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A CIRCLE OR A SPIRAL? THE PRIMEVAL, TROPOLOGICAL SCHEME IDENTIFIED IN THE STRUCTURE OF TRUTH THEORIES

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ABSTRACT

Applying linguistic tropes to the deep structure which underlay the 19th century historical imagination Hayden White derived from the vault of philosophical richness contained in Giambattista Vico's *La Scienza Nuova*. Now the treasure trove becomes a source of one more illuminating analogy. The following study demonstrates how metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony can be identified with five major theories of truth: the correspondence, pragmatic, coherence, deflationary and the semantic one. Theories are evoked on the basis of texts by philosophers themselves (Bertrand Russell, Charles Sanders Peirce, Brand Blanshard et al.). Moreover, a numerical mismatch between them and the four tropes should be seen as everything but unwanted. The concept of irony has multiple interpretations, and so mapping it onto the semantic theory will expose the relation between truth accounts and the principle of their development. In the end, there emerges a pattern in the shape of a circle or a spiral—two models of infinity along which runs the human quest for meaning of truth.

Keywords: Truth, tropes, Hayden White, Giambattista Vico, figuration.

THE UNIVERSAL PATTERN

Language and perception are welded together so tightly that it is impossible to determine which of them takes the upper hand in exerting mutual influence. The structures with the help of which we organise our experience become carved on the linguistic system as if upon a clay tablet, unavoidably and ineradicably—this is a truth long recognised and acknowledged as a philosophical platitude.

Yet observing that in these structures there emerges a regularity which goes beyond single perceptions and beyond language differences, extending itself over entire epochs; this is arguably in a way a more astonishing thought. The regularity would be gradually forming a certain universal pat-

tern, along the lines of which operates the human intellect. Such seems to have been an insight of Giambattista Vico, according to whom the development of mankind was cyclical, and who claimed additionally that the cycle reflects itself in language.

In the *New Science* Vico constructs a circle out of four figures of speech, four linguistic tropes—metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. The mechanism of each figure was to correspond to the ways of thinking typical of societies at the consecutive stages of their progress through history. Tropes revealed how people thought about reality; how they explained and approached phenomena that surrounded them (Vico, 1948 (1744), pp. 404–409). Hayden White, who furthered Vico's study, described the figures as the paradigms of action, by means of which human consciousness deals with the problematic portion of experience, so that it could become an object of analysis and explication (White, 1973, p. 5).

And so the circle was first applied to Vichean historiography, becoming inscribed in the three stages of mankind's evolution: the age of gods marked the shift from metaphorical to metonymical thinking, the age of heroes included transformation from metonymy to synecdoche, and the age of men reached irony—the height of self-awareness and scepticism that would finally tip over the pinnacle of the circle, to fall again into dark, mystic eras ruled by metaphor. Given the vastness of interpretative horizon required to observe such a cyclical pattern, the tetrad may be referred to as master- or mega-tropes, following Kenneth Burke who introduced the former term (cf. Burke, 1941, for the latter term see Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2010, pp. 29–30; and Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2013, p. 16; also Werth, 1994).

Rather remarkably however, White further discovers that the scheme can be found in other, more narrowed dimensions of human existence. One may recognise it for instance in the phases of child's cognitive development, as it gradually becomes more self-reflexive and its ability to process environment gains in complexity. It is also possible to identify tropes in the Freudian elaboration of dream mechanisms, corresponding to various ways in which the elements construed by the dreaming mind enter into a fine interplay between the manifest and the latent dream content (White, 1973, p. 8–20).

More significantly still, White states that no analysis which unfolds through discourse (so in fact no explicit study at all) is free from the tropic embedding. He argues that these figures of speech, with metaphor in particular considered often as the trope which overarches the rest, are so fundamental that they precede reasonings of logic; after all, one may recognise a metaphorical “movement” even behind the steps of a syllogism (White, 1973, p. 7).

Thus the following study aims to draw on White's arguments and expose the presence of a tropological circle in a field where it might be little expected, being closely related to the analytical tradition in philosophy. But at

the same time, if breath-taking scope of Vico's discovery is to be ultimately proven, it would have to be found also in the area of investigation which will be brought to focus here—in what constitutes perhaps one of the most momentous of all human intellectual endeavours, namely, in the philosophical inquiry into the nature of truth. It will be demonstrated how the circle reveals itself in the way which most eminent philosophers continued to develop five major theories of truth.

Before one proceeds to the demonstration, a note on methodology is in place. Naturally, with the concept of truth remaining a great philosophical puzzle, the number of its explanations which have so far been proposed is as plentiful as the number of thinkers themselves, and even the five abovementioned categories have their countless variations. Nonetheless, it will be assumed that such a classification is possible, so as to be able to show the vastness of Vico's scheme. Moreover, given the space allowed for the following study, theories will be necessarily recalled from a bird's eye view. Certain generalisations are unavoidable—whatever stays omitted is believed not to confound the proposed interpretation, but simply be of less relevance to the research. Finally, theories will be reconstructed on the basis of texts by modern thinkers, those which are considered standard, most commonly recognised articulations, in order to prove applicability of the scheme to the philosophical debate in its relatively contemporary shape.

THE THEORY OF CORRESPONDENCE

One should therefore begin with the oldest, most reverend of all ideas regarding the nature of truth, that is the one of correspondence. Having its roots already in the famous Aristotelian passages, the theory identifies the concept with a specific relation between the mental and the physical sphere. In contemporary times the view is often associated with the formulation contained in an early text by Russell, which conveys a classic intuition behind correspondence. In his canonical *Problems of Philosophy* he states that truth consists in a relation between two sorts of complexes. One of them is to be found in the mental dimension—referred to as a belief or a judgement, and one belongs to the external world—a fact. Both complexes comprise a number of objects which are arranged in a particular way and characterised by order imparted to them through involvement of the individual. When the two structures turn out to be congruent, so when there is a structural resemblance between them, there ensues a desired relation, giving the belief a property of truth (Russell, Chapter XII).

According to the rule of Vico's circle, the first idea for the meaning of truth should be underpinned by a metaphor. Its presence in the Russellian account hardly needs a vigorous defence. White characterises metaphor as

based on analogy, similarity and identity (White, 1978, p. 202). The mechanism involves a comparison, stipulation of resemblance between two distinct domains which become superimposed on each other; the projection of the familiar onto the unfamiliar. Accordingly, in the models based on correspondence, there is to be concordance between two separate phenomena. Crucially, much as the advocates of the correspondence view wish to posit a certain degree of sameness between beliefs and facts, the similarity they postulate has to be of a purely figurative nature. The media where beliefs and facts are respectively distinguished are strikingly distinct. Any form of likeness between them seems to be merely imagined, stemming from convenient, linguistically entrenched ways one used to refer to both. Correspondence should be recognised as a form of illusion—a result of the subject’s projecting certain structures found in their beliefs on the external reality, and thereby carving out facts. Much as in the case of taming the unfamiliar by means of metaphor in the era of gods.

Naturally, there is also another version of the theory, which affirms conventionality of correspondence. Its most recognisable formulation was developed by John L. Austin. He argues that a sentence can be described as true whenever there is agreement between two sorts of conventions: a particular instance of the usage of the statement (“demonstrative convention”), and a general, commonly accepted way of applying it (“descriptive convention”) (Austin, 1950, p. 9). Yet it is easy to see that although his model sheds the burden of problematic, structural similarity, it still relies on the process which involves comparison and ascription. Here the subject stipulates resemblance of the situation they are facing to the ones in which their judgement used to be expressed and validated in the past. The two portions of experience that are being associated with each other may have in fact little in common. It has been often pointed out how vague is the operation behind the establishment of conventions (objections towards Austin’s idea are aptly summarised in (Kirkham, 2001, p. 127). Arguably, it is only the individual’s resolution that classifies a state of affairs under a given general type, and with no specific physical resemblance between them, their mutual association must be largely metaphorical.

In this way, the correspondence theory becomes an initial phase in the Vichean cycle.

THE PRAGMATIC THEORY

Exponents of the subsequent idea also attempted to locate truth somewhere in the relation between the sphere of beliefs and the external world, yet they viewed this relation way more loosely. Their primary observation was that true beliefs allow people to function smoothly in the world and

successfully realise their goals. One may recall words of the father of pragmatism; for Peirce, the truth of an idea consists in the process of its verification. It was the end of the process of enquiry (Peirce, 1994, 5.565). As long as a given belief continued to withstand the course of investigation, it remained true. William James went even further in his emphasis on instrumentality. The truth of judgements should be measured by their “cash value”—the degree of their usefulness. It is “only the expedient in the way of our thinking” (James, 1907).

The cognitive process which was therefore inspiring main intuitions behind the theory seems to be unmistakably grounded in metonymy. This figure of speech is a tool devised for convenience and practicality. By a form of mental shortcut, it quickly associates ideas, avoiding explicit formulation of the exact link between them (as in “I read Kant” instead of “I read a book written by Kant”). White stresses that in Vico’s analysis this trope involves reduction, a substitution of agent for act or cause for effect (White, 1978, p. 206). Apart from facilitating the discourse around a given object, metonymy results also in its further specification.

The same mechanism then turns out to be motivating pragmatic thinkers. They reduce the nature of truth from a certain static relation between the individual and the world (as it was generally viewed by proponents of correspondence) to a dynamic process of inquiry and actions which people may engage in thanks to beliefs they hold (Capps, 2019, p. 1.). For the dynamism of the concept to become apparent it is enough to recall James’ statement that “truth happens to an idea. Its verity is in fact a process” (James, 1907). The aim is no longer to grasp the mists of a certain abstract ideal, in a way in which humanity in the early “ages of gods” attempted to make sense of inexplicable phenomena around them by resorting to metaphor. Now comes the need for concreteness and particularity. The pragmatic, reductionist project focuses on scientifically analysable environment in which the individual remains embedded—metonymically tangible and expedient.

Yet much as the theory manages to aptly grasp the practical link which truth needs to retain with human actions, it is often objected that it nevertheless fails to illuminate the precise nature or meaning of the concept. This shortage prompts a move forward to the next phase in the Vichean circle.

THE COHERENCE THEORY

After the dispersion of truth among plethora of human actions which characterised the pragmatic approach, there arose a need for integrity. Recognising the ineradicable difficulty in pinning down the elusive relation between the dimension of beliefs and the external world, the adherers of

coherentism decide to openly retreat towards only one of the spheres—their aim is to define truth in the terms of relations between judgements themselves.

Having its roots already in the thought of German and British idealists, the theory receives its first explicit exposition in texts by Harold H. Joachim and Brand Blanshard. Joachim prepares the ground, with his vision of truth as a “conceivable,” “significant whole” (Joachim, 1906, p. 66)—a dynamic system characterised by “internal, logical connectedness and articulation,” “self-fulfilling and self-fulfilled” (Joachim, 1906, p. 76). To intuitions thus sketched Blanshard’s analysis adds clarity and rigor. Truth was to be a coherent system of judgements, each of which entailed and was entailed by the remaining parts (Blanshard, 1939, p. 264). It represented a growing body of knowledge which, upon reaching certain exhaustion of information regarding the world, would become identified with the universe as a whole and with the Absolute itself (Blanshard, 1939, p. 264). Crucially, both thinkers emphasise that this all-embracing ideal would remain rooted in particularity; theses of the system were to be made and continually revised by individuals themselves, as their perceptual experience and conceptual refinery increased (cf. Joachim’s true judgements as “ideal developments of facts in the medium of thought” (Joachim, 1948, p. 262) or Blanshard’s individual thought gradually “identifying itself” with reality (Blanshard, 1939, p. 264)).

All the nuances and varieties of coherentism notwithstanding, one cannot fail to see its synecdochic foundation. The essence of this figure consists in the strength with which a part is linked with a whole. It involves constant dialectic between individual elements and entities which they constitute. Thanks to the focus it brings on particular attributes, its usage results in further specification of the object being described, which may thereby become, as White puts it, a certain “conceptual unity” (White, 1978, p. 212).

Exactly then as in the case of a strong, logical interconnectedness between judgements of the system which entail one another, upon using a synecdoche from the presence of one detail it is possible to deduce the existence of an entire object (e.g. when a person states they have a roof over their head, it is apparent that they have not only a roof, but also doors, windows, walls, etc.). The dynamism of the expanding body of knowledge corresponds to the unfolding enumeration of attributes and their continual exchange for wholes. Moreover, Vico stresses that the effect of applying a synecdoche is the “elevation” of particulars into universals (White, 1978, p. 212). The same happens with regard to the status of individuals against truth in coherence theories. Both thinkers underscore the role of active agents, whose judgements become a necessary “anchor.” This anchor is what the entire ideal system needs to retain, so that it is not detached from subjective experience of people, each of whom comprehends and enriches the Absolute up to a varying degree.

DEFLATIONARY THEORIES

With correspondence, the pragmatic and coherence theories have at least temporarily exhausted possible interpretations of the notion of truth. So the subsequent step in the enquiry needed to be as summative as perishingly radical.

The deflationists appear to take a look back at the foregoing analysis only to write it off across the board. They argue that other philosophers who have so far been trying to elucidate the concept not so much did not manage to find an accurate account of truth, as they were searching for something which does not in fact exist (Stoljar, Damnjanovic, 2019, p. 1.). Preoccupied chiefly with the sense of truth as a linguistic predicate, they share a common view that when added to a given statement, the word “true” does not enrich it with any additional meaning. To recall but a few standard formulations of the theory: one of the earliest deflationist insights was expressed by Gottlob Frege, who states that the property of truth does not change the content of the sentence to which it is ascribed (Frege, 1918). Ramsey observes that the predicate is used primarily for “emphasis or stylistic reasons,” and to say “p is true” means simply the same as to say “p” (Ramsey, 1927). Another popular version of deflationism is the so-called minimal theory proposed by Paul Horwich, who claims that truth as a property of propositions is “undefinable,” with statements which share it having only the following principle in common: “the proposition that p is true if and only if p” (Horwich, 1998).

Naturally, the exponents of deflationism would vastly differ in terms of how they actually understand equality between sentences endowed with the predicate and their “bare” equivalents. Yet the analyses and arguments they develop are all based on the mechanism of irony.

This trope holds a distinguished status when compared to the previous three figures. While metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche presuppose an unproblematic identity between language and reality which they aim to directly describe, irony ascends onto a higher level of a certain meta-thought. Namely, it requires the recognition of the presence, separateness and specificity of language as such, its rules and conventions—for only then does one learn the possibility to play with, reverse or change these principles (i.e. to be able to state “What a lovely weather!” in the middle of a downpour, one must know in what circumstances would the sentence normally be applied, so as to achieve an ironic effect of strong discrepancy between the conditions usually described with the exclamation and the surrounding ones). The outcome may be humorous, sarcastic, tragic or dramatic, but in each case it requires awareness of a possible mismatch between utterances and the world, together with an ability to undermine effectiveness of all the tropes discussed above.

And this is the first obviously ironic feature which deflationist attitude evinces: a drastic criticism of all the previous attempts at defining truth and

a complete reversion of strategy in approaching the concept. Vico then characterises the ironic stage of the human evolution as permeated with scepticism (Vico, 1948 (1744), p. 1001)—another element inherent in deflationist projects, their starting point being the claim that there is no meaning to be found in the truth predicate. White enriches Vico's description with terms such as "melancholy" and "decadence" (White, 1973, p. 10); similar feelings were also arguably ushered in by a certain caesura and decline which deflationist ideas marked in the course of enquiry. Moreover, what is common between using irony and the outcome of deflationists' analyses is an effect of surprise as well as stark contrast—a certain disillusioned anti-climax or relief, depending on one's position regarding the theory—which ensues when what happens goes strongly against expectations. Deflationists entered the stage in the middle of a lofty, dramatic dialogue, around a concept whose semantic content was presumed to be a golden fleece of philosophy. Yet the solution they offered pierced the balloon of pompous intuitions, with the idea exposed as supposedly devoid of any particular meaning.

More importantly however—and astonishingly—it is in the figure of irony that the Vician circle and truth theories find a point of explicit intersection. To speak ironically, one must already know the distinction between truth and falsehood (White, 1978, 208). So it is not merely the recognition of separateness of language, as observed above, but also its outgrowth, namely the problem of verity as such that the figure is involved with. In Vico's words, irony is falsehood "wearing the mask of truth" (Vico, 1948 (1744), p. 408), a sophisticated operation of which consciousness could be capable only at a highly advanced stage in its development.

And such a turning point seems to be represented by the discussed theory, the advent of which drew a distinction between deflationary and inflationary approaches, for many remaining most fundamental (Boghossian, 1990). After all, the proponents of previous accounts were indeed acutely aware of a problematic relation between language and reality. They sought to illuminate the relation between two spheres, with even the coherence theory, which located truth among judgements themselves, appealing to the notion of community and a system of beliefs actually held and constantly modified by individuals on the basis of their growing experience. But it appears that it is only the deflationist perspective which reduces the concept exclusively to a certain linguistic property. In addition, as if echoing the Vician definition of irony, critics of the theory sometimes point out that it tacitly presumes a certain understanding of truth (see e.g. Lindström, 2004); indeed, deflationist do not seem to question the practical value in usage of the term and its everyday application.

For closure, one could hardly provide a better proof of a close link between deflationism and the fourth trope than by quoting White's words: "Ironic speech [...] constitutes the basis of all those sciences which, through

use of stipulated meanings, consciously seek not only to make true statements about the world but also to expose the error and inadequacy of any given figurative representation of it” (White, 1978, p. 208).

SEMANTIC THEORY

At this point a decisive question arises: how do the discussed theories come to arrange themselves into a particular pattern, proving the Vichean regularity? How does the quest for the meaning of truth slip from the ironic pinnacle back into tendencies which propelled its origins? And which shape will the pattern ultimately assume? Will the philosophical reflection proceed along exactly the same mechanisms of thought or continue to ascend a still more sophisticated versions of each trope? In short, will it form itself into a circle or a spiral?

To answer this question one more analysis should now be recalled. It might seem that the literary figures of speech are hardly applicable to Alfred Tarski’s theory, since he developed his definition for formalised languages. Yet the cognitive fundamentality of tropes allows one to find their clear indication also in studies which belong to deductive sciences. Moreover, traces which the fine complexity of irony leaves on the semantic theory can be interpreted twofold; each way in accordance with Vico’s prediction.

For the purpose of this study, just a brief summary of the analysis will suffice. In *The Concept of Truth for Formalised Languages* (1933) Tarski initially observes that it is impossible to construct a proper definition of truth for the colloquial language, due to its semantic inexhaustibility. It can be infinitely expanded by the addition of new meanings and it is impossible to determine whether its sentences are properly formed (Tarski, 1933, p. 164). Thus he proceeds to develop a definition for a narrower, embraceable kind of language, taking the calculus of classes as an example. In essence, his idea is that to be able to define a true sentence for what he calls the object language, one has to apply a language of a higher order—the so-called metalanguage. The latter would contain the former, and additionally, it would be equipped with a set of the theoretical, “structural-descriptive” expressions used to describe the object language, among which there would be a predicate of truth (Tarski, 1933, p. 172). It is with the help of these that a general definition of a true sentence could be articulated. And so, in what he calls *Convention T*, he provides a definition for an elementary, primitive sentence x : ‘ x ’ is true if and only if x (where the enquoted symbol stands for belonging to the object language, and disquoted to the meta- one). The formula is completed by specifying the rules of how the more complex sentences could be built from the elementary ones and how their truth or falsity depends on truth-values of their constituents (Tarski, 1933, p. 189).

Finally, it should also be observed that the outcome of his analysis remains valid for the colloquial speech; as Tarski notes, if the definition is translated into the natural language, one obtains a “fragmentary definition,” under which a smaller or greater number of sentences may be subsumed (Tarski, 1933, p. 164).

Given such a general outline, it may be noticed without much effort that Tarski’s initial postulate already bears a mark of irony as characterised in the previous section. The impossibility of providing a general definition of truth for the colloquial language is a claim critical in nature, indicative of an attitude pervaded by scepticism and resignation, overpowered by the limitless absorptivity of everyday speech. Admitting only a possibility of having a fragmentary definition is a form of disillusioned surrender. Simultaneously, the thesis casts doubt on all the previous attempts at grasping the concept in colloquial speech and thereby, similarly to deflationist accounts, constitutes a drastic turn in the enquiry. It is also quite obviously a statement involving a meta-view; it comments on language as a whole.

But what new insight does the theory bring in the context of Vichean patterns? Let firstly the possibility of a spiral be considered. In order to recognise the moment of falling back into a certain recursive regularity, one should recall the necessity of stepping on the level of metalanguage. To grasp the meaning of the truth predicate—a certain novel, abstract, unfamiliar entity—one applies a familiar repository of technical expressions, constructed for that purpose. In this way, a sophisticated form of cognitive mapping takes place; both domains which become linked remain on the level of abstraction, and wishing to obtain further definitions of truth, one has to continue rising on still higher, metalinguistic levels in an analogous way (making what Willard Van Orman Quine called a “cognitive ascent” (Quine, 1990, p. 476)). So here, combined with irony, also a more refined mechanism of metaphor comes into play, allowing for a spiral of tropological repetition to open. The mechanisms which would now begin to be applied would essentially correspond to those recognised earlier, yet now they would involve a more complex cognitive processes. In Tarski’s theory, the “ascent” turns the predicate of truth itself into a meta-philosophical tool of comparison. As Scott Soames puts it, the term becomes a ‘convenient vehicle for expressing competing metaphysical views’ (Soames, 1984, p. 400).

And in what sense could the Tarskian analysis be close to the tropological circle? This would have to involve returning to the trope of metaphor exactly as it was understood at the beginning—in the context of truth theories, to the idea of correspondence. To some extent, Tarski himself explicitly admits the connection; his goal is to grasp ‘intentions which are contained in the so-called *classical* conception of truth (“true” – corresponding with reality)’ (Tarski, 1933, p. 153; see also Tarski 1952 (1944), p. 353, 360 and the key notion of “satisfaction,” see p. 352 ff., which smoothly takes us from a se-

mantic theory for formalized languages to the correspondence theory as more suitable for natural language).

There is however a subtle, yet decisive point in which the model specifically requires an operation very similar to the one at the beginning of enquiry. To see how irony catalyses the process of slipping back into a metaphor, one should recall the status which the model holds with relation to the natural language. It was to remain valid, only yielding fragmentary definitions of truth for limited sets of sentences, as long as one would “translate” the results developed in formal terms. It seems that in order to carry out such an act, there has to be a subject who will draw back on their knowledge of rules which determine the procedure of translating. Subsequently, they will use their command of natural language coupled with empirical observation, to validate the outcome. Firstly then, there is a mechanism of irony. To successfully apply the figure, it is necessary to know the context of a given statement; only then can the person see the ironic inversion of meaning. In Tarski’s model, the context is needed in a sense of translative rules, principles linking the formal and the natural language. Then, the figure of metaphor may again become employed. Once the subject has a fragmentary definition formulated in the natural language, the principles have to translate sentences from the subject to the metalanguage—which requires experience and reference to reality (e.g. when these languages are different, translating one into the other will not be a simple disquotation, but an informed decision based on knowledge regarding the meaning and function of the considered sentences).

Together with a return to metaphor the tropological scheme closes and the circle of recreating cognitive patterns may begin anew.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of which of the above interpretations is assumed, the overall picture appears bleak, as both patterns seem essentially regressive. One may ask: Does the recognition of Vichean regularity in the successive emergence of truth theories expose their ultimate futility in attempts to provide a satisfying elaboration of the concept? That is one of possible perspectives, yet arguably a rather short-sighted one. There is a more promising and constructive stance to be adopted.

White himself advocates utility of the tropological prism. He points out that it may become a convenient analytical tool as well as a reliable point of reference. His argument seems particularly valid in the context of philosophical dispute. Given an ineradicable difficulty involved in specifying the objects of philosophical discourse, juxtaposing and comparing theories not in terms of their subject matter, as to the exact meaning of which there are

always endless disagreements, but in terms of the way they are formulated, provides a more stable starting point for the process of their classification. And according to White, classification marks the beginning of understanding (White, 1973, pp. 20–22).

Moreover, if the enquiry is indeed governed by tropological mechanisms, then acknowledging the pattern seems crucial—it is only becoming aware of the regularity which gives a chance to consciously transform or liberate oneself from it.

And in which direction will the study drift, when it veers off its foregoing tropical current? Is there actually such a stream of thought which would not be carried by the overpowering waters of figuration?

Perhaps the insight of Vico himself should be developed into a new, formal theory. The philosopher suggested a radical change in understanding the ideas of truth and falsehood—following his principle of *verum ipsum factum*, he urged to perceive them not as opposites or matters of degree, but as one containing the other, with the notion of truth encompassing everything which is humanly created, and therefore extending also over falsehood (White, 1978, pp. 216–217).

Or perhaps in search of inspiration one should draw from the repository of tropes—this time in full awareness—and deliberately build a new theory by line of reasoning analogous to yet another rhetorical figure? Doubtlessly, whatever new, supposedly revelatory elucidation of the concept is proposed, the wisdom of Vico's legacy prompts in the first place to examine whether the idea was not already realised before, and now is only waiting for its turn in the circle to be once more revived by consciousness; another already existing mechanism, the code to which has been lying dormant in the poetics of language all along.

And if the pattern is indeed inescapable, its recursiveness need not be viewed as vicious. Perhaps it merely proves that in their enquiry, men are not travelling from the past to the future, not wandering interminably from the darkness of eternity behind them into the mists of the one lying ahead. Maybe it means that they remain steady, and only continue to fulfil a predetermined nature of their consciousness, like a star radiating regular beams. They are never to arrive at any ultimate meaning of the concept, for the only truth to be recognised is the quest and pattern itself—a circle or a spiral—being the light of intellect which pulsates unchangingly in its primeval rhythm.

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