The foregoing has consequences for such scholars as believe, on the contrary, that the equality of human nature, which is the true and proper nature of men, must obtain at all times and in all nations. For if we take mathematical calculations such as that six is more than four by two or ten is more than six by four, which are the proportions of number with which commutative justice adjusts the utilities, or that one is to three as four is to twelve, which are the proportions of size with which distributive justice applies its rules, this belief would bring Polyphemus and Pythagoras, one the most immense troglodyte, the other the most humane Athenian, to agree on both of these truths! The eternal and proper law of men that, since they are of the same species, they should communicate the right to the utilities equally among them, ought therefore to be understood on the basis of the reflection that the weak desire [equality under] the law but the powerful want no equals. This, [the law of these scholars], is the law of the human gentes that was current in Ulpian's time, which, when he wished to define it, he described, in words of weight, as *ius gentium humanarum* ['the law of the human gentes'].[176]

[175]Cicero, *De orat.*, I, 44, 197.
[176]See footnote 14, p. 43.

[Chapter] XLVII
A demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion and a criticism of the three systems of Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf

192. This variety of [phases in] the natural law of the nations brings with it an invincible demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion. For, as we shall show below [293], in the times in which a wholly superstitious and fierce natural law certainly prevailed among the Greeks, i.e. their obscure times, but in which the people of God spoke in a poetic language more sublime by far than that of Homer himself, God gave Moses a law so replete in maxims of divine dogma, and so overflowing in humanity concerning the practices of justice, that not even in the most human times of Greece did the likes of Plato understand them or the likes of Aristides put them into practice. This was the law with which God re-ordained his people, after they had become somewhat corrupt during their slavery in Egypt, on the basis of Adam's first natural customs. The ten supreme commandments of this law, which contain the idea of a universal and eternal justice based upon that of human nature at its most enlightened, would form through habit a sage such as the maxims of the best philosophies could form only with difficulty. Hence Theophrastus called the Hebrews 'philosophers by nature'.[177]

193. Thus Providence permitted gentile affairs to be regulated and made to serve her eternal counsel: that, over the long passage of years, such a change in customs should be necessary in order for the Cyclopean law of Polyphemus to give rise to the most human [kind of] Roman law, such as we find in the likes of Papinianus. Moreover, in *The Division of Things*,[178] Papinianus is in agreement with the Platonists about the eternal principles of metaphysics concerning the highest kinds of substance: that things are either corporeal or incorporeal; that the corporeal are subject to, and affected by, the senses, but the incorporeal are things of the understanding and, as the jurisconsults say, *in intellectu iuris consistunt* ['consist in the

[177] Quoted in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, IX, 2.

[178] This is a mistaken attribution of what Papinianus wrote in *De hereditatis petitione*. See *Digest*, V, 3, 50.

understanding of the law']; and they assign to reasons the eternal property of being indivisible, a property which bodies cannot possibly possess, since their first property, that which gives rise to extension, is the divisibility of parts. Thus, as we said earlier [71], Platonic philosophy alone stands in agreement with the last Roman jurisprudence. Hence is divine Providence to be admired in respect of those things that Arnold Vinnen,[179] buried in an eternal night, treated with jests and derision: that rights and reasons are Platonic ideas.

194. But let us leave Vinnen, that most celebrated interpreter of Roman law, and return to the foremost jurisprudents of universal law, Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf, all three of whom claim, on the basis of their systems of the natural law of the philosophers, that, from the beginning of the world, the customs of the natural law of the gentes have been constantly uniform. But, as we demonstrated above [86], they needed to argue thus in order to accept Rufinus'[180] equating of the Mosaic laws with those of the Romans under the emperors, through which [they could then explain how] Christian governments ruled happily with Roman laws, just as Christian theology ruled with Platonic philosophy until the eleventh century and, after that, with Aristotelian philosophy, since this agrees with Platonic philosophy.

[Chapter XLVIII][181]
The idea of a jurisprudence of mankind that changes through certain sects of times

195. The foregoing morality, politics and history of the law of gentile mankind provide the basis for a similar jurisprudence of mankind, with principles that distribute it through three sects of times. Far more suitable to our subject than the sects of the philosophers, these are the sects proper to Roman jurisprudence that the scholars have treated so forcibly.

[179] Arnold Vinnen (1588–1657), Dutch jurist and author of *In quatuor libros 'Institutionum' imperialium commentarius academicus et forensis* (1646), in which he denies the reality of Platonic ideas.

[180] Tyrannius Rufinus, see note 59, p. 64.

[181] This chapter is not numbered in Vico's text. From here until the end of book II Vico's numbering is given first, followed by a corrected number in square brackets.

[Chapter] XLVIII [XLIX]
The jurisprudence of the sect of superstitious times

196. The jurisprudence of the superstitious times was based on the principle that, as reported of those who practise witchcraft, when ignorant and fierce men have once been terrified by fearful superstitions, they treat things with the most elaborate of ceremonies, and most of all if they are in a state in which they are unable to explain anything whatsoever. This, as we have shown [42], was the state of all the gentile nations in the times near the Universal Flood.

197. In keeping, then, with [the character of] this sect of time, the most ancient jurisconsults must all have been priests who treated legal cases by means of sacred rites. Two very beautiful vestiges of such practices survived in the Law of the Twelve Tables. One is in the chapter *De furti* ['On Theft'], where the expression *orare furti* ['to pray theft'] is used for *agere*, i.e. 'to try by law'. The other is in the chapter *De in ius vocando* ['On Summoning to Court'], according to Justus Lipsius' text,[182] where *orare pacti* ['to pray an agreement'] is given for *excipere*, i.e. 'to defend oneself'. These priests must have been the judges who condemned the guilty, for there is a golden passage in Tacitus[183] in which he observes that one of the customs of the ancient Germans was that only priests were allowed to bind the guilty, beat them with rods and inflict other punishments upon them, which they did in the presence of their gods and surrounded by arms. Thus the consecration of the guilty preceded the administration of punishments and many of these consecrations then passed into the Law of the Twelve Tables: an impious son was 'consecrated to the gods of the fathers', a nocturnal thief of crops was 'consecrated to Ceres',[184] and anyone who had harmed the tribune of the plebs was 'consecrated to Jove'.[185] These consecrations of the Latins were the 'execrations' of the Greeks, which, like their deities, they inscribed on their temples. They were like a certain kind of excommunication practised by all the ancient nations, such as the Gauls of whom Julius Caesar[186] has left a very clear account. The interdict of fire and water,

[182] Justus Lipsius, *Opera omnia* (1637), IV, p. 281.
[183] Tacitus, *Germany*, 7.
[184] Pliny, *The Natural History*, XVIII, 3, 2 (henceforth *Nat. Hist*).
[185] Livy, III, 55, 7.
[186] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, VI, 13.

which was practised among the Latin peoples and finally survived among the Romans, was of the same sort.[187]

[Chapter] XLIX [L]
The discovery of the secrecy of the laws uniform in all the ancient nations

198. Here we discover the origin of the secret laws which were spread throughout the religions of all the ancient nations. Since they were sacred, they were guarded within the priestly orders of the nations, such as the Chaldeans of Assyria, the magi of Persia, the priests of Egypt and Germany, and the Druids of the Gallic countries, all of whom had a sacred, or secret, literature. Hence, at first it was by nature and not deception that the science of the Roman laws was kept closed within the college of pontiffs, whose membership, according to Pomponius,[188] was confined to the patricians until a hundred years after the Law of the Twelve Tables, since it took until then for them to communicate priesthoods to the plebs.

[Chapter] L [LI]
A demonstration that the laws were not born of deception

199. In this jurisprudence, in which all the human laws of the first world of nations were regarded as divine, all were held to be truths, as befitted the simplicity of nations in their childhood. And because things were [first] acquired by real use, i.e. by settlers remaining physically on certain lands for a long time, usucaption was the first, and therefore remained the principal, mode through which sovereignty became legitimate among all the nations. Thus far from true, therefore, is the idea that usucaption was peculiar to the Roman citizens, a false belief that has hitherto confused all who have written on this subject. Beyond real use, things were acquired by real 'hand', or real force, which was the principle of mancipations and of those things said to be 'taken by hand', i.e. booty of war, with regard to which optimum or strongest ownership was acquired. And beyond ownership by real use and real hand, obligations were contracted by real bond, as a

[187] Cicero, *De domo sua*, 30, 78.
[188] *Digest*, I, 2, 2, 6.

result of which from the *vincti*, or those under obligations at home, arose the *victi* abroad, i.e. those bound in slavery through war.

200. Thus it is found to be true that the natural law of the gentes of these times admitted of no fictions, which provides a weighty proof that the laws were not inventions born of deception, but daughters born of a generous reality.

[Chapter] LI [LII]
The jurisprudence of the sect of heroic times in which the origin of the legitimate acts of the Romans is discovered

201. Human governments, the first of which were heroic, were born when the public force of the cities, their civil authority, came to be composed of the private forces of the fathers who were sovereign in the state of the families. Thus these private forces came to an end on behalf of the civil authority, in order to become more truly a part of it. But since it is by nature disposed that customs do not change all at once, especially those of rough and wild men, heroic jurisprudence came naturally to be wholly concerned with those fictions of which ancient Roman jurisprudence was full. These began with the simulation of the hand and the bond, both of which then passed into the Law of the Twelve Tables, in the famous chapter *Qui nexum faciet mancipiumque* ['Whoever makes a bond or solemn transfer of property'].[189] Together, they gave rise to civil mancipation, which is discovered to have been the source of all the legitimate acts with which the ancient Romans celebrated the whole of Roman law among themselves. Thus did Roman law need to come from Athens to Rome, when it consisted of customs uniform with those of all the other ancient nations!

[Chapter] LII [LIII]
The origin of the harsh jurisprudence of the ancients

202. To the foregoing we add this second principle: that when men are superstitious and of limited ingenuity they observe the words used

[189] In the sixth of the Twelve Tables.

in pacts, laws and, especially, legal oaths, with extreme care, above all in times when nations are either short of words, or use them in their literal meanings, because they have not as yet an abundance of metaphors. Hence they must observe the words [literally], even if doing so not only fails to procure the intended utility but even gives rise to serious damage and unhappiness, as happened to the likes of imprudent Agamemnon with his sad votive offering.[190] But men believed that the offering was in accordance with justice and Agamemnon himself, that unhappiest of kings and fathers, made it of his own will. Hence men sought to protect themselves, as best they knew how, through the certain and determinate formulae of the words. Thus the imagined hand and imagined bond, conjoined with the solemn formulae of words, entered naturally into the customs of the peoples of Latium and, with wider extension, into those of all the heroic peoples, passing finally into law among the Romans in the celebrated Chapter of the Twelve Tables, expressed in the words, *Qui nexum faciet mancipiumque, uti lingua nuncupassit, ita ius esto* ['Whoever makes a bond or solemn transfer of property, what his words say shall be law'].[191] And at the surrender of Collatia, Tarquinius Priscus expressed the famous heraldic form for all surrenders celebrated in heroic times, in a solemn formula for the stipulation and discharge of debt, as one can read in Livy.[192] So suited, indeed, were stipulations to the Roman citizens of these times, that the major business of the natural law of the gentes rested on them. Hence, in both early and late barbaric history, the conquerors were often happily disappointed or the conquered miserably deceived, because the words of their pacts of surrender were observed with the highest degree of propriety.

203. The model of this heroic jurisprudence of ancient barbaric times whom Homer presents to the Greek peoples is Ulysses, who always tells his stories and makes his promises and solemn oaths with such art that, while he preserves the propriety of his words, he obtains the utilities he has proposed for himself. This custom is found to have begun very early in the times of the divine governments of Greece, for it is with such Ulysseian prudence, and in no other way, that Juno

[190] Lucretius, I, 84–101.

[191] This is the complete statement of the fragment from the sixth of the Twelve Tables, partially stated earlier in 167, 181 and 201.

[192] Livy, I, 38, 2.

swears to Jove that she had not urged Neptune to raise a tempest against the Trojans, whereas, in truth, she had done so through the mediation of Somnus.[193] Thus she deceives even Jove himself, the witness and vindicator of oaths. Hence, just as the whole reputation of the ancient Roman jurisconsults rested on their celebrated *cavere* ['making of precautionary stipulations'], so, in the returned barbaric times, the reputation of doctors [of law] rested on their invention of 'precautions', the greater part of which are now simply ridiculous.

[Chapter] LIII [LIV]
The discovery of the causes of the belief that the Law of the Twelve Tables came from Sparta

204. The human punishments administered in heroic jurisprudence were of the utmost cruelty, such as, for example, that which later passed into the Law of the Twelve Tables, that a failed debtor should be cut to pieces alive and his parts given to his creditors,[194] a truly Cyclopean punishment practised in the times of the divine governments. Even worse, it was practised on the persons of their own grandchildren, as in the case of Hippolytus, who was dragged along and miserably torn to pieces by his own horses, after his grandfather Neptune had startled them.[195] This punishment was administered [first] at home, against those who had broken their word, and then abroad, against kings who had failed to keep their treaties of alliance. Thus it was that Romulus had Titus Tatius killed, pulled apart by two four-horse chariots set running in opposite directions.[196]
205. The strict interpretations and cruel punishments of such a jurisprudence are proper in nations of great fierceness. Hence the laws of Sparta aroused horror in the already very humane Athenians, and were consequently criticised both by Plato[197] and Aristotle[198] and,

[193] *Il.*, XV, 36–44, and XIV, 354–60.
[194] Gellius Aulus, the Roman grammarian of the second century AD, transmitted claims of earlier etymologists in his *Noctes atticae*. See XX, 19.
[195] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV, 506–29.
[196] Vico has conflated the incident in which Livy tells of the murder of Tatius, for which Romulus was not responsible, I, 14, 2, with that in which he tells of the incident in which Tullus Hostilius had Mettius Fufetus put to death in this 'disgusting' and 'never repeated' manner. I, 28, 10.
[197] Plato, *Laws*, I, 630d and 633a–c.
[198] Aristotle, *Politics*, II, 9, 1271b.

[as we noted] in another work,[199] this kind of jurisprudence was referred to as a 'Spartan jurisprudence' by the most enlightened of all the ancient heroic republics known to us. But when the most ancient Romans came to know the Greeks, the similarity that they noticed between the Spartan laws and their own gave rise to the belief that the Laws of the Twelve Tables had come from Sparta to Rome, whereas, in fact, they were simply the wholly native customs of the heroic peoples of Latium.

[Chapter] LIV [LV]
The jurisprudence of the sect of human times and the principle of the benign jurisprudence of the last Romans

206. But when men are discerning, and therefore human by nature, they keep their promises, obey their laws, and fulfil their oaths in accordance with true and just reasoning concerning the utility of things themselves and not just in accordance with words. Here we discover the principle of the [natural] equity of the law, i.e. of the benign jurisprudence of the last Romans, and we determine the sect of their times, as the new Roman jurisconsults often called it, in which cases that were of doubtful natural equity were defined in accordance with the natural law of the human gentes. This is the principle of the new jurisprudence, which was wholly concerned with interpreting the edicts of the praetors, who were themselves wholly occupied with supplying the omissions and amending the rigours of the Law of the Twelve Tables in accordance with natural equity. This was the natural law which, when he sought to define it and as, indeed, he did define it, Ulpian drew upon natural equity, calling it, with the full weight of the words, 'the natural law of the human gentes'.[200] Thus, just as heroic jurisprudence had been celebrated in the times of the heroic governments of Rome up to the Petelian law on the basis of the law of the Twelve Tables, from then on, in the times of the human government of Rome, which began when liberty was fully developed after the Carthaginian War, the Romans celebrated the jurisprudence which, in another work, we called 'Athenian jurisprudence',[201]

[199] *De uno*, CLXXXI.
[200] See footnote 14, p. 43.
[201] *De uno*, CLXXXVII.

from [the name of] the most human of all the republics of antiquity known to us.

[Chapter] LV [LVI]
The discovery of the causes of the belief that the Law of the Twelve Tables came from Athens

207. The very close correspondence between this kind of jurisprudence, which was practised in the times in which liberty prevailed in Rome, i.e. from the Gracchi onwards, and that of the humanity of the Athenians, was the reason why the Romans were led to believe, quite contrary to the truth, that the Law of the Twelve Tables had come to Rome from Athens. Moreover, the belief endured because this last kind of jurisprudence also endured, most of all under the monarchy of the Roman princes, which is the second kind of human government. Thus the tradition that the Law of the Twelve Tables came to Rome from Greece is of a kind with the tradition that the *Curetes* came from Greece into Asia, Crete and Saturnia or Italy. The lack of consistency here is similar to that which surrounded Homer's fatherland, where every Greek people recognised its own native sayings in his poems. And the judgement in which Tacitus says that the poems were a collection of *quicquid usquam gentium* ['everything, everywhere, concerning the nations'][202] is of a sort with the [belief in] the voyages through which Pythagoras carried the dogmas of all the sages in the world to Crotona.

[Chapter] LVI [LVII]
The discovery of the true elements of history

208. Above all, however, the Law of the Twelve Tables provides us with a weighty proof that, were we to possess the history of the ancient laws of the peoples, we would possess the history of their ancient activities. For the customs of men come from their natures, their governments from their customs, their laws from their governments, their civil habits from their laws, and their constant public activities

[202] In fact Tacitus mentions Homer only twice: *Historiae*, V, 2, 3, and *Dialogus de oratoribus*, 12, 5, in neither case using this phrase.

from their civil habits. [Hence, we must employ] a certain critical art, such as that by which jurisconsults, when presented with activities of uncertain or doubtful justice, reduce them to the certainty of laws. The true elements of history would thus seem to be the principles of the morality, politics, law and jurisprudence of mankind, discovered by this new science of humanity, on the basis of which the universal history of the nations proceeds, with the origins, progress, state [of perfection], decline and end narrated here.[203] But we now find that in order to determine the certain times and certain places in which the nations originated, the two eyes of history, i.e. chronology and geography, as they have hitherto been used, are of no assistance at all.

[Chapter] LVII [LVIII]
New historical principles of astronomy

209. For, as the philologists all acknowledge, it is certain that the Greeks raised their gods to the planets and their heroes to the constellations, after the gods of the East, whom the Chaldeans had affixed to the stars, had passed into Greece. But this occurred after Homer, for in his times the gods of Greece lived no higher than Mount Olympus. The gross impropriety whereby the gods were placed on the planets and the heroes on the constellations, common to the Assyrians and Greeks alike, could only have arisen through the visual illusion whereby the planets appear to be larger and higher than the constellations, although astronomical demonstrations of size show that they are inordinately lower and smaller.

210. This gives us reason to meditate on the origin of the first of all recondite sciences, which is found to be the vulgar astronomy of the Chaldeans, who were certainly the first sages of our world. The rough beginnings of this astronomy lay in their divination, in which they observed the falling stars at night, through whose trajectory and place in the sky they received warnings, supposedly divine, about human affairs. Next, given the opportunity afforded by their immense plains, they made frequent and lengthy nocturnal observations of the movements of the planets and, finally, of the constellations, which led them, at the end of a long period of time, to the discovery of their recondite astronomy. The prince of this astronomy was Zoroaster,

[203] This is a fuller statement of the standard sequence first mentioned in 11. See footnote 4, p. 11.

so called from *ester*, the Persian for 'star', and *zor*, which Samuel Bochart derived from the Hebrew *schur*, meaning 'to contemplate':[204] hence 'Zoroaster' was 'the contemplator of stars'. But many were the Zoroasters of Asia. First there was the Chaldean or Assyrian Zoroaster, second the Bactrian, a contemporary of Ninus, third the Persian, still called the Median, fourth the Pamphylian, called the Er-Armenian, and fifth the Proconessian, in the times of Cyrus and Croesus.[205] Hence the wonder of the philologists that there were as many Zoroasters as Joves and Hercules. But all this gives us reason to believe both that, among the Asians, 'Zoroaster' was a name for the founder of each of their nations, and that among the peoples of the East, the expression 'the Chaldeans' continued to mean 'the erudite'. Thus we can resolve the great doubt that has proved so troublesome to the philologists, namely, whether the Chaldeans were particular philosophers, entire families, an order or sect of sages or a single nation, because, on this basis, it is discovered that the traditions [that gave rise to these doubts] were completely true. For first the Chaldeans were the particular men who, with their vulgar magic, founded families of diviners, like the families of haruspices who still existed in Etruria in the times of the Caesars. Next, these families of diviners were united into the ruling orders of the cities, one of which, in Assyria, was subsequently propagated into a nation ruling over the other peoples. Hence the first kingdom of Assyria was founded by the Chaldean race, from which the word 'Chaldean' survived as a synonym for 'erudite', just as in the barbaric times close to us, the word 'Paduan' survived for 'learned'.[206]

[Chapter] LVIII [LIX]
The idea of a reasoned chronology of the obscure and fabulous times

211. But all this still leaves us in despair of discovering the certain times with which to determine the very long period that it took for the nations to reach their recondite astronomy from their vulgar astronomy,

[204] Bochart, *Geographia sacra seu Phaleg et Chanaan* (1646), col. 306.

[205] Vico's list is drawn from Thomas Stanley's *History of Philosophical Systems*, translated into Latin in 1711 by Jean Le Clerc, pp. 1111–14, an abbreviated version having already come out in 1690.

[206] There seems to be no evidence for this claim.

through which alone certainty can be given to chronology. Hence it is necessary to discover the times of the obscure and fabulous things from within our own minds, by means of the identical series of human necessities and utilities that caused the customs of the nations to proceed from certain beginnings through certain sects of time. [And here we must pay attention] to the relationship between the physical sites of the nations and the nature of their countries in general, and that of Mesopotamia in particular, since the [original] nations all came from there, as well as the relationship between their governments and their customs, in order to determine when they must have begun and to take us up to the latest contemporary nations to be discovered. Thus, for example, the Chinese nation began some four thousand years ago, though no earlier,[207] and yet still suffers from a scarcity of articulate words, of which there are no more than about three hundred, and still writes in hieroglyphics. This must be because of the ring of inaccessible mountains and the great wall with which China kept herself closed to foreign nations. The Japanese nation, on the other hand, which began some three thousand years ago, and is still a ferocious race, resembles the Latins closely in its manner of speaking. Then, again, there are the Americans, who originated fifteen hundred years ago, but, at the time of their discovery, were found to be governed with dreadful religions and were still in the state of the families. Here also, at the foot of America, a nation of giants originated a thousand years ago, proving, it has been said,[208] that men and women were carried there by storms from the northern parts of Europe and, probably, Greenland.

[Chapter] LIX [LX]
The discovery of new kinds of anachronism and of new principles for their correction

212. But in our quest to discover how things progressed from the obscure and fabulous times up to the certain historical time of the Greeks, the succession of the kings of Greece of the obscure and fabulous times, described in such minute detail by the chronologists, is of

[207] Vico's insistence upon this limit to the age of the Chinese is a consequence of his claim that the Hebrews, who were generally thought to be six thousand years old, were the oldest nation.

[208] Joseph-François Lafiteau (1681–1746), in his *Moeurs des sauvages ameriquains comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps* (1724), a work known to Vico at second hand.

no help whatsoever. For, as Thucydides warned at the start of his *History*,[209] the kingdoms of the earliest times of Greece were very variable and their kings, one after another, were every day driven from their thrones, a custom of kings and kingdoms that is easily enough encountered again in the accounts of the last barbaric times of the nations of Europe. Hence, as a result of such doubts, we lay down certain natural principles for correcting the anachronisms of fables, of which there are five kinds.

213. The first concerns events that occurred in different times but have been narrated to us as occurring at the same time. Thus Orpheus, for example, both founds the Greek nation and is discovered to be Jason's companion in the expedition to Pontus,[210] where both are joined by Castor and Pollux, the brothers of Helen,[211] whose abduction by Paris was the cause of the Trojan War. Thus, in one and the same age of man, the Greeks, savage and wild as Orpheus found them, acquire a lustre and splendour the equal of nations such as the Trojans, who make so many renowned maritime expeditions. But it is utterly impossible for the human mind to understand such a combination of events.

214. The second kind of anachronism concerns events that occurred at the same time but have been reported as belonging to times very distant from one another. Thus Jove, for example, abducts Europa[212] five hundred years before Minos, the first pirate of the Aegean, imposes on the Athenians the cruel punishment of an annual consignment of youths and maidens to be devoured by his Minotaur.[213] Others, however, have claimed that the Minotaur was Minos' pirate ship with which the Cretans raided the Archipelago, which, as we discovered [in another work],[214] because of the many gorges in its islands, was the first Labyrinth. Both of these different fables are histories of Greek pirates, but pirates did not arise until after the inland nations were founded, because of the longstanding fear of the sea that Thucydides[215] openly attributes to the Greek nation. Moreover, naval and nautical discoveries are the last that nations make.

[209] Thucydides, I, 5, 1.
[210] Diodorus Siculus, *The Historical Library*, IV, 25, and Hyginus, *The Book of Fables*, 164.
[211] Hyginus, *The Book of Fables,* 77.
[212] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VII, 836–75.
[213] *Ibid*., VII, 456–74; 490–500; VIII, 6–10.
[214] *De const. philol*., XXIX, 9.
[215] Thucydides, I, 7 and 8, 3.

215. The third kind of anachronism consists of times described as being empty of events of which they were extremely full. Thus, for example, the whole of the obscure time of Greece, within which, as we shall see below [409–41], it is necessary to recast all the histories, political and civil, which the Greeks preserved in all the fables of their gods and, in large part also, in those of their heroes. For it must certainly be a cause of astonishment to anyone who reflects upon it, not with memory as a philologist but with understanding as a philosopher, that, after kingdoms had been founded in Greece and had passed from house to house through war, together with descriptions of their royal descendants, Orpheus should come forth and, to [the sound of] his lute, domesticate the savage men of Greece and found the Greek nation.
216. The fourth kind of anachronism consists of times described as being full of events of which they must have been empty. Thus, for example, the heroic time which, according to the chronologists, lasted for two hundred years among the Greeks, must either have lasted for five hundred years, or three hundred years of it ought to be restored to the obscure time, [to avoid] the foregoing difficulty in which Orpheus, the founder of the Greek nation, becomes synchronous and contemporary with the Trojan War.
217. Finally, the fifth and last kind consists in those that in the vulgar are called 'anachronisms', by which is meant 'anticipated times'.
218. [To correct these kinds of anachronisms] we now lay down [the principle] that the twelve gods of the greater gentes were twelve short epochs or fixed points of history. The gods themselves will be established through a natural theogony, an account of which is given below [411–41], and by means of these epochs, times will be assigned to the oldest civil things in Greece, which must certainly have been born before those of war.

[Chapter] LX [LXI]
New historical principles of geography

219. But just as our normal chronology, upon which scholars such as Denis Petau[216] and the Scaligers[217] have laboured with incomparable

[216] Denis Petau (1583–1652), author of a work on chronology, *Opus de doctrina temporum* (1626).
[217] Giulio Cesare Scaligero was the father of Giuseppe Giulio Scaligero (1540–1609), who wrote

erudition, offers us no assistance in our [project for a] universal history, our normal geography leaves us similarly abandoned. For, as men universally use the ideas and words known to them when they judge and explain the new and unknown, so the same property of the human mind must have brought entire nations to do likewise.

220. We know with certainty from the Latins that Latium and Italy lay within boundaries that were much smaller than those which, after the ever increasing development of Latin and Italic law, later expanded to their present size. The same occurred with the Tyrrhenian sea, regarding which we wish here to correct what we have written in another work.[218] This must first have been the sea along the coasts of Etruria alone, but the Romans used the same name when they later extended the idea of this sea to the coast running from the root of the Alps, present-day Nice in Provence, as it is described in Livy,[219] to the straits of Sicily, now called 'the straits of Messina', which is the name it has retained in geography. In the same way the Greeks, from whom we have all that we have concerning the ancient gentile nations, must have used their original native ideas and language to think about anything foreign, in those earliest times in which there were neither any interpreters nor any linguistic communication between them and foreign nations. Thus, given the resemblances between many terrestrial sites in the world, they must have used their words for Greek sites to name others similar to their own.

221. Hence we must set out in search of new historical principles of geography, both to defend Homer against the large number of errors of which the science of geography has hitherto wrongly accused him, and to render poetic geography more coherent by basing it on a cosmography suited to [the nature of] the poets. [In this new historical geography] the first Olympus was the mountain upon whose peak and ridge Homer always located the dwellings of his gods. The first ocean was any sea without visible limit, [which explains why] the Polar Star could always be seen from the sea at night. The Greeks must have learnt about the star itself from the Phoenicians, who were already plying the shores of Greece in Homer's time. And just

an influential book on historical criticism, with many new chronological claims, *Opus de emendatione temporum* (1583).

[218] *De const. philol.*, XVI, 8.

[219] Livy, V, 33, 7.

as Homer[220] describes the island of Aeolia as being surrounded by the ocean, so the word 'ocean' became suitable for signifying the sea that embraced the whole earth, when it was finally discovered by our voyagers thousands of years later. Similarly, the first Thrace, the first Mauretania, the first India and the first Spain were the north, south, east and west of Greece herself: hence the Thracian Orpheus is also a famous hero of Greece, while, in the other direction, Perseus, another famous Greek hero, accomplished all his distinguished exploits in Mauretania, i.e. the Peloponnese, which is still called Morea. Yet not only did Herodotus not know that these heroes were his own Greeks but he also states that at one time the Moors of Africa were a white and handsome people![221]

222. Mount Athos must have lain within this Greek Mauretania. Abbreviated later to 'Athos', as it is still named, it stood in the place where Xerxes later dug [his canal] between Macedonia and Thrace,[222] where there was also a river Atlas,[223] as the Greeks have continued to name it. The childlike men of Greece called Mount Atlas 'the column of the sky', because, with its height, it seemed to support the sky.[224] This was the system of cosmography that was transmitted to Homer,[225] with the sky supported by columns, precisely like that, arising from the same roughness of the ideas of his times, which Mohammed left to the Turks. Hence, in Homer's age, the summit of the sky was the peak of Mount Olympus, upon which, as he is always telling us, his gods dwelt and took walks on a roof held on such columns. This is how, on one occasion, also in Homer,[226] we find Thetis telling Achilles that Jove and the other gods had made their way from Olympus to feast on Atlas. [The same historical principles of geography explain what happened] when the Greeks later saw the straits of Gibraltar between the two high mountains of Abyla and Calpe. For they then saw that Europe was separated from Africa by a stretch of sea as narrow as the similar stretch between Attica

[220] *Od.*, X, 3–4.
[221] Herodotus, VII, 69, 2. Vico's remark is inaccurate, since Herodotus is here referring to the chalk with which some Ethiopians adorned themselves.
[222] Herodotus, VII, 22–3.
[223] Herodotus, IV, 49, 1.
[224] Although Mount Athos is the highest in its range, it is not in the Peloponnese.
[225] *Od.*, I, 52–4.
[226] *Il.*, I, 423–4.

and the Peloponnese, the narrowest of any in the world of Greece, with the possible exception of the neck of land upon which Mount Athos stands, which was narrow enough to be penetrated by Xerxes' canal. The similarity of these sites brought about a natural extension of the Greeks' ideas and, with this, a natural extension also of their first words, as we shall show in general in the next book [303–89]. So Spain became 'Hesperia' from the Attic Hesperia, and a part of Africa became 'Mauretania' from the Greek Mauretania, which is still called 'Morea' today. And Mounts Abyla and Calpe must have been the 'two columns' of Atlas, which later became '[The Pillars] of Hercules', because Hercules succeeded Atlas in bearing the burden of sustaining the sky, i.e. of sustaining religion through a different kind of divination, as we shall now explain [223].

223. Greek Mauretania must have been the home of some first founder of the Greek people, a prince of the vulgar astronomy of the Greeks. For the ephors of Sparta, the capital of the Peloponnese, whose divination was based upon the trajectory of falling stars at night, were certainly such [princes of a vulgar astronomy], as were all the Zoroasters of the peoples of the East. But since Atlas' only children were daughters, i.e. the Hesperides of Greece, he left the weight of Olympus, which he had carried on his shoulders, to his successor, Hercules.[227] Yet though Hercules was indisputably the greatest of the Greek heroes, and though his race undoubtedly reigned in Sparta, we have never yet received a satisfactory explanation of him from the mythologists, who have perpetuated some or other school of recondite wisdom from others yet more ancient. But the kind of divination practised by the ephors gives us very serious reason to believe that a colony from the East came to the Peloponnese, since the name 'Peloponnese' itself certainly came from the Phrygian Pelops, and that it brought with it the sort of divination proper to the peoples of the East. For the divination of all the other Greeks peoples was based upon thunder and lightning, in which respect they differed from the Latins only in their contrasting use of their right and left sides. Thus Hercules, from whose race came the noble Spartans who preserved the patronymic 'Heraclid', succeeded Atlas in bearing the burden of sustaining the gods of their nation. But no recondite astronomers ever arose in Sparta because, as everyone knows, Lycurgus

[227] Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, II, 5, 11.

prohibited the Spartans from knowledge of letters.[228] Thus [it was] Zoroaster, and it must have been the Zoroaster of Pamphylia, which bordered on Phrygia, the birthplace of Pelops, who came to teach Atlas in his own dwelling in Thrace. Hence Orpheus had no need to travel as far as Morocco to learn astronomy from Atlas!

224. These same principles [show that] Bacchus could, or rather must, have tamed an India[229] that lay within Greece herself. For otherwise we are faced with the difficulties, mentioned above [35–6], of the suggestion that Pythagoras could have come from Crotona to Rome at the time of Servius Tullius, and of the Tarantines' lack of knowledge that the Romans lived in Italy. Thus, for the Greeks, the Hesperia from which Hercules brought back the golden apple must first have been the part of western Attica within whose quarter of the sky Hesperus himself rose. Later, after they came to know of Italy, they called it *Esperia magna* ['Hesperia Major'], relative to *Esperia parva* ['Hesperia Minor'], because western Attica was a small part of Greece, and the poets[230] retained the name *Esperia magna* for Italy. Then, after they came to know of Spain, it became *Esperia ultima* ['furthest Hesperia'], a name that it also retained. In the same way, the first Europe must have been Greece relative to Asia, the first Ionia must have been the part of western Greece that is still called 'the Ionian Sea', and the Asia that is now called 'Asia Minor' must have been the second Ionia, the western part of Greece, relative to Greater Asia, which has survived as 'Asia' without qualification. Hence it becomes probable that the Greeks knew of Italy before they knew Asia, and that Pythagoras crossed to Italy from western Ionia.

[Chapter] LXI [LXII]
The discovery of the great principle of the propagation of the nations

225. With these principles of chronology and geography we come now to meditate on the great but most obscure principle of the propagation of the nations and the origins of their languages, subjects upon which Wolfgang Latius[231] laboured in two very large volumes,

[228] See footnote 60, p. 65.

[229] Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 13. The myth endured into the seventeenth century.

[230] *Aen.*, I, 569 and VII, 4.

[231] Wolfgang Latius (1514–65), the author of *De aliquot gentium migrationibus, sedibus fixis, reliquiis, linguarumque initiis et immutationibus ac dialectis* (1557).

without producing anything new or certain about the certain origin and continuity of history. However, since words follow in the wake of things, we shall defer our discussion of the origin of languages until the next book, and concentrate in this book on the propagation of the nations. We shall treat it on the basis of a meditation concerning four truths of human nature, whereby men are reduced to abandoning their own lands through one of four causes which succeed each other in accordance with the following order of human necessities or utilities: first, an absolute necessity to save their lives; second, an insurmountable difficulty in being able to support themselves; third, a great greed for enrichment through trade; and fourth, a great ambition to preserve their acquisitions.

[Chapter] LXII [LXIII]
The discovery of the principle of the colonies and provinces and of Roman, Latin and Italic law

226. The first thing we must consider is the nature of the authority through which the first founders of the cities claimed to own the lands in which those whom they sheltered found asylum. This was the authority through which Romulus, with his heroic law of the bond, founded his asylum on the basis of his clienteles and through which the Romans, as demonstrated above [161–2], regulated all things, public and private, at home. It must therefore also have been that with which they regulated them abroad through their conquests. But because the nature of this authority has hitherto lain unknown in the Law of the Twelve Tables, the propagation of the Roman people and the extension of their law into Latium, Italy and the provinces, the same law through which Plutarch[232] claimed that the Roman people became lord of the nations, has long lain hidden from us. And with it, the torch of the things of certain history has also lain hidden, without which it will be impossible to recover the truth of the propagation of mankind from the East to the rest of the world, a truth that has hitherto lain buried in the shadows and fables of the most deplored antiquity.
227. For at first, in keeping with the fierceness of earliest times, the Romans laid waste to the neighbouring cities that they vanquished,

[232] Possibly in Plutarch, *De fortuna Romanorum*, V, 318f and 319b.

leading their subjugated people back to Rome and into the ranks of the plebs, a practice of which Livy[233] took good note in his observation: *Crescit interea Roma Albae ruinis* ['Meanwhile Rome grew large on the ruins of Alba']. So Alba, for example, was *prope victa*, ['a nearby conquest'], and the Albans were added to the numbers of the first Roman *socii*, who resembled the *socii* of the heroes, as we saw above [183] in the case of Ulysses' Antinous and Aeneas' Misenus.[234]

228. Later, however, when both the fields and the plebs of Rome had increased in size, and when, with their increased utilities, the barbarity of their practices had been mitigated, the Romans left the most distant of the conquered cities of Latium intact, because they had surrendered in accordance with the heraldic formula of Tarquinius Priscus. In precisely the same way, in the heroic times of Greece, Pterelus, the conquered king of the Teleboae, surrendered his city to Amphitryon, in Plautus's tragi-comedy of that name,[235] in order that those who surrendered should live as true and proper colonists. These first colonies were the first Roman provinces, the first *procul victae* ['faraway conquests'] within Latium itself, as Florus[236] also noted. Such, for example, was Corioli, from which, after he had reduced it to a province, Marcius took the name 'Coriolanus'. In the same manner, by way of example, the two Scipios were later called 'Asiaticus' and 'Africanus', from the subjugation of Asia and the destruction of Africa.

229. Hence, after the whole of Latium was overcome, Italy became the first province, and Latium was held to be of a higher status than Italy in private civil law.

230. Next, after Rome had extended her conquests beyond the seas, the nations situated outside Italy became provinces, as they remained thereafter, and Italy was held to be of a higher status than them in private civil law. Hence, the people of Latium, with their municipalities, came to be like an order of knights, the next to pass into the senatorial order whereby to undertake public duties; the people of Italy came to be like the Roman plebs after the Law of the Twelve Tables, enjoying the Romans' private civil law of the fields in the Italic

[233] Livy, I, 30, 1.
[234] *Od.*, X, 438–41; and *Aen.*, VI, 160–74, where, however, it is Triton who kills Misenus.
[235] Plautus, *Amphytrion*, 258–9.
[236] Florus, *Epitomae*, I, 5, 6.

lands; the people of the docile provinces came to be like the Roman plebs in the times of Servius Tullius, with natural ownership of the fields, for which they paid a levy, stipend or tribute to the Romans in place of the first census; and the people of the ferocious provinces came to be like the Roman plebs in the times of Romulus. For, because the last Roman colonies were sent out to these ferocious provinces, their inhabitants were reduced to sustaining themselves through labour in fields that were no longer theirs, either in the manner of the ancient Latin colonists, who had surrendered in accordance with the heraldic formula of Tarquinius Priscus, or in that of freely surrendered colonists, such as those who had been received into Romulus' asylum.

231. In this mode, through Romulus' clienteles and the two agrarian laws, i.e. that of [Servius] Tullius and the Twelve Tables, the law of the Roman nation was propagated among the vanquished nations, including the celebrated *ius nexi mancipiique* ['right to make a solemn transfer'], as a result of which the lands of the provincials remained *nec mancipi* ['without the right of solemn transfer'] because, through their victories, the Romans had enslaved their inhabitants. But as the law of the bond was loosened, first in Latium, then in Italy and, finally, through Antoninus Pius,[237] in all the provinces, successively granting citizenship to them all, Rome gradually came to include the whole Roman world. And just as the Petelian law finally untied the bond among the Romans at home, when Justinian ended the distinction between things *mancipi* ['with the right of solemn transfer'] and those *nec mancipi* ['without the right of solemn transfer'] in the provinces, he finally untied it abroad.

232. Since these three civil truths have enabled us to unite within a single system all these things that were previously widely dispersed, it would seem that henceforth everything concerning the law of the Roman citizens, the colonies, the municipalities, and Latin, Italic and provincial law, collected both by the great Carlo Sigonio, the first torch of Roman erudition,[238] and others who wrote after him, ought to be composed in accordance with these [three] principles.

[237] This is probably a mistaken reference to Caracalla's edict of AD 212, which extended Roman citizenship to individuals, classes and whole communities in various parts of the Roman empire.

[238] Carlo Sigonio (1523–84), author of *De antiquo iure populi romani libri XI*, which includes three books on the ancient law of the provinces.

[Chapter] LXIII [LXIV]
The discovery of the mode of the overseas heroic colonies

233. The foregoing account of the propagation of the Roman nation enables us to understand the propagation of mankind by means of two kinds of overseas heroic colonies, both of which were composed of a multitude of men under certain leaders who had either been vanquished or were under pressure from opposing factions in the heroic disturbances over the law of the bond. The first cause of this propagation was the inability of the multitude to sustain life on its native lands by rural labour. The second was the abuse that the nobles heaped upon the plebs to [the very depths of] their souls, as ancient Roman history certainly revealed above [150] with regard to the plebs of Rome.

234. In his *Republic of the Hebrews*, Peter van der Kuhn[239] reports that both kinds of heroic dispute occurred frequently between the priests and peasants of Egypt, and that, to escape the wrath of their victors, the peasants, who always came off worst, either fled into Africa, if they lived in terrestrial regions, or took to rafts on the Nile, if they lived in coastal regions, in both cases committing themselves, in desperation, to the vagaries of fortune in finding new lands. And here the truth of sacred history is demonstrated on a point of the utmost importance: that the Hebrews were not a native people of Egypt, but God's own people who had been enslaved by the Egyptians. For, as we shall demonstrate later [408], Egypt had by this time already passed under [the rule of] monarchs and their heroic law of the priests had therefore already vanished. What applies here in the case of these heroic disturbances of peasants and priests of Egypt must apply also in that of the Phoenicians and the other nations of Asia. These causes enable us to make [three] discoveries concerning colonies of the second kind, [i.e. those consisting of plebs who had suffered from abuse by the nobles]: [first], that such colonies were led by the Egyptians, the Phoenicians and the Phrygians into Greece; [secondly], that in the century of the heroes in Greece, similar Greek colonies were led by the eastern Greeks, i.e. the Attic and Aeolian Greeks, into Ionia, i.e. Asia Minor, which was nearer and more exposed to them; and [thirdly], that, not long afterwards, other Greek

[239] Peter van der Kuhn (1586–1638). Vico's reference is to his *Republic* (1617), I, 5.

colonies were led by the western Greeks into the regions nearer and more exposed to them, i.e. the eastern parts of Sicily and Italy.

235. The nature of the countries into which they were led proves [the nature of] these kinds of colonies. The harshness and sterility of Attic Greece, for example, caused Strabo[240] to believe that the Athenians were natives of Greece, that Attic must have been one of the first Greek dialects, and that this was the reason why that country was unsuccessful in inviting foreigners to live there. His judgement concurs with the view that when the Egyptians came to Greece they must have done so through the need to save themselves [from abuse by the nobles], for Magna Graecia is not the most abundant or agreeable land in Italy, which is true also of the eastern part of Sicily. The famous ports established in Athens, Syracuse and Brindisi show, on the contrary, that these colonies were blown there by the winds of fortune. This brings to light a common error of the chronologists, who would locate the Greek colonies in Sicily and Italy three hundred and fifty years too late, i.e. in the time of Numa.

236. The colonies of the Phoenicians that spread along the shores of the Mediterranean, as far even as Cadiz, for reasons of trade, just as our European colonies are now spread along the shores of the ocean and the Indies, are found to have been of the first kind, [i.e. those unable to sustain their lives on their native lands by cultivation]. They remained in communication with their capital, Tyre, which was an inland city until the time of the heroes of Greece, though located earlier by the chronologists, after which it was transplanted to the shores of the Phoenician sea, where it was highly celebrated for its navigation and colonies. [Here we must note] that throughout all the ancient nations, the superstition had spread that they ought not to live on the shores of the sea, a custom of the first peoples which is revealed in some fine passages in the *Odyssey:*[241] thus, when Ulysses, for example, either lands or is carried to land by storm, he climbs some hill in order to see whether there is any smoke inland that would indicate the presence of men; Thucydides also, at the start of his *History*,[242] acknowledges that this was the custom among these same ancient Greeks, and puts its cause down to their fear of pirates. Hence the Phoenicians must have led their colonies to such maritime

[240] Strabo, *Geography*, IX, 1, 8.
[241] *Od.*, IX, 167; X, 97–102.
[242] Thucydides, I, 7 and 8.

regions as they found useful for trade, settling them along the whole of the Inner Sea [the Mediterranean], which must have included the coasts of Italy from Etruria down to the straits of Sicily. Thus though Giambullari[243] was guilty of the usual error with respect to its cause of all these activities, he was nevertheless correct in proving that the origin of the Etruscan language was among their effects, and that in substance, style and the disproportionate number of words it contained, the language was Aramaic, i.e. that it came from Syria.

237. It seems probable, therefore, that the nations of Egypt and Asia crossed the previously untried Mediterranean, which to them must have been as the ocean is now to us Europeans, to reach the shores of the Inner Sea, under men who led them in small groups, sailing with a few boats and without the force of arms, such as in the Romans' last expeditions, and not in inundations of entire nations, such as those of the barbarians who came from Scandinavia. Hence the Greek, Latin and Italian languages owe a large part of their origins to the nations of the East.

238. For these things are certain: that the Phoenicians led one such group to the place that became Carthage because they saw that the coast was convenient for trade in that part of their world; that the Carthaginian language retained much of its eastern origins, for which reason Phoenicia was called 'Punica'; and that it was through maritime trade that the Carthaginians grew in power. Hence we can defend Virgil,[244] who is shown to have been much more learned with regard to heroic antiquities than some think possible, when he imagined that this is where the Phoenician Dido, under pressure from her brother-in-law's faction, brought her clientes when she founded Carthage before the Trojan War.

239. Similarly, it is certain that Mithras, who was undoubtedly an Egyptian god, was worshipped in Naples. The founding goddess of Naples was Sirena, who was unarguably named from the word *sir*, meaning 'lyric' or 'song',[245] from which Syria was also named. Only later did the Greeks call her 'Parthenope'. We can also demonstrate, therefore, from the fact that he referred to Cumae as 'Euboean', that Virgil[246] never believed that it had been founded by the Chalcidians.

[243] Pierfrancesco Giambullari (1495–1555) claimed in his *Origine della lingua fiorentina* (1549) that the Florentine language came from Etruscan and this, in turn, from Aramaic. The error to which Vico refers is the further thesis that Noah brought Aramaic to Italy.

[244] *Aen.*, I, 341.

[245] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 550.

[246] *Aen.*, VI, 2 and 42.

For if it had been, Homer,[247] who always refers to the Chalcidians as 'Abantes' and never as 'Euboeans', would have called it 'Abantic'. But whereas Homer took the word 'Euboean' from the sibyl [of that name], it was only by guesswork, based upon some similar sibyl, that Pliny[248] thought that the island of Negropont was called 'the island of Euboea'.

240. Hence we discover that the ancient sites along the coasts of Italy were much more advanced than those of Greece. For it is here upon the shores of the sea, in the time of the Trojan War, that Ulysses finds the likes of Circe,[249] who, with her sensual pleasures, changes men into swine, and the sirens[250] who entice travellers with their melodious song and then kill them. But these are among the last customs of nations, whereas Greece, in the meantime, was still in her severe period, with the likes of Achilles refusing to take a foreigner as his wife,[251] although she is a great queen, and Ulysses hanging his rival suitors.[252] This demonstrates that Italian learning is very much older than Greek learning. For while our fashionable system [of thought], happy enough with the findings of the vulgar chronologists, locates Pythagoras at the time of Numa, and has him teaching the most recondite truths of metaphysics, mathematics and physics, [the truth is that] the seven sages had yet to arise in Greece herself, and did so about a hundred years later [than Numa]. And it was one of these sages, Thales of Miletus, the first physicist, who produced an extremely crude first principle of nature, namely, water.

[Chapter] LXIV [LXV]
The discovery of the first origin in this Science

241. Finally, we find that everywhere inland nations rose first, followed by the maritime nations, a truth acknowledged also by Thucydides.[253] Our investigation of causes brings us therefore to meditate on the most important origin of gentile humanity, the search for which is the reason why, in our first book [3], we proposed the expression

[247] *Il.*, II, 535, 541, 542.
[248] Pliny does not claim this derivation.
[249] *Od.*, X.
[250] *Od.*, XII.
[251] *Il.*, IX, 388–97.
[252] *Od.*, XXII, 171–92.
[253] Thucydides, I, 7 and 8.

Ignari hominumque locorumque erramus ['We wander ignorant both of men and places'].[254] The mode that we now discover is that since Mesopotamia was the most inland part of the whole habitable universe, the oldest of all the nations in the world arose there. Hence, some two hundred years before the occurrence of the confusion of tongues in Babylon, [it is here that] the impious races of Ham and Japhet began to penetrate the great forest of the earth in search of food and water to save themselves from the terrifying wild animals and, with men separated from women and mothers from children, without any certain ways of reuniting, their children remained utterly alone, beyond reach of any human voice or any human custom. Thus these impious races everywhere dispersed in a bestial liberty in which, by dint of causes vastly greater than those that Caesar and Tacitus adduced for the gigantic stature of the ancient Germans,[255] they grew into giants. Then later, after these races had been received into religion, their native languages were founded. All of which reduces to [the truth of] the antiquity of the religion of the true God, creator of Adam, and [the fact that] his pious descendants lived in Mesopotamia both before and after the Flood.

[Chapter] LXV [LXVI]
The origins of recondite wisdom are discovered to lie within those of vulgar wisdom

242. Our meditation upon the peoples who were finally led to the sect of human times and the natural equity of the law also provides a unique cause for the subsequent birth of philosophers who meditated on the truth of things. For the philosophers inherited from the Roman jurisconsults the formulae, diverse in words but one and the same in sentiment, *verum est* ['it is true'] and *aequum est* ['it is right'].[256] Hence, among the Romans, the schools of philosophy arose after the full development of liberty through which the natural equity of the law had come to be celebrated. In Sparta, because of her heroic government, all recondite wisdom was banned, but after Athens attained liberty, she became the mother of sciences and arts of the most cultured humanity. There the philosophers arose after Solon,

[254] *Aen.*, I, 332–3.
[255] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, IV, 1; and Tacitus *Germany*, 20.
[256] Cf. *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*, chapter II.

prince of the seven sages of Greece, had both established Athenian liberty through his law and left the saying, so rich in civil utility, Γνῶθι σεαυτόν [*Gnothi seauton*], *Nosce te ipsum* ['Know thyself']. Inscribed on the architraves of temples and proposed as a divine truth, this instructed the Athenians, to much better effect than their vain auspices, to reflect upon the nature of their mind, through which they acknowledged that all were equal in human reason, which is our true and eternal human nature. Hence all should have equal right to the civil utilities, which is the eternal form of all republics, above all of the popular republics.

[Chapter] LXVI [LXVII]
The idea of a civil history of inventions in the sciences, disciplines and arts

243. Hence, in precisely the same way as metaphysics began to emerge through political reflection on the laws of human times, astronomy had earlier begun to emerge from religion, upon the occasion of the frequent observations of the sky made to sight falling stars. From such origins we can weave a civil history of the sciences, disciplines and arts, born upon the occasion of the necessities and utilities common to the peoples, without which they would never have been born.

244. Thus the science of magnitude descended from the magnitudes of the sky to those of the earth, from which geometry, which was born among the Egyptians because the Nile floods dispersed the boundaries of their fields, preserved its name. Geography was born among the Phoenicians to make navigation certain. The first medicine of all must have been botanical at birth, since the men of Hobbes, Grotius and Pufendorf, all sense and almost no reflection, must have had a sharp sense, scarcely less keen than that of beasts, for discerning plants that were useful for their afflictions. Anatomy, however, was born from the frequent observations that the haruspices made of the entrails of victims, for haruspicy was certainly famous among the Etruscans in Italy and, although there is no vestige of it in Homer, Suidas[257] refers to a certain Telegonus who took it to the Greeks. Anatomy was certainly the basis of surgery. And it is

[257] Suidas was a Greek of the tenth or eleventh century AD, the author of a *Lexicon*, in which he refers to Telegonus as the first writer on the art of the auspices, but does not say that he introduced them to the Greeks from the Etruscans.

beyond all doubt that observational medicine, whose prince later was Hippocrates himself, the prince of all medical practitioners, was born in the temples where the sick and wounded appended histories of their afflictions for their gods. All of which relates to our demonstration of Providence: for, had the world never had any religions, it would certainly never have had any philosophers.

245. Thus the θεωρήματα [*theoremata*], which were first the divine things in the vain science of divination, terminated in the eternal cognitions of the mind and of the true in metaphysics. And the μαθήματα [*mathemata*], which were first the sublime things in poetry, i.e. the fables of corporeal divinities, terminated in the abstract cognitions of mathematics which are required for understanding the eternal measures of body, i.e. of the bodily utilities, and therefore in the two kinds of proportion, arithmetical and geometrical, with which justice measures these utilities. And the contemplation of the sky from which those twins, idolatry and divination, arose, terminated in the contemplation of universal nature. [It is relevant here that] the Latins [originally] referred to this contemplation of the sky as contemplation *a templis caeli* ['of the temples of the sky'], i.e. of the regions of the sky designated by the augurs for the purpose of reading the auguries,[258] and that the Zoroasters [were named] from [the Hebrew] *schur*, i.e. *contemplari* ['to contemplate']. Finally there is the Jove of the giants: believed, with the height of poetic sublimity, to be the will of the sky, gesturing to them in lightning, speaking to them in thunder, and sending them warnings and commands through his eagles, he terminated among the philosophers as an infinite mind dictating an eternal justice to man.

246. Herein lies the whole meaning of this book, summarised in the 'Idea of the Work' in the expression *Iura a diis posita* ['The laws laid down by the gods']. Concerned as it is with ideas, it is a principal part of this Science, the whole of which was propounded in the Idea [of the Work] and encapsulated in the saying *A Iove principium Musae* ['The Muses descended from Jove']. In the next book we shall demonstrate the other principal part, concerned with the principles of language, which was also comprehended in the Idea [of the Work] under the expression *Fas gentium* ['The divine law of the gentes'], i.e. the immutable language of the nations.

[258] Lucretius, I, 1014.

[Chapter] LXVII [LXVIII] Determination of the eternal point of the perfect state of the nations

247. In this mode, from vulgar wisdom, which was the science of the divine and human institutions belonging to religion and the law, came the recondite wisdom that we find in divine metaphysics, mathematical truths, the principles of physics, and the human practices with which moral, economic and civil philosophy are concerned, all of which were studied in equal measure by the best philosophers in order to form, through maxims of eternal truth, the mind of the heroes. This is the mind that their common sense of public utility led the Athenian people to develop in the assemblies, whence they enacted just laws, for such laws are nothing more than the mind of legislators devoid of feelings and passions. And here we determine the ἀκμή [*acme*], i.e. perfect state, of the nations, which is enjoyed when the sciences, disciplines and arts, all of which draw their being from religion and the law, are in service to religion and the law. Hence when the nations conduct themselves in a different way, as they would with the Epicureans and Stoics, or with indifference to it, as with the sceptics, or contrary to it, as with the atheists, they proceed to their downfall, losing their own dominant religions and, with them, their own laws. And because they do not value their own religions and laws as being worthy of defence, they proceed to lose also their own arms and languages and, with the loss of these properties, the further property of retaining their own names within those of other dominant nations. Hence, having proved that their nature is such that they are incapable of governing themselves, they lose their own governments. Thus, in accordance with the eternal law of Providence, the natural law of the heroic gentes, in which there is no equality of justice between the weak and the strong, recurs.

BOOK III

THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS SCIENCE CONCERNING LANGUAGE

[Introduction]

248. The foregoing meditation upon the principles of ideas has provided us with a philosophy and history of the law of mankind. Now, to complete the other part of the jurisprudence of the natural law of the gentes, with the use of different principles, we must seek the science of a language common to this law throughout the whole world of human generation.

[Chapter] I
New principles of mythology and etymology

249. The definition of Μῦθος [*mythos*] is 'a true narration', yet it survived with the meaning of the word 'fable', which everyone has hitherto taken to mean a false narration. The definition of Ἔτυμον [*etymon*] is 'true speech'. In the vulgar it means the 'origin' or 'history of words', but the etymologies that have hitherto reached us are of very little help in understanding the true histories of the origins of the things signified by words. Whence, by meditating on these origins, new principles of mythology and etymology are discovered through which it is shown that fables and true speech were one and the same in meaning and that they constituted the vocabulary of the first nations.
250. For a poverty of words naturally makes men sublime in expression, weighty in conception, and acute in understanding much in brief expression, which are the three most beautiful virtues of language.

Hence we discover the principle of the sublimity of the sayings of the Spartans, a people to whom knowledge of letters was forbidden by Lycurgus' law,[1] of the brevity and weight of ancient laws, such as the Law of the Twelve Tables, which the Romans committed to writing when they were still in very barbaric times, and of the acuteness of the Florentine aphorisms that were born in the Old Market in Florence in the most barbaric of Italian times, from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. The three most important virtues of poetic language are that it should heighten and enlarge our powers of imagination, that it should inform us, in brief expression, of the ultimate circumstances by which things are defined, and that it should transport the mind to the most distant things and present them with a captivating appearance, as if embroidered with fine ribbon.

251. Next, the necessity to express themselves for communicating their ideas to others, at a time when, because of a lack of words, the spirit is wholly engaged in finding a way to express itself, makes such mute men naturally ingenious. Hence they express themselves by means of things and actions that have natural relations with the ideas they want to signify. Thus we find that the first words of the earliest nations were mute, which the earliest Greeks must have signified by the word μῦθος [*mythos*], their 'fable', which would be *mutus* ['mute'] in Latin; that the [Latin] *fabula* ['fable'] survived in Italian as *favella*, meaning language; and that fables constituted the first *Fas gentium* ['The divine law of the gentes'], which was an immutable expression. Hence from *for* ['to speak'] came both Varro's *formulam naturae*, meaning 'fate',[2] i.e. the eternal word of God, and the Romans' communal *fasti* ['court-days'], which were held both by the praetors, who administered law through unalterable formulae in times of peace, and by the consuls, who administered it through heraldic formulae in times of war.

252. Finally, when there is either little or no use of reasoning, the senses are robust; when the senses are robust the imagination is vivid; and a vivid imagination is the best painter of the images that objects imprint on the senses.

[1] See footnote 60, p. 65.
[2] Varro, *De lingua latina*, VI, 7, 52.

[Chapter] II
New principles of poetry

253. On the basis of these truths, which befit the man of Grotius, Pufendorf and Hobbes, we discover new principles of poetry, not merely different from but wholly contrary to those imagined by the scholars from Plato and his pupil, Aristotle, down to the likes of our Patrizi, Scaligero and Castelvetro.[3] For we find that poetry constituted the first common language of all the ancient nations, including even that of the Hebrews, though with certain differences founded on the distinction in truth between the religion of the gentiles and that of Adam since, though devoid of words, he was nevertheless enlightened by the true God.[4]

[Chapter] III
Determination of the birth of the first fable, the origin of idolatry and divination

254. When men want to create ideas of things of which they are ignorant, they are naturally led to conceive them through resemblances with things that they know. And when there is a scarcity of known things, they judge the things of which they are ignorant in accordance with their own nature. Hence, since the nature that we know best consists in our own properties, men attribute to things that are insensate and inanimate, movement, sense and reason, which are the most luminous labours of poetry. But when even these properties are of no assistance, they conceive things as intelligent substances, which is our own human substance. This is the supreme, divine artifice of the poetic faculty, through which, in a God-like manner, from our own idea we give being to things that lack it.

255. Here we discover the first great principle of the poetic fables: that, because they were the characters of corporeal substances which were

[3] Francesco Patrizi (1529–97), author of a *Poetica* (1582); Giulio Cesare Scaligero (1484–1558), author of *Poetices libri septem* (1561); Ludovico Castelvetro (1505–71), author of *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta* (1570). Vico groups the three together as representatives of the tradition of writers who believed in an ancient, esoteric wisdom.

[4] The obvious tension Vico feels here arises from the fact that he wants to offer a general theory of the development of language while maintaining a distinction between the principles of Hebrew and gentile history and, accordingly, their languages.

imagined as being intelligent, the corporeal effects of these substances were explained by means of the modifications of our human souls. Thus we reveal the first fable of all, explain the mode of its birth and determine its time. It was born when, living in bestial solitude, men were all force and, like so many children, expressed their passions by shouting, grunting and murmuring, which they did only under the impulse of the most violent passions. In this state in which they were ignorant of the causes of thunderbolts that they had never heard before, at least those of them who were more roused from their stupor imagined that the sky was a vast, animate body which, by shouting, grunting and murmuring, spoke and wanted to communicate with them. Hence we meditate on the modes [through which this first fable was born], which are identical with those through which both the Americans believe that everything new or great that they see is a god, and the Greeks, in their superstitious times, regarding the appearance of those who made discoveries useful to mankind as divine, must have imagined their gods.

256. These first beginnings of Greek humanity and, by analogy, those of all other gentile nations, provide us with the start of a continuous proof, proceeding through the whole time in which the nations were all founded, that men are brought naturally to revere Providence and, consequently, that Providence alone founded and ordained the nations.

[Chapter] IV
The first principle of the divine poetry, i.e. the theology, of the gentiles

257. Thus the first fable, the first principle of the divine poetry of the gentiles, i.e. of the theological poets, was born. And it was born, as the supreme fable must be, wholly ideal, in that the idea of the poet gives things all the being that they lack. Thus it is, as masters of the art of poetry say it should be, entirely imaginary, like the work of a painter of ideas, and not representational, like that of a painter of portraits. Hence, through this resemblance to God the creator, the poets were called 'divine'.

258. This first fable was born complete with its three principal properties:

    I. of being the credible impossibility:[5] impossible, because it gives mind to body, but, at the same time, credible, since those who imagined it believed it;
    II. of being wonderful and perturbing to excess, so that from then on it made men ashamed to practise venery under the open sky and forced them to do so hidden in caverns;
    III. of attaining the highest degree of sublimity, because this was the fable of Jove, the greatest of the gods, Jove the hurler of thunderbolts.

259. Finally, it was born fully ordained for teaching the ignorant vulgar, which is the principal end of poetry, so that, with this first fable, the first and most ignorant men of the gentile world taught themselves a civil theology that included idolatry and divination.
260. We are convinced that this origin of poetry, narrated with simplicity and clarity, is both more reasonable and more suited to the origins of humanity, which are, above all, naturally rough and crude, than Plato's idea that the theological poets understood Jove as the activating mind of an ether that penetrated, agitated and moved everything,[6] an idea he found necessary to adopt in order to found his Republic without recourse to the simpletons and destitutes upon whom Grotius and Pufendorf later founded gentile mankind. Thus, he saw in the movement of the bodies which the theological poets imagined as innumerable, individual gods, a single mind, infinite and activating, a mind that was not itself bodily, because body has the property of being moveable, and therefore divisible, but lacks that of causing movement and division, which belongs to something other than body.

[Chapter] V
The discovery of the principle of the poetic characters that constituted the vocabulary of the first [gentile] nations

261. We said at the outset [42] that we can scarcely understand and are quite unable to imagine how the man of Grotius, Hobbes and

[5] Aristotle mentions this conception in *Poetics*, 1460a.
[6] Plato, *Cratylus*, 412d.

Pufendorf must have thought, let alone spoken. But, after a continuous and severe meditation that has occupied us for twenty-five years, we finally discovered the principle that is as fundamental to this Science as the alphabet is to grammar and geometrical shape to geometry. For, just as the letter 'a', for example, is a grammatical character invented to provide uniformity for the infinite number of different vocal sounds [of the same kind] that we articulate as grave or acute, or, to provide an example of the other type, the triangle is a geometrical character designed to provide uniformity for the innumerable figures of angles of different size formed by the juncture of three lines at three points, so the poetic characters are found to have been the elements of the languages in which the first gentile nations spoke.

262. For if a nation is of very limited mind and is unable to name some abstract or general property, the first time that it notices the property it will give its name to the particular man in whom its appearance is first observed. It may be, for example, the appearance someone has when performing some great labour demanded by family necessities. He will thus acquire glory for this labour, since by performing it he preserves his house or people, and, in this way, preserves mankind itself. Hence he will be called 'Hercules' [i.e. 'Heracles'] from Ἥρας κλέος [*Heras cleos*], or 'the glory of Juno' [i.e. 'Hera'], because Juno was the goddess of marriage and, therefore, of the family. And when many others, at many different times, are subsequently seen performing deeds with this same character, the nation will certainly name them after the man first named from it. So, keeping to the same example, each will subsequently acquire the name 'Hercules'. Moreover, on the assumption that the nation is rough and therefore of limited mentality, only the greatest events will be noticed. The nation will therefore connect all the most striking actions of the same general kind, performed by different men at different times, such as, in the example proposed, all those who have performed some great labour demanded by family necessities, with the name of the man first named from this property. Thus, in the given example, all such men will be named 'Hercules' in common. Thus, through this feature of their nature, we discover that the first gentiles were all nations of poets.

263. Many clear vestiges of this oldest nature of nations have survived in the vulgar languages. In Latin, for example, when the Romans were ignorant of the strategies of war, or of pomp or of the use of

perfumes, but then became aware of them for the first time among the Carthaginians, Capuans and Tarantines respectively, they called everyone in the world in whom they subsequently encountered these customs, 'carthaginian', 'capuan' or 'tarantine'.[7] Thus antonomasia, which has hitherto been taken to be a capricious invention of individual poets, arose from a necessity of nature, common to all the gentile nations, to think and express themselves in such a way. The discovery that the vocabulary of all the first gentile nations consists of such characters will enable us to explain the original language of the natural law of the gentes.

264. It is in connection with their languages, however, that the gentile nations first begin to differ from the people of God, for although its authors suffered from a similar poverty of words as the gentiles, they were nevertheless enlightened by knowledge of the one true God, the creator of Adam. They must therefore have directed all things conducive to their continued existence, even those not expressly commanded to them by God, all of which were arranged differently by other nations in different times, towards a single, provident and eternal divinity. Hence it comes about that although Hebrew is a wholly poetic language, such as to surpass in sublimity even that of Homer, as the philologists also acknowledge, one finds not a single suggestion in holy language of any proliferation of divinity. This must itself be a demonstration of the truth that the fathers of sacred history lived for the many centuries of which it tells.

[Chapter] VI
The discovery of the true poetic allegories

265. The meanings of such words must, first and appropriately, have been allegories, which the Greeks still call *diversiloquia*, i.e. words that comprehend different men, deeds or things. The mythologists ought, therefore, to have sought univocal meanings for the allegories and not, [as they have], analogical meanings of such vagueness that they seem to have been left as prime material for all the interpretations of learned scholars in the various fields of logic, physics and metaphysics. Moreover, such interpretations as are of a moral, political or historical nature have been assimilated to contemporary customs, governments and deeds, without any reflection upon the fact that,

[7] These were standard examples in contemporary manuals of rhetoric.

by a necessity of nature, the customs, governments and deeds of the humanity most distant from us must have been very different from our own. Thus the mythologists seem to have been the poets, responsible for imagining so many various and diverse things on the basis of the fables, while the poets were the real mythologists, intending their fables to narrate truly the things of their times.

266. But because it is impossible for [wholly] false ideas to arise, for falsity consists in a confused combination of ideas, no tradition, however fabulous, can arise which did not at first have some ground of truth. Thus, since the fables could have been nothing other than histories of the oldest human events of Greece, as shown above [93, 215], the most difficult part of this work has been to meditate on the original grounds of truth in which these fables originated. These will constitute, at one and the same time, the true origins both of mythology and of the histories of the barbaric times.

[Chapter] VII
The idea of a natural theogony

267. And with the discovery of [the true nature of] the poetic characters, we meditate on the occasions and times of certain human necessities or utilities, through which there arose within the minds of the Greeks the grounds of truth whereby, before all else, they imagined the characters of their false gods. We find that these characters were histories of the oldest superstitious customs of the peoples of Greece, described in a natural theogony which unfolds the mode of their generation, i.e. as we saw in the case of Jove, how they were born naturally in the imagination of the Greek peoples.

[Chapter] VIII
[The idea of a reasoned chronology proceeding] from the fables of the gods through those of the heroes to the things of certain history, which were necessary as the perpetual causes that influence effects in the known gentile world

268. A reasoned chronology is a chronology that proceeds in accordance with the natural order of the series of common ideas concerning

human necessities or utilities. Thus, with such a chronology for the obscure, fabulous and historical times, the origins of which are themselves obscure and fabulous, we can assign to the gods and heroes the times when they must have been born in the Greek imagination, in which the gods preceded the heroes, since it has been handed down to us that the heroes were the children of the gods. Hence, with the discovery that the heroic fables were histories of the heroic customs of Greece, this work comes to contain a continuous allegory of the whole of fabulous history which, commencing with the gods and continuing with the heroes, ends by linking up with the certain historical time of the nations.

269. It brings to light, from the very start, the totality of the parts that comprise the whole system of the natural law of the gentes, almost all of which were born at the same time, such as the men whom Epicurus[8] imagined as cicadas and Hobbes[9] as frogs, and grew together into the huge monarchical body, that of Ninus,[10] with whom history begins. But, by omitting this enormous range of subject matter, Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf dealt, in despair, with considerably less than half of the natural law of the gentes, i.e. with the part related to the preservation of mankind, while omitting completely the part related to the individual preservation of the peoples, from which the first part must have come. [Similarly], their ignorance of such origins led Hobbes, Machiavelli and Epicurus, each indebted to his predecessor, to deal with only the other half [of the natural law of the gentes], leading them to a display of impiety towards God, scandal to their princes and injustice to their nations. In addition, both Plato, who founded republics that could not be put into practice, and Polybius, whose reasoning about [the founding of] Rome was based on republics that were already founded, lost sight of Providence. Hence, since neither of them took account of [the role of] Providence in the practice of human affairs, between them they fell into error with regard to two of the three most universal principles of the humanity of nations proposed above [10]: for Polybius[11] believed that the world could contain a nation of sages in the absence of any civil religion;

[8] This reference should be to Lucretius, IV, 56, and VI, 801.

[9] Hobbes, *De cive*, VIII, 1, where, however, Hobbes likens the growth of primitive man to that of mushrooms.

[10] Ninus was the mythical founder of the capital of Assyria, i.e. Ninus or Nineveh.

[11] Polybius, *History of the World*, VI, 56, 10–11.

and Plato[12] thought that there could be a republic of sages who held their women in common.

[Chapter] IX
Seven principles of the obscurity of the fables
Principle I: Concerning poetic monsters

270. But to come, once and for all, to the head of the science of the causes responsible for all the obscurity in the fables, we establish the following seven principles.

271. First, then, when men are in the state posited by Hobbes, Grotius and Pufendorf, in which they are unable to abstract properties from bodies, should they need to unite two different kinds of properties belonging to bodies of different kinds, they will unite the two bodies in a single idea. If, for example, they need to unite the property of man in his human appearance with that of mating with his mother, since this is an act observed most frequently in the more lustful, and therefore bolder and more brazen, of domestic beasts, such as goats, which is why the Latins used to describe the act of a lustful goat sighting a female goat, quite properly, as an act of *protervia* ['wantonness'], they will unite 'man' and 'female goat' and thus imagine Pan and the satyrs. And since the belief that they were savages has remained constant, Pan and the satyrs must have been the first of the minor gods. Here the principle of all poetic monsters is discovered.

[Chapter] X
Principle II: Concerning metamorphoses

272. If these same men are unable to abstract properties from their subjects, and the only way in which they can explain how a body has acquired a property from a body of a different kind is by losing its own kind of the property, they will imagine that one body has changed into another. Thus, to signify a woman who, after a life of wandering, abandons this life to settle down in a certain place, they will imagine that she has changed into a plant. This was the manner of thinking from which metaphors such as 'to plant oneself' for 'to settle down', 'the plants of houses' for their 'foundations', and, above

[12] Plato, *Republic*, V, 457d.

all, that of 'family trees', with their stocks or trunks, certainly arose. Here the principle of all metamorphoses, or poetic transformations of bodies, which is the second principle of the obscurity of the fables, is discovered. On this matter we here correct what we have written elsewhere about it.[13]

[Chapter] XI
Principle III: Concerning confusion in the fables

273. From the two foregoing principles, the third principle of the obscurity of the fables, their confused nature, can be explained with ease. This confusion is born of minds that are limited, slow and impoverished in words, as a result of which, with only the most miserable ability to explain themselves, men will unite things wholesale. The supreme example of such confusion and incongruity is the fable in which Cadmus[14] first slays the serpent, then sows its teeth in furrows, from which come forth armed men who proceed to fight and kill one another. This fable, as we shall discover [335, 444], contains a large tract of history, running from the origin of the political heroes who founded the first cities up to the heroes of the wars. This is how we should understand the sort of characters in which Cadmus wrote all of his heroic history, if we are to comprehend the abyss of obscurity in which the fables of the first times of Greece lay until Homer. For even in his times, which were contemporary with those of Numa and about eight hundred years after Cadmus, the Greeks had not yet discovered vulgar characters, so that it was the families of rhapsodes who, for long afterwards, preserved Homer's poems by memory.

[Chapter] XII
Principle IV: Concerning changes in the fables

274. The fourth principle of the obscurity of the fables lies in the changes that occur to them. For since the human mind is of indefinite

[13] *De const. philol.*, XII, 17, 36.

[14] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 1–130. Cadmus was a mythical Phoenician who, in addition to his part in this fable, was reputed to have brought a written record of it to the Greeks. Hence Vico's subsequent remarks in this paragraph about how the story should be understood, given the time at which he places Cadmus.

capacity, when the things it hears are of indefinite report, it receives them in some magnified way, and receiving them thus, over long periods of time and almost exclusively through the hands of rough and ignorant men, it must naturally and endlessly alter and enlarge them. Thus it is that what reaches us concerning things that are very old and distant comes with a fame that is in large part false and has been said 'to gain in strength and size on the way'.[15] This is the principle of such changes in the fables as those concerning the inordinate size in body and strength of the giants and heroes. And even now it is the reason why, given the darkness in which its origins have hitherto lain, the world, the appearance of which is old enough to satisfy the demands of truth and [the Christian] religion, has seemed to those who disbelieve sacred history to come close to an infinite antiquity. But, in the light of our Science, it is demonstrated to be very young.

[Chapter] XIII
Principle V: Concerning the impropriety of the fables that derives from [new] ideas

275. The fifth principle of the obscurity of the fables lies in the minds of the Greek nations, which, as they developed increasingly and endlessly, naturally enhanced the fables beyond the very limited understanding of the founders of their nations, so that, as they grew more distant from those founders, they came to give highly inappropriate accounts of those first meanings. Thus, for example, when, after many centuries, the Greek nations came to understand that the skies and stars were very much higher than the top of Mount Olympus, upon which, up to Homer's time, the gods had dwelt, they naturally raised their gods to the stars. Hence, the expression 'to shout to the stars' became a hyperbole, whereas formerly it was used to express the [literal] truth.

276. Similarly, to take another example, wings were [originally] heroic emblems for indicating that the deeds or rights of the heroes were dependent in all things on divination, i.e. the science of the auspices.[16] This is made clear in the account that ancient Roman history gives of the heroic disputes between the nobles and the plebs. Here the

[15] *Aen.*, IV, 175.
[16] Wings had this significance because the auspices were taken by tracing the flight of birds.

plebs claimed [the rights to] solemn marriages, magistracies, public offices, pontificacies and priesthoods, which the nobles continuously denied them with the oft-repeated reason that *Auspicia esse sua* ['The auspices belonged to them']. The plebs responded by asserting that the fathers with whom Romulus had composed the senate, who were the ancestors of the patricians themselves, *non esse de caelo demissos* ['had not rained down from the sky'],[17] which was tantamount to denying that the nobles were heroes or children of the gods, a reply that would have been completely irrelevant had the heroism of the nobles not consisted in [their possession of] the auspices. But the meaning of this fable was later obscured through the application of inappropriate ideas. Thus it came to be believed that wings had been given to Astraea in order to fly in the sky, to Mercury to bring the embassies from heaven to earth, to Saturn to signify the speed of time, to Fame to enable her to fly everywhere, to Victory to signify her ingenuity to the muses, and to Pegasus, Love and the [Mercury's] caduceus. But [originally] they could only have been given to Hymen to enable him to descend from the sky bearing the auspices through which the Roman nobles told the plebs that they alone celebrated just marriages. Hence, for the first Greeks, these wings served to denote, through flight, the speed and ingenuity [of the heroes], just as in America only nobles wear feathered head-dresses [to denote nobility]. And when the barbarians spread from the north throughout the other nations of Europe, this very ancient custom of the peoples, whereby only the nobles could adorn their helmets with plumes, spread again. This is why the only adornments we observe on the earliest marble monuments are the emblems, with three feathers at the top of their shields, that were exclusive to sovereign princes and kings.

[Chapter] XIV
Principle VI: Concerning the impropriety of the fables that derives from [new] words

277. The sixth principle of the obscurity of the fables concerns the way in which, when customs change over the long passage of time, our vulgar words themselves change in such a way as to lose and obscure

[17] Livy, X, 8, 10.

their original meanings, a process that must have been very much more prevalent in the case of the fables. Examples of this are found in the three words, 'lyre', 'monster' and 'gold'.

278. At first the lyre was a cord, still called χορδά [*chorda*] in Greek, and the first cord must have been made of withe, which was called *vimina* in Latin, from *vi* ['force']. In the very oldest times, it was also *fides*, with *fis* as the nominative and *fidis* the genitive, meaning 'force' and 'power'. Hence the expressions *implorare fidem*,[18] that is, 'to implore the force of others', and *recipere in fidem*,[19] or 'to receive under the power, protection or authority' [of others], survived among the Latins. And with this allegory, which is both natural and suited to the severe age of the founders of the nations, all the fables in which the heroic character of the lyre enters should be explained. At first the lyre consisted of a single cord of withe, signifying the power that each father in the state of the families held under the force or authority of the gods, which must have been the first and proper *fides deorum*. Later, in the state of the first cities, it came to consist in a number of cords, [signifying that] in each of the cities the force of the fathers was united in a ruling order which commanded the laws. Hence the poets continued to call the law, *lyra regnorum* ['the cord of the kingdoms'].[20]

279. The second heroic word was 'monster', which originally meant a 'civil monster', part man and part wild animal, as we explained above [95, 271] in connection with Pan and the satyrs. Roman history clearly confirms this claim through the passage in Livy[21] where, in connection with the heroic disputes over the communication of marriage and the auspices from the nobles to the plebs, he relates that the fathers object to the plebeians that whoever should thereafter be born of both would be born *secum ipse discors* ['in discord with their own nature']. For they would be born in part with the solemn auspices of the nobles, from which come men, i.e. those born of matings in which it was certain that sons had not lain with mothers or fathers with daughters, so as to ascertain their descendants, and in part with the private and uncertain auspices of the plebeians, through which *agitabant connubia more ferarum* ['they mated in the manner of

[18] Cicero, *Academicorum*, II, 28, 89.
[19] Cicero, *De officiis*, I, 11, 35.
[20] This is probably a conjecture about the theological poets.
[21] Livy, IV, 2, 6.

wild animals']. These are the monsters thrown down from Mount Taygetus, in accordance with Spartan law, and into the Tiber, in accordance with Roman law as it is given in a chapter of the Twelve Tables. They were not, however, as has hitherto been imagined, natural monsters, which, given the brevity of their laws, the first legislators certainly had no need to take into account, since monsters are such rarities of nature that rarities of nature are called 'monsters'. Hence, given the wealth of laws upon which she was already working under the emperors, the city of Rome was disposed to conceive laws only for the most frequent things, leaving the very rare to the prudence of the magistrates. With a mythology such as this, which is both fitting and reasonable, all the poetic monsters can be explained.

280. The final example was gold. When it still consisted of grains and there was no art by which to reduce it to a solid, much less for adding splendour to it, nor any idea of a possible use for it, we find that for the early Greeks, poor, simple and frugal as they were, their gold was wheat. Hence the Nile was the χρυσοῤῥόας [*chrysorrhoas*],[22] 'the bringer of gold', and the Pactolus,[23] the Tagus[24] and others were 'rivers of gold', that is, the bringers of abundant harvests of wheat. For the golden era of Greece was the same as the Latin era of Saturn, who took his name from *satis*,[25] i.e. 'the sown fields' that were reaped with scythes. This, however, was the age in which the gods mated with mortals, through which the heroes were said to be the children of the gods; the age in which Astraea dwelt on earth because it was believed that the gods reigned on earth and commanded human affairs through their auspices; and the age of the sort of innocence described by Polyphemus when he tells Ulysses that he and the other giants attend to their families and have nothing to do with anything else. All the other ideas of a pastoral heroism of gallantry that have been attached to these things represent the desires of the ingenious in the ages of Moschus[26] and Anacreon,[27]

[22] Athenaeus, the Greek grammarian of the third century AD, *The Banquet of the Learned*, V, 36, p. 203c.
[23] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, V, 30, 110.
[24] *Ibid.*, IV, 35, 110.
[25] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 520.
[26] The bucolic poet of the third century BC.
[27] The celebrated Ionian lyric poet of the sixth century BC, universally regarded in antiquity as a voluptuary. For Vico this would mean that his poems could not be representative of the poetry of the heroic age.

corruptions born of an over-refined love. Next, the only use gold had was as a metal, in this respect no different from iron. With this [interpretation of this] traditional allegory, light is thrown upon the truth of all allegories into which the character of gold, treasure or wealth enters. Thus Homer's heroes[28] are defended from the foul stain of being avaricious when they wanted to exchange their iron shields for others made of gold but then, after the exchange, did not want to compensate for the difference. Only much later, because of the value and colour of this great fruit of human industry, so necessary for human upkeep, was this metal called 'gold'.

[Chapter XV][29]
Important discoveries concerning the law of war and peace resulting from the foregoing principle of poetry

281. Thus, in the barbaric times when people went to war without a prior declaration, the foremost meaning of the word 'robber' was 'a hero who wages war',[30] for the first cities regarded one another as eternal enemies. Hence, in Greek theatre,[31] Medea's father, Aeson,[32] used this as an honourable title when he first greeted Jason. A fine vestige relating to this is to be found in the Law of the Twelve Tables, in the section entitled *Adversus hostem aeterna auctoritas esto* ['Against a stranger the right of possession is eternal'], i.e. that the ownership of anything occupied by a stranger is never lost, so that eternal war was needed to regain it. Hence 'stranger' and 'perpetual enemy' must have had the same meaning. And to be a perpetual enemy it was sufficient not to be a citizen, in virtue of the celebrated distinction that the ancient Latin peoples drew between *civis* ['citizen'] and *hostis* ['stranger'], where *hostis* applied to those from regions which, in their barbaric times, were extremely hostile to the Latins. Eternal

[28] *Il.*, VI, 234–6.

[29] This chapter is not numbered in Vico's text. From here until the end of book III, Vico's numbering is given first, followed by a corrected number in square brackets.

[30] Plutarch, *The Life of Theseus*, 6 and 10.

[31] This is not, in fact, a reference to a Greek play, but to the poem, the psuedo-Orpheus, *Argonautica*, V, 827, derived by Vico from Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, III, 24.

[32] In fact, Aeson was Jason's father.

wars of this sort take place today between the peoples of Barbary and the Christians and it may be that the Christians named this coast of Africa 'Barbary' from the barbaric custom of such eternal pirates, just as the Greeks retained the name Βαρβαρία [*Barbaria*] for the coast of Africa on the Red Sea, where Troglodytice was situated. But later, when the nations had all shed this custom, the Greeks must have used the celebrated distinction between 'Greek' and 'barbarian'[33] to distinguish themselves from all nations beyond their borders. This corresponded, though in wider compass because it obtained between nations, to the Latin distinction between *civis* and *hostis*, which was more restricted because citizenship entered into it. By reason of their unity and truth, however, which are still unique, the people of God divided the world into Hebrews and gentiles, with an extension that was incomparably wider than the Greek distinction and was, indeed, almost infinite. Hence we can see how much sagacity Grotius, Pufendorf and, above all, Selden,[34] showed when they founded their systems upon a law common to the Hebrews and the gentiles! Later the word 'robber' came to mean 'the king's bodyguard', which endured into Plautus' time.[35] And finally it finished up by meaning an 'assassin'.

282. Similarly the word 'guest' first meant 'a stranger regarded as an eternal enemy'.[36] This was its meaning when the Troglodytes slew all the 'guests' who entered their boundaries, as was the custom of all the barbaric peoples. Next, it meant 'a stranger to be treated in accordance with the most holy laws of hospitality', and after the recourse of barbarism it survived in the Italian word *oste* for both a 'hostelkeeper' [i.e. 'keeper of guests'] and 'soldiers' quarters', which were described either as 'friendly' or 'hostile'. But, as a result of applying anachronistic meanings of these words to the hospices of Jason and Paris, the histories of the expeditions of the Argonauts and of the Trojan War and, in short, the law of war of all the heroic peoples, were obscured. For, contrary to the truth, and with a record worse even than that of the highly dissolute Paris, Jason and Theseus, a model for Virgil's Aeneas,[37] have come down to us as the most

[33] Strabo, *Geography*, I, 4, 9.
[34] See footnote 11, p. 14.
[35] Plautus, *Miles gloriosus*, 949.
[36] Cicero, *De officiis*, I, 37.
[37] In the episode concerning Dido, *Aen.*, IV.

villainous of rogues, men guilty of depriving young queens and widows of their honour, of accepting immortal benefits from them and then betraying and abandoning them in ways so cruel as not even the most villainous of present-day assassins would adopt. But according to the law of the heroic gentes, deeds such as the abduction of heroines who were guests, i.e. strangers, for such were Medea, Ariadne and Helen in character, were held to be completely just. And in the first and most severe heroic times, it was permissible for heroes to lie with such 'guests' as with slaves, to contract marriages with citizens, as Achilles said he would prefer when, in the name of their king, Agamemnon's ambassadors offered him a young foreign queen as his wife,[38] or, like Paris, to spurn [the code of] heroism and abduct them as wives.

283. But here a most enlightening difference between the Hebrews and the gentiles reveals itself, for sacred history narrates that Abraham's 'guests' were rich in royal humanity.[39] This is another weighty proof of the sanctity of the law of nature observed by the early patriarchs prior to Abraham, to whom they left a family so large that he waged war with it against neighbouring kings.[40] Further, it is also a weighty proof that when the patriarchs founded their clienteles they did so filled with benign feeling towards those who had taken refuge in their country from the misgovernment of the Chaldeans. Thus, in addition to possessing a paternal power that was not used to consecrate innocent children to God, the Hebrews came to differ from the gentiles in respect of their clienteles.

284. But these heroic Greek things render some of the things recounted in ancient Roman history highly doubtful. Did the Romans, for example, abduct the Sabine women after they had received them in hospitality within Rome herself[41] or, conversely, did they do so by raiding the land of the Sabines, where the equestrian games of those times must have been held? And had the young Horatian girl[42] been promised in marriage to one of the heroes of the Curiatii, when these very same Albans, a little earlier, had disdained to provide a wife even for Romulus, because he was a stranger, in reward for his part in

[38] *Il.*, IX, 388–97.
[39] Genesis 18:2–8.
[40] Genesis 14:1–17.
[41] Livy, I, 9, 10.
[42] Livy, I, 26.

liberating them from tyranny and restoring their king to them? And had one of the Curiatii really abducted her, as Paris did Helen, when so soon afterwards the girl was found weeping for her dead husband? Hence these doubts about Roman and Greek history mount up and become common to both. Was the Trojan War, for example, declared only nine years before [it ended], at which point it is certain that Agamemnon and Priam made a pact concerning the laws of victory to be imposed upon whichever of the two parties was defeated,[43] whereas in the Alban War a pact was made only after the Albans and Romans had already inflicted much grave and lengthy damage upon each other?[44] And was it because of the [uncertain] nature of these exploits, rather than as a result of his art, that Homer omitted their origins and began to sing of them from their middle or more towards their end? Even further, were the first wars waged perhaps as duels between offended and offending princes in the presence of both of their peoples, as happened in the Trojan War, in which a duel was agreed by pact between Menelaus, Helen's husband, and Paris, who had abducted her from the Greeks, and among the Latins, where the Alban War consisted in the duel between the three Horatians and the three Curiatii? For this is a custom more suited to the limited minds of the first peoples and to the custom of duelling practised a little earlier in the state of the families, as a result of which public wars were called 'duels' until Plautus's time.[45] Again, [the war with] the Veii certainly seems to have been the Latins' [equivalent of the] Trojan War: for it was fought out over ten continuous years,[46] as was the Trojan War among the Greeks; in both cases there was a state of continuous siege or eternal hostility, such as there is today between the peoples who live on the coast of Barbary and the Christian peoples; it involved those 'quarters of hostile soldiers' that were the subject of the declaration, so very much later, in the Law of the Twelve Tables, *aeterna auctoritas erat* ['against a stranger the right of possession is eternal']; and it occurred when, throughout the whole relevant time, though faced with the most obdurate of enemies, the consuls campaigned in major force in the spring but returned home at the start of winter. Could this be explained, then, by the possibility

[43] *Il.*, III, 245–309.
[44] Livy, I, 22–3.
[45] Plautus, *Amphytrion*, 189.
[46] Livy, V, 7–22.

that the heroic nations, who were still rough in counting and reasoning, may have referred to any large but indeterminate number as 'ten', where we would say 'a hundred' or 'a thousand'?

[Chapter] XV [XVI]
Principle VII: Concerning the obscurity of the fables: the secrecy of divination

285. The seventh and most frequently encountered natural principle of the obscurity of the fables is the secrecy with which divinity was practised, as a result of which the poets were called μύστες [*mystes*], which Horace[47] translated as *deorum interpretes* ['interpreters of the gods']. Hence the fables must have been the mysteries and poetic characters of the sacred language of the Greeks. Among the heroic poets, the serpent, for example, signified the earth because it casts off its skin, changing from black to green and yellow, just as the earth changes annually under the sun. The Hydra, growing ever more heads when beheaded, is the great forest of the earth. It took its name from the ὕδωρ [*hydor*] or 'water' of an earlier flood, and Hercules used fire to destroy it, just as our present-day peasants do when they clear the forests of trees. Homer's celebrated diviner, Calchas,[48] interpreted the eight swallows and their mother who were devoured by the serpent as signifying the land of Troy which, at the end of nine years, would be in the power of the Greeks, and the Greeks continued to call the booty of war ὠφέλεια [*opheleia*] from ὄφις [*ophis*] or 'serpent'. In this sense it can be true that the poets enveloped their wisdom in the veils of fable.

[Chapter] XVI [XVII]
The principle of the corruption of the fables

286. The principle of the corruption of fables is based on the foregoing principles of their obscurity. For the mutation of customs, which tend naturally to change for the worse and towards their corruption in all states, combined with ignorance of the proper meanings of the fables, i.e. that they were histories of the Greek religions and the heroic virtues and deeds of the founders of their nation, drove the fables

[47] Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, 391.
[48] *Il.*, II, 308–30.

towards highly corrupt meanings that were completely contrary to the religions, good laws and customs [that they formerly signified].

287. Thus, to give some examples based upon the principles of our present reasoning, [let us consider] the time when, in their stupor, it was impossible for the Greeks to experience the nausea of venery because they always mated with one woman, a custom that still prevails among our peasants who are naturally happy with their wives, so that never, or at least very rarely, do we hear of adulterers in villages. Hence, in that early time, the fable that the heroes were Jove's children could only have signified some idea, severe, weighty and in conformity with such a custom, in which Jove could not have been thought of as an adulterer, since men had as yet no understanding of adultery. Thus we find that, with the poetic brevity that is proper to language in its infancy, this fable means that the heroes were born from certain and solemn marriages, celebrated through the will of Jove, which he indicated to their relatives through the divine auspices that the Roman heroes claimed on the grounds that *auspicia esse sua* ['the auspices belonged to them'],[49] and to which the plebeians objected on the grounds that [the heroes] had not *esse de caelo demissos* ['rained down from the skies'].[50] But later, in the age of reflective lust, because wholly corrupt men naturally wish to sin against the authority of religion and the law, this fable was taken to represent children born of [different] women by an adulterous Jove, and, in keeping with the fable understood in this sense, these children were then taken to represent the jealousies, altercations and quarrels of Juno and Jove and the abuses that Jove heaped upon Juno. Similarly, we find that all the other fables connected with the solemnity and sanctity of heroic marriage, in one of which Juno's anger with Jove led her to try to kill Hercules because he was Jove's unsightly bastard,[51] were [originally] fables about the great labours that Juno, the goddess of marriage, commanded the first fathers to undertake for the needs of families. But since none of the [corrupt] fables contain these [original] and appropriate meanings or allegories, they come to the

[49] Livy, X, 8, 9.

[50] Livy, X, 8, 10. But cf. 276 for Vico's full explanation.

[51] According to tradition, Hercules was the son of Jove and Alcmene of Thebes in Boeotia. According to one variation of this fable, however, provoked by Jove's unfaithfulness, Juno sent two serpents to kill Hercules. These were the serpents which he strangled while still in his cradle.

obscene end in which Hercules, [originally] Ἥρας κλέος [*Heras cleos*], 'Juno's glory', he who overcomes everything through his virtue and with the help of Jove's favour, becomes, in fact, Juno's utter disgrace.

[Chapter] XVII [XVIII] The discovery of three ages of heroic poets up to Homer

288. With these shafts of illumination the fables are restored in their true light, through which three ages of heroic poets are distinguished. The first was an age of wholly severe poets, as is appropriate for the founders of nations. The second, which must then have grown gradually over many centuries, was an age of wholly corrupt poets. Both of these ages consisted of entire poetic or heroic nations. The third was an age in which individual poets collected the fables of these nations, i.e. their corrupt histories, from which they then composed their poems. This is the age in which to place Homer, since we have shown that he was a historian, and in our view the first that we have, of the Greek nation.

289. We shall continue by offering some further examples of the consequences that flow from these reasoned principles concerning the three ages of poets. Thus we find that Apollo is the poetic character of the diviners, first and appropriately called 'divine', who took the auspices at marriages, and Daphne, whom he pursues through the forests, is the poetic character of women who sleep nefariously with their fathers or sons in the vagabond forests. Hence his pursuit is that of a god, while her flight, on the contrary, is that of a wild animal. When Apollo finally brings her to a halt, she implores the aid, force and faith of the gods through the auspices, and becomes a plant, of the laurel species above all others, i.e. through the certain succession of her flourishing plants, she implants the gentes or houses, the names and origins of which, ever green and ever alive, were preserved by the first Greeks through patronymics. Hence Apollo remained the eternal preserver of names and the god of the civil light through which the nobles are said to be 'illustrious', 'distinguished' and 'famous'; he 'sings' or predicts, for that is what the word [*canere*] meant in pure Latin, with his lyre, i.e. with the force of the auspices; he is the god of divinity, from which the first poets were

appropriately called 'divine'; and he is assisted by the Muses, because all the arts of humanity come from marriage, i.e. from [truly] human unions.

290. One such Muse is Urania, the contemplator of the sky, thus named from οὐρανός [*ouranos*], 'the sky', [which she contemplates] in order to take the auspices for the celebration of solemn marriage. Hence Hymen, the god of marriage, is her son. The next Muse, Melpomene, preserves the memory of ancestors through their tombs.[52] The third, Clio, who narrates the history of distinguished deeds, is the same Muse as the Fame of the heroes, through whom they founded their clienteles in all the ancient nations. This is the *fama* ['fame'] from whom the Latins derived the word 'families' for their clienteles, in which they were followed by the translators of Greek when they rendered κῆρυκες [*kerukes*], i.e. Homer's servants of the heroes, as *famuli*.

291. Hence, through auspices taken from thunderbolts, [it was believed that] Jove favours the laurel, i.e. that he is favourable towards unions with certain women; and, because the first paternal kingdoms were founded upon such unions, Apollo is crowned with laurel upon Mount Parnassus, i.e. on the mountains in whose ridges lie those perennial springs necessary for the founding of the cities. Thus from πηγή [*pege*] or 'spring', the Latins originally called cities *pagi*.[53] Hence Apollo is Diana's brother[54] and it is his horse Pegasus, which, with a kick of its hoof, causes the waters of Hippocrene's spring, from which the Muses drink, to gush forth. Finally, Pegasus is winged, because only the nobles had the right to be armed on horseback. And, just as among the ancient Romans, so, in the returned barbaric times, the nobles alone were armed on horseback, through which they were called 'cavaliers' [i.e. 'knights'].

292. Here is a mythology in which everything seems smooth, coherent and appropriate to its subject, and nothing is absurd, far-fetched or contorted. But later these characters fell into obscurity and the fable was corrupted by the poets of the second age, so that the poets of the third age subsequently inherited an immodest Apollo, a flight of Daphne in which she was a goddess, and a Diana who was of no

[52] This appears to be a mistake since Melpomene was the Muse of tragedy.

[53] Derived from Voss, *Etymologicon*, pp. 420–1.

[54] See 417–19 below.

possible use as a model of the foundation of nations. And, as noted by the critics, Homer allowed for the appearance of both divine men and human gods.

[Chapter] XVIII [XIX]
A demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion

293. But not only is sacred history completely devoid of such foul corruptions of the first traditions of the deeds through which the people of God was founded, it also possesses a continuity of civil discipline that is wholly worthy of the true divinity of its founder. Moses tells us of this continuity in expressions more poetic even than those of Homer, though he lived some thirteen hundred years earlier than Homer, who was contemporary with Numa. At the same time, however, he brings from God to his people a law that is both so learned that it commands them to worship only one God, who is not a fantasy of their imagination, and so holy that it forbids them even the least of the normally permitted desires.[55] The dignity of these dogmas of divinity and the sanctity of these customs are so far beyond anything to be found in Plato's metaphysics and Socrates' moral philosophy that this may be the reason why Theophrastus, Aristotle's disciple and, therefore, the pupil of Socrates and Plato, referred to the Hebrews as 'philosophers by nature'.[56]

[Chapter] XIX [XX]
How the first legislative wisdom was that of the poets

294. Thus Apollo was the character of the sages of the first sect of times, i.e. the sect of divine poets, whose judgements were based on divination, i.e. the science of the auspices. These divine manifestations were contemplated in order to regulate first and foremost the human institution of marriage, through which men began to pass from their ferine wandering into humanity. This was the true sect of times of the theological poets who founded gentile theology, i.e. the science of divinity, by contemplating the sky in order to take the auguries,

[55]Exodus, 20:3–17.
[56]See footnote 177, p. 117

from which poetry received the highest sovereign praise that even Horace sang, in *The Art of Poetry:*[57] that the first legislative wisdom in the world was that of the poets.

[Chapter] XX [XXI]
Of the divine wisdom and art of Homer

295. But after the long passage of years and the many changes in custom through which the Greek religions were defiled, as we saw with the fable of Apollo [292], the great Homer arose. Reflecting upon the corruption of his times, he organised the whole system of the *Iliad* on the basis of Providence, which we established as the first principle of the nations [10], and on the religion of the oath. This is the oath which Jove took when he solemnly swore to Thetis that he would restore the honour of Achilles, which had been abused when Agamemnon took Chryseis from him by force.[58] Hence Jove regulates and governs Greek and Trojan activities through the many, varied and tortuous turnings that the war takes, in such a manner that, by means of the things themselves, he finally fulfils the promise he has sworn.[59] At the same time Homer compares all the virtues and vices with one another, and brings [the nature of] each to light, since the religions of the Greek peoples were of little value in holding them to their duties. Thus he shows that Paris' incontinent behaviour and violation of hospitality is the whole cause of the ruin of the kingdom of Troy. In complete contrast, Achilles, the greatest of the Greek heroes, upon whom the fortune of the war depends, disdains the young, foreign queen offered to him as his wife by her father, Agamemnon, chief of the allied Greeks, because she lacks auspices in common with him, and prefers to marry the woman of his own fatherland offered by his father, Peleus.[60] With the same aims in mind, the whole system of the *Odyssey* is organised on the basis of the prudence and tolerance of Ulysses, who finally takes his revenge and hangs the suitors, men lost in gluttony, play and inactivity, wholly preoccupied with the

[57] Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, V, 396.

[58] *Il.*, I, 524–30. Vico has transposed Chryseis and Briseis.

[59] The parallel between the action of Providence in the world of history and the activities of Jove in the Trojan War is given even more emphasis by Vico's claim that both achieve their ends 'by means of the things themselves'. For Providence in this connection, see 13, 15, 45 above.

[60] *Il.*, IX, 388–97.

violence and damage they are inflicting on Ulysses' royal patrimony and with besieging the likes of chaste Penelope.

296. On the basis of these ideas, Homer's two poems take on a completely different appearance from that with which they have hitherto been observed. Yet to Homer himself we attribute no wisdom other than the civil wisdom that was proper to the sect of heroic times, through which he merited the eulogy of being the founder of Greek humanity, although, in accordance with the above principles, he must in reality have been the restorer of Greek humanity.[61] Nor do we attribute to him any art other than the excellence of his nature, together with the good fortune of having lived in the time of the heroic language of Greece. For, in addition to our earlier demonstration [37] that he never even set eyes on Egypt, the recondite wisdom that Plutarch, and Plato also in these matters, saw in him, and the art of poetry that the critics discovered in him, are opposed both by our [natural] series of human ideas and also by the certain history of the philosophers and the poets.

297. For the first to arise were the very crude philosophers, who posited, as the principles of things, the bodies formed by the secondary qualities, called 'elements' in the vulgar. These were the physicists, the prince of whom was Thales the Milesian, one of the seven sages of Greece. They were followed by Socrates' master, Anaxagoras, who posited insensible bodies, the seeds of matter of every kind and form, as the force within all mechanisms. Next came Democritus, who posited bodies with the single primary quality of shape. Finally Plato sought the principles of things in the abstract principles of metaphysics, for which he posited an ideal [first] principle. But how could this recondite wisdom that Plato desired have descended all at once, in a downpour even, from the skies into Homer's breast? [And if we turn to poetry], it is certain that though dramatic or representative poetry arose after Homer, it began in the roughest of manners, as its origins undoubtedly tell us, with peasants painting their faces with the lees of grapes as they played about on their carts at vintage time. In which school, then, wherein only heroic poetry was taught, could Homer have learnt, such a long time earlier, so many arts that, when the philosophers, historians and orators of Greece later reached the

[61] According to Vico's principles, Homer belongs to the third age of poets, i.e. the age of the individual poets who received corruptions of fables from the nations of the earlier ages.

peak of their distinction, not a single poet could surpass him, even after long periods of time? Only the reasoned principles of poetry given above [288] can resolve these severe difficulties.

[Chapter] XXI [XXII]
How principles of recondite wisdom came to be discovered in the Homeric fables

298. For, in order that men should reach the sublime [truths of] metaphysics, and those of morality derived from them, Providence permitted the progress of the nations to be regulated in such a way that, just as individual men naturally sense first, and then reflect, first with souls perturbed by passions, then finally with pure mind, so mankind had first to sense the modifications of the body, then to reflect upon those of the soul[62] and finally upon those of abstract mind. Thus we discover the important principle that every language, no matter how copious and learned, encounters the hard necessity of expressing spiritual things by means of relationships with corporeal things. Whence, also, we discover the cause of the vain desire to establish the wisdom of the theological poets. For the idea of this wisdom arose when, given the reverence that is naturally borne towards religion and antiquity, which become more venerable as they become more obscure, upon certain occasions and opportunities that presented themselves, the fables caused the philosophers to raise themselves to meditate on and, at the same time, explain their recondite sciences. Hence they gave the fables various interpretations, physical, moral, metaphysical or derived from some other science, according as some task or whim excited their imagination, so that, with these erudite allegories, they were themselves responsible for imagining fables. But the first authors of the fables neither understood nor, given their rough and ignorant nature, could have understood, these erudite meanings. Rather, as we said above [93], this very roughness of their nature was the reason why they conceived the fables as true narrations of their things, divine and human.

[62] Although Vico has previously referred to 'modifications of our human mind', see 40 above, this is the one occasion on which he refers to 'modifications of the soul' in such a way as to seem to refer directly to Malebranche's use of the expression: see Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*, I, 1, 1, where these modifications, that is those that arise internally and without sensory stimulation, are described as 'nothing other than a manner of being of the soul'.

299. As examples of our principles, we offer the following physical interpretations of fables. The theological poets believed that Chaos was the confusion of human seed;[63] but later, when the appropriate idea had become obscure, this gave the philosophers cause to meditate on and, at the same time, the opportunity to explain, the confusion of the seeds of universal nature under the word 'Chaos'. Similarly, the poets believed that Pan signified that the whole nature of man was pervaded by a combination of rationality and bestiality; but later he was taken by the philosophers to signify the universal nature of things. Again, the poets believed that Jove was the fulminating sky, who led the terrified giants, fearful of seeing him wherever they looked, to hide under the mountains; but later he gave Plato both cause and opportunity to meditate on the nature of an ether that penetrates and moves everything,[64] and to arrest its own movement on the basis of the saying, *Iovis omnia plena* ['All things are full of Jove'].[65]

300. The fable of the giant Tityus, whose liver and heart are eternally ravaged by the eagle, will serve as an example of a moral interpretation. For the poets this fable signified the terrible and fearful superstition of the auspices; but the philosophers found it suitable, and took it thus, for signifying the remorse of a guilty conscience.

301. Finally, as an example of a metaphysical interpretation, let us take the hero of the poets. The theological poets believed that he was of divine origin because he was generated with Jove's auspices; but he gave the philosophers both the occasion and the opportunity to meditate on and explain their own [concept of the] hero, i.e. of one who, by thinking about the eternal truths of metaphysics, would attain a divine nature, through which his actions would naturally be virtuous. Yet this was the Jove whose first thunderbolts called a few of the giants, since a few must have been roused from their stupor, to be received into humanity. Hence arose those who were lords over the many other feeble-minded beings whom they received [into their asylums] and who therefore became their slaves, only because they were fleeing from the pains inflicted upon them by Hobbes's licentious, violent men. Thus, as explained above [139], the aristocratic republics were called 'the governments of the few'. But later this

[63] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 211–32.
[64] Plato, *Cratylus*, 412d.
[65] Virgil, *The Eclogues*, III, 60. This is the second part of the quotation that Vico appends to the title of the whole work.

Jove was transformed into the Jove who endowed a few with the disposition suitable for becoming philosophers, thus destroying the proper meaning of the expression, *Pauci, quos aequus amavit/Iupiter* ['The few, whom the just Jupiter loved']. In similar mode, the poets believed that Urania was the observer of the sky, who read the auspices in order to celebrate marriages through the will of Jove, which is why her son Hymen is the god of solemn marriage; but in erudite times she became identified with astronomy, the first of all the recondite sciences, as we demonstrated above [210].

302. For all these reasons, when Plato's Homer sang, his songs were taken to be Platonic.[66] For Plato always sought to explain himself in terms of vulgar wisdom in order to put his recondite philosophy in service to the law. Hence as many scholars emerged from his Academy as there were heroes of Greece, whereas only pomp and pride emerged from Zeno's porch and only good taste and refinement from Epicurus's little garden.[67] In this way, and in other fables, we prove our thesis that had the world never had any religions, it would never have had any philosophers.

[Chapter] XXII [XXIII]
The mode in which the first language among the nations was born divine

303. Indeed, without religion, not even language would have been born among men, because, as we argued earlier [45], men cannot unite in a nation unless they are united in the common thought of some one divinity. Hence the first languages to begin among the nations must necessarily have been of a divine kind. But, just as we found in the preceding book that the ideas of the Hebrews and the gentiles were different in this respect, we here find that their languages were also different. For Hebrew began and remained the language of a single God, whereas, although the gentile languages must have begun from a single god, the gentile gods proceeded to multiply so monstrously that Varro succeeded in counting a good thirty thousand of them

[66] Literally, 'when Plato homerised, Homer was believed to platonise'. Vico's point is that, notwithstanding the various uses Plato made of Homer, some of which involved taking Homer as a repository of an earlier esoteric wisdom, later scholars interpreted them in such a sense as to attribute Plato's own philosophy to Homer.

[67] Vico diminishes the size of Epicurus' famous garden in order to diminish the importance of his philosophy.

among the peoples of Latium, a number that is scarcely exceeded by the number of words of settled meaning in the large vocabularies of today.[68]

304. [The discovery of] this mode of the birth of languages, i.e. of their nature, has required of us a very severe meditation. For, beginning with Plato's *Cratylus*, which we erroneously favoured in another philosophical work,[69] and continuing up to Wolfgang Latius,[70] Giulio Cesare Scaligero,[71] Francisco Sanchez[72] and others, nothing has so far been able to satisfy our understanding of it. Hence, in connection with certain similar matters, Jean Le Clerc[73] says that there is nothing in the whole of philology that is subject to greater doubts and difficulties. For it has required of us an effort as painful, troublesome and weighty as that of casting off our nature in order to enter that of the first men of Hobbes, Grotius and Pufendorf, men utterly without words, from whom the languages of the gentile nations arose. But just as the assumption that we had succeeded in entering these minds enabled us to discover new principles of poetry and find that the first nations were composed of poets, these same principles enabled us to discover the true origins of language.

305. Thus we found that poetry originated because these first men, utterly devoid of language, must have expressed themselves, like mutes, either by mute actions or by using bodies that were naturally related to the ideas they wished to signify. Let us take, for example, the word 'year', which was later used in astronomy to signify the entire course of the sun through the regions of the zodiac. In their rural age, when men had not yet settled upon a word for it, they must certainly have expressed [the idea of] the year through the most important natural event that befalls peasants annually, and for which, indeed, they toil

[68] See footnote 125, p. 96. This is probably a reference to Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, which is largely known through St Augustine's discussion of Varro's lists of gods. See *City of God*, III, 12 and VII, 6. While admitting that Varro enumerated a large number of gods, discriminating between the certain and uncertain, Augustine suggests that the number, though large, was exaggerated.

[69] *On the Most Ancient Wisdom*; *Second Response*, I.

[70] See footnote 231, p. 134.

[71] See footnote 3, p. 151.

[72] Francisco Sanchez de la Brozas (1523–1601), author of *Minerva seu de caussis linguae latinae* (1587).

[73] Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736), much admired by Vico, who quotes, with pride, in his *Autobiography*, from a short letter from Le Clerc and a favourable review of *Universal Right*. Le Clerc agreed with Vico that languages had natural origins.

all year round. Hence, in such an age, since crops were undoubtedly a great discovery of human industry, men used a scythe or a scything gesture of the shoulder to indicate that they had harvested as many times as the years they wished to signify. It follows, moreover, from our earlier reasoning concerning the poetic characters [261–4] that they created the divine character of Saturn from the men who were first responsible for the discovery of crops, for this was the superstitious age of the peoples, such as that of our contemporary Americans, who, in accordance with their level of ability, believe that everything large is a god and name it thus. Thus the Latins' Saturn was the god of time in the same sense as that in which the Greeks named him Χρόνος [*Chronos*]. But his scythe reaped men's crops and not their lives, nor did his wings signify the flight of time. For rational moral allegories such as these meant nothing to those first peasants, who were concerned with communicating their household business among themselves. Hence, among them, Saturn signified that agriculture, and hence the cultivated fields, belonged by right to the heroes, who alone had the auspices. In this mode, our discovery of the things themselves shows that the poetic tropes that were later rediscovered and classified as kinds of metonymy were all born by nature among the first nations and not through the caprice of particular men skilled in poetry.

[Chapter] XXIII [XXIV] The mode [of birth] of the first natural languages, i.e. those with natural signification

306. Extending our meditation further, we find that the propriety of these first languages lay in the fact that they were based on the false ideas of the founders of the gentile nations, in which, as we learnt from our earlier reasoning about divine poetry [254–5], it was believed that all things necessary or useful to mankind were animate, divine substances. Hence the later poets[74] received Jove for the thundering sky, Saturn for seeded land, Ceres for wheat, and so on for Varro's thirty thousand gods. Given that these hypotheses or beliefs were false, the tradition that the philologists commonly mention, that the

[74] Cf. 288.

first words signified by nature,[75] could therefore well be true. Thus we derive a further demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion: that, enlightened by the true God, Adam[76] imposed names on things according to their nature, not, however, by referring to them as divine substances, because he understood true divinity, but by referring to their natural properties. Hence it is that while holy language never replicated true divinity, it nevertheless surpassed in sublimity the heroic language even of Homer.

[Chapter] XXIV [XXV]
The mode in which the second language of the nations was born heroic

307. In later times, as the false belief whereby wheat was imagined to be a god died out, the heroic peasants transformed what they had taken to be the natural meaning of the word through metonymy. This occurred when, by chance, they repeated the same action a number of times on different occasions, first to signify so many ears of corn, then so many harvests and, finally, so many years: for ears of corn are the most particular of these things, harvests are still corporeal [in character], but the year is abstract. In this way, we discover that the first words of nations must all have been produced by the poetic tropes in which the part is substituted for the whole, which are now classified as kinds of synecdoche. For the nations must have begun by naming things from their most important and principal parts until, as they continued to compose things in this way, the word for a part came of itself to signify the whole. Thus, for example, 'roof' stood for 'house', because the first hovels needed only hay or straw as a covering, as a result of which the Italians still refer to them as 'thatched cottages'. Precisely the same occurs in the Law of the Twelve Tables, in which the act *tigni iuncti* ['of joined beams'] appears.[77] In the earliest times these must have been the beams that were needed solely as material for huts, but then, with the growth of customs concerning human comfort, *tignum* changed

[75] The debate was between a natural or conventional basis for the meaning of words.
[76] Genesis 2:19.
[77] *Digest*, XLVII, 3.

of itself to mean all the material needed for the architecture of a building.[78]

308. Later, after the nations had discovered words of settled meaning, the poets of the third age arose before the prose writers.[79] Although this certainly happened among the Greeks and, as we shall see below, the Latins [376–80], because of the uniformity of causes, [it must have occurred] also in all the ancient nations. Hence they would have used expressions such as Virgil's *Post aliquot mea regna videns mirabor aristas* ['After several harvests shall I wonder upon seeing my kingdom?'],[80] which demonstrates the awkwardness with which, through their limited ideas and poverty of words, the first Latin peoples expressed themselves. Finally, with rather more clarity, they would have said *Tertia messis erat* ['It was the third harvest'], like the peasants of the Florentine countryside today, who count three years, for example, by saying, 'We harvested three times'.

[Chapter] XXV [XXVI]
The mode in which the poetic language that has come down to us was formed

309. In this mode, from the mute languages of Hobbes's great beasts, Grotius's simpletons and Pufendorf's solitary beings, after they had emerged into humanity, the poetic languages of the ancient nations gradually came to be formed before our present vulgar languages. Hence, after the long passage of the centuries, the whole corpus of the language of each of these first peoples was composed of three parts, each different in kind, as we can now see.

310. The first kind of language consists of the characters of the false divinities, including all the fables of the gods. The *Theogony* of Hesiod, who certainly lived before Homer,[81] is a glossary of these gods in the first language of Greece, just as Varro's thirty thousand gods constitute a vocabulary of the first language of Latium. And in the five or six places in his two poems where he mentions an ancient Greek

[78] As it is used in the *Digest*.

[79] In the third age, words would come to have a settled meaning by convention and not naturally as in the earlier ages.

[80] Virgil, *The Eclogues*, I, 69.

[81] Belief in this chronological order was not exclusive to Vico.

language that was spoken before that of his heroes, Homer himself calls it 'the language of the gods'.[82] The hieroglyphics, or sacred characters, of the Egyptians, which were understood only by their priests, correspond to this language, which Tacitus,[83] almost as if he scented our claims, calls *sermonem patrium*, i.e. the native language of the oldest nation. Thus, among the Egyptians, Greeks and Latins, such divine languages must have been discovered by the theological poets of the first poetic age, the founders of these three nations.

311. The second kind of language consists of heroic characters and contains all the heroic words discovered in the second poetic age, that of the poetic heroes who lived before Homer. But while these divine and poetic languages were taking shape, as articulate words were born and multiplied, the third part of the corpus, different in kind, was taking shape. This is a language of words based upon natural relations or natural metaphors which depict the actual things that people wish to express by describing them. The Greek peoples found themselves already furnished with such a language in Homer's time, but with the difference, observable even in the vulgar languages of today, that one people in Greece would speak more poetically than another in relation to some identical idea. Homer selected the best expressions from all these peoples with which to weave his poems, which is the reason why, noting the presence of their own native words in his poems, almost all of the different peoples of Greece claimed him as their own citizen.

312. Ennius[84] must have done the same in the case of the languages of Latium, which still retained much that was barbaric in them, and Dante Alighieri certainly did so when, as the barbarity [of his time] began to diminish, he gathered the language for *The Divine Comedy* from all the dialects of Italy. Hence, just as in Greece no greater poet than Homer arose, so in Italy no more sublime poet than Dante was born, for each had the good fortune both to be blessed with incomparable genius and to live at the end of the poetic age of his nation.

[82] For example, *Il.*, I, 403–4; XIV, 291.

[83] *Ann.*, II, 60.

[84] Quintus Ennius (239–169 BC), the Roman poet of Greek extraction. Though almost none of his work is extant, he was generally credited with having introduced Greek and Homeric literary forms into Roman literature. There is no other evidence, however, for Vico's claim about the source of his literary language.

[Chapter] XXVI [XXVII]
Further principles of poetic reason

313. But in order that the truth of our present reasoning, particularly in connection with Homer, should be recognised, by dispersing all trace of the mists with which our imagination might cloud reason, it is necessary to subject our learned natures again to something of the same force that we exerted at the start [77], in order to enter the nature of Grotius's simpletons. It will then become clear that not only do we say nothing that tarnishes Homer's reputation, but, with the aid of metaphysical proofs based upon the idea of poetic reason, we shall demonstrate that, on merit alone, he was the father and prince of all poets throughout the age.

314. For the study of metaphysics and of poetry are naturally opposed to each other: one purges the mind of the prejudices of youth, while the other immerses and subverts it in them; one resists the judgements of the senses, while the other makes them its principal rule; one weakens the imagination, while the other requires a robust imagination; one draws a careful distinction between body and spirit, while the other delights most in giving body to spirit: hence, while the thoughts of one are abstract, the concepts of the other are more beautiful the more they take bodily form. In short, one is studied in order that the learned, shorn of all passion, should know what is true in things, and that they should know the true in things because they are shorn of all passion, while the other strives, through the mechanisms of highly perturbed feeling, to induce the vulgar to act in accordance with the true, which they would certainly not do without such perturbed feeling. Hence, in the whole of time up to now, and in all the languages known to us, there has never been a single man of talent who was at the same time both a great metaphysician and a great poet, not, at least, of the very highest kind, of which Homer was the father and prince. Thus when Plutarch[85] drew a parallel between Cicero and Demosthenes, in which Longinus[86] followed him, he did not deem Virgil worthy of comparison with Homer, in

[85] Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*.

[86] Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 12, 4–5. Vico's supporting argument is based on the assumption of his time, that *On the Sublime* was a work of the third century AD, whereas it is now thought to be the work of someone earlier than Longinus, writing in the first half of the first century AD. His basic claim about the respective merits of the poets involved in these comparisons is unaffected, however, by this mistake.

which Longinus again followed him, whatever Macrobius[87] may say to the contrary. And should anyone raise the objection that Dante was not only the father and prince of Tuscan poets but at the same time highly learned in divinity, we would reply that since, unlike Virgil, he arose in a poetic age of language, which in Italy was born at the height of her barbarism in the ninth to the twelfth century, had he been completely ignorant of scholasticism or of Latin, he would have become an even greater poet and the Tuscan language might well have been comparable to that of Homer, which was never true of Latin.

315. Everything that we have said here concerning the principles of poetic reason goes to prove that Providence was the divine mistress of the origins of the poets. In this connection, setting aside many others noted elsewhere, there are two passages worthy of marvel in the *Odyssey*, which prove that Homer flourished at a time when the faculty of reflection, i.e. pure mind, was still unknown. Thus, at one point Telemachus' mind is referred to as his 'sacred force',[88] i.e. his hidden force, and at another, Antinous' mind is said to be his 'secret strength'.[89] In fact, throughout the work, Homer's heroes 'think in their hearts' and 'reason in their hearts', and Ulysses, the most prudent of all, always 'ponders in his heart'.[90] Hence the endurance of such poetic expressions as *movere* ['to stir up'], *agitare* ['to toss about'], *versare* ['to turn over'], *volutare corde* ['to weigh in one's heart'], or *pectore curas* ['the cares of the breast'],[91] and in vulgar Latin, up to Plautus' time, they used the expression *cor sapere* ['the heart knows'], in addition to *cordatus* for 'prudent', *socors* for 'careless' and *vecors* for 'foolish'. Meanwhile, close to the greatest age of the language, Scipio Nasica was *corculum senatus* ['the wise heart of the senate'], because, in the common view of all, he was adjudged the wisest of men.[92]

316. These ways in which the Greek heroes thought and the Latins spoke could never have come about had the nature of these peoples not

[87] Macrobius, a Greek grammarian, possibly of the late fourth and early fifth centuries AD, the author of *Saturnaliorum conviviorum libri VII*, a compendium of dissertations on history, mythology and criticism, including four books of criticism on Virgil.

[88] *Od.*, XVIII, 60.

[89] *Od.*, XV, 34.

[90] *Il.*, V, 669.

[91] These phrases come from writers such as Ovid, Plautus and Seneca.

[92] Cicero, *Brutus*, 20, 79; 58, 213.

been such that they never thought except under the impulse of great and violent passions. Thus they believed that they thought in their hearts, a belief that we can scarcely now understand and are quite unable to imagine. Yet this comprised but a small part of the nature of those first gentile men, utterly devoid of any language, amidst whom we set out, at the start of this Science [14], to find the origins of the natural law of the gentes. And even today we still need the help of poetic words for sensible figures of speech to understand the labours of pure mind.[93] Thus, for 'to know truly', we use *intelligere* ['to perceive with the senses'], whence comes 'the intellect', or 'to select well', which is applied also to vegetables [*legumi*], and which led to *legere* ['to read']. Similarly, we use *sentire* ['to sense'] for 'to judge'; *sententia*, which derives from what belongs to the senses, for 'judgement'; and *disserere*, which is 'to scatter seeds for the harvest' for 'to discuss' or 'to reason'. Finally, we have *sapientia* ['wisdom'] from *sapere*, which means 'to give taste to the palate'.

[Chapter] XXVII [XXVIII]
The discovery of the true origin of the heroic emblems

317. Now, returning to the order of our discourse, our reasoned example of the way in which, in their poetic age, the heroic peasants counted their harvests as years [307–8] leads to three great discoveries. The first concerns the heroic emblems, upon which our knowledge of some extremely important consequences for the science of the natural law of the gentes depends.

318. But since none of the authors who have worked out their many ingenious accounts of these emblems had any idea of the discoveries made in this science, it must have been the force of the true itself that made the expression 'heroic emblems' flow from their pens. The Egyptians referred to these emblems as a 'symbolic language', i.e. a language of metaphors, images and resemblances, which, they said, had been spoken in the time of their heroes, but we shall prove here that it was a language common to all the heroic nations spread throughout the universe.

[93] In *Etymologicon*, p. 510, Voss also asserts that sensible meaning is prior to intellectual meaning.

319. For when the ambassadors of Darius the Great declared war against King Idanthyrsus of Scythia, thus confining the war to the two kings, as would the present-day king of Persia against the queen of Muscovy,[94] Idanthyrsus replied by sending a frog, a mouse, a bird, a ploughshare and a bow, in order to tell Darius, by means of these five objects, that such a war would violate the law of the gentes.
320. I. Because Idanthyrsus was himself born in the land of Scythia, just as frogs are born in the lands where they are found, thus signifying that his origin in that land was as old as the origin of the world. Hence Idanthyrsus' frog was precisely one of the frogs into which, according to what the theological poets have passed down to us, men changed at the time when Latona gave birth to Apollo and Diana close to the waters,[95] by which the poets may have meant to refer to the Flood.
321. II. That his house or clan had been created in Scythia, just as mice make their holes in the lands in which they are born.
322. III. That the empire of Scythia was his because he possessed its auspices. Thus where a heroic king of Greece would have sent Darius two wings in place of Idanthyrsus' bird, a heroic Latin king would have replied *auspicia esse sua* ['that the auspices belonged to him'].
323. IV. Hence, that he had sovereign ownership of the fields of Scythia, because he had tamed the land by ploughing it.
324. V. Finally, that, as a result of this, he had the sovereign right of arms to protect his sovereign laws with the bow.
325. This is the language of the heroic peoples of Tartary, which is identical with that in which we hear Etearchus, the king of Ethiopia, speak.[96] Thus, when the ambassadors of Cambyses declared war against Etearchus, in the war in which Cambyses himself perished, they presented him, on behalf of their king, with many vases of gold. But when Etearchus failed to recognise any natural use for them, he rejected them, commanding the ambassadors to inform their king of the display which he then presented to them. Whereupon, seizing a mighty bow and loading it with a heavy arrow, he indicated that Cambyses should have exhibited his personal strength, because the esteem of princes lay not in gold but in their virtue, which could

[94] Vico later changed this to 'Tartary', to indicate that, in this respect, modern practice retains a feature of heroic practice, for which evidence is given in 325.
[95] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, 316–81.
[96] There are two references to Etearchus in Herodotus, II, 32 and IV, 154, but the incident which Vico relates occurs at III, 20, 21, involving an anonymous sovereign.

have been conveyed by means of a sublime heroic emblem with vases of gold, representing the countries he had overrun, together with a muscular arm firing a mighty arrow from a mighty bow. So much is here expressed by means of objects alone that there is no need for any motto at all to inspire it. This is the heroic emblem in its most perfect essence: a mute language of acts and corporeal signs, which, when there was a poverty of words of settled meaning, men discovered by ingenuity because of their need to express themselves in times of war.[97]

326. The everyday language of the Spartans was similar to that of Idanthyrsus and Etearchus, for the Spartans were denied knowledge of letters, and, as everyone knows, even after the discovery of words of settled meaning and writing, they spoke in a very concise manner. [We can be confident that these were heroic practices for] the philologists are in general agreement that the Spartans preserved very many of the heroic customs of Greece. Thus, for example, the custom in accordance with which the Spartan replied to a stranger who was surprised that Sparta was not ringed by walls, which, according to the testimony of Thucydides himself,[98] none of the heroic cities of Greece were. The Spartan replied by pointing to his breast, with which gesture, and without uttering a single human word, he enabled the stranger to understand the sublime sentiment, which, clothed in words of settled meaning, would become 'our breasts are the walls of Sparta', an expression that any great heroic poet would prize. In pictorial language, this sentiment would be expressed in the form of a great heroic emblem in which an order of heroic shields would be represented, accompanied by the motto, 'The Walls of Sparta', meaning not only that the true armoury of Sparta consisted in its strong citizens but also that the solid rock of its rulers was the love of their subjects. Similarly, in accordance with a different custom, when another stranger wished to know the extent of the boundaries of Sparta, the Spartan replied, by hurling a spear, 'as far as this carries'. He could have used these very words except that, through

[97] Theoreticians of the language of emblems in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were divided as to whether an emblem unaccompanied by a motto was more expressive than one with a motto. Vico is ambiguous here, however, because although his first examples stress the power of the unaccompanied emblem, as his theory of the mute origins of language would require, in the alternatives in which he adds mottoes, new information is introduced.

[98] Thucydides, I, 5, 1.

his action, he had made himself understood without the use of words. And were Homer, Virgil, Dante, Ariosto or Tasso to have clothed this sentiment in words, none of them could have improved upon 'Our empire extends to the reach of this spear', which, in pictorial form, would become the sublime emblem of an arm hurling a spear, accompanied by the motto, 'The Boundaries of Sparta'.

327. The natural customs of the ancient Scythians, Ethiopians and, among the Greeks, the illiterate Spartans, differ in no way at all from those of the barbaric Latins that shine forth in Roman history. Thus, the hand with the stick that cuts off the heads of the poppies towering over the other humble herbs, with which Tarquin the Proud replied when his son sought advice as to what he ought to do in Gabii, i.e. that his son should kill the chiefs of the city, must be such a heroic emblem.[99] This story, which is attached to Tarquin, either belongs to the very oldest times of the Latin peoples, since in times when there are words of settled meaning, his reply would be public rather than private,[100] or in Tarquin's times the language of heroic characters was still in use in Rome.

328. The foregoing discussion provides a conspicuous proof that the heroic emblems contain the whole of poetic reason, which reduces in its entirety to this: that a fable and an expression are one and the same thing, i.e. a metaphor common to poets and painters alike, so that a mute who lacks the expression can depict it.

[Chapter] XXVIII [XXIX]
New principles of the science of blazonry

329. The second principle [that follows from our example of the numbering of years in the poetic age] is that of the science of blazonry.

[99] Livy, I, 54, 6.

[100] In Livy's account of this episode, it is made clear that Tarquin was suspicious of the messenger and that his reply was therefore made in a code that his son, but not the messenger, could easily understand. This implies that an articulate language would have been available to him had he wished to use it. Since Vico claims that the story is an example of a mute language of gestures used when there was no conventional language available, he is forced to conclude either that the implications of Livy's account cannot be true and that a language of mute gestures was in use in Rome in Tarquin's time or that this is part of a story of older times which has wrongly become 'attached' to Tarquin. The suggestion that it has wrongly become attached to Tarquin is strengthened by the fact that there is a very similar story concerning Thrasybulus and Periander in Herodotus, V, 92. I am grateful to Donato Mansueto for drawing my attention to this roughly parallel story.

This science is found to be the first language of the natural law of the gentes, which, as we said at the outset [77], is necessary for any scientific reasoning about principles. The language of this law was the celebrated *Fas gentium* ['The divine law of the gentes'] that the Latin heralds invoked when declaring war or formulating peace agreements by calling upon the testimony of Jove, which they did by shouting, in their loudest voice, *Audi, Iupiter, audi fas* ['Hear us, Jupiter, hear us, divine law'].[101] This was a solemn and certain language of manifest and natural signs, a language of heroic emblems which provided a language of arms for expressing proclamations of war, such as those with which Idanthyrsus replied to Darius and Etearchus to Cambyses. Hence, in this armed language of the natural law of the gentes, we discover first the true origin of the first family coats of arms, which constituted a certain language of arms of the families. This was followed later by the heraldic coats of arms, because the names of the clans or houses came before those of the cities and the names of the cities before those of the wars in which they fought. And since, as the latest travellers have observed, the Americans, who are still governed by families, certainly use hieroglyphics to distinguish the chiefs of their families, it must be conjectured that this was how they were first used among the ancient nations.

[Chapter] XXIX [XXX]
The new discovery of the origins of the family ensigns

330. But in truth, although a number of scholars have hitherto employed much ingenuity in proving that the coats of arms of the nobility were born in Germany, together with the custom of holding tournaments in order to earn the love of noble maidens with feats of valour in arms, others of sharp judgement have been reluctant to accept this view of the origins of the science of blazonry. Because not only do these peoples seem to have been incapable of uniting in the barbaric times in which they are said to have been born, times in which, ferocious and crude, they could not have understood the heroism of the Romance cavaliers, but not all the things that appear in emblems can

[101] Livy, I, 32, 6.

be explained in this way and even to explain some imposes a strain on reason.

331. The parts of which the entire system of this science is composed are shields, fields, metals, colours, arms, crowns, cloaks, decorations, and guardian figures, all of which are found to have been the pictorial language of the heroic times for indicating the rights of lordship. For first it was necessary that the ancient clans or houses, the greater gentes, should take their names from the lands where their houses were planted; and then, through the genealogies of ancestors acquired through burial of their dead, be ascertained as the sovereign lords of these lands through the auspices their stock possessed, following their occupation of the vacant lands. Thus, at first, the Athenian *terrigenae* ['those born of the earth'] and the Roman *ingenui* ['natives'] meant 'nobles', just as in the returned barbaric times a large part of the most noble houses, and almost all the sovereign houses, took their names from the lands of which they became lords. Hence we find that the Spanish retained the expression *casa solariega*, i.e. a house attached to its plot of land or field, to indicate a 'noble house'; that the Latins called the nobles *gentiles* from such houses, planted in certain lands by such clans or gentes, because, as Livy narrates,[102] at first they alone belonged to a gens; that elsewhere, the Italians, French and Spanish continued to use the word 'gentleman' for 'noble'; that through the rigour of heraldic law, which allowed only nobles to mount coats of arms, soldiers are still called 'gentlemen of arms', because at first only the nobles had the right of arms; and that the word *miles*, meaning 'noble', was still in use later in royal diplomas.

332. As a result of all this, the extended surface of shields that constitutes the foundation of family coats of arms is called the 'field'. The proper meaning of this word was 'ploughed land', but it then came to mean 'land cluttered up with soldiers' quarters and battles', because after the greater gentes had reduced the first lands to fields of wheat by ploughing them, they turned them into fields of arms by defending them against the impious thieves of wheat and harvests whom they killed for their thefts. Hence family coats of arms continued to signify both the names of noble houses and their deeds of arms, and shields are called 'arms' because they are both items of defence and 'devices of the nobility'.

[102] Livy, X, 8, 9.

333. With these principles we can easily understand the meanings of the metals and colours with which noble emblems are distinguished.

334. The noblest metal is gold, but the first 'gold' of the poets was wheat, and the Romans continued to give a certain measure of spelt, their first wheat, as a prize to valiant soldiers. And the noblest colour is blue because it indicates the colour of the sky in which the auspices were taken, through which the first lands of the earth were occupied. Hence, when the royal ensigns of the barbaric centuries arose, they were adorned with the three feathers at the top, from which feathers survive on the crests of noble ensigns. Thus the colour blue signifies sovereign lordship received from God.

335. Rakes, with which the shields of the nobles were laden in great abundance, signify that the ancestors of the nobles had made their lands arable. Vairs, which are also frequent devices of nobility, signify the furrows of the ploughed earth in which the armed men of Cadmus are born after he has sown them with the teeth of the slain serpent; while the teeth signify the curved hard woods with which the lands must have been ploughed before the use of iron was discovered. In a beautiful metaphor, they were called 'the teeth of the great serpent'[103] of the earth. And the Latins called the 'curve' [of the plough] *urbum* from *urbs* ['city'].[104]

336. Others have already said that fesses and bends were the spoils of the enemy which victorious soldiers carried on their shields as a sign of their valour. It is equally certain that Roman soldiers who were outstanding in deeds of arms used to carry the prizes awarded them by their emperors on their shields, the most prestigious of which were spears. These were not the spears strengthened with iron, but those made of pure wood, with which the heroes were armed before they discovered the use of iron. They were like the spears the barbarians used, with the burnt tips for making sharper wounds, that the Roman historians called *praeustas sudes*,[105] and also those with which the American Indians have been found to arm themselves. Hence we find that among the Greeks, Minerva, Pallas and Bellona came armed with spears; that among the Latins, Juno and Mars were called *quirini* from *quiris*, i.e. 'spear', and Romulus, 'Quirinus'; that in Homer and Virgil the heroes were similarly armed; that the spear survived as the

[103] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 103.
[104] Varro, *De lingua latina*, V, 143, followed by Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 657.
[105] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, V, 40, 6; Tacitus, *Ann.*, II, 14.

proper armour of the Spartans, the heroic people of Greece; and that, in the returned barbaric times, only gentlemen of arms, or nobles, were armed with spears, a custom that has survived today only in their tournaments. Thus these spears must be the pales that are frequently seen on noble emblems; and the shields laden with spoils and arms of this sort must all have been the true heroic emblems of an age in which, lacking [articulate] language, men spoke with these objects.

337. With regard to the other colours the most reasonable possibility is that the Germans retained them from their most ancient origins. For Roman history certainly recounts that when the German princes, as well as those of the Gauls and Britons, waged war, they carried painted shields and were dressed in garments of a variety of colours,[106] perhaps in order to be conspicuous in battle. Hence, when they were led in triumph before the Roman people in such clothes, they presented them with a most beautiful spectacle.

338. The emblematic cloaks of the heroes must have been those that the Latins called *personae*. This word was not, as the popular etymologists have claimed,[107] derived originally from *personare*, that is, from the way in which the actor resonated his voice within his mask in order to make himself heard throughout the whole theatre. That is the reason why the mask itself came to be called *persona*, but such an origin is unsuitable for *personae*, because of the small size of the theatres of peoples who were still very small in number. It came instead from *personari*, which meant, as we showed in another work,[108] 'to be clothed in the hide of a slaughtered wild animal'.[109] Thus, in paintings, Hercules was certainly clad in a lion's skin, and other heroes in Homer and Virgil wear the hides of bears and of tigers. The sovereigns may later have changed from these striped hides to the hides of sables, which were distinguished by their black tails, just as the Roman nobles distinguished their white togas by the somewhat similar addition of a purple edging, called a *clavus* because of its shape. It may also be that, in the returned barbaric times, the great lords were still called 'personages' from such 'persons'.[110] [But it is certain that] these heroic hides or cloaks were noble devices

[106] Tacitus, *Germany*, 6.
[107] Gellius Aulus, *Noctes atticae*, V, 7.
[108] *De const. philol.*, XX, 69.
[109] Also in Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 446.
[110] That is, from those who wore the cloaks mentioned in Vico's derivation of the word *personae*.

signifying that the heroes alone had the right to bear arms and, therefore, to hunt wild animals, which was the first school for their future wars against men. And to this day, the heroic custom whereby the nobles alone have the right to hunt is still preserved in Germany. Hence, in Homer, the dogs by which the heroes are often surrounded, called *mensales* ['of the table'] by the translators, must have been the hunting dogs that provided the flesh of wild animals for the heroic tables. This reasoning enables us to understand why, in the latest barbaric times, shields are still seen covered in leather, with extremities shaped into cartouches, and edged from top to bottom in a suitably ornate finish, and why, also, pairs of dogs are seen at the feet of the statues of dead nobles to signify their nobility.

339. In the times of the families it was also possible to use an imaginary figure of Fame as the supporter in a family coats of arms. This was the Fame after whom, as we demonstrated above [290], the families that were composed of the *famuli* were named. These were Homer's κῆρυκες [*kerukes*], called, [in Latin], *clientes*, rather like *cluenti* from the ancient *cluer*,[111] i.e. 'the splendour of arms'. Hence the heroes were 'the illustrious ones' [*incliti*], from whom the *clientes* took their name, as if resplendent in the glory of the illustrious.[112] The [name of the] Muse Clio, who sang the history of the heroes with her trumpet, corresponds to this Latin word *cluer*, with its resemblance to the Greek κλέος [*cleos*], i.e. 'glory', from which Hercules ['Heracles'] was named Ἥρας κλέος ['*Heras cleos*'] or 'the glory of Juno' ['Hera']. Hence the verb *cluere*, 'to be resplendent in arms', must certainly be the origin of the word *clypeus*, the shield.

340. Finally, upon the occurrence of the first heroic disturbances, in which the clientes rebelled, [composing themselves] into plebs, and the nobles united in orders, the first cities arose. Since it then became necessary for embassies to recall the plebeians to the cities, more ornaments and crowns were added to the noble emblems. For, in that [age of] simplicity, when heralds were sent out, their heads and shoulders were covered by a holy plant such as verbena, because of the superstition that if they were armed in such clothing they would be rendered safe from harmful enemies. This superstition may have arisen because it was thought that nobles alone should touch this

[111] There is no evidence for this form of verb. It may be a mistake for *clueo* or *cluo*, i.e. to be esteemed or famed, but these verbs are not related to Vico's 'splendour of arms'.

[112] The relation between *clientes*, *incliti* and *clueo* is in Voss, *Etymologicon*, pp. 165–7.

plant. Hence it continued to be called 'holy' and 'inviolable', and because it was gathered from the hedges that made up the first fences or walls of the small cities, the walls themselves were sanctified and became holy, as has been found in America. For it is certain that the Roman heralds gathered verbena from the fortress of the Campidoglio,[113] and that the ambassadors who wore this holy plant were 'holy', just as the laws that they took with them were 'holy'.

341. The heralds were also furnished with a winged caduceus and their temples and feet were adorned with wings, just as Mercury, the god of embassies, later continued to be shown in paintings, to signify that they were the augurs of the nobles who had sent them. Thus to their emblems were added crowns, the rays of which were represented by the sides and edges of leaves; leafy branches, representing the branches of princes; mantlings, i.e. leaves that had fallen from their crests and covered the shoulders of their arms; and, on the top of their crests, plumes.

[Chapter] XXX [XXXI]
Further origins of military ensigns

342. From these origins a forest of military ensigns sprang up, constituting a certain language of arms of the cities, through which, lacking in language, the nations achieved understanding among themselves in the most crucial business of the natural law of the gentes, that of wars, alliances and commerce.

343. Hence the eagles that were depicted on Roman ensigns came from the eagles of the auspices with which Romulus took the site where he founded Rome. Hence, also, the eagles that were on Greek ensigns from the time of Homer were united as one body with two heads, after Constantine had placed two Romes at the head of the Roman empire. Hence, also, the eagles on the Egyptian ensigns, in which Osiris was depicted with a human body and the head of an eagle.

344. With the guidance [of these principles] we can resolve both the wonder of the great number of lions that were raised up in the emblems of so many nobles houses of Europe and so many cities, peoples and nations, and, the cause of even greater wonder, the different blues, golds, greens and blacks. It is impossible to read all this in terms

[113] Livy, XXX, 43, 9.

of natural history and equally difficult to narrate it in terms of civil history, unless the emblems are understood as signifying either lands taken through heavenly auspices or lands reduced to cultivation, for which there were three colours: black for inseminating the crops, green for germinating them and gold for harvesting them. For, in disproportionate number, the first cities were called 'altars' [*are*], and it is observable that in ancient geography this was identical with the idea of a fortress. Thus in Syriac *ari* meant 'lion', from which Syria herself was called Aramia or Aramea, and, as Keller noted,[114] the names of all her cities consisted of *Aram*, with the addition of a prefix or suffix to indicate whatever was specific to each. Again, in present-day Transylvania the expression 'the altars of the Sicilians' is still used for the cities that were once inhabited by a single very ancient race, composed entirely of nobles, which, when it was united with two other races, one Hungarian, the other Saxon, came to comprise the whole nation. Sallust[115] tells us that in the heart of Africa the famous expression 'the altars of the Fileni brothers' survived as the name for the border between the Carthaginian empire and the kingdom of Cyrenaica, and it may be that the Greeks called Mars Ἄρης [*Ares*] from the resemblance of this word to *ari*, the Syriac lion. And just as the Syrians used the word *aram* as their general name for cities, the Latins universally called them *urbs*, which gave rise to the ancient word *urbum* for the curve of the plough; while [it is noticeable that] the first syllable of the [Italian] word for a plough [*aratro*] contains the sound 'ara'. Thus if Hercules slew the lion whose skin he wore, i.e. the lion that belched forth the fire that burnt the Nemean forest, in heroic language this event must undoubtedly have had the same significance in some parts of Greece as the serpents he slew while still in his cradle, i.e. at the birth of heroism, had in other parts. The same must have been true of the Hydra in another part of Greece, and of the dragon in Hesperia, for the Hesperian dragon belched forth flame, the Hydra was slain by fire, and the flames of the Nemean lion set fire to the Nemean forest. Thus these fables must all signify a single kind of labour of the various Hercules of Greece, i.e. the reduction of the forest of the earth to cultivation through fire, just as our peasants still use fire to clear the trees from forests when they want to inseminate them.

[114] Christopher Keller, German philologist (1638–1707), in his *Notitiae orbis antiqui, sive geographiae plenioris, tomus alter Asiam et Africam continens* (1706), p. 459.

[115] Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum*, 79.

345. With this very ancient language of arms the public emblems that are laden or adorned with dragons can be explained. They are depicted as spiny and harsh, as was the great forest of the earth, ever vigilant, like the Hydra, who, when beheaded, grows ever more heads and remains alive, and their bellies are furrowed with Cadmus' teeth. One of the most beautiful of these emblems is that of the state of Milan, the celebrated kingdom of the Goths, where the most noble family of the Visconti rose to eminence, in which a dragon is depicted devouring a young boy. This is the Python, the great uncultivated forest of Greece, and possibly also the Orcus[116] of the poets, who devours those who live bestial lives, whence, leaving no certain descendants, they leave no memory of themselves. For the Python was later slain by Apollo, the eternal preserver of names, as we said above [289], and emblems containing dragons armed with wings, were, as we have so frequently said [276], ensigns of the heroes.

[Chapter XXXII][117]
The heroic origins of the distinguished Order of the Golden Fleece and the royal blazon of France

346. Such an ensign is that of the royal house of Spain, after it passed to the house of Austria from the dukes of Burgundy. This is adorned with at least two crests of dragons belching forth fire, which must be two supporters [on the emblem] of the distinguished Order of the Golden Fleece,[118] which hang from a necklace of flints, from each stone of which fire is sparked by blows from two pieces of metal. Hence the emblem of the Order of the Golden Fleece is a heroic medal from the times of the Scythian Hercules when, in the north, they spoke in heroic emblems, as was demonstrated earlier [319–24] in the case of Idanthyrsus, the king of Scythia, when he replied with five objects, i.e. five heroic words, when Darius the Great declared war against him. The heroic emblem of the Golden Fleece thus demonstrates that the first founders of the most august house of Austria descended

[116] The Roman Orcus was borrowed from the Greek Hades, later Pluto, king of the underworld.

[117] This chapter is also not numbered in Vico's text. As earlier, from here until the end of book III, Vico's numbering is given first, followed by a corrected number in square brackets.

[118] In 1431, in Bruges, Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, established a courtly order, under the name of the Golden Fleece.

from Scandinavia, after which they became the sovereign lords of cultivated lands, with the free right to plunder the flocks of the strangers who were at first their perpetual enemies, as we saw earlier [281–2]; and, consequently, that the most august house of Austria has enjoyed a continuous period of four thousand years of sovereign lordship.

347. But should anyone continue to claim that some duke of Burgundy took the emblem from the Greek fable of Jason, we would refer him to the Japanese, whose emperors everywhere adorned their thrones with dragons, and ask him to explain by what route the Greek fables could have reached either them or, indeed, the Chinese, whose emperors also established an order of knights dressed in the garb of dragons, although their boundaries were rendered impenetrable to strangers until two centuries ago.

348. Following this same order of combination, [we find that] the three frogs of Idanthyrsus, discussed above [320], must have been incorporated into the ensigns of three princes of the Franks, when, along with other nations, they descended from Scandinavia. The three frogs were later united in a single object, the blazon of France, but because of the rough way in which they had been crafted, the frogs were taken for three toads, soon to be changed into three golden lilies, and, though this was contrary not only to their own nature but to that of any flower whatsoever, these were further divided into two leaves towards the spathe, in order to represent the two hind feet of frogs, and three leaves at the top, to represent their two front feet and head. Hence, since the time of Idanthyrsus, which must have been the time when Apollo and Diana were born among the Greeks, the time when, as demonstrated just above [320], men changed into frogs, the blazon of France has expressed the four thousand years of continuous sovereignty enjoyed by that royal house.

[Chapter] XXXI [XXXIII]
Further principles of the science of medals

349. The third principle [that follows from our example of the numbering of years in the poetic age] is that of the science of the medals that were the hieroglyphics or heroic emblems in which the heroes preserved their histories. Hence it is possible that the Latins called the

medals 'money' because they admonished later generations about the antiquity of their ancestors.[119] The Greeks called money νόμισμα [*nomisma*], which, as if by divination, Aristotle[120] said had come from νόμος [*nomos*], or 'law', because such money was the language of the first laws. Hence, to continue with further examples of this line of reasoning, one can see countless medals of Greek cities, bearing impressions of the altars, serpents, dragons or tripods which the poets or divinatory heroes used to interpret the oracles. For, as we saw in connection with ancient Roman history [74, 276], the heroic kingdoms were wholly under the control of the auspices. And it was from Greece that Horace[121] transported the saying in which he called tripods *virorum praemia fortium* ['the prizes of the brave'].

[Chapter] XXXII [XXXIV]
The language of arms through which the principles of the natural law of the gentes of the Roman jurisconsults are explained

350. This language of arms conforms with the common custom whereby the ancient nations met in armed assemblies, though they were confined to the heroes since they alone had command of arms, as we demonstrated earlier [156–7] in connection with the *Curetes* who were scattered throughout Italy, Greece and Asia, and the Germans of whose times Tacitus tells us.[122] Since the heroes alone had command of arms, they alone had command of the laws, which were everywhere permeated with superstition, so that at home religion came with an appearance of arms and abroad war was permeated with religion. Thus, the heroes were fighting for the gods of their fatherland in these wars. And when nations were conquered they lost their public religion along with their gods, whom they had been invited to abandon when, in the loudest of voices, the heralds declared war against them.[123] The custom whereby the Christian peoples take the bells of conquered cities as part of the first booty of war may be a relic of this custom of the heroic peoples.

[119] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 379.
[120] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 1133a.
[121] Horace, *Odes*, IV, 8, 3–4, where, however, tripods are not mentioned.
[122] Tacitus, *Germany*, 7 and 13.
[123] Livy, I, 55, 4 and V, 21, 5.

351. Hence, when nations were conquered they could no longer celebrate solemn, public marriage, because, with the loss of their gods, they lost the public auspices necessary for the celebration of such solemn, civil marriages. Consequently they contracted natural marriages, which left them without the paternal power of the Roman citizens. Thus the Cyclopic command that the heroic fathers had exercised over the lives and possessions of the children of their families diminished throughout the provinces.

352. [As we have seen] the public auspices were supposed to represent the will that the gods had entrusted to the order of heroes and the reason, therefore, why the will of the heroes was sovereign and possessed of an absolute liberty. Hence, when they lost their auspices, conquered nations lost command also of their laws and arms and could no longer meet in armed assemblies. They therefore lost that form of armed ownership that the Romans called 'quiritary', as a result of which, since they no longer had patrimony when alive, they no longer left any heritage when dead, other than that which the Romans called *bonorum possessio* ['bonitary ownership']. This was a natural heritage, i.e. the totality of the goods of the deceased, which, since it was not recognised in the heroic law pertaining to those who belonged to a gens, and therefore went unrecognised in the Law of the Twelve Tables, was administered as a matter of exception by the praetors.

353. For these reasons, nations that had been conquered lost the law of the bond which, in times when nations still lacked articulate language, was expressed by a heroic emblem signifying that the [varieties of] private ownership possessed by those with the bond were dependent upon a public ownership that was sovereign in right, lordship and liberty. Later, after the discovery of words of settled meaning, [reference to] this public ownership made its way into the formula for asserting a claim, as expressed in the words, *Aio hunc fundum meum esse ex iure quiritium* ['I affirm this land to be mine in accordance with quiritary law']. Here the term *fundum* retained its proper meaning in civil law, in which it is the true foundation, the *fundus*, of all the other terms, and which, as demonstrated above [154], consists in the ownership that belonged to the sovereign powers. Hence, when the formula *ex iure quiritium* was used, either when consigning or reclaiming an estate with the solemn consignment of a bond, it meant that, in virtue of the force and right of eminent ownership, each person individually had civil ownership of the estates that were consigned or reclaimed.

Initially confined to the nobles, this kind of ownership was later extended to all the Roman people in assembly throughout the whole breadth of the lands of Rome. The estates themselves were called *praedia*, in the native meaning of this term of civil law as used in the bond of landed property, where the citizens were *praedes reipublicae* ['goods of the republic'], a usage of *praedia* that arose because, as we demonstrated above [154], the first heroic booty [*praeda*] consisted in the plebs of the first cities.[124] This meant that, together with their real estate, these citizens were subject to the public Treasury, which, as we shall shortly see [369], was the reason for excises or tolls. It was also the reason why servitudes were imposed on *praediis* ['estates'], which were by nature subjects, so that the servitudes were *iura praediorum* ['the law of estates'], but not on land as such, which, by its nature, fell under the free ownership of the sovereigns. Hence three and no more kinds of lords exist in nature, with three different kinds of ownership over three different kinds of things: the owners of the profits, who are lords of the commodities that estates sustain; the direct owners, who are lords of the estates that the lands sustain; and the sovereigns, who are lords of the land that sustains this civil world of nations. And all this through the authority of ownership that God committed to the civil powers in their governance of it. Thus the bond was the heroic emblem of public liberty in all the ancient nations, as we shall demonstrate in the mythology of Hercules in the next book.

354. In the poetic age the expression 'the people with the bond' meant what was later called *populus suae potestatis*, that is, a people with its own δυναμις [*dynamis*] or *potestas* ['power'], from which δυναστεία [*dynasteia*] meant 'a people with its own sovereignty'. Thus, when he stipulates the bond, the Roman herald, using the formula of Tarquinius Priscus, asks, '*Est ne populus collatinus suae potestatis?*' ['Is the people of Collatia acting in virtue of its own power?'], to which the plenipotentiaries of Collatia reply, '*Est*' ['It is']. But when the heroic emblem of the bond was lost, membership of a gens was lost with it, and, hence also, agnation, which came with membership of a gens, for each family was part of the house from which it had branched out. Hence, when conquered peoples contracted natural marriages and became the natural fathers of their

[124] See Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 470.

children and the natural owners of the fields, where they had the kind of ownership that Roman law called 'bonitary', they remained 'cognate', i.e. connected by blood, and thus connected by nature alone.

355. When they lost their gods, the provinces also lost the *fas deorum* ['the divine law of the gods'], i.e. the sacred language through which [their oaths] were *nuncupari vota* ['oaths to be publicly announced']. Hence, they also lost the public language, with its ever-present religious connotations, in which Tarquinius Priscus drew up the formula for the surrender of Collatia, *nuncupatis verbis*, to express it in Latin, i.e. in the solemn language of the stipulation and discharge of debt, as we can see from Livy.[125] Thus conquered peoples were deprived of the law of the heroic gentes contained in the chapter of the Law of the Twelve Tables, *Qui nexum faciet mancipiumque, uti lingua nuncupassit, ita ius esto* ['Whoever makes a bond or solemn transfer of property, what his words say shall be law']. It was a feature of this law, however, that in heroic times neither buying nor selling, wherein lies the origin of contracts, was conducted on the presumption of good faith, for in the act of consigning the bond, through which the farm to be sold was solemnly consigned, it was necessary to stipulate the *dupla* [double payment] in order that the seller should not infringe the buyer's right, just as it was stipulated when cities surrendered in order that the pact of surrender be respected. For all these reasons, therefore, the provinces were no longer able to contract solemn civil obligations by means of stipulation. Hence, just as at home Roman law provided support neither for the mere fact of possession, which was recognised as a matter of exception in the interdicts of the praetors, nor for agreements not stipulated in the act of consigning the bond, so abroad the law concerning victories provided support neither for [mere] possession nor for contracts in the provinces. The praetors sustained these by means of equity.

356. Hence, from here and nowhere else, came the contracts that the Roman jurisconsults called *iuris gentium* ['contracts of the law of the gentes'], to which Ulpian, in weighty language, added the word *humanarum* ['contracts of the human gentes'].[126] Some interpreters,

[125] Livy, I, 38, 1–2.
[126] See footnote 14, p. 43.

with ideas quite contrary to ours, have held that the Romans must have received these contracts from free, foreign nations, all of which were barbaric. But though the Greek nation, in comparison with which, as demonstrated above [207], the Romans themselves were reputed to be barbarians, was a subject nation of Rome, the Romans never possessed a law in common with Greece. On the contrary, it was through the Roman law of victory that it came about that contracts in nations of provincial status were ruled only by the decency of truth, good faith and natural equity. For, by allowing gentile things to be arranged thus, Providence, whom the Roman jurisconsults also defined as the regulator of the natural law of the gentes, ordained that, just as divine law should give birth to heroic law through the law of the auspices, based upon a difference in the two natures, as argued at length above [117–18], so heroic law should give birth to the law of human gentes; and that through this law it should come about later that both the victorious Roman people should finally be indoctrinated into humanity from these conquered provinces and the major corpus of Roman law be composed of the law administered in the provincial edicts. Precisely thus, in the heroic disputes, were the heroic fathers indoctrinated severally into more equal laws by the plebs themselves. Hence, as we observed elsewhere,[127] the tribunitial or plebiscitary laws were replete with natural equity. And in precisely the same way as the Roman plebs sought to become the equals of the fathers in civil law, by denying the heroism of which they boasted, whence the people later commanded laws that were more in conformity with natural equity, by depriving the conquered peoples of their heroism, the victorious Roman people rendered the heroes and the plebs equal in law. This is [the essence of] natural right itself, on the basis of which a law common to the whole of mankind arose throughout the nations.

357. Finally, however, when the Roman princes in the monarchy wanted for themselves alone a unique status in civil nature, they sought to unite in the persona [of the monarch] all aspects of Roman heroism. These included the auspices of Rome; command of arms and the laws, hence the fortune and glory of their exploits; and sole entitlement to the name and nation of Rome, starting from Tiberius Caesar, with whom the Roman monarchy strictly began. Thus they deprived the Romans of the right of the heroic gentes to meet in

[127] *De uno*, CL.

assembly under the title 'citizens', as the 'lords of arms' were called, and confiscated their arms. This is the truly royal law through which the Roman people was stripped of its sovereignty, which was consigned in bond to a Roman prince. But stripped of its arms, Roman private law then became truly *nudum ius quiritium* ['a bare law of the citizens'], a bare name, a mere solemnity, productive of hardly a single useful effect. For, in their wish to render the Roman citizens equal to the provincials, the Roman princes began to promote the natural law of the human gentes throughout the whole extent of the world in which the Roman prince was *rector humani generis* ['the governor of mankind']. This was in the age of Augustus when, with Roman pomp at its peak, the Roman empire was referred to, in vulgar Latin, as *orbis terrarum* ['the orb of the world']. Thus the Roman princes promoted the natural law of the gentes for the same end as that which so delighted the Christian princes when they heard it acknowledged with the title 'clement'. This is the political reason why monarchies conform best to human nature and therefore constitute the most durable form of state.

358. Thus was the wisdom of the peoples made ready to receive the wisdom of the philosophers by means of the self-same vulgar who, when profane, had at first been held in disdain and kept at length from the vain wisdom of divinity. For, as a result of the Roman practice whereby natural liberty was allowed in the provinces, the vulgar there became precisely like the Roman plebs before the Law of the Twelve Tables. Hence they were left with all the modes of acquiring ownership, which were therefore said to be modes 'of the natural law of the gentes', with the exception only of occupation by war and usucaption, and these still constitute all the modes of acquiring it that are born separately in each people. For we demonstrated occupation and usucaption earlier [141] and Grotius acknowledged and accepted all the others.[128]

359. From our reasoning in all these things, we can conclude that, throughout the extent of their victories, the Romans propagated their victorious Roman law over the peoples they conquered, and enclosed them in the heroic law of the bond through which, tightly bound within their power, they held the world they had subdued. This shows how much science there is in Grotius's understanding of

[128] Grotius, *The Law*, II, IV, XII–XIII.

the law of the gentes of the Roman jurisconsults, which he criticises throughout whereas it is he himself who is worthy of criticism.[129] For this law was the single, highest and most truly sovereign science of that immortal people with respect to the justice of war and peace! Likewise, we can see how much science the interpreters reveal in their understanding of the expression 'civil law',[130] when they assert that marriage, paternal power, agnation, heritage, mancipation, usucaption and stipulation are properties [only] of *Roman* citizens!

[Chapter] XXXIII [XXXV]
The necessity of the language of arms for understanding barbaric history

360. With this same language of armed persons, which applies both to the heroes of the first heroic times, who were clothed in the leather of slaughtered wild animals, and to the nobles of the returned barbaric times, who, encased in iron, were properly men of arms, facts of fabulous history that have hitherto seemed impossible become intelligible. We are told, for example, of the inordinate strength of the heroes, such as Ajax, 'the tower of the Greeks',[131] or, no less incredibly, of Horatius Cocles, who singlehandedly held up an entire Etruscan army on the bridge,[132] just as in the recourse of barbaric times we are told of the stupendous strength and bodies of the likes of Roland or Orlando and the other paladins of France,[133] or, in the Kingdom of Naples, of the forty Norman heroes who defeated entire armies of Saracens.[134] For these princes of cities were said to have waged war singlehandedly, as only monarchs [are said to do] today, because their families or hordes of vassals were lost from sight in the splendour of the names and shields of their illustrious owners, from whom, as demonstrated above [339], their vassals were called *clientes*, like *cluenti*, i.e., 'resplendent', a term that is appropriate for describing opaque bodies that are illuminated by light, but not

[129] See 20 and footnote 21, p. 16.
[130] *Digest*, I, 2, 2, 5.
[131] *Il.*, III, 229; VI, 5.
[132] Livy, II, 10.
[133] *Chanson de Roland*.
[134] Enrico Ostiense, *Summa titulorum decretalium*, II, 37, who locates this incident in the eleventh century.

for those that themselves give forth light. Thus in Roman public law the practice endured that, when war was waged, the provinces to which the Romans extended the law of the heroic clienteles, as explained above [358], were compounded under the name 'Roman' and lost in the light of Roman glory. They were therefore referred to as the 'the *socii* of the Romans', just as the vassals of Ulysses or Aeneas,[135] whom Virgil[136] certainly describes when Aeneas gathers them together for embarkation, were said to be the *socii* of the heroes. Similarly, in Roman private law, the servants and children of the family were hidden under the personae of their owners and lords. Thus these are the true poetic, civil characters of such personae or masks, a kind of genera in which many men are comprehended under the character of a gens or house, as, in truth, to anyone who reflects upon them, are the family coats of arms themselves. Hence when individual poets later became aware of [the poetic characters of] the genera of customs, they transformed them into poetic, moral characters, in order to instruct the vulgar, who were incapable of understanding customs through the genera of the philosophers. If this is so, five important truths follow.

I

361. That from poetry came the first outline of the shape that metaphysics, the queen of the recondite sciences, began to take. Thus far from true is it that recondite wisdom gave rise to poetry!

II

362. That the poetic falsehoods are the same as the general truths of the philosophers, with the sole difference that the latter are abstract and the former clothed in images. Thus we should be warned both of the malice of anyone who claims with intent, and of the ignorance of anyone who claims without intent, that the lessons of the poets disagree with those of the philosophers. Furthermore, the truth of the poets is, in a certain mode, more true than that of the historians, because it is the highest idea of a truth, whereas that of the historians is often true as a result of caprice, need or luck.

[135] *Od.*, X, 438–41 and *Aen.*, VI, 160–74.
[136] *Aen.*, III, 13.

III

363. That the true significance of the characters of both genera[137] is that they are poetic allegories or expressions, in which diverse men, customs and deeds are contained in a single image.

IV

364. That, just as use is made of poetic characters created by art, it must previously have been by nature that the first nations, incapable of understanding things by means of [philosophical] genera, were naturally led to conceive genera as poetic characters, as we demonstrated above [261–3].

V

365. Finally, the claim that we put forward in a different work[138] is confirmed: that ancient Roman law was a serious, dramatic poem. Here, however, in conformity with the science that is the subject of our reasoning, we assert that, had dramatic poetry not been celebrated first in the streets, it would not later have risen to the theatres.

[Chapter] XXXIV [XXXVI] Concerning the third part of poetic language: words of settled meaning

366. While the two principal parts of poetic language, those of divine and of heroic characters, were developing, the third part, consisting of words of settled meaning, began as their sounds began to develop. Thus the whole corpus of poetic language was composed of active metaphors, vivid images, obvious resemblances, apt comparisons,

[137] In a later addition, Vico clarifies this by adding 'both political and military'.

[138] *De uno*, CLXXXII, 2, where Vico cites Justinian's remark that the fictions of civil law were *iuris antiqui fabulas*, a fable of ancient law, in which, despite its fictitious character, the truth of the law was preserved. In proceeding to refer to it as a 'poem', Vico draws attention to the presence in it both of fictions and fictitious characters, asserting that it therefore included a fable about the law of the gentes and, later, of the natural law of the philosophers. He does not explicitly refer to Roman law as a 'serious' poem, but this later qualification of his earlier remark may reflect his continued endorsement of Justinian's view that it employed fictitious characters in the interests of the truth. The claim in the rest of paragraph 365, however, goes well beyond this.

expressions in which effects stand for causes and parts for wholes, detailed circumlocutions, epithets for specific things and appropriate digressions. These were all ways born to enable those who do not know how to name things with appropriate words to make themselves understood or to talk to others with whom they share no words of settled meaning with which to make themselves understood. Thus digressions are characteristic of lowly women and peasants who do not know how to choose what is best suited to their needs and to omit what is irrelevant to them. But to anyone who reflects well upon them, the frequent elisions i.e., defective words, the pleonasms or superfluous words, the onomatopoeias or imitations of voice or sound, the abbreviated words still in use in Italian poetry and the conjoined words so frequently observed in the German language, will all seem characteristic of language in its infancy. And, as in the ancient languages of the poets, so it was certainly possible in Latin to be confronted in the comedies, solemn formulae and ancient laws with everyday words that must undoubtedly have been taken from vulgar Latin. The use of contorted language arises naturally in those who either do not know how to express themselves or suffer from some hindrance in doing so completely, as we can observe in both irate and deferential people, who use the direct and indirect cases of nouns correctly, but omit their verbs. German is certainly more misleading [in its use of such contorted language] than Latin, just as Latin is more misleading than Greek. On this point we wish to correct here what we have written elsewhere.[139]

[Chapter] XXXV [XXXVII]
The discovery of the common origins of all the articulate languages

367. This same origin of poetry that we have discovered enables us also to discover the origins common to all the articulate languages on the basis of the following observation concerning humanity: that children born in our present wealth of languages, in which they hear human words almost from birth, begin to speak by pronouncing monosyllables, but though the fibre of their muscle is supple and extremely pliable, they do so only with great difficulty. Hence it is hardly possible

[139] *De const. philol.*, XII, 14.

to understand how much greater must have been the difficulties of pronunciation that those first men of Hobbes, Grotius and Pufendorf experienced, or, in truth, the dehumanised races of Cain before the Flood and of Ham and Japhet after it, and even Adam, who applied names to things, for the robustness of their bodies caused them all to suffer from a stiffness in their vocal cords. This confirms our conjectures about interjections and pronouns: that the first words were interjections, articulated under the impetus of violent passions of fear, joy, pain or anger; that the first words to signify human ideas were pronouns, for there were as yet no words of settled meaning by which to name them; and that in all languages almost all words of both kinds were monosyllables. Certainly German, which is undoubtedly an original language, was produced from wholly monosyllabic roots. And here is born a demonstration of the ultimate antiquity of the holy language, which remains wholly unaltered from its first origins, and has a corpus of words almost wholly composed of one or two syllables.

[Chapter] XXXVI [XXXVIII]
The discovery of the true causes of the Latin language and, by analogy, of all the others

368. Since it is a property of elements that they should be simple and rough, the harshness and simplicity of the words that must have been born first in the nations is a great proof of the first origins of language. Thus we find that the causes of the Latin language were very different from those so ingeniously worked out by Giulio Cesare Scaligero[140] or the quite different origins so acutely devised by Francisco Sanchez.[141] The same must be said of the origins of Greek that Plato proposed in his *Cratylus*, which we erroneously followed in another of our works, as we now openly confess.[142] For all the words of the Latin language are found to have been monosyllabic, harsh in pronunciation, and wholly native to Latium, with no debt whatsoever to origins in any foreign language.[143]

[140] Giulio Cesare Scaligero in his *De caussis linguae latinae* (1540), the *Praefatio ad Sylvium Caesarem filium*.

[141] See footnote 72, p. 178.

[142] See footnote 69, p. 178.

[143] The main principle involved in the long list of examples that follows is that because the first words are monosyllabic, they must provide the roots of longer words to which they are attached etymologically, as Vico explicitly states at 370 below.

369. Because the thundering sky was the first of the many things in nature to be noticed, and before people had agreed on a proper word with which to name it, it was referred to as *hoc* ['this'], as in *Aspice hoc sublime cadens, quem omnes invocant Iovem* ['Behold this, sublime and setting, whom all call Jove'],[144] and thus it remained in the ancient vulgar, as we know from the expression *Luciscit hoc iam* ['This, now, becomes light'] of the comedies,[145] where 'this' indicated the sky. Later, agreement on a proper name began with the monosyllable *cel*, exactly like the [Italian] word *ciel* ['the sky'], which came down from Italy's barbaric times to the Italian poets. Through onomatopoeia, the Latins named the father and king of the gods, *'Ious'*, from the roar of thunder, just as the Greeks named him Ζεύς from the whistle of thunderbolts. The most conspicuous of created things was *sol* ['the sun'], and the most joyful and awakening, *lux* ['the light'], the masculine case of which first meant 'day', as in *hoc luci* for *hoc die* ['this day'].[146] The opposite of *sol* was *nox* ['the night']. The most readily observed parts of man were *os, oris* ['the mouth'] and *os, ossis* ['the bone'], *dens* ['the tooth'], *frons* ['the brow'], *cor* ['the heart'], *crus* ['the leg'], *pes* ['the foot'], *calx* ['the heel'], and *cus* ['the skin']. They must [also] have said *pen*, *penis* ['penis'], since *ren*, *renis* ['kidney'] survived, and, for reasons to be explained just now, the hand must first have been *man*. The most characteristic properties of man were *vox* ['the voice'], *mens* ['the mind'], and *spons*, *spontis* ['one's self'], from which came *mea* and *tua sponte*, i.e., 'the will'. The most necessary things were *fons*, for the perennial waters, *frux*, for apples, later to be used for the harvests, *glans*, ['acorn'] and *nux* ['nut']. Fire was both *fax*, and *lux*, and the lowly women of Naples, who are too superstitious to use the word 'fire', still call it 'light'. At first, again for reasons to be explained, bread must have been *pan*, the simplest and crudest of cooked foods was *lens* ['lentil'], and the crudest of dishes, made from spelt and beans, was *puls* ['pottage']. The first season was *ver* ['spring'], and, in addition to the thunderbolts and thunder which, according to our principles, were called *Ious*, there were *nubs*, *nubis* ['the cloud'], *nix* ['snow'] and *ros* ['dew'], which at first must have meant rain. The delicacies of the golden age were *lac* ['milk'], and *mel*

[144] This occurs in Ennius' *Thyestes*, cited in Cicero, *De nat. deorum*, II, 2, 4; 25, 65; and in other classical authors.
[145] Plautus, *Amphytrion*, 543.
[146] *Ibid.*, 165.

['honey'], in contrast to which there was *fel* ['poison']. The parts that comprise the organism of plants were *stirps* ['the root'], *tralx* ['the shoot'], *flos* ['the flower'], *frons* ['foliage'] and *frux* ['the fruit'], from which came both *fructus* ['produce'], leading to *frui* ['enjoyment'], and *frutex* ['the stem'], leading to *fruticari* ['to grow bushy']. The most useful animals were *bos* ['the ox'], and *sus* ['the pig'], and, for reasons to be given, the Latins may first have used the monosyllable *ous* for *ovis* ['the sheep']. The first virtue of these wholly ferocious and wild men was given the divine name *Mars*,[147] from which it was possibly called *mas* ['male']. The genus of all crafts was *ars* ['art'], the material of all animal husbandry, *grex* ['the herd'], that of the whole countryside, *rus* ['the farm'], with its most prized tool *falx* ['the scythe'], and the fence round the fields was *seps*, in common with the Greek σῆψ [*seps*]. The house was given [another] divine name, *Lar*. The principal architectural materials were *trabs* ['timber'] and *calx* ['stone'], and the naval materials *trabs* and *pix* ['pitch'], while lime and pitch were of the genus *glus* ['glue'], from which came *gluten* and *glutinum* ['sticky']. [When they did not know the proper name of something][148] infants used the word *res* ['thing']. The first wheat was *far* ['spelt'] and the main condiment *sal* ['salt']. The first household goods were *vas*, from which came *convasare* ['to pack one's bags'], which is our military *imbaliciare*, amongst the most necessary parts of which was *lanx* ['a plate']. The first metal was *aes* ['copper'] and the first money *as*, i.e. the whole [unit], the division of which was *pars* ['the part']. The roughest of the gods was *Pan* ['the rustic god']; the private prize of virtue, *laus* ['praise']; and the most simple homage to the gods, *thus* ['incense']. *Spes* ['hope'] was the first of the emotions and *mors* ['death'] the ultimate terror. The society of the gods was founded on *Styx*, the deep water, i.e. the springs of the fountains in which the gods swore solemn oaths. *Mons* ['the mountain'] and *scrobs* ['the ditch'] were variations of terrain that even simpletons could spot. *Cos* was the stone that the first heroes struck when they sought to make fire. *Fex* ['dregs'] was the genus for all forms of filth. A prince of culture was *vir*, a word that retained its meaning as 'husband', 'priest' and 'magistrate' among the Romans. The heroes bought their wives with *dos* ['a dowry'], as a result of which the ancient Romans

[147] 'Divine', because Mars was the god of war. See 424 below.
[148] See *De const. philol.* XII, 7, 3.

continued to celebrate solemn marriage *coemptione et farre* ['by a mock sale and sharing of bread']; and so on with *gens*, *urbs* ['the city'], *arx* ['the stronghold'], *rex* ['the king'], and *dux* ['the leader']. The prayer of refugees in the asylum was *prex*, leading to *precium* ['grapevine'], which was first a food that refugees received for their rural works. The aid that the heroes gave to the refugees on their lands was *Ops*,[149] another divine word, from which the heroes were called *optimi* ['the strong'] in the state of the families and *optimates* ['aristocrats'] in the first republics. *Mercari* ['to trade'] came from *merx* ['goods'] and the first commerce was of the fields, for in a state where men are simple and rough, and their only concern is with the necessities of life, but where some are rich in fields while others possess none, the first commerce among them will be [on the basis of] a census, such as that of Servius Tullius.[150] And with the return of the barbaric times, when the fields had lain uncultivated through the ravages of war, and the conquerors had become the lords of great lands leaving the multitudes deprived of sustenance, the first contracts to return were emphyteusis, the census and the 'rural' fiefs. [But, to return to our theme, further examples are] *pax* ['peace'], from which came *pacisci* ['to make an agreement'] and *pactum* ['an agreement']. Continuing further, *fraus* ['deception'], *vis* ['force'], *nex* ['murder'], *fur* ['thief'], *fons* ['spring'], and *lis* ['dispute'] comprised the whole subject matter of judgements, and *ius* ['right'], *fas* ['the divine law'], *mos* ['custom'] and *lex* ['a law'], that of jurisprudence. *Fis*, from which came *fidis* ['gut'] and *fides* ['trust'], which was possibly named from the whistle of thunderbolts, meant cord, force, power and authority. *Sors* was chance and *fors*, utility, leading to *fors Fortuna*,[151] for a good outcome, and the ancient *fortus*, for *bonus*, i.e. 'useful'. *Trux* referred properly to Cyclopic ferocity. *Crux* ['an execution tree'] was a very ancient kind of punishment, and the gallows to which Horatius was condemned by the duumvirs was described as a 'barren' tree.[152] *Praes, praedis*, from which came *praeda* ['booty'], *praedari* ['to plunder'] and *praedium* ['estate'], was the obligation attached to real estate, since, in accordance with our principles, the plebeians held the landed property of which the nobles

[149] Ops, the wife of Saturn, was the goddess of abundance and fertility.
[150] See footnote 130, p. 98.
[151] Livy, X, 46, 14.
[152] Livy, I, 26, 6.

were lords. Wealth was given the divine name *dis*, for the first wealth consisted in the cultivated fields and *Dis* was the god of the deep earth, through which he was later taken to be god of the underworld, i.e. the Pluto who abducts Ceres or Proserpina, the seed of wheat, who returns later to see the sky and the crops. Thus the rich were the lords of the lands in the state of the families, who, when they later united in republics, went on to create the eminent ownership of the lands of their states that belongs to the civil powers, thus making it possible to satisfy public needs from all that comes from, and is sustained and maintained by, the land, all of which has hitherto been [taken to be] the underworld, with its [god] Dis as the hidden origin of levies, tributes and stipends. Hence, by means of these various practices, as well as their continuous labours and the other things mentioned above concerning public necessities, the people are able to organise their lives in times of peace through [a system of] punishments and in times of war through their armies, so that sovereign power itself consists in eminent ownership. Finally, to bring this line of reasoning to an end, *vas vadis* was the same as the Greek Βάς [*bas*] and the German *Wass*, from which came *wassus* and *wassallus* ('vassal'], i.e. the subject who is obliged to follow [his lord] in person, the obligation itself being called *vadimonium*. This demonstrates that among the Greeks, Latins and Germans, fiefs were born before language.

370. From all these origins it should be clear that the first words must have begun as monosyllables, above all those in which the word for the direct case was the same as that for the other cases, such as *vestis* ['clothing'] from *vest*, *hostis* ['enemy'] from *host*, *sudis* ['stake'] from *sud*, *ovs, ovis*, originally for sheep, and *Ious, Iovis*. So also *fis, fidis*, the cord or strength, and *quir*, the spear from which the Latins derived *quirites*, just as from χείρ [*cheir*], the hand, the Greeks derived *Curetes*. In this respect in its origins the Latin language is seen to bear a close resemblance with German. So for *bene* ['well'], *canis* ['dog'], *donum* ['gift'], *filum* ['thread'], *finis* ['boundary'], *solus* ['alone'], *verum* 'truth'], *vinum* ['wine'], and *unus* ['one'], the first Latins must have said *ben*, *can*, *don*, *fil*, *fin*, *sol*, *ver*, *vin*, *un*, and, in the same way, *pan* ['bread'] and *man* ['hand'], abbreviations of the sort that the Italian poets certainly inherited from the second barbaric times.

371. Turning to verbs, *sum* ['to be'] later signifies all being, *sto* ['to stand'] is the verb of substance, and being and substance are the highest

genera of things. *Fio*, which first meant 'to suffer' [or be the object of an action] rather than [the subject of] *facio* ['I do'], must have begun as *fo*, analogously with *fis* and *fit*, and '*fo*' continued to be used by the Italians. The verb *for* ['to speak'] belongs to the language in which we find *Fas gentium* ['The sacred law of the gentes'], which comprises the whole subject matter of this book. The verb *flo* ['to stream forth'] was concerned with life, hence it may have become *flos* ['the flower'], like the breath of a plant. *No* ['I swim'] was the first *natare* ['swimming'] of children on land which, according to our principles, was the exercise through which they grew robust and large. For, by expanding and contracting the size of their various muscles, their strength gained more nourishment from the nitre in the filth in which they wallowed, as a result of which they grew into giants. [Only] later was *no* transported to the sea, because the Latins, in common with all the other nations, were slow in going to live on the coast.

372. It is certain that not only in Latin but in all languages the particles were monosyllabic, and among these principally the prepositions such as *a*, *ab*, *e*, *ex*, *de*, *di*, *ad*, *in*, *sub*, *super*, *se*, *prae*, *ob*, *am* and *circum*, which are signiflying elements in the words of which they are constituents.

373. Henceforth, therefore, we should use such origins and roots to explain the causes, natural and true, of the other languages, on analogy with the origins of Latin provided here.

[Chapter] XXXVII [XXXIX] The discovery of the origins of song and verse

374. The principles of many important things stem from this [theory of the] origin of articulate languages. The first is that song and verse were born by a necessity of human nature and not through a caprice of pleasure. But because it has been imagined that they were born as a caprice of pleasure, some very serious philosophers, such as Francesco Patrizi,[153] as well as others whom we would be ashamed to mention in the same breath, have labelled them as so many trifles.

375. For mutes naturally express vowels by singing; people with a stammer express articulate sounds that are difficult to pronounce by

[153] See footnote 3, p. 151. Patrizi believed that song was created for reasons of pleasure.

singing them; and the Chinese, who have no more than three hundred words, increase their number by pronouncing them in a variety of ways through a certain kind of singing.

376. Next, [our theory] permits us to observe that the first kind of verse was heroic, born equally among the Hebrews, Greeks and Latins on the principle of uncertain metre. With regard to Hebrew, St Jerome[154] attests that the Book of Job, which is a much older history than that narrated by Moses, was written in heroic verse, thus demonstrating both the truth of this sacred book and the antiquity of sacred language. With regard to Greek and Latin [we can turn to] two outstanding pieces of vulgar learning which have hitherto lain unnoticed and unused as a result of the preconceptions underlying other principles of poetry, as laid down first by Plato, confirmed by Aristotle, and then adorned by all the others who have written on poetic thought, such as the likes of Patrizi, Mazzoni,[155] the Scaligers and Castelvetro.

377. The first piece states that, when they implored Apollo's aid against the Python, the Greek peoples articulated the first heroic verse when they were enfeebled by fear, by pronouncing in slow beats or spondees: ἰὼ παιάν, ἰὼ παιάν, ἰὼ παιάν [*io paian*, *io paian*, *io paian*].[156] Later, when they acclaimed the victorious god, in their happiness they pronounced the same verse in quick beats, i.e. in dactyls, with the long omega uttered as two separate omicrons, just as the ancient Latins pronounced long vowels in two beats and loosened the diphthong αι [*ai*] into two syllables, so that six dactyls came to be formed from six spondees. After the slaying of the Python, heroic verse continued to be referred to as 'Pythian' verse, though it was more commonly called 'heroic', since it was the verse in which the heroes spoke. Similarly this heroic verse was the first to be spoken by the Latins, who called it 'Saturnian verse', nor could it have been named otherwise since it was born in the age of Saturn, in times when Italy was still savage. The fragments left by Ennius[157] also tell us that the

[154] St Jerome, *Praefatio in Iob*.

[155] Iacopo Mazzoni (1548–98), Platonic philosopher and author of *Difesa della 'Commedia' di Dante*. For the others, see footnotes 217, p. 130 and 3, p. 151.

[156] In a later addition Vico repudiates this account and explains the slowness of the first spondaic verse as a consequence of the slowness and difficulties that the first men had in pronouncing words, already explained earlier. But he may also have done so on the grounds that enfeeblement by fear would not be a good example of the strong emotion required to induce people to express sound.

[157] Cited in Cicero, *Brutus*, XIX, 75.

fauns sang in heroic verse, unless [we are prepared to believe that] some other Latin Orpheus, replete in recondite wisdom and highly skilled in poetic art, had reduced to humanity the aborigines from whom the Latin peoples arose!

378. The [second piece of vulgar learning is the] history of two words, which tells us that the first laws must have been expressed in such verse: νόμοι [*nomoi*], which means both laws and songs in Greek, and *carmina*, which meant both 'verses' and 'the solemn formulae of the laws' in Latin. Since the tradition that the Arcadians of Italy were born as singers has also been preserved, it is also possible that Carmenta, the mother of the Arcadian Evander, took her name from these heroic poems.[158] But, for heaven's sake, even Cicero,[159] when he formulated the laws of his republic, which he certainly dictated in conformity with the Law of the Twelve Tables, made them sound like heroic verse. And if the decemvirs certainly used the word *deivei* ['the gods'] in the chapter *De parricidio* ['On Parricide'], following Jacob Raewaerd's edition,[160] they must have begun the first two laws with two halves of heroic verse: *divos caste adeunto/Pietatem adhibento* ['the gods should be approached chastely/with a demonstration of piety'].[161] But in this case, not only in matters as grave as the creation of laws but in any letter at all, it would have been a very grave error to express oneself in a prose so dense as to eschew even iambs, which least of all resemble song or convey any sense of it.

379. Hence it must be understood that these two nations passed from heroic verse to prose by means of iambic verse, into which, indeed, it was so natural to fall unintentionally when thinking that diligent writers of prose had to focus their whole attention upon not doing so when writing. And in its origin heroic verse was born with uncertain metre, as we find in the verse of Plautus and Terence, though more so in Plautus than Terence. Thus it was through nature, and not art, that tragedy and comedy, both of which certainly came after Homer, were at first written in iambic verse, for art would not have been an

[158] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 57, and Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 129.

[159] Cicero, *De legibus*, II, 8–9 and 19–20.

[160] Jacob Raewaerd (1534–68) was not the author of an edition of a text of the Law of the Twelve Tables, as Vico states, but of a short monograph on it, *Ad leges XII Tabularum* (1563). This does not mention a chapter with the title *De parricidio*, but contains an allusion to a remark in which Festus talks of consecrating parricides to the 'gods of the fathers'. Vico's *deivei* is a form of *divi* as used in the expression *divi parentum* ('gods of the fathers') in 59 above.

[161] Cicero, *De legibus*, II, 8, 19.

imitation of nature had the men of both nations not truly spoken in such verse. But later, as comes about so often through a blind reverence for antiquity, the common error [of thinking otherwise] became a precept.

380. As for the living languages, Gilbert Génébrard[162] and other chronologists tell us that no book was written in French or Italian before the twelfth century, even though the Provençal and Sicilian poets were already flourishing. And in Silesia, which is a nation of peasants, everyone is born a poet.

[Chapter] XXXVIII [XL]
The idea of an etymologicon common to all native languages

381. The second principle [that follows from our discovery of the origins of articulate language] is that of an etymologicon common to all native languages. For, since the totality of the principles of things includes both those from which their composition begins as well as those in which their resolution is finally reached, our discovery that all the first words uttered by the Latins must have been monosyllables provides us with a model of the way in which the universal origins of all native languages must be discovered in such monosyllables. For words are articulate human sounds, and since children are naturally led to express things by imitating the sounds that they make, a large part of the vocabulary of every language must owe its first origins to onomatopoeic monosyllables of this sort. Thus, to revert to the same origins with which we have been concerned, commencing first of all with the Latins and Greeks, these confirm that the Greeks called Jove, the first of the gods, Ζεύς, from the whistle of thunderbolts, and the Latins called him *Ious*, the genitive of which is *Iovis*, from the roar of thunder.

382. Such an etymologicon must be made to proceed in constant accordance with the natural order of ideas. Thus, since the forests came first, then the hovels, next the fields, flocks and herds, followed by the cities, the nations and, finally, the philosophers, the etymologicon for each language must explain the origin and progress of its words through these stages. Thus, for example, *lex* was first of all

[162] Gilbert Génébrard (1537–97), author of *Chronographiae libri quatuor* (1580). See p. 622, where Génébrard's observation is confined to books written in French.

a collection of acorns: hence *ilex* ['oak'], as used in Plautus's *lectus ilex* ['a collection of oak'],[163] in the same way as *aquilex* was a collector of waters. Later, it entered into a collection of vegetables, hence they became *legumina*. Next it became a collection of men: first the collection of rebellious clientes to whom the first agrarian laws were granted, and then the meeting of citizens in parliament that was required, before the discovery of writing, to keep the people informed of public deliberations. Next, after the discovery of writing, *lex* became a collection of letters, hence the vulgar *legere* ['to read'] which still survives, from which the written law was finally called *lex*.

[Chapter] XXXIX [XLI]
The idea of an etymologicon of words of foreign origin

383. The third principle [that follows from the discovery of the origins of articulate language] also concerns etymology. [We start from the fact that] inland nations always rose before maritime nations and, as discovered above [368], that the first Latin words contained nothing of Greek origin. In Italy this was true even of words in Latium at the time of the origins of Rome, when Magna Graecia was flourishing on the coasts of Italy. Hence words whose origins are undoubtedly foreign must be secondary words, introduced after nations came to know one another on the occasion of wars, alliances and commerce. With this principle many grave difficulties that are encountered in ancient Roman history can be laid to rest.

384. For, given the common poverty [of articulate words] in the first languages and the difficulty the first peoples had in abstracting qualities from subjects, these two human customs must have produced the antonomasia through which the names of nations that were distinctive in certain qualities were used to signify everyone later found to possess such qualities. Thus when the Romans were ignorant of refined customs and first observed them among the Tarantines, they used the word 'Tarantine' for 'refined'; when they were ignorant of pride and first encountered it among the Capuans, they used the word 'Capuan' for 'proud'; and so on for other similar cases of antonomasia. This was the mode in which Romulus' asylum came

[163] Plautus, *Asinaria*, 221, with reference to the description of a bed.

to be filled with Phrygians from overseas, despite the fact that Ancus Marcius was the first to extend the boundaries of Rome to the sea on the nearby shores of Ostia.[164] For when the Romans, ignorant of their own origins, in which respect they must have been no more fortunate than the Greeks, later came into contact with the Greeks and discovered from them that colonies had come to Italy from overseas Phrygia, they claimed that Romulus' inland colony was such an overseas colony from Phrygia. This is also the true reason for the later belief that the Romans were descended from the Trojan Aeneas. In this way Rome can also be relieved of the great misfortune that she had not in her ranks men fit to be elected as her legitimate king, since it was believed that Numa and Ancus Marcius were Sabines, Servius Tullius a Greek and that an aristocratic kingdom was governed by a woman. For these must all have been instances of antonomasia: Numa and Ancus, who resembled his uncle closely in piety, must have been called 'Sabine' from the religious customs of the Sabines; Servius Tullius was 'Greek' from the crafty ingenuity in which the Greeks excelled; and [some aristocratic king] was referred to as Tanaquil,[165] i.e. as a 'woman', because of his weak ways, just as, for the same reason, in our own times we refer to weak men as 'women'.

[Chapter] XL [XLII]
The idea of a universal etymologicon for the science of the language of the natural law of the gentes

385. All the foregoing discoveries were necessary for the completion of the principles of the linguistic part of this Science, and all are directed to this end: that, just as the Roman jurisconsults, for example, possessed both a science of the languages of the civil law and a history of the times in which the words of the Law of the Twelve Tables had other, different meanings, so the jurisconsults of the natural law of the gentes should have such a science by means of a universal

[164] Livy, I, 33, 9.

[165] Tanaquil, the wife of Tarquinius Priscus, was far from weak, according to Livy (I, 41), since she concealed his death, when he was killed in a conspiracy, in order to enable Servius Tullius, their protégé, to become the *de facto* king. Vico's claim is not incompatible with this: it merely explains how, given the connotations of weakness that Vico believed were associated with normal womanhood, the fact that Tanaquil was a woman came, by antonomasia, to produce a later misreading of Roman history.

etymologicon. The model for such an etymologicon is provided by the nature of proverbs. These are certain maxims of life that the wisdom of mankind has found to be useful, but which, because different nations have regarded them from different points of view, have been explained in different expressions. And in the same manner as proverbs, when men, deeds or things that were the same in their nature were regarded by different nations from different points of view, they must have been given different names. Thus, to this very day, identical cities in Hungary have been given, in words quite different in sound, one name by the Hungarians, another by the Germans and yet another by the Turks, because these three nations were used to naming these cities from three different points of view. Hence it was that so many barbaric cities were named in Roman history in a Latin of such grace that it seems as though they were cities founded in Latium. This principle can also alleviate the great difficulties that the scriptural critics face when they observe the infinite variety of names given in profane history to personages whose proper names are given in sacred history. Thus Rameses [II], that mightiest king of the Egyptians, whose priests, Tacitus tells us, used that name when talking to Germanicus, must have been the famous Sesostris of whom the Greeks speak, who subjugated the three other dynasties of Egypt under his Theban dynasty. In just the same way, the god Fidius, the Romans' Hercules,[166] was one of the Hercules whom the Greeks observed in all the ancient nations, of whom Varro had the diligence to enumerate as many as forty. The Latins called him 'Fidius', regarding him from the point of view of faith, which is the first and principal foundation of nations. Thus he became their god of oaths. But after the Latins came to know the Greeks, the habit of delighting in anything foreign led them to signify the same idea with the name 'Hercules' and, also, 'Castor' and 'Pollux', for, in addition to Hercules, they must have been divine witnesses of oaths among the Greeks. Hence *mehercules* ['by Hercules'], *edepol* ['by Pollux'], *mecastor* ['by Castor'] and *mediusfidius* ['by Fidius', 'by the god of truth'] survived among the Romans as formulae for oaths, of which the first three were foreign and the last alone native. In the same way as the Latin 'Fidius' survived later as the Theban 'Hercules', the heroic character of the peoples of Latium

[166] Varro, *De lingua latina*, V, 66.

in the rural age, who must earlier have had a native name, changed to 'Evander', the Greek Arcadian who welcomed Hercules to Latium, some five hundred years before even the name of Pythagoras, passing through so many nations diverse in language and custom, could penetrate to Rome from Crotona. Thus, also, the major deities whom the Chaldeans affixed to the stars certainly bore different names earlier in the East, but after the Phoenicians had plied their trade in Greece, they found the Greek names of the native gods suitable to impose on their foreign gods. This undoubtedly happened after Homer, for in his age the gods lived on the summit and ridge of Mount Olympus.

386. With this combination of the certain history of the Latin language with our reasoned history of Greek, certain light is thrown upon the origin of the Graeco-Neapolitan language. This must have been some species of Hellenistic language, intermingled with some native Syriac or Egyptian elements, together with some foreign Greek [introduced] after the Greeks came to Naples for reasons of trade. Hence it was that Tiberius took more delight in Neapolitan Greek than in the Attic Greek of Athens. Thus, through this way in which proper names changed in accordance with the various points of view of different nations, we discover the origin of the eternal shadows that enshroud the civil history and geography of the ancients and the natural history of fossils, plants and animals.

[Chapter] XLI [XLIII]
The idea of a dictionary of mental words common to all nations

387. We conclude this book on language with the idea of a dictionary of the mental words, so to speak, common to all nations. Such a dictionary will explain the uniformity of their ideas concerning substance by means of the diverse modifications [of mind] which the nations would have for thinking about the identical human necessities and utilities common to all and, attending closely to such diversities in properties as would follow from diversities in their sites and climates and, hence, natures and customs, will narrate the origins of their different vocal languages, all of which unite in a common ideal language.

388. Staying with the same examples proper to our principles, let us now enumerate all the properties of the fathers in the state of the families and in that of the first cities to which this state gave rise:

    1. of imagining deities;
    2. of begetting certain children with certain women through certain divine auspices;
    3. of being, therefore, of heroic or Herculean origin [for the following reasons]:
    4. because they possessed the science of the auspices, i.e. of divination;
    5. because they made sacrifices in their houses;
    6. because of their infinite power over their families;
    7. because of the strength with which they slew the wild animals, tamed the uncultivated lands and defended their fields against the impious vagabonds who came to steal their harvests;
    8. because of the magnanimity with which they received into their asylums the impious vagabonds who, endangered by the quarrels of Hobbes's violent men in the state of bestial communion, sought refuge in them;
    9. because of the height of fame to which their virtue in suppressing the violent and assisting the weak had raised them;
    10. because of the sovereign ownership of their fields that they had acquired naturally through such exploits;
    11. because, consequently, of their sovereign command of arms, which is always conjoined with sovereign ownership;
    12. and, finally, because of their sovereign will over the laws, and therefore also punishments, which is conjoined with sovereign command of arms.

389. Hence the Hebrews would have called the fathers 'Levites' from *el*, which means 'strong'; the Assyrians, 'Chaldeans', i.e. sages; the Persians, 'magi' or diviners; and the Egyptians, as everyone knows, 'priests'. The Greeks had a variety of names for them. Sometimes they were the 'heroic poets': 'poets' from divination, because the poets were said to be 'divine' from *divinari* ['to divine']; and 'heroes', amongst whom were Orpheus, Amphion and Linus, because they were believed to be the children of the gods. At other times, for their infinite power, they were 'kings', which was the appearance which

led Pyrrhus' ambassadors to speak of having seen a senate of kings in Rome.[167] For their strength they were also called ἄριστοι [*aristoi*], from Ἄρης [*Ares*] or Mars,[168] rather like 'the martial ones' from whom, because the first cities were composed of them, the first form of civil governments was aristocratic. Throughout Saturnia, i.e. Italy, Crete and everywhere in Asia, for their appearance as armed priests, they were called *Curetes*. But first, with special significance, throughout all Greece they were the 'Heraclids', or those of the Herculean races, a name that survived among the Spartans, who were certainly armed with spears and whose kingdom was undoubtedly aristocratic. In precisely the same way, the Latin peoples referred to them as *quirites*, or priests armed with a spear, the Latin for which was *quir*, and as such they were the *Curetes* of Saturn whom the Greeks observed in Italy. They were also the *optimi*, meaning 'the strongest', just as the ancient *fortus* ['strong'] meant the same as our *bonus* ['good'] today; and the republics that they later came to compose were the 'republics of the optimates', corresponding to the aristocratic, i.e. 'martial', republics of the Greeks. Because of their absolute lordship over their families, they were lords or *heri*,[169] which even sounds like 'heroes', and their patrimony after death continued to be their *hereditas*, or 'lordship', which, as demonstrated above [369], the Law of the Twelve Tables left intact to them through the custom whereby people who belonged to a gens made dispositions in the manner of sovereigns. For their strength they were also called *viri*, again corresponding to the 'heroes' of the Greeks. Hence *viri* survived as the name for those who were husbands by solemn marriage, who, as we have found, were the only nobles in ancient Roman history until six years after the Law of the Twelve Tables.[170] Others to be called *viri* were the magistrates, such as the *duumviri* ['the duumvirs'] and the *decemviri* ['the council of ten'], the priests, as in *quindecemviri* ['the college of fifteen'] and *vigintiviri* ['the board of twenty'], and, finally,

[167] Plutarch, *The Life of Pyrrhus*, 19.

[168] Cf. *De const. philol.*, XXI, 5, where Mars is said to be the heroic character for strength: initially the strength required to plough the land, then that required to defend the altars and refugees, and finally that in war in general.

[169] Cf. *De const. philol.*, XX, 6, where Vico derives *heri* from *haerere*, i.e. the long inherence in a property by which it first came to be owned. This agrees with Voss's derivation in *Etymologicon*, p. 288.

[170] In the year 445 BC, the tribune Canuleius introduced a law permitting intermarriage between the patricians and the plebeians.

the judges, as in *centumviri* ('the bench of a hundred']. Thus this one word, *vir*, expressed wisdom, priesthood and kingship, which, as demonstrated above [132], were one and the same thing in the persons of the first fathers in the state of the families. Hence also, but with even greater propriety than any of the other peoples, the Latins called them 'fathers' from the certainty of their children. For the same reason, the nobles were 'patricians', as, similarly, they were the εὐπατρίδας [*eupatridas*] of the Athenians. In the returned barbaric times, they were called 'barons': hence, and not without surprise, Hotman[171] noted that in feudal doctrine the word *homines* ['men'] was reserved for vassals. This was precisely the same difference that the words *vir* and *homo* retained among the Latins: *vir* was a word for virtue and, indeed, as we have seen, civil virtue, but *homo* denoted a man of ordinary nature with an obligation to follow those with the right to lead. The Greeks called such a man Βάς [*bas*], the Latins *vas* and the Germans *Wass*, from which came *vassus* and *vassallus* ['vassal']. This distinction must certainly also have been the origin from which the word *baron* [*varon*], meaning 'male', survived in Spanish, just as *vir* later survived in Latin to distinguish male from female, and of the *homagium*, akin to *hominis agium* ['the right to lead men'], in which the heroic law of the bond consisted, which was the source of all the heroic disputes narrated above [161–7] in ancient Roman history. Hence we can see how much science there is in what Cujas[172] and the others have written about the origin of fiefs!

[171] François Hotman (124–90), French jurist and historian of Roman law. Like Cujas, however (see footnote 116, p. 93), Vico does not cite him frequently.
[172] *Ibid.*

BOOK IV

THE GROUND OF THE PROOFS THAT ESTABLISH THIS SCIENCE

390. The ground of the proofs that establish this Science is the universal language of the universal law of the gentes which has been observed in this great city of mankind. With the language of this law we can explain the mode of the birth of the parts that comprise the entire system of the nature of nations, for science consists solely in cognition of the mode; we can exhibit the times of the birth of the first parts of each kind [of nature], for it is the distinguishing mark of a science that it should reach those origins beyond which it is utterly foolish curiosity to seek others earlier;[1] through these same times and modes of birth we can discover the eternal properties through which alone it is possible to ascertain that their birth or nature was thus and not otherwise; and [we can reveal how], from their first beginnings, they proceeded through an uninterrupted, i.e. continuous, succession of things, in accordance with the natural progress of human ideas. This is the principal reason why, in the 'Idea of the Work', we conceived the present book in accordance with the expression *leges aeternas* ['the eternal laws'] that the philosophers use to name the parts of law that we have treated here. Moreover, on the basis of the foregoing meditations, this work brings mythologies, which are histories of facts, into agreement with etymologies, which provide a science of the origin of things. Thus it brings to light, recomposes and restores to their proper places, the great fragments of antiquity, hitherto lost

[1] See 58. Vico believes that, given that the world is finite and that the humanisation of the world begins in a sense of shame, there is no rational way of extending human knowledge beyond the shame that ensues from the Fall in the case of the early Hebrews and the shame of mating under the gaze of the sky in the case of the later gentiles.

from sight, dispersed and displaced, while preserving the reverence owed to the vulgar traditions by discovering the grounds of their truth and the causes whereby they later reached us cloaked in falsehood. Thus the whole of philology is governed with certain and determinate meanings by philosophy and consistency reigns both among the parts and in the totality of the system of these principles.

391. This Science, conducted in accordance with the foregoing sorts of proof, contains two practices. The first is that of a new critical art, which serves it as a torch with which to distinguish the true within obscure and fabulous history.[2] The second is a diagnostic art, as it were, which, regulated in accordance with the wisdom of mankind, provides the stages of necessity and utility in the order of human affairs, and thus, as its final consequence, provides this Science with its principal end: knowledge of the indubitable signs of the state of the nations.

392. In exemplification of the above claims we offer the following. The mode [in which the first parts of the system of the nature of nations were born] consisted in the reduction of a few men from bestial venery to human venery.

393. The first time [in which these parts were born] was when, among the Egyptians, Greeks and Latins, the sky first thundered after the Flood.

394. The [first parts of its] nature consisted in those properties of the fathers through which they became sages, priests and kings in the state of the families.

395. The continuity of the succession [of things begins with] the first kings, and they were certainly monarchical kings, who were the fathers in the state of nature. Thus, with the full weight of the word, Homer[3] gives the name 'king' to the family father who, with his sceptre, orders the roast ox to be divided among the harvesters, an event placed in front of the cities on Achilles' shield, on which the whole history of the previous world was described. Next the kings everywhere were aristocratic. Finally monarchical kings were established, and everywhere, both in extent and duration, monarchies were, and are, the most celebrated [kingdoms] in the world.

[2] The general principles of this critical art are given in 91–3 above, but then explicated in more detail in the subsequent chapters. Thereafter, however, the whole of Vico's historical and comparative conclusions are based on their application.

[3] *Il.*, XVIII, 556.

396. The eternal properties [of things] are: [firstly], that the natural law of the nations should be dealt with solely by the civil powers, which should either consist in a ruling order of sages, such as in the aristocratic republics, or be regulated by a senate of sages, as in the free republics, or be assisted by a council of sages, as with the monarchs; [secondly], that the civil powers should be revered as sacred persons who recognise no superior other than God, like the first fathers in the state of the families, and that they should finally govern their peoples in the manner of the fathers of large families; and [thirdly], that the civil powers should have the right of life and death over their subjects, just as the first fathers exercised it over their children, and that their subjects should, like children, inherit through the fathers of the republics, in order that the fathers preserve the liberty of their great families for their nations and for their children. And even Tacitus,[4] in his history of the Caducarian law, referred to the Roman prince as *omnium parentem* ['the father of all']. This is the genesis of that eminent ownership of the civil powers, to which, in respect of public needs, the sovereign or despotic ownership of the family fathers over their patrimony must give way. Hence, we can see with how much truth Bodin[5] spoke when he said that sovereign ownership under the sovereign ownership of others was a discovery of the last barbarians, whereas it was from the sovereign ownership of the first fathers that the first republics arose and, with them, civilisation itself!

397. The stages of utility are: first, the need of states to worship a provident divinity; next, the need for the certainty of family relationships through solemn marriage; lastly, the need to distinguish ownership of the lands by burying the dead in them, from which human custom came the practices whereby citizens erected magnificent palaces and embellished their cities with public buildings for the lustre and splendour of their descendants: thus did the public desire for immortality flower among the nations. Hence, the nations guard the following three human practices above all others with the highest of ceremonies and most elaborate solemnities: their native religions, marriage within their own people and funerals within their own lands. For this is the common sense of the whole of mankind: that

[4] Tacitus, *Ann.*, III, 28.

[5] Jean Bodin (1530–96), author of *Les six livres de la république* (1576), and *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566), both of which were known to Vico. The present reference is to the 1626 edition of *Les six livres*, p. 106.

the nations should stand firm on these three customs above all others in order not to fall back into the state of bestial liberty, for all three arose from a certain blush of shame, experienced by the living and the dead, in face of the sky.

398. In the same way, the stages of the utility of recondite wisdom are revealed. For recondite wisdom must serve the vulgar wisdom from which it is born and for which it itself lives, with the end of correcting and supporting that wisdom when it is weakened, and guiding and leading it when it wanders astray. Thus the rule for judging the state of the nations is whether they embrace or reject, and whether their philosophers support or abandon, these three maxims.[6]

[6] With this pronouncement Vico claims to have established the truth of the hypothesis advanced in 11 above.

BOOK V

THE FINAL BOOK

[Introduction]
The order of development of the subject matter through which a philosophy of humanity and a universal history of the nations are formed at one and the same time

399. With the aid of the foregoing necessary discoveries, this Science becomes a philosophy of humanity in virtue of the series of causes it provides, and a universal history of the nations in virtue of the sequence of effects it traces. It takes as its subject matter such nations as have their own religions and laws, cultivating the language appropriate to them, and which they defend with their own arms, for such nations alone are properly free. But Providence ordains that when nations lack these things, rather than annihilate themselves in the rash of civil wars that break out when peoples trample on their laws and religions, they proceed to submit themselves to preservation under other better nations. Hence, in the 'Idea of the Work', the whole of this book was comprehended under the expression *foedera generis humani* ['treaties of mankind'], which explains how, by passing from one nation to another, the natural law of the gentes preserves mankind itself to the highest degree possible.

[Chapter I][1]
The uniformity of the course that humanity takes among the nations

400. The uniformity of the course that humanity takes among the nations can readily be seen from a comparison of two very dissimilar nations, the Athenians and the Romans, one a nation of philosophers, the other a nation of soldiers.

401. Thus Theseus founds Athens upon the altar or shrine of mercy just as Romulus founds Rome in the sacred grove,[2] both of them opening asylums to those in danger. Theseus persists in a Herculean labour when bringing the twelve villages of Attica into the legitimate body of his city,[3] which is half of that in which the kings of Rome persist when subjugating some twenty or more neighbouring peoples within a space of two hundred and fifty years. Theseus reserves the administration of law and war to himself[4] in the same way as do the Roman kings. When the kingdom in Athens comes to an end, the archons are created, at first every ten years and then annually, which is how they continued, just as when the kingdom in Rome comes to an end, it is replaced by annual councils. And in both cases this occurs after they have fallen under a tyranny, Athens under that of the Pisistratids and Rome under that of the Tarquins. True, there is a minor difference of time between them, in that Aristogiton liberates Athens from the tyrant Hipparchus some ten years earlier than Brutus drives Tarquin the Proud from Rome; but the destinies of Hipparchus and Tarquin are the same when Hipparchus, along with Hippias,[5] is assisted in vain by Darius, and Tarquin, similarly, by Lars Porsena,[6] in their attempts to be restored to their seats. What, then, we must ask, did Solon's wisdom confer upon Athenian liberty over and above that which the nature of things themselves conferred upon Roman liberty those ten years later? For liberty had been conferred upon Greece some two hundred years earlier, when, by waging war, she maintained it so gloriously against the immense

[1] The chapters in this book lack numbers. They are numbered here in accordance with the convention employed earlier.
[2] Livy, I, 8, 5.
[3] Plutarch, *The Life of Theseus*, 24.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] In fact, only Hippias, since Hipparchus had already been killed.
[6] Livy, II, 9.

power of Persia. But when Rome fought against and triumphed over Carthage, some two hundred years later, she did so not for her own liberty but for command of the world. Thus, through their greatness, these Roman exploits more than compensate for the greater age of those of the Greeks. Hence, indeed, Livy[7] believed that had Alexander the Great turned his armies against Rome in the West as he did against Persia in the East, his glory would all have been lost. Thus Solon did no more than hasten the process whereby the ingenious Athenians became philosophers, for the sterility and harshness of their site had naturally made them ingenious while the setting of their city on the coast had naturally made them more human.[8] Thus, also, the site of Rome, which, according to Strabo, seemed made by nature to establish command of the universe,[9] assisted [the development of] the fourth monarchy. But had a site of such convenience been available either to Carthage or Numantia, two cities that Rome herself feared might take command the world, either of them would have become what Rome later became.

[Chapter II]
The origins of this Science found in two Egyptian antiquities

402. This whole Science is founded, therefore, upon two great pillars, as it were, of Egyptian antiquity, that is, of those Egyptians who used to mock the Greeks, who were grossly ignorant of them, by saying that they were still children.

403. One is the Egyptians' division of all their earlier times into three ages, those of the gods, the heroes and men. This division of ages must lend support to the division between the divine, heroic and human governments that was the subject of our earlier reasoning [132, 135–40], for it is a certain historical truth that the epochs of time have, for the most part, been taken from the most celebrated empires in the world.

[7] Livy, IX, 16, 19.
[8] Cf. 387 above.
[9] Strabo is ambiguous on this point. In *Geography*, V, 3, 2 and 7, he says that the site of Rome was not particularly well favoured and gives credit to the Romans for overcoming this disadvantage. At VI, 4, 1, however, he comments upon the natural advantages of the whole of the Mediterranean coast of Italy.

404. The other is a further division, that of the languages that were spoken from the beginning of the world up to the Egyptians' final times, to which Porphyry refers in Johann Scheffer's *De philosophia italica*.[10] The first was a language of hieroglyphics or sacred characters, i.e. a language of the gods, of the sort that Homer said was older than his own language,[11] a divine language that explained all things human. This is the reason for the formation of the vocabulary of Varro's thirty thousand gods among the Latin peoples.[12] The next was a language of symbols or emblems, precisely as we have seen in the case of the heroic language of arms [307–45]. The last was an epistolary language, i.e. a language of vulgar letters and words of settled meaning, used for carrying out their final practices in everyday life. This division of languages corresponds precisely, both in its parts and order, to the division of the ages and, therefore, to the division of the three [kinds of] laws of the gentes, divine, heroic and human, demonstrated above [176, 183, 191]. For it is the experience of all nations that languages live within empires and that it is through them that the formulae of the religions and laws of the empires are expressed.

[Chapter III]
The origins of this Science found within those of sacred history

405. We took our start from the origins of sacred history since, as we demonstrated above [60, 103, 241], they were more ancient than any origins in profane history. Hence we laid down as our foundations [these three human characteristics]: modesty, which arose from the shame felt by the two originators of mankind[13] upon being seen naked after they had sinned; curiosity, the misuse of which caused them to sin; and industry, through which, by the sweat of his brow,[14] man must provide for his life. In these three salutary punishments, which God inflicted upon mankind for the sin of the first two humans, all the principles of humanity are to be found: in modesty, wherein, as

[10] Johann Scheffer (1621–79), author of *De natura et constitutione philosophiae italicae, seu pythagoricae*, see V, p. 25.
[11] *Il.*, I, 413–14; XIV, 291.
[12] See footnote 68, p. 178.
[13] Genesis, 3:7–10.
[14] Genesis, 3:19.

demonstrated above [58], lie the origins of all the parts that comprise the system of the natural law of the gentes; in curiosity, the origins of all the sciences; and in industry, those of all the arts. And in Adam's sovereign power and sovereign ownership of all the rest of mortal nature of which he could make use, and because he could make use of it, are to be found both the original power from which all governments and empires come and the original ownership from which all forms of lordship and commerce come, which are the original two continuous sources and springs of all the laws of all nations of all times. For, although he was fallen, Adam was the first man, supreme by nature over all mankind.

[Chapter IV]
Supplement on antediluvian history

406. It follows from the concept of the ideal eternal history devised above [90], that, since the series of causes that operated from Seth and his race down to Shem and his pious progeny of non-giants was the same as that which operated in Cain and his impious, gigantic progeny down to Ham and Japhet and their races of giants, the sequence of effects in both cases must also have been the same. Hence, when Cain became aware of the pains of his vagabond and impious life, he must finally have founded his city,[15] together with a few other giants born within at least two hundred years of his bestial wanderings, while he was still living in hatred of the religion of Adam, his father. He must therefore have done so on the basis of some kind of divination similar to [the astronomical divination] of the Chaldeans, because, since there was no flood before him, and it is probable that the sky never thundered before the Flood, a long period of time must have passed before there was any thunder in the sky [from which, like the later gentiles, to take the auspices]. He also re-established agriculture in his city because, since his mind had been enlightened by the true religion in which he was born and grew up, he had already discovered it. But between Adam and him there was this one outstanding difference: that Adam, enlightened by the true God, rediscovered an articulate heroic language, whereas, because of the need to unite the solitary giants on the basis of the

[15] Genesis, 4:17.

idea of some provident divinity in order to communicate with them, Cain had to begin with a divine mute language. Thus the long gap of one thousand, six hundred and fifty-six years that lies obscure in antediluvian sacred history, is filled.

407. As for the continuity of sacred and profane history, this was shown above [101–3], where we demonstrated that both the Universal Flood and the giants truly existed in nature.

[Chapter V]
Compendium of the obscure history of the Assyrians, Phoenicians and Egyptians

408. A thousand years after the Flood, the monarchy of Ninus appears among the Chaldeans. Our earlier reasoning [234] concerning the servitude that the Hebrews suffered in Egypt, within and rather nearer the end of this period of time, shows that Egypt was then under monarchical rule; while towards the end of this same period, Tyre had already become celebrated both for navigation and for her colonies. This demonstrates that Assyria, Egypt and Phoenicia had already passed through the two ages of the gods and heroes, which the Assyrians called the 'Chaldean' age, and the Egyptians, the 'priestly' age, and that, having extended their empires inland, Assyria and Egypt had passed into the kind of human government constituted by monarchies, the most tolerant of which are those of inland nations. But, with their ease of access to the sea, the commerce of the Phoenicians had led them, albeit rather later, to the different kind of human government constituted by free republics. This is a further test of the ideal eternal history devised above [90].

[Chapter VI]
The age of the gods of Greece in which the divine origins of all gentile human institutions are found

409. But in the period in which the governments of the nations of Egypt, Assyria and the East had already become human, those of the Greek and Italian peoples were still divine, though Greece reached this state rather earlier than Italy because she was nearer to the East

from where all nations were propagated. And it is in Greece, from which we have all that we have concerning gentile antiquity, that we find, through our earlier discovery of the principles of the poetic characters and the true poetic allegories [261–4], that the twelve gods of the greater gentes were the twelve great divine origins of all the human institutions of the gentiles. These arose in the order given in the rational chronology that we based on our natural theogony [209–11] for the historical origins of astronomy and, therefore, for [the corrected] normal chronology subsequently set out [267]. These twelve gods of that first, most distant, gentile antiquity must serve as twelve minor epochs through which it is possible to assign times to all the fables of political heroes that are in any way related to any one of these deities. Here we shall offer proofs for each of them.

[I][16]

410. Fabulous history tells us that the Sky was the father of all the gods,[17] and that he reigned on earth, bequeathing many things of great benefit to mankind.

[II]

411. Of all the children of the Sky, Jove was imagined to be the father and king of all the gods. Hence he was the origin of idolatry and divination, i.e. the science of the auspices, because of the mode in which, as demonstrated above [105–7], he was the first god to be born in the Greek imagination. And, as our principles of poetry tell us, idolatry and divination were the twin daughters born of that first civil metaphor in which Jove, identified with the Sky, would write his laws in lightning and promulgate them in thunder. From this metaphor came that first poetic civil sentiment in which the sublime and the popular were united, more wonderful than anything to which poetry later gave birth: 'in the first age / the heroes read the laws on Jove's breast'.

[16] The sections devoted to each of the twelve gods are not numbered in Vico's original edition. The present numbering, given first by Nicolini (see editor's note), and followed by Battistini, is given for reasons of clarity.

[17] In his *Theogony*, Hesiod gives the Sky, Uranos, as the son of Chaos and Earth and the father of Saturn who was, in turn, the father of Zeus.

412. Hence, as we saw in our chapter, 'The causes of the Latin language' [368–73], at first *Ious* meant both 'Jove' and 'law', and, among the Greeks, as Plato[18] noted in agreement, διαϊόν [*diaion*], or 'celestial', also meant 'law'. Later the letter κ was added to διαϊόν, so that it was then pronounced δίκαιον [*dikaion*], to make it more elegant. And it was on the basis of this idea of the identical meaning of 'law' and 'Jove' that the divine kingdoms began with idolatry and a divine language or language of divination. Thus arose the divine law of the gentes. This is the time, after the Flood, in which to locate Deucalion[19] and Pyrrha, as they stand on a mountain in front of the temple of Themis, i.e. of divine justice, their heads veiled to signify the modesty of their mating, the stones at their feet, representing Grotius's simpletons, thrown behind them to indicate that, through their household discipline, they have created men in whom the ways of humanity are formed through fear of the divine governments. Thus together, they were the true Orpheus, for, as they sang to the stones and wild animals of the power of the gods, it was they who founded the Greek nation.

413. The oak tree that is consecrated to Jove proves that he was the oldest of all the gods, for it caused the men who ate its acorns to stay on the lands. This is the time in which the great principle of the division of the fields begins through worship of the thunder that drove the impious, vagabond giants underground, i.e. held them fast on certain lands. Thus here also Theseus begins to take shape, taking his name from θέσις [*thesis*], not, as yet, for his bodily beauty, but for having settled in the lands of Attica.

[III]

414. Juno is the principle of solemn marriage, i.e. of marriage celebrated with Jove's auspices. Hence her two names: 'Jugalis', from the yoke of marriage, and 'Lucina', for bringing certain offspring into civil light. She is both the wife and sister of Jove, for the first marriages were celebrated among those who possessed his auspices in common.

[18] Plato, *Cratylus*, 412d–e.

[19] According to legend, Deucalion was the son of Prometheus. For their piety, he and his wife Pyrrha were saved from a nine-day flood, through which Zeus destroyed the rest of degenerate mankind. Arriving at Mount Parnassus, they consulted the shrine of Themis for advice as to how to restore the human race, and were advised by the goddess to cover their heads and to throw stones behind them, from which came men and women.

She is jealous of Jove, but her jealousy is of the severe kind that befits legislators who must found peoples and nations, i.e. jealousy about communicating marriage to those who do not share in the communion of Jove's auspices. She is also sterile, but her sterility is, so to speak, civil; hence it remained the common custom of all nations that women do not found houses. She is suspended in the air, the region of the auspices, with a rope around her neck, [to signify] that first force with which, as we said earlier [58, 106], the giants dragged the vagabond women into their grottoes and kept them there, from which came the certain succession of houses or greater gentes. Her hands are tied with a rope, the first conjugal bond, later replaced in almost all nations by a ring, and two stones lie at her feet, to signify the stability of marriages that should never be split. Hence the Romans were very late in introducing divorce, which is the reason why Virgil called solemn matrimony *coniugium stabile* ['stable marriage'].[20] Thus easily can we explain this fable, which has so far proved of such torment to the ingenuity of the mythologists.

415. Finally, the peacock, with its tail resembling the colours of Iris, her minister, is consecrated to Juno, to signify the air, i.e. the region of the auspices through which she is the goddess of solemn matrimony.

[IV]

416. Diana is the principle of the chastity of human mating: hence she is raised to the moon, the brightest of nocturnal planets.[21] This is why she lies at night with sleeping Endymion, secretly and unknown. She must have been the third of the greater divinities. For the first human necessity for men and women who had settled on certain lands, and no longer lived a life of wandering, must have been the proximity of perennial waters that eagles, who build their nests near springs, must have shown them. Hence the [Italian] word for an eagle [*aquila*] must have come from the Latin *aquulae* ['rivulet'], an abbreviation of *aquulegae*, akin to *aquilex*, the discoverer of waters, which is why eagles were deemed to be the first great benefit that Jove bequeathed. The word 'eagles' itself was originally used for all

[20] *Aen.*, I, 73; IV, 126.

[21] Selene, or Luna, was the original goddess of the moon, who, having sent Endymion to sleep, became the mother of fifty daughters. Only later was she identified with Diana and the worship of the two amalgamated.

birds of prey which nested high in the mountains, where the first cities were later planted on strong sites, near perennial waters, with a plentiful circulation of fresh air. Plato attributed this [choice of site] to the wisdom of the first founders of the cities,[22] whereas it was, in fact, a benefit of Providence, one of those bequeathed to mankind by the Sky at the time when it reigned on earth. For the eagles that Romulus followed when settling upon the site for his city, which then remained gods of the Roman empire, were certainly vultures.[23]

417. Hence Diana is the principle of the worship of the perennial springs that were necessary to keep men settled in certain cities; so that the Latins called cities *pagi* from the Greek word πηγή [*pege*] for 'spring'.[24] Water thus remained the foremost element in the sacred or divine things of the gentiles and, consequently, one of the first principles in all human things. The gods therefore swore by the Styx, the deep, living waters or springs of the fountains, upon which, with fearful superstitions, their kingdom was founded. Hence Actaeon, who had the temerity to gaze upon naked Diana, the spring of the fountain, became a stag, that most timid of animals, and was torn to shreds by his dogs for his wicked and impious knowledge.[25] And from *lympha*, or 'pure water', the Latins continued to call lunatics *lymphati*, as if they had been sprayed through with pure water.[26]

[V]

418. Apollo is the principle of names, i.e. of the names that the gentes kept on the tombs of their ancestors on certain lands devoted to that purpose. Hence he must have been the fourth of the greater gods, for those who settled on certain lands must have been struck by the sickening smell of the corpses of their ancestors as they lay rotting nearby, and have finally been driven by it to bury their bodies. Hence Apollo is the principle of history, which began with genealogies, and therefore became the principle of the civil light into which Juno

[22] Plato, *Laws*, III, 681a and 681e–682b.
[23] Livy, I, 7, 1, mentions vultures but not eagles.
[24] See footnote 53, p. 171.
[25] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 182–252.
[26] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 439, derives *lymphati*, lunatics, from the belief that those who gazed upon nymphs bathing in springs became mad through what they saw.

Lucina leads those of legitimate birth, through which he was later affixed to the sun, the source of natural light. He is also the principle of articulate words, so that this is the time in which we must locate Hellen,[27] one of the three sons through whom Deucalion began to form the first three dialects of Greece. Hence, in virtue of the origins discovered above [374–8], Apollo is also the principle of song and verse, and therefore of the legislation produced by the oracles, whose responses everywhere were in verse. For the oracles were the first laws of the gentiles, which survived in the laws that the Greeks called νόμοι [*nomoi*] or 'songs' and the ancient Latin *carmina*, the *dictae per carmina sortes*[28] ['fates expressed in verse']. The first oracles were the fates dictated by the laws of the family fathers, and since marriages were the first things in life upon which fates were pronounced, they survived in Latin as *vitae consortium* ['lives shared by fate']. Similarly, husbands and wives were *consortes* ['sharers of fate']. Hence Apollo was the principle of the science of divinity, in which the first wisdom consisted. And through all this he was the principle of humanity or *humanitas*, which the Latins derived originally from *humare*, i.e. 'to bury'.

419. Apollo and Diana are the twin children of Latona, a goddess whose name comes from hiding them. Hence the name *Latium* came from *latere* ['to hide'],[29] which survived in the Latin expressions *condere gentes* ['to found gentes'], *condere leges* ['to found laws'], *condere urbes* ['to found cities'] and *condere regna* ['to found kingdoms'],[30] all of which were born in the oldest households, hidden as they were in the forests, alone and separate from one another, as Polyphemus tells Ulysses.[31] Both twins are hunters of wild animals, not yet for pleasure but because it was a human necessity that the settlers, unable to save themselves from wild animals by fleeing like the impious vagabonds, should stay where they were to defend themselves and their families. Hence it is possible that the word 'hunt' may have come down to the Italians from the hunting of wild animals, not, however, from their dens but from their own first hovels, which is why Hercules, Theseus and the other heroes slay the wild animals. But Apollo was

[27] Pausanias, *Itinerary of Greece*, X, 38, 1.
[28] Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, 403.
[29] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 326.
[30] The connection is based on the fact that the Latin *condere* meant both to hide and to found.
[31] *Od.*, IX, 112–15, where, however, Ulysses is the narrator.

a shepherd when Diana was not yet a shepherdess, for he was not a shepherd of flocks and herds but a pastor of the vagabonds who had taken refuge in the asylums and been received into the heroes' clienteles, as explained earlier [148]. Thus, with the full propriety of the words, the Latins continued to talk of *greges operarum* ['flocks of workers'], and later, when the pastors were superseded by the kings, of *greges servorum* ['flocks of slaves'], and it is noteworthy that when he refers to the kings Homer invariably adds the expression 'pastors of peoples'.[32] The fables of Daphne, the Muses, Parnassus, Pegasus and Hippocrene have been explained above [289–91].

[VI]

420. Vulcan is the principle of fire, which is of the utmost necessity for human practices. He must have been the fifth god of the greater gentes, because fire is a human [rather than a physical] necessity, since it is possible to lack an understanding of fire whereas it is impossible not to sense thirst or the foul smell of corpses. Nevertheless, fire is of such utility in human life that, after water, it is the second element in sacred things and, therefore, in all others, civil and profane. Hence, for the Romans, water and fire continued to signify the community of the city, access to which, in early times, was acquired through solemn marriages celebrated with water and fire, or lost through the 'interdict of water and fire'.[33]

421. Vulcan is also the principle of the arms that he manufactures with the Cyclops in the first forges, i.e. in the forests to which the first gigantic fathers set fire. The first arms, as we discovered above [336], were the wooden spears with the burnt tips, so effective for inflicting wounds, with which, the Roman historians tell us,[34] the barbaric nations of the north were armed, as, later, were the Americans. This, and no other, is the fire that the giants who had been driven underground emitted from beneath the mountains, and also, therefore, the flame belched forth by the Hydra, the dragons of Hesperia and Pontus, and the Nemean lion, all of which, as said above [344], signified the land that had been reduced to cultivation by fire. To these fables let us

[32] *Il.*, XVI, 2.
[33] Cicero, *De domo sua*, 30, 78.
[34] Tacitus, *Ann.*, II, 14.

add here the best known of all, that of the Chimera with its serpent's tail and lion's head, which also belched forth fire. It was slain by Bellerophon,[35] who should be located in this time and who must have been another Hercules belonging to a different part of Greece. Hence this is also the time in which we should locate Cadmus,[36] who slew the great serpent, and Bacchus, who tamed the serpents. And nothing was of greater importance in the founding of the Greek nation than the stupefaction of the serpents with wine.

422. Next, the single eye that each Cyclops had on his forehead was the land burnt and then ploughed by the giants, for it was said that 'each giant had his eye', i.e. that each had such land, cleared of woods and cultivated. Such was the sacred grove in which Romulus opened his asylum which, in accordance with the uniformity of such ideas with those of the Greeks of that time, was called the 'eye' from its 'light'. But these two traditions, i.e. of the forests cleared of trees and the arms invented by the gigantic family fathers, came down to Homer in a form so mutilated and disfigured that they were the cause of the confusion whereby Ulysses uses a stake with a burnt tip to blind Polyphemus' eye,[37] a confusion in which even Plato[38] found the first family fathers in poetic history. This is one of the proofs of the three ages of heroic poets up to Homer, through which, as shown above [273–4, 285–7], the fables were transmitted to him in forms that were changed, confused, obscure and corrupt. Hence *lucus* survived as the Latin for a sacred grove, which the poets always associated with Diana's altar since, together with fire, water was an element of the civil world. Later the physicists were to foist their own fable upon these elements, claiming that the theological poets had understood fire and water[39] as elements of the natural world. And the unfortunate Latin philologists, observing the delight to which the dense shade of the sacred woods gave rise in their times, as it does in our own, took refuge in a sacred grove, an asylum opened in reality by their own ignorance, and, with a complete antiphrasis, said that the reason why it was called a 'grove' was that 'it was not light'!

[35] *Il.*, VI, 180–2.
[36] See footnote 14, p. 159.
[37] *Od.*, IX, 382–94.
[38] Plato, *Laws*, III, 678c–681e.
[39] Cf. 240 and 298 above.

[VII]

423. Saturn must have been the sixth god of the old gentes. For after the forests had been set alight, which must have been in the summer when the foliage was already dried by the scorching sun, the peoples must by chance have tasted the roasted grains of wheat, hitherto guarded among the thickets and thorns of the forest by the ever-vigilant dragon of the forest, and, finding them both pleasant in taste and useful for the support of life, begun to cultivate the lands. Saturn is the father of Jove, for Jove was born among those who had settled on certain lands which they then ploughed and sowed, but also the son of Jove, because Jove was the king and father of all the gods, whose birth he allowed among men through the religion of the auspices. He is also the principle of the sown [fields], taking his name from the Latin *satis* ['sown fields'],[40] and therefore the principle of chronology, or time, hence the Greeks called him Χρόνος [*Chronos*], for, as demonstrated above [307], chronology began with the numbering of years through the numbering of harvests.

[VIII]

424. Mars is the principle of war, through which the fathers killed the impious thieves who sought to steal their harvests. And, as we saw earlier in connection with the origins of duels [142, 177], the fields of harvests began to become fields of arms and battles. Born as he was after Saturn, he must have been the seventh divinity in the state of the families.

[IX]

425. Vesta is the mother of Saturn, for she signifies the earth and, as such, is the mother of the giants, though [only] of the pious, who, because they buried their ancestors, were called the sons of the earth. She is also the mother of those gods called *indigetes*,[41] i.e. the gods native to each land. On the other hand she is also the daughter of Saturn, because she signifies the principle of sacred ceremonies.

[40] See footnote 25, p. 163.
[41] Livy, I, 2, 6.

The first ceremony of all was that of safeguarding on crude altars the fire, stolen from the sky by Prometheus, through which the forests were set alight by striking flints when the foliage had dried out in the hot summer sun. Hence, both the anciles, which must have been spears with burnt tips rather than shields,[42] descended to the Romans from the sky, and fire, over which the vestal virgins later had safe-keeping, descended to the Greeks from the sky. And when fire went out, it had to be lit again from the sky by means of a burning-lens.

426. The second sacred ceremony was that of consecrating [the lives of] the thieves of the crops to the gods, a ceremony performed on ploughed land. Here begin the orations, obtestations and consecrations that constituted the solemnities with which, as demonstrated above [197], under the divine governments, the Greeks administered their first judgements, in which the guilty were the first 'votive offerings'. Hence, despite their lack of science, even the philologists said that an altar may have been called *ara* because it was that upon which ἀρά [*ara*], the votive offering, was placed, the word ἀρά coming from Ἄρης [*Ares*], or Mars, who killed the votive offerings sacrificed by Vesta. As a result of all this, the Latins inherited *hostiae* ['sacrificial victims'] from *hostis*, from these first enemies, and *victimae* ['victims'] from *victus*,[43] the first vanquished people in the world.

427. The third sacred ceremony was that of making sacrifices with spelt. Hence, since she was born after Saturn and Mars, Vesta must have been the eighth divinity of the greater gentes. From the spelt that she sacrificed to Jove came the spelt that played such a large part in the divine ceremonies of the Romans, such as the sacrifices called *farracia* ['of spelt'], and the practice of pasting flour, which was named from spelt, on the foreheads of victims. The 'marriages celebrated with loaves of spelt' among the Roman priests also survived from these ceremonies because at first all nobles were priests.

428. Vesta is also Ops, the principle of the aid or force that the impious vagabonds sought when they had recourse to the asylums opened by the first founders of the cities.[44] These were the asylums where, as we argued earlier [148], the clienteles arose, through which the families began to include others than just their children, in accordance with the principles discovered above [140]. Hence the first

[42] This is in contrast to Livy, for whom the anciles were shields. See I, 20, 3.
[43] Cf. 176 above.
[44] Ops was the goddess of abundance.

republics of 'optimates' came from Ops. From this point of view, she is identical with the Latin Rhea and the Cybele or Berecynthia of the *Curetes*, i.e. the Greek priests armed with spears, the same, as shown earlier [156], as the Latin *quirites*.

429. As Cybele or Berecynthia, she wears the crown of poetic towers that the Latins call *orbis terrarum* ['the orb of the world'], i.e. the world of nations. Thus she is the goddess of the civil authority that was exercised over what in civil law was called *territorium* ['the surrounding land']. This word is best understood as deriving from *terrendo* ['frightening away']. But it is not yet the frightening away undertaken by the lictors, who, according to the nonsense purveyed by the etymologists,[45] tried to clear out the multitude in order to heighten their own power, because *territorium* was born when peoples were small and there were few of them. Rather it was that undertaken by the strong, who were responsible for clearing out the impious thieves of the crops from their fields. Thus it is from *terrere* ['to frighten away'], and thus *territorium*, that what the poets called the *turres* ['towers'] or *terres* that crown Berecynthia come. These were the first *arces* ['strongholds'] in the world, from which came *arcere* ['to guard'] and *arma* ['weapons'], and, in accordance with nature, they must at first have been solely for defence, in which the true use of strength consists. All these words had a common origin in the 'altars' [*are*] over which Vesta also had custody. Here also we find the first origin of the law of the gentes called *postliminium*[46] ['the right to return to one's former condition and privileges'], enjoyed by those slaves *intra arces sui imperii se recipiunt* ['who return to the seat of their own sovereignty']. Finally, Danae is enclosed in one of these poetic towers, and it is in her womb, after descending in a shower of poetic gold, i.e. of wheat, that Jove generates the mighty Greek hero Perseus, i.e. in a marriage celebrated with spelt.

430. Vesta is also the Cybele or Berecynthia who is seated in a chariot drawn by lions, from whose Assyrian name, *ari*, came the names of the innumerable cities in ancient geography that now adorn the insignia of so many peoples.

431. All this demonstrates that Vesta was the religion, armed and magnanimous, of the first gentile world.

[45] *Digest*, I, 16, 239, 8.
[46] *Digest*, XXIX, 15, 5 and 19; Grotius, *The Law*, III, 9, 11.

[X]

432. Venus is the principle of civil beauty, such as belongs to Theseus, Bacchus, Perseus, Bellerophon and also Ganymede, who, after he has been abducted by the eagle, possesses the science of the auspices and is minister at Jove's table, i.e. administers sacrifices to Jove, a fable in which Plato found fitting confirmation of the divine life of philosophers who meditate upon abstract and eternal truths.[47] In contrast with these beautiful beings are the monsters born of stray matings. Thus the beauty with which the Spartans wished their offspring to be blessed was civil beauty, and it was for the lack of this kind of beauty that their offspring were thrown down from Mount Taygetus.[48]

433. The idea of Venus began to awaken when the heroes, whose character was the male Venus, and heroines became aware of their beauty in comparison with the ugliness of the men and women who they had received from bestial liberty into their asylums. Hence, since Venus must have been born in the Greek mind after Ops, she must have been the ninth divinity of the ancient houses. This is the heroic Venus, born on earth as the daughter of Jove or, in some places, of Saturn.[49] With her shameful parts covered, she is Venus Pronuba, another goddess of solemn marriage.[50] But the girdle with which she covered herself, which must first have been made of foliage, then of hide and then of rough cloth, was finally taken by the corrupt poets to represent the foments of lust. The son of this Venus is Winged Love, i.e. Love accompanied by the auspices, conjugal love. With his eyes blindfolded for the same reason as Venus is covered by her girdle, he is furnished with the torch of fire that the Romans used when they contracted marriage *aqua et igni* ['by water and fire'], the same torch as that of Idomeneus, which was made from the thorns that burnt in the fire of the forests. A mythology such as this is much more appropriate than the idea that the flames and stings of love experienced by the likes of Hobbes's violent men mirrored the feelings caused by the delicacy of sensual pleasure. The ministers of this Venus were the Graces, i.e. the civil offices, from which *gratia* survived

[47] Plato does not mention Ganymede in this connection. A more likely source is Xenophon's *Banquet of the Philosophers*, VIII, 30.
[48] Plutarch, *The Life of Lycurgus*, 16.
[49] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 188–200.
[50] In addition to Juno.

among the Latins as a synonym for *caussa*, meaning an operation or transaction. This is also the Venus to whom swans are consecrated, as they are to Apollo who sings the auspices in marriage ceremonies; and it is into a swan that Jove was transformed to fertilise the egg from which Helen, Castor and Pollux were born, meaning that they were born with Jove's auspices. Finally, this is the Venus from whom Aeneas and Anchises were born,[51] that is, Venus Pronuba, Venus the honourable, Venus the goddess of solemn marriage.

434. Quite other is the plebeian Venus, born of the sea, whose son is wingless Love, i.e. Love without the auspices. She is the character of the plebeian women from overseas, who, coming from more cultured nations, were more graceful and light-hearted in appearance than the Greek heroines. She is the goddess of natural [rather than civil] unions, whence she later came to signify nature to the physicists. Plato found the difference between the two Loves extremely useful when discussing the difference between divine and bestial love. This plebeian Venus is the Venus to whom doves are sacred, for among the Romans they were the lesser auspices of the plebeians, just as eagles were the greater auspices of the nobles. Hence Virgil[52] misused them when he imagined that they were the gods of Aeneas. Finally, this is the Venus to whom myrtle, less noble in foliage than the laurel, is consecrated, to signify the sea from which she came, for myrtle is abundant in maritime lands.

[XI]

435. Minerva is the principle of the civil orders born through the uprisings of the clientes. Hence she must have been born long after the age of Ops, who was born in the times when the impious vagabonds sought the aid of the strong and were received into their asylums. She must also have been born well after the age of Venus, if Venus is civil beauty by nature, i.e. according to the natural order. And because the heroes treated those they had sheltered with justice, so that the Graces were celebrated both by the heroes and the sheltered, they were heroes by nature. But after they became tyrants, in order to preserve mankind, which cannot be preserved without orders, Providence allowed the civil order, the senate of each city, in which, ever and everywhere,

[51] Vico later noted this mistake and corrected it so that Aeneas is born of Venus and Anchises.
[52] *Aen.*, VI, 190–2.

the wisdom of the republics consisted, to be born through the uprisings of the clientes. Hence Minerva is the tenth of the greater divinities.

436. Thus, at this time and in this mode, the cities were born with their two orders, the nobles and the plebeians, from origins that the political philosophers were unable to discern because they accepted the account of the vulgar division of the fields given by the jurisconsults. And they were all born from the desire of the multitude to be governed in justice, a desire which is the eternal concern of all governments. This may be the reason why the nomination of the heroic kings lay with the plebs, as we demonstrated above in connection with the Roman kings [169]. Thus the cities all rested upon Minerva, i.e. upon orders whose duty it is to govern the errant multitudes with civil wisdom, a wisdom that can exist only if it is supported by all the civil virtues, which is the eternal form of all states.[53] Two eternal properties prove that this is how the republics were born: [first], when the plebs are subjected to haughty, cruel and greedy treatment, they will seek change; [second], in such circumstances, the nobles, rich and powerful when political movements are afoot, will unite their interests with that of their fatherland, and thus become proper 'optimates' or 'patricians', because, through [this identity with] their fatherland, they will then treat the plebs with courtesy, liberality and justice. This proves also that this is how the plebs ought to be treated in peaceful states and that, if they are thus treated, such republics will be highly blessed and, therefore, eternal.

437. Minerva is born after Vulcan, using the arms he has forged, splits open the head, i.e. the mind, of Jove, the character of the fathers and the king, coming to unite them in armed orders in order to terrify the clientes who have united in plebs against them. Such a mythology is better suited to Grotius's simpletons than the idea that divine wisdom, the daughter of omnipotence, blessed with self-understanding, is led to love omnipotence through love of her divine bounty, which would constitute a wisdom more sublime by far than

[53] The civil virtues, according to Vico, will differ at different stages in the career of a nation. So, although the eternal form of all states requires that civil wisdom should be supported by them, it does not follow that in all states either the content of civil wisdom or that of civil virtue should be the same. All that is required is that there should be a relation of support between them.

anything that even Plato could devise about divinity. But the olive is sacred to Minerva not because Grotius's simpletons would need an oil-lamp with which to read[54] when vulgar literature arose after Homer, but because men understood the utility of oil for human practices in her time; nor is the owl, that nocturnal bird, sacred to her because night is helpful for philosophical meditation, but to signify the Attic world in which owls are abundant.

438. For Homer's Minerva is almost always 'warlike'[55] and 'predatory',[56] and rarely a 'counsellor':[57] hence the Minerva who gives counsel in the Curia is the Pallas[58] of the assembly and the Bellona of war.[59] She comes armed with a spear, of the kind made of wood and with a burnt tip, bearing a shield charged with the head of Medusa, whose hair consists first in tresses of poetic gold, i.e. of the dry harvests which, in a beautiful metaphor, were called 'the golden tresses of the land', then later in tresses of serpents, which represent the sovereign ownership of the lands by the fathers who had united in their order. This is the shield with which Perseus turned his enemies to stone, thus, with the cruelty characteristic of heroic punishments, terrifying those guilty of high treason, i.e. of war against their fatherland. For these were the first public enemies who, if condemned, became subject to punishments such as the cruel and vile punishment that Tullus Hostilius commands the duumvirs to pronounce upon Horatius for the crime of high treason after he has killed his sister,[60] a punishment that Livy[61] describes as *lex horrendi carminis* ['a law of fearful form']. This shield of Perseus, which turns anyone who looks in it to stone, is clear like a mirror, because such punishments were originally the παραδείγματα [*paradeigmata*] of the Greeks and the *exempla* ['models'] of the Romans. Hence, these severe punishments survived as 'exemplary' punishments, and the death penalty as 'ordinary', from the 'orders' mentioned above.

439. Homer presents Minerva as seeking to conspire against Jove because his behaviour is unjust to the Greeks but helpful to the Trojans, and

[54] Pliny, *Nat Hist.*, XII, 2, 3.
[55] *Il.*, XII, 128.
[56] *Il.*, IV, 128; V, 765; VI, 269 and 279; X, 460.
[57] *Il.*, V, 260; *Od.*, XVI, 282.
[58] *Od.*, I, 125.
[59] Although Minerva and Bellona were both goddesses of war, they were not the same goddess.
[60] See 158 above.
[61] Livy, I, 26, 6.

nothing is less in keeping with civil wisdom, since Jove is both king and monarch. [But Homer took this view] because in his time it was believed that Jove's government was aristocratic, since that was the form of government universally celebrated in heroic times. For the same reason Homer[62] also allows Jove to tell Thetis that he cannot transgress anything that has once been determined by the great celestial council. But here again, it is an aristocratic king who speaks. Yet it was on the strength of this passage in Homer that the Stoics imagined that Jove himself was subject to fate. And though elsewhere in Homer we find Ulysses telling the rebellious plebs on the plains of Troy that it is best to be governed by a single person,[63] the political philosophers should reflect on the fact that this is a remark made during war, the nature of which demands that government should be monarchical and in which *non aliter ratio constat quam si uni reddatur* ['law cannot exist unless there is accountability to one person alone'].[64] But the fable of the great chain from one end of which, Jove said, he would singlehandedly drag behind him all men and all the gods were they attached to the other, refers to the strength of the auspices.[65] And should the Stoics contend that this chain constitutes their great, eternal series of causes, let them be careful not to break it, for then Jove himself would control the fates.

[XII]

440. Mercury is the principle of commerce. He begins to appear in outline in the times of the first commercial transactions, when the fathers and their clientes exchanged cultivation of the fields in return for daily food. But since he arose well after Minerva, he was the eleventh god of the older gentes, for he is the principle of legislation and the legislators proper were those who brought the laws and persuaded [people to accept] them, not those who commanded the laws, whose principle is Apollo. Hence Mercury is the principle of the embassies, born with the eternal property of being sent by the sovereigns to carry the two agrarian laws from the ruling orders to the plebs. These laws are signified by the two serpents, the characters of the two

[62] *Il.*, I, 526–7. See also, VIII, 69–74.
[63] *Il.*, II, 204–5.
[64] Tacitus, *Ann.*, 162.
[65] See 52 above and footnote 11, p. 42.

forms of ownership of the land, bonitary and civil, entwined round his caduceus, at the top of which two wings signify the two lesser forms of ownership which were subject, through the auspices, to eminent ownership of the land.[66] Hence the heroes, who possessed eminent ownership, were said *fundare gentes* ['to found gentes'], *fundare urbes* ['to found cities'][67] and *fundare regna* ['to found kingdoms'].[68] Finally, Mercury is the principle of the language of arms through which the nations communicated the law of the gentes among themselves, and also, therefore, of the science of blazonry discussed above [329].

[XIII]

441. Finally, Neptune is the principle of the naval arts and of navigation, which are the last discoveries that nations make. The maritime wars against pirates which begin in his time are represented by his trident, the great hook for seizing ships, as we shall see below [461], which causes the towers of Berecynthia to tremble. This is a more appropriate mythology than the idea, hitherto received from the physicists, in which the fable tells of the earthquakes caused by waters in the bowels of an abyss conjured up by Plato.[69]

[Chapter VII]
The uniformity of the age of the gods among the ancient gentile nations

442. Varro located the whole of the age of the gods within the obscure times, because, since he accepted the vulgar [belief in the] origins of poetry, he believed that Orpheus and the other heroic poets of Greece had imagined the fables of the gods all at once. This is an error that has hidden the origins of the whole of gentile humanity from us.
443. For the gods of the greater gentes of Greece conformed [in substance] with those of the East which, after they had been brought by the

[66] See 154 above.
[67] *Aen.*, VI, 811; VIII, 478.
[68] Livy, XLV, 19, 10.
[69] This is a gloss on what Plato says in *Timaeus*, 25, 60e–61b, and *Critias*, 5, 112a and d.

Phoenicians to Greece and been given the names of the Greek gods, were raised to the planets. Hence the same must be said of the Phoenicians' own gods and taken as understood in the case of those of the Egyptians. Later, having been embossed in the sky, these same gods were taken from Greece to Italy, where they were designated with the names of the gods of Latium. This provides a demonstration that the origins of the Latin, Greek, Phoenician and Egyptian peoples, and, indeed, of all the peoples of the East, were the same. But the impropriety whereby the gods [rather than the heroes] were placed on the planets arose because planets strike the naked eye as more illustrious, both in light and movement, than the constellations, and must therefore have been observed before the constellations, on which the heroes were then placed. Hence [we have no reason to doubt that] the age of the gods came before that of the heroes and that divine poetry was born before heroic poetry, just as Hesiod certainly existed before Homer. So each of these nations was responsible for imagining its own gods, who had not, as hitherto imagined, been imposed upon them earlier by the likes of Zoroaster, Trismegistus and Orpheus, to whom the Latin peoples had no equivalents. For each of these nations was, by its own nature, itself a Zoroaster, Trismegistus or Orpheus, as we demonstrated earlier [27–8]. This is a further proof of the ideal eternal history devised above [90].

[Chapter VIII]
The age of the Greek heroes

444. Thus it is within this age of the gods that the characters of the native Greek political heroes gradually begin to take shape, including both their indigenous inland heroes, as we shall soon see when we explain the character of Hercules [458–70], and the foreign heroes who came from overseas. For we know from our earlier line of reasoning concerning the propagation of the nations [225] that it was while the age of the gods still prevailed among the Greeks that the heroic disturbances in Egypt, Phoenicia and Phrygia forced those nations, with their Cecrops, Cadmus, Danaus and Pelops, out to the coasts, where some remained, of whom Cecrops[70] was certainly one, while others

[70] Cecrops was the mythical founder of Athens, reputed to have introduced laws, religion and alphabetic characters from Egypt.

were forced into unfavourable, and therefore still vacant, lands, as was Cadmus in Boeotia.[71]

[I]

445. The age of the Greek gods begins with Iapetus, who is identical with Japhet, the son of Noah, who came to populate Europe, and lasts for a stretch of five hundred years. And since, as demonstrated above [444], the characters of the political heroes took shape within the age of the gods, this is when the outline of the characters of the heroes of war must also have begun to appear. But because, as we saw earlier [241], inland nations arose before maritime nations, fabulous history, which begins the heroic century with the [Argonauts'] maritime expedition to Pontus, here leaves us with a large [historical] gap. We are now, however, in a position to correct this omission, by means of our earlier observation [281] that the word 'robber', with which Aeson greeted Jason,[72] was an honourable title for a hero. This proves that the heroic robbers came before the heroic pirates because, as shown earlier [281], under the heroic law of war, wars were made without proper declarations of war. We shall discover more about these robbers below [458–70] through the character of Hercules.

[II]

446. As the age of the gods comes to an end with Neptune, that of the heroes begins with the pirates of Minos, the first navigator of the Aegean. His Minotaur must have been a ship with horns of sail, which, availing himself of the same metaphor, Virgil called *velatarum cornua antennarum* ['the horns of our sail-clad yard-arms'].[73] It devours Attic boys and girls in accordance with the law of force, which must therefore have been understood by the inhabitants of Attic cities who had never yet seen ships. The Labyrinth itself is the Aegean sea, enclosed within a bewilderingly large number of islands. The thread is navigation, whose author is winged Daedalus, [who travels], in

[71] Cadmus was said to have come from Phoenicia to Boeotia, where he founded the city of Thebes.
[72] See footnote 32, p. 164.
[73] *Aen.*, III, 549.

Virgil's phrase, *cum remigio alarum* ['with the oarage of his wings'].[74] And the art [of navigation] is Ariadne. She is Theseus' first love but he subsequently abandons her, settles down with her sister instead,[75] and then, by making piratical raids with his ships, liberates Athens from Minos' cruel laws.

447. These are the times in which to locate Jove when, in the shape of a bull similar to that of Minos, he abducts Europa.[76] It must be understood, however, that in the age of this fable the characters of the gods had already changed to signify men possessed of the properties through which the gods had first been imagined. Thus, in virtue of being king of the gods, Jove here signified the ruling order of the heroes who engaged in these piratical raids. This is an extremely important canon of mythology.

448. These are also the times in which to locate Perseus when he liberates Andromeda from the Orc.[77] Like the Minotaur in the Labyrinth of the islands of the Archipelago, the Orc devours maidens who are chained to the rocks through fear of the pirates, just as we saw earlier [300] Prometheus and Tityus chained to crags through their fearful religions. Hence the fearful were later said, in words of settled meaning, to be *terrore defixi* ['held fast by terror'].[78] Perseus undertakes this exploit in the Ethiopia of White Morea, as explained above [221], which is still called the Peloponnese; and it was from the plague that raged there that Hippocrates saved his island of Cos,[79] which was situated in the Archipelago, for had he wanted to save it from the plague of the Abyssinians, he would have needed to save it from all the plagues in the world.

[III]

449. Next comes the naval expedition or piratical excursions to Pontus, in the part of the seas of Greece from which the whole of that sea later took its name, as demonstrated above in our 'historical principles of geography' [221]. This is the exploit in which Hercules,

[74] *Aen.*, I, 301; VI, 19.
[75] Phaedra, like Ariadne, was a daughter of Minos.
[76] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II, 836–75.
[77] Herodotus, II, 91; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 571–734.
[78] Livy, V, 39, 1.
[79] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 37, 123, where it is stated that the plague ravaged the whole of Greece.

the greatest of all the Greek heroes, is joined by Orpheus, Amphion and Linus, all three of whom are poetic heroes, as well as Theseus and, finally, Castor and Pollux, the brothers of Helen. These are the poetic heroes who, singing of the power of the gods in the auspices, reduce [to humanity] the wild animals of the cities, who had rebelled in the heroic disturbances in Greece. Thus Amphion erects the walls of Thebes, the city that Cadmus had founded some three hundred years earlier. This is precisely what happens in Rome, which was founded some three hundred years later, where, as Livy tells us,[80] when the plebs lay claim to the laws of the nobles, Appius Claudius, the grandson of the decemvir, sings to them of the power of the gods in the auspices upon which these laws were dependent, the science and ceremonies of which could not be desecrated to plebeians who *agitabant connubia more ferarum* ['mated in the manner of wild animals']. Thus do these poetic heroes found and establish the peoples of Greece, but, as demonstrated above [73–6], in the time in which they were composed solely of heroes. And since these were the times in which the heroic law of the gentes was the subject of disputes in which the heroes remained superior, this was called the age of the heroes of Greece.

[IV]

450. The expedition to Pontus is followed by the Trojan War, in which [the states of] Greece naturally joined in an alliance, just as there were alliances in the war of the Sabines against the Romans, as we demonstrated above [284]. Thus this war must have involved Trojan pirates who ranged along the coast of a part of Greece which must at the time have been named after the Achaeans, but which later spread to cover the whole nation, thus bequeathing to Homer the erroneous belief that the whole of Greece was a confederation [of states]. When the name was finally restricted to the area that later survived as 'Achaea', a republic arose there, the Achaean republic, which was unique in the ancient world in that it was composed of a number of free cities united in one body, thus strongly resembling the present-day republic of the United Provinces of Holland.

[80] Livy, VI, 40–1.

[V]

451. After the Trojan War come the wanderings of the heroes, such as Menelaus, Diomedes, Antenor, Aeneas and, most celebrated of all, Ulysses, some of whom remain in foreign lands while others return to their fatherlands. These must have been the flights of heroes, together with their clientes, who had either been vanquished or were under pressure from opposing factions in the heroic disputes over the auspices and the things dependent on them. This, as Suetonius tells us,[81] is what occurred in Regillum at the time of Romulus, when Appius Claudius, under pressure from opposing factions, on Tatius' advice, handed his original proud pretensions to the house of Appia, and, together with his vassals, moved to Rome.

452. Thus, from the suitors [of Penelope], who invade Ulysses' royal palace, i.e. the ruling order of heroes, and devour the royal substance, because they want to appropriate fields that belong by law to the heroes, Homer later inherited the names of a great many kingdoms. The obscurity into which these truths fell has rendered this the most inapposite of all the Greek fables. Finally, however, the suitors want the kind of marriage appropriate to Penelope, just as, after the optimum law of the fields had been communicated to them in the Law of the Twelve Tables, the Roman plebeians then wanted the [right of solemn] marriage appropriate to the fathers in Roman history.[82] And while, in one part of Greece, solemn marriage is reserved to the heroes, Penelope remains chaste and Ulysses hangs the suitors,[83] in another[84] she is prostituted to the suitors and gives birth to Pan, the monster with diverse natures. This is just what the Roman fathers tell the plebs: that anyone born of marriages of plebeians conducted through the auspices of the nobles would be born, in Livy's faithful expression, *secum ipse discors*, i.e. 'with discordant natures'. And this the fable that has hitherto exercised the mythologists so greatly!

453. This is the Pan, the character for those with discordant natures, who seizes Syrinx,[85] the character for heroines. Her name came from the

[81] Suetonius, *The Twelve Emperors*, Tiberius, I, 1.
[82] Livy, IV, 1, 4.
[83] *Od.*, XXII, 171–92.
[84] For example, as reported in Servius, *Ad Aen.*, II, 44.
[85] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 689–712.

Syriac word *sir*, for song,[86] i.e. from the auspices that the oracles sang, from which the sirens were also named. These oracular songs were also the source of the songs that had been sung at marriages since the times of Achilles, on whose shield they are described by Homer.[87] [In the original fable] Syrinx turns into a reed, which is a lowly, short-lived plant, whereas Daphne, when brought to a halt by Apollo, turns into a noble, evergreen tree. But after the fable became obscure, Pan remained in the woods, playing a pipe made of reed, with shameless and lascivious satyrs, who neither celebrated cities nor founded nations. But by then this must have become a fable in which the heroic disputes in Syria were conflated with those in Greece, in accordance with the reasoning given in the 'etymologicon of words of foreign origin' [383–4].

454. One of the most celebrated native histories of the heroic disputes is found in the fable of the apple of discord,[88] which signified first the crops, then the fields and finally marriage. The first fruits of industry were called 'apples', a metaphor for the fruits of nature gathered from summer onwards, which were the only fruits of which people had any idea. This apple, which fell from the sky because Prometheus had abducted fire from the sky, was the cause of the dispute between the three goddesses, Venus, Pallas and Juno. This was the plebeian Venus, the plebs of Greece, who first wants ownership of the fields from Pallas, i.e. from the order of the heroes in the assemblies, and then proceeds to claim [the right of] marriage from Juno, the goddess of solemn marriage, and, through marriage, the [various kinds of] authority as [recounted] in Roman history. By pure chance, though it is relevant to our principles, Plutarch[89] noted that the expression *pulchriori detur* ['let it be given to the most beautiful'], and the judgement of Paris, the only two places in the *Iliad* [90] in which the fable is mentioned, were not by Homer but by a heroic poet of some later, already effeminate, time. For, as we saw in a different work, vulgar letters such as could have been written on the apple had not yet been discovered in Homer's time.[91] It is pertinent to add here that Homer

[86] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 550.
[87] *Il.*, XVIII, 494–5.
[88] Hyginus, *The Book of Fables*, 92.
[89] The reference is to an apocryphal work, *On the Life and Poetry of Homer*.
[90] *Il.*, XXIV, 29–30.
[91] *De universi iuris uno principio et fine uno, Dissertationes*, IV, 14.

never mentions any such form of letters and, when he mentions the disastrous letter carried by Bellerophon,[92] says that it was written in σήματα [*semata*].

455. Other histories of the heroic disputes are found in the fables of Ixion, Tityus and the plebeian Tantalus, i.e. of the plebs of Tantalus, for the clientes took their names from their illustrious leaders. They are all narrated as taking place in the underworld, i.e. in places that are low in relation to the sky, where the towers of Berecynthia are erected, high up near the living waters of the springs that lie hidden in exalted places. In the same way, the fortified towers of the returned barbaric times are, for the most part, to be seen sited in mountains, with the villages scattered in the plains. Thus high stood the sky in the eyes of Grotius's children! For this is the Sky that reigned on earth, the father of all the gods, who were themselves raised, in Homer's time, to little more than the peaks or summit of Mount Olympus, the same Sky through which Perseus and Bellerophon ride upon Pegasus, from which the Latins continued to use the expression *volitare equo* for 'to go horse-riding'.

456. Hence we can explain the fable, another history of these heroic disputes, in which Jove boots the plebeian Vulcan headlong from the sky. This event must be inserted into the quarrel between Jove and Juno,[93] for our critical art shows that the quarrel was not between Jove and Juno but between them and Vulcan, who lays claim both to Juno's marriages and to Jove's auspices. Hence, as a result of his fall, he remained a cripple, i.e. lowly and humiliated. [Similarly, we can explain the fables of] Ixion, perpetually turning the wheel, and the serpent with its tail in its mouth, which, as we shall soon show [466], represents the cultivation of the land. The significance of this became obscure because it was not realised that κύκλος [*kuklos*] first meant a circle and it was accordingly taken to be a wheel, as even Homer[94] refers to it, a convolution from which the Latins inherited the expression *terram vertere* ['to turn the soil'] for 'to plough'. Similarly, from the fable of Sisyphus and the stone, i.e. the hard earth, which he forever rolls uphill, the Latins inherited the expression *saxum volvere* ['to roll the stone'] for 'perpetual labour'. Finally

[92] This is the letter that Bellerophon took from Proetus to Iobates, not knowing that it contained a request, written in σήματα (*semata*), signs, that Iobates should kill him. *Il.*, VI, 168.
[93] *Il.*, I, 590–1; XV, 22–4.
[94] *Il.*, V, 722; XXIII, 340.

there is Tantalus, who is starved of the fruit of the nearby apple trees which forever climb into the sky, i.e. into the cities, sited on high, of the heroes. The moral philosophers later found these fables suitable for creating portraits of the ambitious, greedy and avaricious, but these [vices] were never experienced in an age content with only the necessities of life.

457. In addition to the fable in which Ulysses blinds Polyphemus, that of Penelope's suitors provides a further weighty proof of the three ages of heroic poets up to [and including] Homer, through which, as a result of the causes discovered above [286–7], a highly corrupt history of the peoples of Greece was transmitted to him.

[Chapter IX]
The uniformity of the age of the heroes among the ancient nations

458. The uniformity of the course that the age of the heroes takes among the other ancient nations is supported by a further philological demonstration, based upon two pieces of testimony belonging to two entire nations. The first comes from the Egyptians, who claim, according to Tacitus,[95] that theirs is the oldest Hercules of all and that the others had all taken their name from him. The second comes from the Greeks, who recognised a Hercules in all the nations that they knew. To these two weighty proofs, drawn from the Egyptians and Greeks, we should add the authority of Varro, the most learned of Romans,[96] who counted a good forty Hercules, among the most celebrated of whom were the Scythian Hercules, who rivalled the Egyptian Hercules in age, the Celtic, Gallic, Libyan, Ethiopian, Phoenician and Tyrian Hercules, the famous Theban Hercules of Greece and, as demonstrated above [385], the god Fidius, who was the Hercules of the Latin peoples. Hence, since heroism, comprised of the same properties, took the same course through all these ancient nations, every Hercules was worthy of the same name as that which the Egyptians, the Greeks and Varro gave him. This must be a great proof of the ideal eternal history designed above [90], a history that should be read with the assistance of our critical art and the

[95] Tacitus, *Ann.*, II, 63.
[96] See footnotes 125, p. 96 and 68, p. 178.

etymologies [91–3, 381–2] and universal dictionary conceived above [387–9]. Here, in confirmation of our principles, we shall explain some fables that relate to the natural law of the heroic gentes.

459. The character of the Theban Hercules begins to take shape in the age of the gods at the start of the epoch of Jove, for he is generated by Jove and his birth is accompanied by Jove's thunder, just as Bacchus, another famous Geek hero, was born when Semele was struck down by a thunderbolt. These constitute the first and second of our principles of humanity: that all the ancient nations were founded upon the true belief in a provident divinity and began with certain and solemn marriages, celebrated through the auspices that the gentiles observed by means of Jove's thunderbolts.

460. The great labours of Hercules certainly begin in the epoch of Juno, for he undertakes them on her orders, i.e. from her admonitions about the needs of families, the first of which, in the epoch of Diana, was the need to kill the wild animals in defence of the families.

461. Hence Hercules descends into the underworld and drags Cerberus out from it. This need arose, and was satisfied, in the epoch of Apollo, when burial was established, because the underworld was the sepulchre of the first poets, the place where, when the earth opened before his feet and he looked down from above, Ulysses saw the heroes of the past.[97] Thus Hercules drives the dogs from the sepulchres. This was our third principle of humanity, i.e. burial of the dead, through which humanity was named *humanitas* from *humare*, 'to bury'. Cerberus was said to be 'three-throated', possibly to signify Orcus,[98] he who devours all, by [using 'three' as] a superlative, a usage that has been retained by the French, who convert the normal form [of an adjective or adverb] into a superlative by qualifying it with *très*. It must also have applied to Neptune's trident, the great hook for seizing pirates' ships, and to Jove's three-pronged thunderbolt which, when it struck, pierced things with such potent force. [But to return to our theme], when Cerberus came forth into the sight of the sky, the sun followed his path. This, as we discovered earlier [345], was an anachronism concerning the time in which Orcus and the dogs devoured human corpses. For this was a time in which there was as yet no Apollo, the god of civil light, who establishes the

[97] *Od.*, XI, 36–43.
[98] See footnote 116, p. 196.

genealogies of the first gentes or heroic houses, the source of their splendour, through [the practice of] burial, as demonstrated above [289, 418]. Hence Theseus, the founder of the Athenian people, and Orpheus, said to be the founder of the Greek peoples, also descend into the underworld, because the religion of burial led all nations to revere in the souls of their dead an aspect of divinity, which is why the Latins called them *dii manes* ['the divine souls of the dead']. Thus they were led to sense the immortality of the soul, a common sense of nations that Plato was later to demonstrate.

462. Next, while still in his cradle, Hercules kills the serpents, then the Hydra, the dragon of Hesperia, and the Nemean lion, all of which belch forth fire. This is in the epoch of Vulcan, who sets fire to the forests, as explained above [344, 421].

463. In the epoch of Saturn, the age of gold, as demonstrated above [280], Hercules brings back the golden apples, i.e. he harvests the wheat from Hesperia in the west of Attica, where the Hesperidean nymphs certainly watched over their gardens. Here we have a deed worthy of Hercules and of Greek history, rather than the business of the orange trees of Portugal, which is a history worthy only of gluttons. Virgil,[99] the most learned of ancient poets, used the tale of this deed as his model when he called the harvests of wheat that Aeneas seeks in the ancient forest of uncultivated land, 'the golden bough'. This is the bough that Aeneas is not allowed to break off until he has the permission of the gods, because the impious vagabonds who lacked the auspices did not harvest grain. But when he has the bough, he enters the underworld to present it to Dis,[100] the god of the treasures, for the discovery of which Hercules is the god,[101] wherein he beholds both his ancestors and his descendants, a sight denied to the impious vagabonds, who lacked the custom of burying human corpses.

464. Next, in the epoch of Mars, Hercules kills the monsters, i.e. both the impious vagabonds born of nefarious matings and thus possessed of discordant natures, and the tyrants, i.e. the robbers of crops and the landless men who seek to occupy the lands of others, in whom the outline of tyrants first appeared. Here Hercules establishes the heroic

[99] *Aen.*, VI, 137; 187; 208–9.

[100] 'Dis' is another name for Pluto, god of the underworld.

[101] Petronius, *Satyricon*, 38. Vico uses this belief about Hercules as a way of maintaining his claim, for which there is no evidence, that Virgil used the tale of Hercules and the golden apples as his model for Aeneas and the golden bough.

law of the fields, i.e. the optimum or strongest law, for defending claims against the unjust and violent.

465. In the epoch of Minerva, he wrestles with Antaeus and conquers him by lifting him on high and then tying him to the ground. This is the history of the heroic disputes in which the heroes resisted communicating ownership of the fields to the plebs. The struggle with Antaeus must have occurred in the epoch of Mercury, when Hercules brought the first agrarian law to the rebellious plebeians and led them to the cities of the heroes, which were situated on high, as noted many times above [416, 455–6]. Through this law, the likes of Antaeus remained tied to the lands, and were therefore called *glebae addicti* ['those assigned to the land'] by the Latins and, in the returned barbaric times, 'lieges', the first rustic vassals, after whom the noble fiefs arose. But nowhere is this [tract of] heroic history explained better than in the tale of the Gallic Hercules, who, from a chain of poetic gold, i.e. wheat, held in his mouth, drags in his train a vast throng of men tied to the chain by their ears. Such a mythology is altogether more appropriate than the idea that Hercules should signify eloquence at a time in which the nations were not yet speaking in words of settled meaning. This must also be the [tract of] history signified by the fable of Venus who, since she is naked, is the plebeian Venus, and Mars, who is also naked, i.e. not clad in the hides of wild animals, and is therefore not the heroic but the plebeian Mars who, as Homer tells us, was struck by warlike Minerva.[102] As such he is the character of the clientes, who, under the command of the heroes, wage war and, after they rebel on the field of Troy, are beaten by Ulysses with Agamemnon's sceptre.[103] Venus and Mars are both dragged from the sea, from which overseas settlers came to lands already occupied, in Vulcan's net,[104] i.e. are in the ties of the heroic bond. But because they failed to understand this fable, the corrupt poets later made Venus out to be Vulcan's wife,[105] and consequently imagined that Venus and Mars had committed adultery. Through our critical art, however, we learn that the sun, the god of civil light, did not expose them [in their nakedness], but bathed them instead

[102] *Od.*, VIII, 267–302 and *Il.*, XXI, 403–8.
[103] *Il.*, II, 265–9.
[104] *Od.*, VIII, 267–302.
[105] In Vico's account, as the plebeian Venus, lacking the auspices, she could not be a legitimate wife.

in the splendour of the illustrious, as we saw above [339]; and when the gods mocked them,[106] [they did so in the sense in which], as we saw with Sallust [184], the Roman patricians mocked the extremely unhappy plebs, which was in the time, as Sallust himself calls it, of Roman heroism. This conforms with our earlier claim [353] that the bond was an emblem of heroic nations. Thus it is on the basis of the bond that Hercules establishes the tithe that is still called 'the tithe of Hercules', that is, the tribute of the fruits of cultivation, which, as Tacitus observed,[107] the German vassals paid to their lords. This would be the census of Servius Tullius which reappeared, under the same name, together with emphyteusis and the fief, in the returned barbaric times.

466. Through his wrestling match with Antaeus, Hercules established a game that the Greeks continued to call 'the game of the bond'. This must have been the first Olympic Games, which Hercules is certainly said to have been the first to establish. Hence, as the Greek nation reached its highest lustre with these games, the Greeks began to number the eras of years in Greek history, which they had previously numbered in harvests, in Olympiads. A reference to harvests remained, however, in the winning-cones used in the circuses, where they were named from the Latin *meto*, 'to reap',[108] just as the expression 'a reap of grain' survived among the Italians [for a stack of hay]. Such an etymology is altogether more appropriate than any in which the significance of these expressions is found to lie in the cone that describes the annual course of the sun, a feature that was understood only much later by the most learned astronomers. Thus, for the heroic peasants, the circle formed by the serpent with its tail in its mouth could not have signified eternity, which metaphysicians find very difficult to understand; rather it signifies the year of crops with which the serpent of the earth feeds itself annually. Later, however, failing to understand that this was the real significance of the serpent, Ixion's wheel was made to represent it. Hence the year continued to be called 'the great circle', from which *annulus*, 'the little circle', was derived. But 'the great circle' certainly does not describe [the course of] the sun as it comes and goes between its two tropics.

[106] *Od.*, VIII, 325–7.
[107] Tacitus, *Germany*, 25.
[108] Voss, *Etymologicon*, p. 371.

467. It is now possible to find the missing heroic robbers who, as noted earlier [445], must have preceded the heroic pirates, by reference to Hercules and to the property whereby he subdues peoples and carries away household plunder, such as the herds of Hesperia, i.e. of the west of Attica, both for the glory of doing so and as proof of that glory.

468. Hercules passes from the age of the gods into that of the heroes when he joins the naval expedition to Pontus in the epoch of Neptune, i.e. in the time of the heroic pirates in Greece. Thus he is found to be contemporary with Orpheus, Amphion and Linus, all three of whom, companions of Jason, were sages in divinity and conspicuous in the heroic disputes against the Greek plebs when the plebs wanted the right of heroic marriage to be communicated to them. It was because these disputes were concerned with the struggle for the law of the heroes that the heroic century was given its name. In precisely the same way, as demonstrated above in Livy [449], in the same heroic disputes [in Rome] between the fathers and the plebs, Appius Claudius, the grandson of the decemvir, was the Roman Orpheus. Hence Hercules must already have communicated optimum ownership of the fields to the [Greek] plebs through the second agrarian law in the epoch of Mercury, since it had been communicated to the Roman plebs in the Law of the Twelve Tables prior to the dispute for the solemn marriage of the fathers.

469. Finally Hercules erupts into a fury when he is stained with the blood of the Centaur who is still called Nessus,[109] the monster of the plebs with two diverse natures, as is explained in Roman history by Livy.[110] This means that, in the midst of civil furore, Hercules communicates heroic marriage to the plebs, is contaminated by plebeian blood, and dies, just as the Roman Hercules, the god Fidius, dies with the Petelian law. At this point Livy suggests that *vinculum fidei victum est* ('the bond of faith was broken'], an expression which he must have taken from some ancient writer of annals and reported with as much good faith as ignorance. For the belief that has hitherto been accepted is false, since the Romans still celebrated judgements in which debtors were constrained [by law, to pay their debts] after the Petelian law.[111] But in the light of our principles, the only sense in

[109] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IX, 137–238.

[110] Livy, VI, 40–1.

[111] At VIII, 28, Livy introduces the expression 'the bond of faith was broken' in connection with the passing of the Petelian law, through which the private incarceration of debtors was

which this expression can be true is by referring to the unshackling of the feudal law, i.e. of the bond and of the private imprisonment born in the first open asylums in the world, the asylums through which Romulus founded Rome upon the clienteles and Brutus re-established the liberty of the lords, in accordance with the origins of ancient Roman history narrated earlier [161].

470. These heroic disturbances which, as we have now seen, comprised the most important matter in Greek fabulous history, have been narrated in the vulgar in certain ancient Roman history. But it should come as no surprise to anybody who reflects upon it that the Romans guarded the Law of the Twelve Tables, together with others that arose later from time to time, in writing, whereas the Athenians changed their laws every year, while the Spartans, prohibited from writing them down, always spoke of them in the language of the day, so that their fables, which constituted the language of their laws and customs, were quickly obscured. For the Roman fables must have passed in their entirety from heroic characters into vulgar expressions, just as we have seen on so many other occasions how, in the most completely natural way, the Greek fables passed into expressions in vulgar Latin.[112] And, as a result of these same causes, the Latin language has preserved its origins more entirely than Greek.

[Chapter X]
The age of men

471. The development of the bond continued among all the ancient nations in the same way as it did through the Petelian law among the Romans, with the result that, in Livy's words, *aliud initium libertatis extitit*, 'liberty stood out above every other principle'.[113]

prohibited, following a public tumult after such a debtor had been severely beaten by his creditor. Livy introduces the expression because he believed that without private incarceration, debtors would fail to pay their debts. But, as Vico points out, this cannot be correct since debtors were still required by law to repay their debts after the Petelian law. For Vico, indeed, the only sense the expression 'the bond of faith was broken' can have, if it is relevant here at all, is by referring to a much wider issue, i.e. the ending of the feudal law, which, together with private incarceration, had operated in various ways, since Romulus first set up his asylum.

[112] Cf. 417, 423, 429, 433, 446, 448, 452, 455, 456, 465, 469.

[113] Livy, VIII, 28, 1.

Since this was the popular liberty from which the nations everywhere then passed into monarchies, it begins in universal history with the monarchy of Ninus in the East. According to our principles these two kinds of government, i.e. the popular and the monarchical, constitute the two forms that human governments can take, which explains the hidden nature of their command over ferocious nations. Tacitus saw this in practice when Agricola exhorted the English to study letters, the import of which he expressed in his well-known saying, *et humanitas vocabatur pars servitutis erat* ['what was called humanity was part of their servitude'].[114]

472. Thus, through their heroic law, the Romans spread humanity into the likes of Africa, Spain, Gaul, Noricum, Illyricum, Dacia, Pannonia, Thrace, Flanders, Holland and as far as England, the end of the world. The age of men then began because men reach the form of human governments naturally through the development of epistolary languages, i.e. the languages of private affairs or the vulgar languages of words of settled meaning. In the popular republics these are given the meanings of the words the people use in the common assemblies, where laws are commanded according to natural equity, which is the sole form of equity that the multitude understands; and in the monarchies they originate in that necessity of nature whereby, when the people are masters of a language, their rulers are naturally led to want laws that will be welcomed by the common sense of the multitude, who understand natural equity alone. Hence the science of the law fell naturally from the grasp of the heroes, as it did also from that of the Roman patricians, for aristocratic republics must be governed by orders rather than laws.

473. Thus reason is the cause of the vulgar languages, for monarchy constitutes the kind of government that best conforms with the nature of [fully] developed human ideas, which is the true nature of man. Thus, under the monarchies everywhere, the law that Ulpian called *ius gentium humanarum* ['the law of the human gentes'][115] is celebrated. Hence neither the jurisconsults in their replies, nor the emperors in their written responses, define cases of doubtful justice according to [the standards of] the sects of superstitious times, or those of the heroic or barbaric times, but according to that of their

[114]Tacitus, *Agricola*, 21.
[115]See footnote 14, p. 43.

own times, i.e. as we have demonstrated throughout the length of this work, the sect of human times which was as proper to Roman jurisprudence as those of the Stoics and Epicureans were contrary to it. Providence guided the nations through all these sects of times both in order that Roman law should be founded on the principles of Platonic philosophy, which is both the queen of all the pagan philosophies and the most discreet servant of Christian philosophy, and that, at the same time, Roman law should be domesticated, so to speak, so as to submit itself to the law of conscience that the Gospel commands.

CONCLUSION OF THE WORK

474. The foregoing explanation of the character of Hercules provides the uniform origins of all the ancient nations. Contained, as they are, in their entirety in the fabulous history of the Greeks, and interpreted here in the light of certain Roman history, they fill out the fragmented history of the Egyptians and clarify the utterly obscure history of the East. [An understanding of] these origins must precede [that of] universal history, which begins with the monarchy of Ninus; it must precede [that of] philosophy, in order that, by meditating upon Providence, philosophy should reason about men, fathers and princes; and it must precede [that of] the jurisprudence of the natural law of the gentes ordained by Providence. Hence [it will be seen that] the whole of history, the parts of philosophy that we have discussed, and the jurisprudence of the natural law of the gentes, as given in the systems of Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf, have hitherto been treated without such origins, while the Stoics with their fate and the Epicureans with their chance have actively damaged [our understanding of] them. This explains why, at the outset, we despaired of finding this Science, wherein we have demonstrated that Providence ordained this world of nations, either from the philosophers or the philologists.

475. Thus, to conclude with the example with which our reasoning began: first came the auspices, which men believed were necessary to distinguish who had ownership of common land in the first world under the divine kingdoms; next came the Herculean consignment of the bond in the heroic kingdoms; finally came the consignment of the estates themselves in the human kingdoms. Herein lie the origin,

progress and end of the natural law of the gentes, as it proceeds with uninterrupted uniformity among the nations in order that the natural law of the philosophers, which is both eternal in its idea and in accord with the natural law of the Christian peoples, should [finally] be understood. [The essence of] this law in the kingdom of conscience, which is the kingdom of the true God, is that it suffices for the transfer of the ownership of something that it should be transferred with the deliberate will of its master and accepted by others also of their own free will, with adequate signification on both sides. This was the idea of our whole work, which we began with the saying, *A Iove principium Musae* ['The Muses descended from Jove'],[1] and which we now conclude with the second part of that saying, *Iovis omnia plena* ['All things are full of Jove'].[2]

476. Hence Polybius[3] is refuted by the fact that had there been no religion in the world there would have been no philosophers in it. Thus true, then, is his claim that had there been philosophers in the world, there would never have been need of any religion! Thus also is Bayle,[4] with his belief that nations can reign without religions, refuted by fact. For, without a provident God, there would have been no states in the world other than those of wandering, bestiality, ugliness, violence, ferocity, depravity and blood, and probably, or even certainly, throughout the great forest of the earth, hideous and mute, mankind would not now exist.

[1] See footnote 2, p. 1.
[2] See footnote 65, p. 176.
[3] See footnote 11, p. 157.
[4] Bayle, *Pensées diverses écrites à un docteur de Sorbonne, à l'occasion de la comète qui parut au mois de décembre 1680*, paras. 161 and 162.

INDEX

[I]
Vulgar traditions

477. In addressing this work at the outset to the universities of Europe, we respectfully noted the need to submit our vulgar traditions to the severe criticism of an exact metaphysical ratiocination. In the first book, despairing of finding the principles of this Science from either the philosophers or the philologists, we alerted our reader to the need to suspend his memory or imagination of our vulgar traditions, if only for the brief amount of time required to read the work, in order that, when he later returned to these traditions, he would recognise for himself the truth that gave rise to their birth and understand the causes through which they have reached us covered in falsehood. Hence, in article VIII, part II, volume XVIII, of the *Biblioteca antica e moderna*, in reference to *De constantia philologiae*, a part of another of our works in which, although by means of other principles and in a wholly different order, these same fickle traditions are noted, Jean Le Clerc makes the following judgement: 'He gives us in brief the principal epochs after the Flood up to the time in which Hannibal waged war in Italy. Because, throughout the whole course of the book, he discusses the diverse things that ensued in this length of time, makes many philological observations on a large number of matters, and corrects many vulgar errors, to which men of the highest understanding have paid no attention whatsoever.'

478. We now offer a list of these errors, together with their corrections:

I

479. That the Ogygian and Deucalion Floods were individual floods in Greece. Whereas they were mutilated traditions of the Universal Flood.

II

480. That Japhet was the Iapetus of the Greeks. Whereas he was the race of Japhet, sent by its creator, through its impiety, into a ferine wandering through Europe, from which the peoples of Greece arose in that part of Europe.

III

481. That the giants of the poets were impious, violent tyrants, who were called 'giants' only metaphorically. Whereas they were true giants. Wholly impious until the sky first thundered after the Flood, their violent successors were those who remained in bestial communion, in whom, when they finally wanted to rob the cultivated lands of the religious giants, the first outline of tyrants began to appear.

IV

482. That the first gentile men, whom the Socinian Grotius identified with his simpletons, satisfied by nature, and therefore innocent and just, created the golden age, the first age of which the poets tell us. Whereas they were satisfied with the fruits of nature, and their innocence and justice was of the kind that Polyphemus relates to Ulysses of himself and the other giants,[1] in whom Plato located the first state of the families.[2] And their golden age was the age of the wheat discovered by the giants.

[1] *Od.*, IX, 112–15. Ulysses is the narrator.
[2] Plato, *Laws*, III, 678c–681e.

V

483. That when men finally became aware of the pains of their common life, without religion, without force of arms and without the command of laws, they divided the fields justly and, with only their boundaries fixed, held them securely until the cities arose. But this is our own fable of the golden age. For, as proved in this work [116, 143], the boundaries were fixed to the fields through religion; the pains of life of which men became aware were not those of a common or human, but of a solitary and ferine, life; and those who became aware of them were Grotius's impious simpletons, who, hunted for their lives by Hobbes's violent men, had recourse to the lands of the strong and religious to save themselves.

VI

484. That the first law in the world, as Brennus, Captain of the Gauls, told the Romans,[3] was that of force, which Thomas Hobbes imagined was the force that some men imposed upon others, with the consequence that, since kingdoms are born of force, they ought to be preserved by force. But the first law was born from the force of Jove, supposedly residing in his thunderbolts, which drove the giants underground into their grottoes, whence, as demonstrated above [58, 106, 414], arose the whole of gentile humanity.

VII

485. That the first gods in the world were created through fear, understood, in accordance with Samuel Pufendorf's idea, as a fear that some should have induced in others; hence, that the laws that these men made are the daughters of a deception, and that states ought therefore to be preserved by certain powerful secrets together with certain semblances of liberty. But it was their fear of the thunderbolts that, Providence permitting, brought the giants to imagine and revere for themselves the divinity of Jove, king and father of all the gods, so that the essence of republics lies in religion and not force or deception.

[3] Livy, V, 48, 9.

VIII

486. That the recondite wisdom of the East should have spread to the rest of the world through a series of schools in which the teachings of Zoroaster passed successively to Berosus, Hermes Trismegistus, Atlas and Orpheus. Whereas it was the vulgar wisdom that was propagated from the same religious origins throughout the world with the propagation of mankind itself, which undoubtedly came from the East. The [truly] recondite wisdom of the East was brought by the Phoenicians to the Egyptians, to whom they gave the use of the quadrant and the science of the height of the Pole Star, and to the Greeks, to whom they brought gods raised to the stars. And in both cases, as demonstrated above [107], this happened long after [the propagation of vulgar wisdom].

IX

487. That, consequently, to the sound of his lute, Orpheus sang his wonderful fables of the power of the gods to the savage men of Greece, thus reducing them to humanity and founding the Greek race. But, as shown above [213, 216], this is a gross anachronism concerning the heroic disturbances in Greece over the ownership of the fields, disturbances that occurred some five hundred years after religions were introduced and peoples and kingdoms were founded.

X

488. That, on the strength of this fable of Orpheus, the vulgar languages arose first, followed later by those of the poets, [a belief] based upon the hitherto prevalent idea that Orpheus of Thrace had a language in common with the vagabond Greeks of the forests; and that, since he understood this vulgar Greek language, he created poetic metaphors and used the metre of song in such a way as to delight Hobbes's violent men, Grotius's simpletons and Pufendorf's abandoned ones with the wonder of his fables, the novelty of his mode of expression and the sweetness of his harmony, thus reducing them to humanity. But, as demonstrated above [303], these languages could never have been born without religion.

XI

489. That the first authors of language were sages. But they were sages in the first and proper wisdom which, as demonstrated in our principles of poetic reason [313–16], was that of the senses.

XII

490. That, before all others, a natural language, i.e. a language that signified things in accordance with their nature, was spoken, based on the idea that talking and philosophising were one and the same thing. But, as demonstrated above [303–5], the first language was the divine language of the gentiles, based upon the false ideas of the first poetic peoples, in which the origins of the civil world were taken to be corporeal substances and objects believed to possess divinity, i.e. a divine intelligence. Thus were the gods imagined.

XIII

491. That Cadmus the Phoenician discovered the characters. But they were poetic characters.

XIV

492. That colonies were led by Cecrops, Cadmus, Danaus and Pelops into Greece and by the Greeks into Sicily and Italy. Not, however, for the pleasure of discovering new lands or the glory of propagating humanity, but for safety and escape when they were under pressure during the heroic disturbances in their countries.

XV

493. That, in the midst of all this, avid for the pleasure of glory, Hercules travelled the world, slaying monsters and suppressing tyrants. Not, however, some single Theban Hercules, but, as fully proved above [262, 385, 458], as many Hercules as there were ancient nations.

XVI

494. That the first wars were undertaken solely for the sake of glory and to bring plunder home as emblems of war. Whereas these were the wars of the great heroic robbers, so that 'great robber' was an honourable title for a hero.

XVII

495. Through the things imagined about Orpheus, that the founders of Greek humanity, such as Amphion, Linus, and the others called 'theological poets', were sages of the same kind as that of which, in the times known to us, the divine Plato was prince. But they were sages in the divinity of the auspices, i.e. divination, which, from *divinari* ['to divine'], was the first divinity among the gentiles.

XVIII

496. That, consequent upon the previous error, the theological poets concealed the highest mysteries of a recondite wisdom in the fables: hence the desire, from Plato's time down to our own, that of Bacon of Verulam,[4] to discover the wisdom of the ancients within the fables. But the wisdom concealed in them was of the kind whereby, in all nations, all sacred things were kept secret from the profane.

XIX

497. Hence, above all, the desire to discover the wisdom of the ancients in Homer, the first certain father of the whole of Greek erudition. But Homer was a sage in heroic wisdom: thus in the *Iliad*, the model of heroic virtue whom he presents to the Greeks is an Achilles who believes, as he tells Hector,[5] that there is no equality of right between the strong and the weak concerning the utilities; and in the *Odyssey*, his model of heroic prudence is a Ulysses who always procures his utilities by deceptions such that he can maintain his reputation for keeping his word.

[4]See footnote 24, p. 19.
[5]*Il.*, XXII, 261–7.

XX

498. That the first cities were born of families, hitherto understood as consisting solely of children of the family. But they were born of the families, properly so called from their *famuli*, without whom, had they not, from the start, rebelled against the heroes who governed them with such harshness, no cities would ever have arisen in the world. Hence we demonstrate that the patriarchs were just and magnanimous, because they preserved the state of the families up to the time of the [Mosaic] law.[6]

XXI

499. That the first name for a civil power to be heard on earth was that of 'king', i.e. as hitherto imagined, the monarch of a people. But the first civil powers were the fathers of the families, those whom Homer calls 'king' on the shield of Achilles, and, as demonstrated above [134, 360, 395], they were monarchs of their families.

XXII

500. That in the first age the sages, priests and kings were the same as those whom we have hitherto imagined to be sages in recondite wisdom, a tradition that derives from Plato, for whom such sages were necessary. But they were the fathers of the state of the families, and, as such, sages in the wisdom of the auspices.

XXIII

501. That, on the basis of a belief in the discerning nature of the customs of the golden age, in which the multitude had a common understanding of beauty and worth, the kings were elected for the dignity of their appearance and the worthiness of their persons. But the kings were born naturally, as demonstrated above [150], during the disturbances of the clientes, when the more robust and spirited of the fathers became the chiefs of the nobles and ruled them in orders to resist the clientes, who had united in plebs. Then the cities arose.

[6] See 148 above for the reasons for the special status of the biblical patriarchs.

XXIV

502. That the Roman kingdom was an admixture of monarchy and popular liberty. But here we have hitherto been deceived by the word 'king'. For the political philosophers tell us that the Spartan kingdom was certainly aristocratic and the philologists believe that the Spartans retained many of the most ancient heroic customs of Greece. And, as we saw above [158–60], the Roman kingdom was aristocratic in form.

XXV

503. That Romulus established the clienteles in order that through them, or so we have hitherto imagined, the nobles would teach the plebeians the laws, which were, [on the contrary], kept secret from them for a good five hundred years more and were communicated among the nobles themselves by signs or occult characters. But through the clienteles Romulus defended the lives of the plebeians, sheltering them in the asylum opened in the sacred grove. Then, from Servius Tullius onwards, the fathers defended the plebeians in their possession of the fields assigned to them under the burden of the census. Then, after the Law of the Twelve Tables, they defended the plebeians in their possession of fields with the right of optimum ownership, which had been communicated to them: hence the formula for asserting a claim, *Aio hunc fundum meum esse ex iure quiritium* ['I affirm this land to be mine in accordance with quiritary law']. And with the full development of popular liberty, they defended them with their support and defence in lawsuits and legal charges.

XXVI

504. That the Roman plebs consisted of citizens from the time of Romulus. This assumption has stood in the way of a correct reading, and hence a proper understanding, of the history of ancient Roman law. For the fathers communicated to the plebs the right to contract legal marriages, so appropriately called *connubium*, only six years after the Law of the Twelve Tables.[7]

[7] Hence, prior to that, they would have remained slaves.

XXVII

505. That the barbaric nations waged war when they were desperate for their liberty. This is true [but only in the sense that] the heroes waged war for their liberty as lords, whereas the plebs waged it for the natural liberty to enjoy, under their natural lords, the natural or bonitary ownership of the fields that they would have lost through slavery.

XXVIII

506. That Numa was a disciple of Pythagoras. This is denied even by Livy.[8]

XXIX

507. That Pythagoras' voyages through the world were true because many dogmas identical to his were later discovered throughout the world. But, as demonstrated above [37], these voyages are incredible for other reasons.

XXX

508. That Servius Tullius established the census in Rome. But this was the census that the plebeians had to pay the fathers for bonitary ownership, and not yet that upon which popular liberty was founded.

XXXI

509. That Brutus established popular liberty. But he re-established the liberty of the lords and it was through the two annual consuls that the first outlines of popular liberty appear, as Livy clearly noted.[9]

XXXII

510. That in Rome, at the beginning of liberty, there were agrarian disturbances of the same kind as those stirred up by the Gracchi. But they were the second kind of agrarian disturbance, i.e. they were

[8]Livy, I, 18, 2–3.
[9]Livy, II, 1, 7.

concerned with the communication of optimum ownership of the fields from the fathers to the plebeians. Others of the first kind, i.e. those concerned with bonitary ownership, must have been stirred up earlier under the reign of Servius Tullius, who settled them with the census.

XXXIII

511. That colonies of the last kind known to us were led to Rome. But these were the second kind of colonies which arose as a result of bonitary ownership under the census of Servius Tullius. Like the first colonies of Romulus they were proper colonies of peasants who cultivated the fields for the lords.

XXXIV

512. That the Roman plebs wanted the Law of the Twelve Tables because of their hatred of uncertain and hidden law and of law administered through the royal hand of the fathers. This is true, [but only] because, as a result [of these kinds of law], the plebs were not secure in the bonitary ownership of the fields assigned to them by the fathers.

XXXV

513. That the Law of the Twelve Tables came to Rome from abroad. [This false belief arose] because, when the Romans went abroad, they found customs there that were the same as those commanded to them by this law.

XXXVI

514. That Roman law was an amalgam of Spartan and Athenian law. [This false belief arose] because when the Romans went abroad at the time of their aristocratic government, they saw that their law was the same as that of Sparta. And later, in the time of their popular government, they saw that it was similar to that of Athens.

XXXVII

515. That the century of Roman virtue lasted from the expulsion of the kings to the Carthaginian War. [But] the century of Roman virtue was the century of heroic virtue, in which the fathers fought for heroism and the rights dependent on it against the plebs who aspired to them.

XXXVIII

516. That the natural law of the gentes, with which from the beginning the Romans justified their wars, practised their victories and regulated their conquests, came to them from other nations. But it was born at home among the Romans, uniform with the law of the other nations that the Romans came to know on the occasion of these wars.

XXXIX

517. That optimum law was exclusive to the world of Roman citizens. But it was born uniform in every free city, and became exclusive to Roman citizens only because the Romans removed it from the whole world that they made subject through their victories.

XL

518. That, from the beginning, the natural law proceeded among the gentiles through the force of the true, without distinguishing the gentiles from a people assisted by the true God; for Selden failed to distinguish this people from Hobbes's violent men, Grotius from his own simpletons, and Pufendorf from his men thrown into this world without the care and assistance of God. But it becomes true because it proceeded in accordance with the truth of Providence.

[II]
General discoveries

519. In addition to the particular discoveries made in particular places, we now present a summary of certain general discoveries which, like

blood through the body, are diffused and spread through the whole of this work.

I

520. An ideal eternal history, described on the basis of the idea of Providence, in accordance with which the particular histories of all nations proceed through time in their rise, progress, state [of perfection], decline and end.

II

521. The eternal principle of the nature of states and the eternal properties of civil institutions, through which, by combining and uniting them, the reader will discover a description of the laws of an eternal republic that changes in time and place.

III

522. The nature and original properties of the monarchies and the free republics, the matrices of which, as it were, are discovered in the heroic republics and the monarchies of the first family fathers in the state of nature, which have hitherto lain hidden within the Greek fables. This was the wisdom of the ancients that awaited discovery in the fables.

IV

523. Hence the whole of ancient Roman history is cast in a new light through this investigation of causes that we have discovered in the shadows and fables of antiquity least known to us, enabling us to establish facts that are as certain as their alternatives, as they currently stand, are beyond the possibility of belief, as demonstrated earlier [93, 158–60].

V

524. The certain origin of the whole of profane, universal history, and its continuity from sacred history, through fabulous Greek history,

down to certain Roman history, which begins with the second Carthaginian War. This universal history is read by means of three languages, corresponding to the three ages through which, in the order laid down by Providence, this history begins, proceeds and finishes in all the gentile nations. The science of these languages was required in order to be able to talk of the natural law of the gentes with propriety.

VI

525. The whole of ancient Roman government, law, history and jurisprudence brought together in a single system on the basis of three laws, all of which were native to the peoples of Latium. The first was that of the clienteles of Romulus; the second was the census of Servius Tullius; and the third was the optimum private law of the fields which was communicated to the plebeians in the Law of the Twelve Tables, reserving to the fathers, in the Eleventh Table, the optimum public law of the auspices. In these three laws, which alone can form and fix virtuous habits in peoples, lie the causes of the religion of the fathers, the magnanimity of the plebs, the strength of the people in waging war, the justice of the senate in giving the laws of peace to conquered nations and, through all this, the causes of the whole of Roman greatness. Hence these same native customs enabled the likes of Brutus to drive the tyrants from the necks of Rome; and the likes of Horatius, Mucius Scaevola and, finally, the maiden Cloelia,[10] to confound the likes of Lars Porsena and his whole Etruscan power with the wonder of their virtue. Similarly, through their customs, the Roman people were able to prevail over the other peoples of Latium, who, because they shared the same customs, were also of a ferocious nature, so much so that, as the political philosophers concerned with Roman affairs have noted, this was a much more difficult accomplishment. Later, these same native heroic customs, by then set down in the [Twelve] Tables, enabled the Roman heroes to subdue Italy, conquer Africa and, on the ruins of Carthage, lay down the foundation of their command of the world.

[10] Cloelia was a Roman renowned for her bravery in the dispute with Porsena. Livy, II, 13.

VII

526. A proper philosophy of humanity, constituted by a continuous meditation upon what was necessary in order that Hobbes's violent men, Grotius's simpletons and Pufendorf's destitutes should gradually be led from the time in which Jove drove the giants underground to the times in which the seven sages arose in Greece, i.e. to the times in which Solon, prince of the seven sages, would teach the Athenians the celebrated saying, *Nosce te ipsum* ['Know thyself'], through which the humanity of the Greeks began to come to completion by means of maxims. Over the whole preceding period of fifteen hundred years, Providence alone, through certain human senses, led these [first men] to this humanity, as mankind began to take shape, first through the religion of a provident divinity, then through the certainty of children, and, finally, through the burial of ancestors. These are the three origins of the civil universe that we laid down at the start.

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