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## Logos and its Feignings.

### Will to Power, Groundlessness and the Decorum of Civilisations

**ABSTRACT:** *The article aims to explore a characteristically twentieth-century paradox: the simultaneous success and failure of logos. While the century witnessed extraordinary achievements in science and technology, it also saw a profound crisis of foundations – a dramatic disintegration of the very supports that had sustained the Western tradition. Not only were traditional anchors such as God and consciousness called into question, but even more fundamental structures – writing, the alphabet, the very notions of rationality and causality – came under critical scrutiny, revealing their limits. This collapse gives rise to two opposing forms of nihilism, which can no longer be disguised or sublimated, as great thinkers and artists of the past had once managed to do. In this context, concepts such as the so-called sensus communis and the decorum of civilizations are reconsidered – not as static monuments of inherited tradition, but as dynamic legacies that must be continually rethought and kept alive through the movement of thought.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Groundlessness, Logos, Civilisation, Feignings.*

One of the most insightful prophecies regarding the collapse of the third millennium can be found in a fragment by Nietzsche, written in the summer of 1872: “*Humanity must be able to sustain itself without any support of this kind*”<sup>1</sup>. The kind of support Nietzsche refers to has taken on different names throughout the tradition. First metaphysics, but even before that, religion and myth had long provided such ‘supports’: the idea of a purpose for the world, of an end in itself or a destiny to be fulfilled. More generally, the belief that there is something ‘in itself’, the assumption that behind our words there are things that correspond to them, and that our concepts mirror the truth of reality, rather than being merely crude simplifications of experience<sup>2</sup>.

In the twentieth century, the sciences themselves underwent an epistemological crisis, linked to the impossibility of grounding mathematical propositions on a rigorous logical foundation. As Robert Musil put it, mathematicians

1 Nietzsche 1999a, 464. Fr. 19 [139].

2 In the sense that our words tend to simplify those processes by assigning them a certain name: that name, always identical to itself, gives the illusion that the underlying processes are also always the same, whereas in fact those processes always happen differently.

looked deep into the basis of their discipline and realized that it was all “castles in the air”. His later remark – “*nevertheless, machines work*”<sup>3</sup> – captures perfectly the essence of this paradox: science is no longer grounded in truth, but in utility and effectiveness.

The transformation of science into technicism, the crisis of religion, the volatility of global markets, and the disintegration of cultural traditions all seem to confirm Nietzsche’s diagnosis: the supports upon which we once relied have collapsed. New epistemological frameworks attempt to fill the void. Concepts such as *reciprocal interaction* (*Wechselwirkung*) seek to replace the overloaded notion of causality; the shift from ‘substance’ to ‘function’ dissolves phenomena into networks of relations; and the introduction of statistical reasoning means that our statements no longer claim truth or falsehood, but rather express varying degrees of confidence – themselves subject to constant revision.

This *symptomatology of uncertainty* is paradoxically accompanied by an unprecedented explosion of productivity across all domains. At this point, it becomes difficult to draw a clear line between the material and the intellectual. In fact, the increasing rate of innovation seems intimately tied to this very crisis of foundations. In metaphysical terms, we have abandoned the concepts that once allowed us to imagine eternal and immutable realities – *entity, essence, cause, substance, purpose, God* – in favour of surrendering to the vortex of becoming, and thus to the powers of transformation.

Musil again observed how, on the surface of society, we see the proliferation of voices, slogans, and opinions, while in the hidden chambers of our civilization, the tireless will of Hephaestus continues to reshape matter in ever new forms<sup>4</sup>.

## 1. Supports

To borrow another image from Nietzsche, we recognise that the ice still sustaining us is becoming ever thinner<sup>5</sup>. In this sense, much of twentieth-century philosophy confronts the impossibility of grounding knowledge on any firm foundation. At the same time, increasingly refined analysis leads to a deepening distrust of all supports.

Let us consider perhaps the most resounding case – what we now commonly refer to as the *linguistic turn*. From Wittgenstein’s perspective, we see that the meaning of terms depends entirely on their use<sup>6</sup>. If we turn to Heidegger – as he suggests in the *Kantbuch* – we see how the entire conceptual framework rests on the imagination, leading us to ask whether the primacy of *logos* should give way to

3 Musil 1981a, 1006.

4 See Musil 1981b, 1088.

5 See Nietzsche 1999b, 12. Fr. 25 [9].

6 See Wittgenstein 1965, 27.

*sensibility*<sup>7</sup>. We could speculate that this abyss – which Kant sought to bridge by rewriting the *Critique of Pure Reason* – is the very same that prevented Heidegger from completing the second part of *Being and Time*.

Beginning with De Saussure's theory of the signifier and the signified, Lacan exposes the illusion that the signifier should represent a stable meaning. Instead, he shows that "the correlations between signifier and signifier supply the standard for all research into meaning"<sup>8</sup>, and that "it is in the chain of the signifier that the meaning *insists*, but that none of its elements *consists* in the meaning of which it is at the moment capable"<sup>9</sup>.

On entirely different grounds, Quine's *Word and Object* – through notions such as the *indeterminacy of reference* and the *indeterminacy of translation* – demonstrates the impossibility of identifying or explaining meaning by relying on any unitary logical support. It becomes clear that our understanding is always mediated, not only by a linguistic reference system, but by a vast social and cultural context. In emphasising the performative nature of language, Austin highlights its irreducibility to a mere accumulation of terms based on a fixed, pre-established plane of meanings.

Even in a work like Merleau-Ponty's *The Prose of the World*, we see how the meaning of signs is determined by their configuration in use. Thus, "language never says anything; it invents a series of gestures, which between them present differences clear enough for the conduct of language, to the degree that it repeats itself, recovers and affirms itself, and purveys to us the palpable flow and contours of a universe of meaning"<sup>10</sup>.

In all the cases mentioned, the analysis of linguistic support leads immediately to a radical problematisation of the support itself. Recognising that even language is a support – perhaps the support of all supports – exposes its fictional character, and allows us to identify its boundaries and limits. These investigations reveal the gradual emergence of its inconsistency, its powerlessness, and its irreducible vagueness.

If we were to extend the list of destroyed supports, we could point to Freud as having conducted a meticulous dismantling of the support known as *consciousness*; to Simmel, who uncovers behind the apparent stability of *form* the restless dynamism of money and, later, of life<sup>11</sup>; to Husserl's late notion of the *historical a priori* (*das konkrete historische Apriori*), which cracks open the macroscopic support of the transcendental<sup>12</sup>; and to Derrida, whose thought provides a systematic deconstruction of the alphabetic support. The non-totalisability of the real, the

7 See Heidegger 1997, 117: "How is the baser faculty of sensibility also to be able to constitute the essence of reason? Does not everything fall into confusion if the lowest takes the place of the highest? What is to happen with the venerable tradition, according to which Ratio and Logos have claimed the central function in the history of metaphysics? Can the primacy of Logic fall?"

8 Lacan 1966, 121.

9 Lacan 1966, 121.

10 See Merleau-Ponty 1973, 32.

11 On the relationship between money and life see Blumenberg 2012.

12 See Husserl 1976, 380.

order of discourse, and the microphysics of power are the tools by which Foucault dismantles any attempt to reduce power to a single, unified support. Similarly, Deleuze exposes the workings of *difference* beneath the foundational support of the entire Western tradition – that which we call ‘*identity*’.

Likewise, we may read Benjamin as a great destroyer of the support known as *history*, understood as historical continuity – the very notion upon which the concept of *epoch* depends. Before him, Weber dismantles the support guaranteed by objective rationality, favouring instead a distinction between *means-end rationality* and *value-rationality*. In doing so, he moves beyond the ideal of methodological unity among the sciences, advocating instead for a collaboration that avoids any preliminary hierarchy. This position is, in fact, inherited by at least the entire first generation of the Frankfurt School. In this regard, we may quote a passage from Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*, where he writes: “Reality is no longer to be construed, because it would be all too thoroughly construable. Pretexts are furnished by its irrationality, intensifying under the pressure of particular rationality: there is disintegration by way of integration”<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. The Paradox of the Logos

In other words, twentieth-century philosophy presents itself as a furious destroyer of those supports we might call ‘traditional’ – precisely because they constituted the foundations upon which all traditions were built. We must grow accustomed to doing without such ‘supports’, to living without them, as Nietzsche once wrote.

Perhaps it is in this light that we can interpret the twentieth century’s profound nostalgia for the angel: the tremendous and lost angel of Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*; Valéry’s angel in *Le Cimetière marin*; the medieval angel glimpsed at Ermelinda Tuzzi’s home in *The Man Without Qualities*, as Arnheim describes it; Benjamin’s angel of history, to which Scholem’s writings are closely related; and the angel studied by Jung, Peterson, Corbin, Guardini, and Eliade. In more recent times, one might also mention works by Cacciari, Heinrich Krauss, Coccia, Agamben, and Esposito. We always write about what we miss, but in this case the attention paid to the figure of the angel corresponds to a precise need: it is an attempt to understand – or at least to approximate, perhaps even just to remember – a time when we still believed in foundations. The angel reminds us of a time when we were in direct contact with the foundation – a time when someone would come to announce founding words.

From this perspective, following the collapse of the “primacy of the logos”, we observe a multitude of strategies: circumvention, avoidance, sclerosis, or even emancipation from the force we call *logos*. Consider Freud’s *acheronta movebo*; the enormous resurgence of mythological and ethnological studies over the last cen-

<sup>13</sup> Adorno 1973, 23-24.

ture, as if these disciplines were seeking out alternatives to Western rationality; the rediscovery of the so-called Presocratics<sup>14</sup>; Husserl's insight into the *Lebenswelt* – the “lifeworld” that underlies any scientific structuring of thought; or Blumenberg's investigation of historical transitions, tied to the exhaustion or invention of new metaphorical frameworks. In short, while the twentieth century celebrates – on the scientific and technological level – the immense and unprecedented power of the *logos*, a *logos* that has rapidly become a global currency rooted in Western structures, at the level of what Dilthey would have called the *Geisteswissenschaften*, we witness a persistent and systematic devaluation of the *logos*, precisely because it ultimately fails to provide a true foundation for knowledge.

The situation is deeply paradoxical: on the one hand, for more than a century, we have been engaged in the ongoing ‘demonisation of the *logos*’, understood as incapable of guaranteeing knowledge; on the other hand, the *logos* has been increasingly exalted, unleashed in its full capacity to transform reality, demonstrating its implacable effectiveness more and more each day.

To illustrate this paradox, we might briefly return to Hegel's critique of Kant's notion of the *thing-in-itself*. In §44 of the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel writes that the idea of a *thing-in-itself*, conceived as something lying behind thought, amounts to a *caput mortuum*: an abstraction of thought – the hollow self that turns this empty identity with itself into its own object<sup>15</sup>. Kant had already dismantled any ontological claim, settling for a more modest analytic of pure intellect<sup>16</sup>. Up to Kant, Western thought had sustained the idea that being and *logos* could, in some fundamental way, coincide. As Rosenzweig once said: if being is the wall and *logos* the image, then the wall had always been painted as a fresco<sup>17</sup>. *Logos* was meant to connect things in the very way they were connected in reality. But now, Kant reveals that *logos* does not *find* the conjunction of the manifold – rather it *produces* it<sup>18</sup>. As Simmel noted, Kant irrevocably cut the thread that had connected being and thought. We can no longer hope to grasp the configuration of reality – of the world “out there” – with thought. What we construct are representations, no more than our way of accessing that reality which remains, so to speak, outside us. The last remnant of the belief in an original identity between being and thought lies precisely in the idea of the *thing-in-itself* – the final ‘incarnation of the idea of a substance’ that presents itself as if it were genuinely “other” than thought, yet is still nothing but a hypostatisation, an unwarranted projection of thought itself.

Since Hegel's critique of the *thing-in-itself*, no support, no foundation, can be conceived as absolute. We have come to understand that all supports are feign-

14 Not in the sense that they were previously unknown, but with regard to the enormous and incomparable interest they aroused during the 20th century itself.

15 See Hegel 1992, 81.

16 See Kant 1911, 122: “Der Verstand findet also in diesem nicht etwa schon eine dergleichen Verbindung des Mannigfaltigen, sondern bringt sie hervor, indem er ihn afficirt“.

17 See Rosenzweig 2005, 18.

18 See Kant 1911, 122.

ings – constructions that may yield practical or discursive advantages, but cannot claim absolute truth. This conceptual shift opened the way for Nietzsche's radical critique of Western metaphysics.

Returning to a key insight from Nietzsche already mentioned: we have lived under the illusion that behind each word – words like *language, consciousness, alphabet, identity, meaning, God* – there lies a corresponding thing, a *thing-in-itself*. But once we understand that no such equivalence exists between word and thing – that is, between thought and being – the fundamental operation of the *logos* becomes clear. It proceeds in two stages:

a) When we name something, we segment a process: we carve it into parts and retain only certain fragments. We say: seed, tree, flower, fruit – but in doing so, we fragment and lose the living continuity of the process.

b) The word also serves to stabilise the segment of reality it names: it creates the illusion that the reality it designates is as fixed and stable as the word itself<sup>19</sup>.

*Logos* thus produces and sustains the feign that there is a direct connection – indeed, an identity – between word and thing, such that things appear to be as stable and structured as the language we use to describe them. The so-called *linguistic turn* is nothing other than the application of Hegel's critique of the *thing-in-itself* to language itself. We have believed that language was a stable support – and the same illusion has applied to writing, consciousness, the idea of purpose, God, and so on.

In fact, all these are merely our own constructions – our feignings. We do not truly engage with what we call language, consciousness, God, molecular biology, or particle physics as *things-in-themselves*. These 'formulations' are simply our modes of understanding – ways of reducing, conceptualising, and formalising what we still insist on calling 'elements of reality'<sup>20</sup>. What we possess are models that, while not capable of explanation in any absolute sense, nonetheless manage – increasingly well – to predict how a growing number of processes and dynamics will unfold.

This paradox, then, may be expressed in the contrast between the non-totalisability of the real, as Foucault put it, and the increasingly conspicuous presence of what Sartre would call "ongoing processes of totalisation"<sup>21</sup>.

### 3. The Stalemate of the Logos: Two Opposing Nihilisms

The paradox can be described as follows: we are incapable of grounding knowledge, yet increasingly powerful; we have relinquished the ambition of grasping

19 This absolute permanence and stability of the word is part of the illusion we are talking about: language also changes and modifies itself over sufficiently long periods of time. But we do not notice, we do not recognise such changes and therefore we erase them, pretending a stability that is not there.

20 We do not even know how to qualify this 'reality out there', and so Kant correctly renounced the high-sounding name of ontology.

21 See Sartre 1960.

what reality is, yet we have become ever more effective in interacting with its processes. The absence of foundation coincides with the removal of an entire set of metaphysical constraints: thus, the will to power can now be unleashed in the most complete way.

At the same time, any attempt to highlight the impotence of the *logos* – for example, by analysing the irreducibility of myths, rituals, and legends to rational thought; by studying paraconsistent logics and logical paradoxes; by emphasising the role of metaphorical and analogical structures<sup>22</sup>; or by insisting on the undecidability between competing scientific paradigms – ends up, in a typically Hegelian sense, as a veiled celebration of the very power of the *logos*, now shown to be capable of investigating territories far beyond its supposed jurisdiction. In this sense, the *logos* reveals its voracity, its omnivorous nature, its boundless capacity to ‘cook the world’ – to misuse an expression by Charles Malamoud<sup>23</sup> – making digestible even the most apparently indigestible elements of experience.

Faced with this co-presence of groundlessness and power – what might be called a *powerful groundlessness* – philosophy has attempted to respond by reimagining the tasks of the *logos* itself. Whatever path we take, we must remain faithful to this *hendiadys* (power and groundlessness), which defines the character of our time.

If the *logos* fails to hold these two poles together and instead privileges one over the other – either effectivity or groundlessness – it falls into a genuine stalemate. We might illustrate this dual tendency in the following way.

a) *A logos flattened on effectiveness.* If the *logos* focuses solely on increasing its power – becoming a kind of servomechanism within the machinery of production – it is indeed employed efficiently, but it loses the ability, and even the will, to recognise the radical absence of foundation that makes such an unleashing of power possible in the first place. In other words, it becomes sheer technicality, sacrificing that capacity for *stepping back* which has always characterised philosophical thought. It is precisely this capacity to return to the fundamentals, to open up new paths, to invent new problematics, that enabled the *logos* to achieve the very power that now manifests itself in its extraordinary technical-scientific successes.

b) *A logos consecrated to groundlessness.* Conversely, if the *logos* becomes absorbed by its own groundlessness – adopting a purely critical posture – it risks becoming reactive, opposing any expression of power in a kind of rearguard resistance. It becomes vulnerable to being perceived merely as a brake, an obstacle to the full expansion of techno-scientific progress. Such a *logos* ceases to be constituent or architectural: what results is a disconnection between what Hegel would have called *objective spirit* and *absolute spirit*. When the arts, religions, and the broader domain of the *Geisteswissenschaften* are reduced to nothing more than critical voices, they are inevitably expelled – or at least marginalised – in relation to

22 Apart from Blumenberg, perhaps the richest and most interesting investigation in this field can be found in Melandri 1968.

23 See Malamoud 1989.

the productive forces. Yet these very productive dynamics are made so fertile and generative because they are themselves nourished by the *logos*, understood here as scientific rationality and calculative thinking.

This is the condition of stalemate. In the first case, the *logos* is reduced to competence over the square millimetre that delimits a single discipline or productive sector, losing any capacity for dialogue across domains. In the second, it retreats into a space of pure ineffectiveness, condemning itself to an incapacity to engage with real processes.

These, then, are the two available paths: a commitment to production, without reflection on first principles; or the destruction of supports, without the capacity to build. In both cases, we risk the annihilation of the *logos*. In both, we fail to grasp the *logos* in its truest sense – as a constructor of feignings.

Put differently: the first position implicitly carries a clear nihilistic imprint, insofar as this productive unleashing is grounded – as Nietzsche and Heidegger both showed – in the tacit, perhaps unacknowledged conviction that being is nothing, and can thus be destroyed, altered, manipulated, and reproduced according to mere utility. But the opposite stance also culminates in nihilism. To recognise the *logos* – understood solely as calculative thought – as powerless because it lacks grounding, leads in turn to the dissolution of its judgmental capacity. Every development, every transformation (whether progress or regress) is condemned in advance, flattening and ultimately erasing the very sensitivity of the *logos* – now reduced to a faculty of pure negation, incapable of acknowledging or affirming anything that emerges from the processes of production.

#### **4. Decorum: On the Transmission of Meaning**

The two options, in their opposition, reveal the stalemate of the *logos*. Instead of holding the two sides together, the *logos* focuses on one at a time, becoming either mere calculative thinking or sterile critique of foundations. This results in a true internal fracture within the *logos*: the philosophical and the technical components have always coexisted, nourishing one another. Today, this split is symptomatically reflected, for example, in Dilthey's distinction between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaften*.

The *logos* devoted to power is branded with the stigma of infamy, accused of nihilism by the *logos* still philosophically concerned with foundation. But a not-so-different infamy now strikes that same 'philosophical *logos*': having opted for the mere custody of groundlessness, it is unable to suggest any way forward or propose new directions. Its attitude is nihilistic as well. Both of these 'accusations of infamy' can only remain credible if we still believe in the existence of something inherently true.

In fact, it is easy to see how this *logos*, immersed in the destruction of foundations, is still surreptitiously enslaved to the thing-in-itself: it still thinks, still hopes, still believes in the possibility of recovering a foundation. From this deep conviction, it judges the rest of civilization as engulfed in irreversible decline. Such a

narrative precludes any way out, and it becomes clear how much it depends on the unspoken belief that a thing-in-itself exists and could somehow be found again<sup>24</sup>.

This vicious circle resembles a kind of story – a story about being and thinking. It begins like this: once upon a time there was man – the ‘real’ one, the one we knew in our childhood, now disfigured by technology. There is also this variant: once upon a time there was thought – the ‘real’ thought. As if there had ever really been a ‘man-in-itself’ or a ‘thought-in-itself’, later undermined and undone by calculative or techno-scientific thinking. But we must now ask: where exactly would this man-in-itself be? At what point in history could we place him? Before Plato? Before Christ? The Renaissance, just before Descartes? Is ‘man’ still the one Kant had in mind? In fact, there is no pure man who remained untainted until a certain moment: all these men – even those before Plato – are already and forever contaminated by that logos which is both a quest for power and, therefore, a quest for foundation<sup>25</sup>.

In one of his essays, Benn wrote that he believed all great authors felt it was their inner task to conceal their nihilism. It is unthinkable, for example, that Plato, Augustine, or Dante did not feel the absence of foundation. Could this really be an exclusive feature of the twentieth century? In fact, Benn continues, Dürer concealed his nihilism in the religious sphere, Tolstoy in the moral, Kant in the cognitive, Balzac in the social, Goethe in the whole man.

With infinite caution, nihilism is steadily concealed. Everyone approaches it with equivocal questions, with the most cautious and ambiguous turns of phrase, on every page, in every chapter, in every figure. Not for a moment do they doubt the essence of their inner creative substance. It is the abyssal, the empty, the cold, the inhuman. The one who showed himself most naïvely was Nietzsche<sup>26</sup>.

All great thinkers and artists have always known and taken on nihilism by transfiguring it through expressions and artistic forms. Hence the so-called *Geisteswissenschaften*, along with the arts and religions, have always nourished the *objective spirit*; conversely, this is how the great scientists conceive their work: through the mathematical formula, the equation, the formalisation of discovery that enchants chaos<sup>27</sup>. And so the logos has always managed to hold these two components – groundlessness and power – together, and civilisations of all times have moved forward along this tightrope. We can say that from Nietzsche onwards, humanity has stopped disguising nihilism and begun facing it head-on, trying to make it explicit. We are not the first era to be aware of the absence of foundation – but we are the first to make it explicit.

24 Clearly whatever can be found, whatever support can be identified, it immediately turns into the product of a thought, immediately losing any possibility of standing as an authentic foundation.

25 Foundation that before Plato was provided by religions and myths, certainly not by metaphysics or philosophical thought, but the search for foundations has always been combined with the technical-instrumental character. Without the synergy between these two factors, we do not have what we call man, which is not to be conceptualized as a thing, fixed and complete, but in turn as the product of historical evolution.

26 Benn 1968, 873-874.

27 Whether on the level of *Geisteswissenschaft*, or on the level of *Naturwissenschaft*, the logos always and only produces fictions, no claim to truth, no claim to reach the thing in itself.

In the past, expressions – whether artistic, religious, philosophical, or even scientific and technical – disguised nihilism. Vico would say that, in all civilisations, “man feigns with decorum”<sup>28</sup>. That decorum is what we find at the heart of every fable, every figure, every production of the imagination – and which we could, in the end, also translate as ‘beauty’. But Vico prefers the term *decorum*. Walde notes how the Latin term *decus* has a double origin: on the one hand, it is related to *disco*, ‘to learn’, which in turn connects to the Greek *διδάσκω*; on the other hand, it is related to *doceo*, which means ‘to teach’, and in Greek we find *δόγμα*, but also *δόξα*, meaning ‘opinion’<sup>29</sup>.

*Decorum* is a learn-teach system – a system of transmission between generations. It draws from opinion, from the Husserlian *Lebenswelt*, and moves toward the establishment of forms – forms that, from time to time, enchant a whole community, an entire nation. It is a kind of wonder, perhaps even a form of wisdom, on which everyone agrees. We could say that these forms of wisdom are the *dogmas* on which different eras are built. As Vico writes, *decorum* is literally what is ‘convenient’, in the Latin sense of *cum-venire*, meaning ‘to come together’, that is, to converge on a complex of customs, habits, manners, idioms. A logos unable to hold together groundlessness and power gives rise to a time devoid of *decorum*, a stream of life that risks being indecorous and inconvenient.

From this point of view, *decorum* is not a thing, not an object of study to be held at a distance. To quote Vico again, it is “a natural uniformity, agreeable to the common sense of an entire nation”<sup>30</sup>: a learning-teaching dynamic, an uninterrupted discourse made of agreements, compromises, but also disagreements, incompatibilities, even misunderstandings. In this ensemble of gestures, idioms, shared traditions and idiosyncrasies, personal convictions and widespread opinions, despite the emergence of many dissonances, there remains a ‘natural uniformity’<sup>31</sup> – a *common sense*, that sense we share, as Kant would say, which we participate in when we make judgments, leaning as it were on the common sense of all humanity<sup>32</sup>. This ‘natural uniformity’ simply indicates that a series of feignings arises, and some of them manage to impose themselves as part of the *sensus communis* – they are believed and thereby constitute an epoch.

This entire set of even conflicting elements finds its own expression: musical, sometimes pictorial, but also poetic, often architectural, religious, philosophical. Today, these expressions cannot and should not be understood as something fixed,

28 See Vico 1948, 66. Talking about fables he writes: “The first of the three shows the natural inclination of the vulgar to invent them, and to invent them appropriately”. But this “invent them appropriately” in Italian sounds “fingerle con decoro”.

29 See Walde 1910, 223.

30 Vico 1948, 277.

31 It is important, in this context, to provide the definition of nature proposed by Vico, which is actually constructed around the historical development of phenomena. See Vico 1948, 58: “The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being (nascimento) at certain times and in certain fashions. Whenever the time and fashion is thus and so, such and not otherwise are the things that come into being”.

32 See Kant 1913, 293-294.

fossilised quotations from the past: they are something that always reawakens the logos; the logos revives them, renews them, rethinks them in light of new contexts, and continually – perhaps imperceptibly – alters their meaning. From this perspective, we may speak of *feignings* as an undercurrent that does not support civilisation but rather *coincides* with its very flow: we can view civilisations as a vast sequence of *feignings*, through which communities enrich and influence one another.

In this permanent reworking, in this constant transformation we call *sensus communis*, the logos is continually confronted with its own feigns – with the neglected, broken, scattered fragments of civilisation, as Vico said<sup>33</sup>. At every instant, we come across something that may have been alive a moment ago but now lies inert, and is therefore ‘ugly’, meaningless. The logos is precisely the ability to revive *feigns*, to reanimate them – infusing them with meaning and passion<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> See Vico 1948, 94.

<sup>34</sup> Vico 1948, 116.

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