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## *Giambattista Vico and the Discovery of Metaphoric Cognition*

Robert E. Haskell  
*University of New England*

In 1725, or thereabout, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), the Italian philosopher and rhetorician, discovered the cognitive function of metaphor. He set forth his views in what he called his *New Science* (1948). Of course, metaphor as-a-figure-of-speech was known long before Vico, but not metaphor as a fundamental cognitive operation. What is more, he discovered it without significant antecedent. It is not often in the history of science or of philosophy that one can trace the first historical conceptual moment in the birth of a discovery. Certainly such is not the case with Darwin's theory of evolution, nor with the Copernican theory of the sun centered universe, nor with Freud's discovery of the unconscious.

The translators of Vico's abridged *New Science* call it "one of the few works of original genius in the entire history of social theory. (p. xiii). While the *New Science* is in fact a social history and theory, its entire edifice is made possible by his cognitive theory of metaphor. As Vico and his translators point out, it is Book Two, what Vico calls "Poetic Wisdom," which is the foundation for his social theory. More importantly, it is the tour de force for his cognitive theory of metaphor. Whatever else Vico may have been—philosopher, social theorist, rhetorician, professor of eloquence—he was most certainly one of the first cognitive psychologists.

In this chapter, I will confine myself to Vico's cognitive concept of metaphor per se, and not to his social transformations which give issue to his developmental social theory. I shall also limit myself to pointing out his general principles, and not burden the reader with the details of his discovery. The latter have been explicated clearly by Vico himself, as well as by others (Verene, 1976; White, 1973, 1976). In addition, I will introduce some of my own empirical data that seems to confirm Vico's theory of metaphor. Finally, I will suggest a view of