

THE MODERN APPROACH TO GIAMBATTISTA VICO HISTORICAL VIEWS

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Abstract: As established by R. Collingwood and F. Meinecke, historicism as a method and as an integral part of modern thinking was formed in the period of Enlightenment, when the philosophical thought was frankly anti-historical. The impetus for reflection on the past and for the attempts to global understanding of the development of mankind was the desire to create a humanitarian method by analogy with the methodology of natural science, proposed by F. Bacon. J. Vico, having released three editions of "The New Method", became incomprehensible by his contemporaries, including Montesquieu and Herder. Vico was the first European thinker who clearly understood the difference between the humanitarian and the natural sciences, and explained this difference.

Keywords: general history, history of culture, the method of historicism, J. Vico.

1 Introduction

The impetus for reflection on the past and for the attempts to global understanding of the development of mankind was the desire to create a humanitarian method by analogy with the methodology of natural science, proposed by F. Bacon (Sokolov, 2017). His most important discovery was the formulation of the thesis that a person creates his own history by telling it at the same time. Therefore, the problem of separation of historical narrative and understanding arises. A man, who understands history, is personally involved in its flow, along with his own theoretical constructions, which turn out to be historical limited and relative. Understanding of history unfolds after the re-development of real history, providing its ideological moment, that in itself affects the course of historical events. A characteristic feature of the historical thinking of J. Vico was its integrity. The desire for integrity was the structural basis of his concept, but on the other hand there was the trust in intuition to the detriment of rationality and empirical negligence in the logical development of hypotheses.

2 Methods

J. Vico's treatise was completely published in 1744, six months later after the author's death. The composition and style of his work makes it possible to refer to the representatives of European Enlightenment or even more broadly - early modernism, but, at the same time, completing the tradition of medieval scholasticism and Renaissance humanism. His main method is *ex verbo* argumentation and the use of analysis of tropes and poetics, which contrasts with the natural sciences. In that case, the main task of J. Vico was the creation of a general science, which, in his view, was a true, reliable, law-based history. History is the one and only science because it embraces the meaning of human being.

3 Results

As F. Meinecke rightly pointed out, historicism has become an integral part of modern thinking (Friedrich Meinecke, 2016). Nevertheless, when counting time of the emergence of historicism and its applicability in cultural studies, should start with thinkers of the 18th century. R. Collingwood noted, that one of the first among them is surely the name of J. Vico, a thinker, whose main creative interests lay in the realm of history. His main task was to formulate the principles of the historical

method in the same way as F. Bacon formulated the method of natural science (Collingwood, 2018). Meinecke also pointed "Foundations of a new science" as a kind of "New Organon" of historical thinking, which marked "a real breakthrough of a certain type of thinking" (Friedrich Meinecke, 2016). Nevertheless, the works of the professor of rhetoric from Naples were well-known, but not appreciated by contemporaries: apparently, Montesquieu and Herder's libraries had this book. The essence of the Vico's breakthrough fully explains, why he was misunderstood by contemporaries. It was the belief, that the main subject of human knowledge is the human world. God created the physical nature, therefore, only He can understand it. The history created by people, the so-called "world of nations", is best suited for human knowledge, since it is only there someone can find, if not the absolute truth, available only to God, but still probable knowledge (Sergeyevich, 2002).

Paul Avis describes Vico's achievements in such manner: «Long before Marx, Freud and Jung, Vico recognises the deep irrational urges, the corporate drives and the social structures that motivate men and determine their actions. Well in advance of modern anthropology, he perceives the true significance of primitive myth-making and rituals. Before the birth of German philosophical idealism, Vico grasps the truth of the inescapable subjectivity of knowledge, the principle that mind has the making of reality. With the trumpets of the Enlightenment sounding in his ears, he turns his back on rationalist uniformitarianism and enunciates a principle of historical relativism. Anticipating the historicist tradition that runs from Herder through Dilthey to Collingwood, Vico offers an account of the organic development of societies, clarifies the distinction between the sciences and the humanities...» (Avis, 1986).

Vico's theory of cultural genesis, like a DNA molecule, contained almost the same theories, that will be considered in the further parts of our work. Vico's anthropology was a compromise between Catholic doctrine and historical knowledge. He announced, that mankind was originally well arranged by God, but free will also represented freedom to sin, for which human were punished by the Flood. Those, who survived, were divided into two categories: the God-chosen people, and the descendants of the pagan forefathers, who were extremely slowly overcoming the animal state. The main mechanism of humanization and civilization is religion, and due to the objective course of things, every nation must go through the stages of development, described in the terminology of Ovid (and Lucretius) as a change of centuries-periods (Avis, 1986). All peoples (except God-chosen Jews) went through approximately the same stages of development as an individual - from a primitive existence to the maturity of rational humanity. The latter expresses the true nature of man. Thus, it was first formulated that a different mental organization of people - humanized from a living state, was generating corresponding morals, social and state institutions at each stage of development.

At the same time, Vico was still completely within the framework of ancient and Renaissance ideas about cyclism, since he argued that human weakness does not allow either to achieve perfection or to keep it. A people, approaching perfection, is a victim of internal moral decay, is returning to its former barbarism and beginning the same life path (Giambattista Vico, 2016). At the same time, Vico's teaching was still a theology of history: he was absolutely convinced that God rules the world in accordance with His plan and determines the history of peoples according to His will (Friedrich Meinecke, 2016). Thus, the secularization of the historical process began from a sacred history, viewed from the perspective of eternity (*sub specie aeterni*) (Friedrich Meinecke, 2016). Benedetto Croce, who "rediscovered" Vico for modern science, emphasized, that in his writings one should not look for world history as such. He ignored the world-historical connection of peoples with each other, arising primarily as a result of wars and mutual reception

of culture, and one of his main points was that each nation itself spontaneously goes through the same stages of development. Even Vico considered the Romans as a model for the concept of "people," and in one of his earlier works he described the Romans as disciples of more ancient Italian peoples and Greeks. At the same time, he regarded the development of peoples as a type, and not as an individual.

4 Discussion

The method of J. Vico is based in philology, it is engaged in the study of etymology, creating a "linguosemantic archeology" (Kalimonov et al., 2017). This method allowed him to substantiate the thesis, that history is the result of the actions of people themselves; society is a self-organizing system. History is a natural and uniformed process of changing the order of human activity; at the same time Vico rejected the linear picture of progress introduced by the French enlighteners (Chanyshhev, 2010).

J. Vico should be considered as a political thinker, and the common place, starting from B. Croce, was to put him in the same context with N. Machiavelli (Avis, 1986). The political concept of J. Vico is inseparable from his historical thought, since it represents the inner semantic core of his historical philosophy. A. Chanyshhev noted that the main achievement of Vico as a historian is the conceptualization of the concept of history as a single regular stage-cyclical process of changing society (Chanyshhev, 2010). Vico defined politics through the concepts of domination and submission, i.e. this is an overbearing practice. This practice appears with the appearing of cities, citizenship and public authority. He comprehended this side of human experience in terms of the sacred, since the most archaic ordering mechanism of society was the rituals of purification and sacrifice. Philologically, this is confirmed by the fact that the Latin term "politus" simultaneously meant "brilliant" and "pure" (Giambattista Vico, 2016). Power, as a source of human order and a way to maintain it, having arisen once, makes the entire history of people a political history (Chanyshhev, 2010).

For modern historiography (with its critical attitude to technical civilization), the concept of secondary barbarism, decay and completion of the civilization cycle is of particular interest. It is believed that Goethe pushed off from political history according to Vico, and insisted on the necessary synthesis of the idea of linear progress and the cycle in ideas about civil history. Partly, this influenced the Fichte concept. Without denying progress, J. Vico took into account the internal contradictions of evolution: acquiring advantages, when reaching the next stage of development, leads to the loss of the merits of the previous stage. The transition from traditional society to the present leads to immersion in inhumanity, the onset of a state resembling the "natural" according to Hobbes (Chanyshhev, 2010). However, the lack of predetermination and the accumulation of achievements each time in his understanding created something new: the barbarism of the Middle Ages was different from the ancient one, since a new force acted in it - Christianity. In this regard, it is advisable to call the concept of Vico "cyclic evolution", and it differs from the fatal circular isolation of the ideas of history among Plato and Polybius, as well as the renaissance predecessors of Vico - Machiavelli and Campanella (Chanyshhev, 2010).

There is also a point of view, according to which J. Vico should be perceived as a marginal thinker (Neretina, 2017). In part, this is described in his autobiography. When he returned to the University of Naples, after being absent for 9 years, the thinker discovered that philosophy is studied only by Descartes. As a result, Vico turned out to be his only contemporary, who was engaged into the creation of a philosophy of history (Neretina, 2017). In terms of methodology, he was "on the sidelines" of the directions given by both F. Bacon and R. Descartes, simultaneously belonging to both of them. In part, his position can only be appreciated in the 21st century, since the consistent

application of Vico's critical method turns out to be deconstruction.

Hence his interests lie in the first thought and the origin of the language, the real archeology of knowledge (Neretina, 2017). Thus, not referring to either Baconianism or Cartesianism, J. Vico is relevant precisely because he represented both sides. Being in the style of thinking and presenting the results of his thought activity as a scholastic of the Renaissance, J. Vico was at the center of the logical debate of early modernity. He was not in its pure form either a theoretician or an empiricist who at the same time-honored universals (forgotten by philosophers in north of the Alps) and promoted a strictly scientific method (Neretina, 2017).

5 Summary

The need for a philosophical understanding of the historical process, generally, arises in the era of fundamental changes in the functioning of society, when certain values and traditions, ideals and principles, established patterns and goal-setting are called into question. During the research, we confirmed that the development of theoretical principles and values by philosophers of history (does not matter, professional philosophers or philosophizing historians and cultural scientists) directly depends on the features of the development of science and social practices of their time (Muhametzyanov et al., 2019). Naturally, in the process of reflection, the whole experience of mankind finds expression, primarily crystallized in the forms of spiritual culture.

6 Conclusions

Vico's anthropology was a compromise between Catholic doctrine and new scientific knowledge: man was created sinless, but with free will, he performs certain actions, including violence. Vico was the first to use the concept of "culture" in the modern sense, and the first to propose the concept of staged growth (in the terminology of the age of a person, to which the age of culture was equated). J. Vico, in fact, was the founder of a comprehensive study of culture and the morphology of culture.

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