

## SENSIBILITY, SELF-UNDERSTANDING, AND SELF-REDEMPTION

*F. Mechner Barnard*

Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, London, Hogarth Press, 1976, pp. xvii, 228 £6.00 cloth.

There is no real equivalent for *Einfühlungsvermögen* in the English language. Its closest rendering as "the capacity to feel oneself into" the minds, motives, moods, purposes and aspirations of other people, is an awkward circumlocution, while "empathy", its less awkward rendering, is too lifeless and wooden, too clinical, if not sterile, to convey the vividness and imaginative sweep of the German word — its essential flavour is lost in translation. Characteristically, this could serve as a telling illustration of what, in essence, Vico and Herder are about. That we cannot assimilate one culture to another; that, consequently, we cannot fully render the meaning of a word in one culture in terms of another; that every such translation involves an inescapable loss: this is the heart of their joint message. Each language, on this theory, expresses a certain form of life, a uniquely particular way of viewing the world, a distinct *Weltanschauung*. The fact that the German language readily embraced this highly evocative term — which Herder is said to have coined — suggests that it manifestly (or at least latently) felt a need for it, whereas the English language, apparently, was perfectly content to make do with a highly arid substitute, this suggesting in turn a fundamental difference of attitudes within two distinct cultures. What to one is rich in content is dangerously elusive to the other.

To hard-nosed empiricists (not uncommon among Anglo-Saxon thinkers) the notion of a *sensibility* of understanding — which of course must be sharply distinguished from "sense perception" — is rather unpalatable, for it smacks too suspiciously of fancy, irrationalism, and wilful subjectivism. Vico and Herder saw in this attitude an ill-founded prejudice, as inimical to true understanding as purely deductive rationalism. There is a process of understanding, they insisted, that is inherently different from the two established methods of enquiry into knowledge, from deductive a priori reasoning and empirical a posteriori induction or generalization. It consists in grasping connections *imaginatively*, by bringing a combination of different modalities of the mind into play. Deduction and induction might offer the possibility for observation, description or classification, particularly in external nature, but they are inadequate — and at times inapplicable — for the study of men and the world of human actions and creations. Here imaginative insight or, as Vico put it, a reconstructive *fantasia* is indispensable. This is the startling discovery which the two thinkers, whose ideas Sir Isaiah Berlin explores in his recent book, wished

## F. MECHNER BARNARD

to proclaim from the rooftops of every city of learning. Indeed Vico, to whom the larger part of the book is devoted, claimed for this "third method" the status of a new science.

It is a *science* by virtue of *not* being fanciful, mystical, or subjective. Only a mind extended by imaginative sensibility can render existential data of the human world intelligible in the form of *Verstehen*, and not merely in the form of *Wissen* and do so in a manner that is both empirical in origin and objective in content. But it is a science not easily accomplished. To gain understanding as well as knowledge about what men do and did, when, why, and how, requires the most arduous effort, the marshalling of one's entire range of mental capacities; nonetheless, it is achievable, at least in principle, and achievable to a degree superior to that attainable in the natural sciences. This is Vico's boldly affirmed conviction. What men have made, other men, possessing minds like them, can reflectively penetrate or "enter into". In history we are the actors; in the natural sciences we are merely spectators. "I know what it is to look like a tree, but I cannot know what it is to be a tree. But I do know what it is to be a mind, because I possess one, and create with it." (p. 25) This is at the root, as Berlin interestingly observes, of Hegel's celebrated distinction of *an sich* (in itself) and *für sich* (for itself); it is the doctrine, above others, on which, according to Berlin, "Vico's claim to immortality must rest." (p. 67) There is no suggestion, however, in either Vico or Herder, that this kind of "understanding" is a matter of super-natural discovery, of quasi-mythical divination, or a wholly intuitive act, although it is not entirely clear, especially with Vico, what role revelation or grace plays in attaining it. Berlin takes Collingwood rather sharply to task for evidently misinterpreting the source of historical understanding, of reading into Vico (and Herder) metaphysical and transcendental notions that were foreign to both.

Although Herder, unlike Vico, recognized that in the last analysis *Verstehen* entailed an inescapable subjective element, he in no way saw in this a denial of objectivity, for what "objectivity" in history can conceivably mean, according to him, is first and foremost the resolve toward impartiality, a readiness to look upon acts and events from perspectives other than exclusively one's own, to engage what Kant subsequently was to call an "enlarged mentality". And it was Vico's and Herder's crowning achievement to urge men to use and develop their imaginative sensibility in this pursuit, in this quest for self-understanding and — as Herder hoped — self-redemption. To this achievement Berlin's book pays eloquent tribute.

## II

Berlin's essay on Vico, revised and expanded from its original version, published in 1960, centres almost exclusively on Vico's theory of knowledge

## SELF-REDEMPTION

and on the chief sources on which it presumably drew.

Despite his immense admiration for Vico's intellectual achievement, Berlin makes no secret of the fact that the reader of Vico's writings faces no easy task. In order to gain some measure of clarity he has to pick his way most carefully. Obscurities abound; Vico's thought and style are like a tangled forest; clear and confused insights mingle in lavish profusion; hence Berlin rightly remarks that it is "constantly necessary to sift the chaff from the grain", to sort out an "ill-assorted mass of ideas, some lucid and arresting, others shapeless or obscure, bold and novel thoughts cluttered with trivial fragments of a dead scholastic tradition, all jostling each other in the chaos of this astonishingly fertile, but badly ordered and overburdened mind." (p. 67) No wonder, therefore, that Vico is "constantly rediscovered and as constantly laid aside. He remains unreadable and unread." (p.95)

Stripped of its stylistic encumbrances, however, an arresting and novel doctrine emerges, revealing a number of exciting themes as original in their day as they are still relevant in ours. I shall single out two of which this can be said without the slightest reservation: Vico's epistemology of "*Verstehen*" and his conception of Natural Law. Both themes are treated in detail and with infinite skill in Berlin's study, and all I can attempt here is to summarize the salient points and briefly comment on these.

According to Berlin, Vico's epistemology distinguishes four types of knowledge: (1) *Scienza*, which is knowledge yielding *verum*, that is, a priori truth, attainable only to the full in those instances in which the object of enquiry is wholly the product of one's own creation, one's own artefacts or fictions, such as logical and mathematical constructs, or poetic and artistic works; the external world of nature, therefore, is fully knowable only to God, its sole creator. (2) *Conscienza*, which refers to the type of knowledge gained from the observation of overt "behaviour" of men, animals, plants and things. This is the most common type of knowledge men have, to which Vico applies the term *certum*; factual propositions of this kind, though exceedingly clear (in the sense of seeming wholly self-evident) could, Vico declares, yet be false. (3) This category of knowledge, to which Vico applies no specific term, comes closest to the Platonic notion of universals, of eternal truths and principles, though how we can discern these, without grace or revelation (both of which Vico wholly accepts as sources of valid knowledge) is not made clear. Finally, and evidently Vico's prime concern, (4) man's self-understanding, the awareness he has of his own activities and of those of other men, by being not merely an observer from outside — as he is when he thinks of trees, rivers, or earthquakes — but a participant who knows from inside what it is to have purposes, hopes, or fears. This form of knowledge Vico refers to as knowledge *per causas* (Vico's spelling) which we obtain by attending to the *modificazioni* of our *mente*; these help us to disclose "what men, or societies, or cultures are *at*, that is, not merely what

## F. MECHNER BARNARD

happens to them, or of how they react or behave as casual agents or "patients", but of those internal relationships and interconnections between thought and action, observation, theory, motivation, practice, which is precisely what observation of the external world, of mere copresences and successions, fails to give us." (p. 106)

In the light of this fourfold distinction, our knowledge of the world of nature is, contrary to what the Cartesians (and their diverse present-day followers) maintained, incapable of serving as the paradigm of science per se. The humanities, involving self-understanding, and the natural sciences, involving the observation of the external world, differ, for Vico, in kind and not merely in degree: their methods, goals, and knowability are fundamentally different; they are two distinct worlds, two dissimilar fields of scientific enquiry. Although the world of man is not entirely of his own making, in the sense mathematics is, it is nonetheless knowable in a different and additional sense from that in which non-human things and events are knowable. Although Augustine had already advanced the doctrine that nature is truly knowable only to God, its creator, it was Vico who fully brought to light (in Berlin's view) the concept of "*Verstehen*", of understanding through internal causes as a mode of intelligibility.

"*Verstehen*", in this sense — which has become celebrated largely owing to the importance that has since been given to the concept by Herder, Dilthey, Max Weber and others — is possible because of man's sensibility of *Einfühlung*, of having the capacity of "entering into" the thought and feelings of others, their motives, intentions, ideals, interests, their gestures, works of art, or sense of humour. In his autobiography (*Unfinished Journey*), recently published, Yehudi Menuhin recalls playing a violin sonata to Bela Bartok, the Hungarian composer, which the latter had specially written for him. Bartok, known to be pitilessly severe with his comments, was delighted; he did not think, he said, music could be played like that until long after the composer was dead. Menuhin is recalling this occasion not in order to boast; but the knowledge that he succeeded in penetrating to the very heart of a composer through his music, and that he, the living man, knew that it was understood was an experience of infinite worth to him. This kind of knowledge cannot be assimilated to Gilbert Ryle's famous classification of knowledge in terms of "knowing that" and "knowing how", for it is indeed *sui generis*, confined to the world of human thought and human feeling. Vico was the first modern thinker, according to Berlin, to grasp this important fact and to deny the possibility of assimilating the methods of the *Geisteswissenschaften* to those of the *Naturwissenschaften*, and vice versa.

Vico's challenge and denial of the notion of an unchanging human nature and of the idea of absolute and unalterable values is the second momentous achievement which Berlin records. This questioning of the ancient foundations

## SELF-REDEMPTION

of Natural Law theories caused tremors in the prevailing structures of thinking about man and his world. Men, Vico asserts, continuously transform themselves in transforming their world; only the pattern of the flow is constant, not its substance; there are no human or cultural essences which remain identical through change. True natural law is not the natural law of the philosophers, not a set of universal rules, but the continuous emergence of new laws of the *nascimento*, "the coming to birth of a thing at certain times and in certain fashions." (*New Science*, 147) In place of the "natural law of the philosophers" Vico advances his "Natural Law of Nations", where "natural" does not mean fixed or static, but growing and changing, and where "nations" is not taken as a given, but (from *gentium*) as something constantly evolving in the process of self-generation, "each generation bearing its successor on its shoulders". One cannot abstract what is common to the constitutive phases of a continuous transformation, just as it is impossible "to abstract what is common to all shapes, or colours, or all human faces or lives, and to pronounce that to be the basic or natural shape, or colour, the basic or natural human face or life. That is why it is idle to seek to abstract common unaltering beliefs and call them natural law." (p. 85)

Berlin is doubtless right in calling Vico's attack on the established conception of natural law a "very bold undertaking", (p. 86), but it would be mistaken, I think, to see in Vico a thoroughgoing relativist or to infer that he wholly abandoned the notion of universality. Like his "successor" Herder, Vico never repudiated the oneness of humanity in moral or anthropological terms. Both thinkers are characterized by an ambivalent tension in this as in other respects of which, as deeply religious men, they may or may not have been aware. Such ambivalence clearly invites diverse interpretation. It seems to me that Vico was not aware of advancing in effect not one theory of human development (in socio-political and cultural terms), but two: a relativist and pluralist theory of independent multiple origins, *and* a universalist and monistic theory of common origins and common institutions, such as some form of religion, marriage, and burial, or some "universal and eternal principles . . . on which all nations were founded and still preserve themselves." (N.S. 332) Similarly, Vico could scarcely have put as much faith as he did in the possibility of "understanding" (in the sense of *Einfühlung*) had he not assumed, as Berlin acknowledges, that "men can think of others only as being like themselves" in their basic propensities and sensibilities. (p. 23) Finally, in view of his providential conception of the cosmic design and man's divinely ordained place in it, he could hardly have rejected all aspects of the ancient, and particularly Christian, natural law tradition. To be sure, as a celebrant of man's conscious individual and social self-enactment, Vico was a true humanist forerunner of subsequent socialist, populist and anarchist endeavours in this direction. But Vico was a decidedly pious celebrant, and no secularist, contrary to what Michelet and others since

## F. MECHNER BARNARD

would have us believe. Vico was no more of a secularist than he was an eighteenth-century progressivist or a nineteenth-century evolutionist. Human purposes, though self-chosen, were not autonomous for him, but integral constituents of a providential design with its own inscrutable purposes, of which men may get but an inkling. (N.S. 338-60)

Although Berlin is by no means unaware of these ambivalent tensions in Vico's thought, he appears to doubt that they impinged on his relativism and pluralism — and the same can be said about his position on Herder's relativism and pluralism. As to Vico's political convictions, Berlin justifiably wonders if he had any at all or if he simply lacked the courage of his convictions, but I am unable to judge if political issues of Vico's age were generally less clearly seen or less profoundly felt than those of earlier or later times, as Berlin suggests. All I can say with some assurance is that in this respect the truly striking affinities between Vico and Herder find no common expression, for, while Vico admired authority and despised democracy, Herder admired democracy and despised authority, and while Vico bowed and scraped for support and recognition, Herder remained a stiff-necked and intrepid rebel throughout his life.

### III

The astounding similarity between several pivotal themes in the writings of the two men is all the more remarkable in that it cannot be traced to any direct influence. Vico, of course, knew nothing of Herder, having died in the year (1774) Herder was born. Herder, in turn, heard of Vico for the first time when most of his major ideas had taken shape. It seems therefore that Herder, quite independently of Vico, generated strikingly similar ideas, beset by similar problems, in an entirely different environment from that of seventeenth-century Naples. And, like those of his "predecessor", Herder's ideas entered into the texture of European thought, and, as they did, transformed it.

Perhaps the most obviously common feature characterizing their thought (and clearly evident from what has been said so far) is the idea that diversity is something to be treasured and nurtured rather than deplored or stifled. The apotheosis of diversity no doubt derived its impulse from a broader vision than that commonly encompassed in the notion of the political. Yet in the case of Herder — unlike probably that of Vico — a decisively political sensibility was at work from the earliest intellectual period. All bureaucratic attempts and centralizing schemes toward uniformity aroused his ire and provoked some of his most bitter laments over Prussia, his native soil, to which he never returned. And he never tired of denouncing multi-national empires and the suppression of native cultures by European imperialists. This politically tinged celebration of diversity in turn provided the doctrinal source of a variety of political

## SELF-REDEMPTION

“isms”, such as nationalism, liberalism (J.S. Mill’s in particular), populism, and anarchism. That Herder was vastly more influential in these directions than Vico had been may well have something to do with time, geography, and other conditions that were more propitious to the reception and dissemination of the former’s ideas. But the temptation for *post hoc* rationalization should not too easily be discounted. No doubt, differing circumstances played their part; conceivably, too, the time *was* riper for Herder than it was for Vico; still, the contrasting impact of Vico’s and Herder’s thought must in large measure be attributed to the latter’s undeniably superior literary talent, to his prolific writings, and, not least, to his combining the roles of poet and thinker, of *Dichter* and *Denker*, so prestigiously in vogue in eighteenth-century Germany, and so caustically satirized and pilloried subsequently by Heine and Marx. Thus, while Vico has only recently been re-rescued from oblivion, Herder has enjoyed international renown almost continuously since his first writings appeared in print.

Some of Herder’s renown (as I have argued elsewhere and Professor Berlin confirms) has been undeserved and would thoroughly have disgusted him. For neither fanatical nationalism, nor irrational romanticism, racism, let alone anti-Semitism, had any part in his thought and work. Less undeservedly, he is celebrated as the begetter of linguistic ethnicity, of nativism, romanticism, relativism and historicism, as a rebel against classicism, rationalism, progressivism, and all that is most typically seen as the French expression of the Enlightenment, in particular the ideas of Voltaire, d’Alembert, Helvetius, and Holbach. This deeply entrenched view of Herder — often accepted from commentators without direct familiarity with Herder’s writings — is not necessarily false, but like all crude simplifications it is highly misleading. For Herder was a most complex thinker, as he was a most complex personality. This complexity, this inner tension is lost in such facile categorizations. Fortunately, Berlin succeeds in avoiding these worn clichés; with refreshing sweep, acute perceptiveness and *Einfühlung* — few among contemporary interpreters of ideas have attained greater mastery in this — Berlin brings to life the authentic Herder, with warts and all. This essay, too, has been previously published (in 1965) but, unlike the piece on Vico, only slightly expanded.

After informing the reader in his characteristic manner what he is *not* going to do, Berlin singles out three themes as “cardinal ideas” in Herder’s thought: Populism, Expressionism, and Pluralism. He wants to do justice, primarily, not to Herder’s influence, but to his originality. Originality, however, is no less thorny an issue than “influence”. Surveying the sources on which Herder has drawn, or might have drawn, Berlin has no difficulty in showing that no single sword in Herder’s intellectual armoury was wholly of his own making. More often than not, he states, “Herder began with something that had by that time become established as a traditional German attitude.” (p. 151) Although I

## F. MECHNER BARNARD

find this a somewhat hyperbolic statement, it is a timely correction to the oversell-approach in which through and through originality is claimed for every idea of a thinker as a justification for his admittance to the galaxy of the great. This is not Berlin's approach. For he recognizes that "if one were called upon to show what is strictly original in the individual doctrines of Locke or Rousseau, Bentham or Marx, Aquinas, and even Hegel, one could, without much difficulty, trace virtually all their doctrines to antecedent 'sources'. Yet this does not derogate from the originality and genius of these thinkers." (p. 152) What proved highly original and seminal in Herder's case was the creative synthesis forged by him out of the most disparate material around him. Berlin finds its most profound expression in the three "isms" mentioned above; each of these "isms" has, he feels, wholly maintained its interest and relevance to political and social theory. Curiously, he stresses, however, that all three of them are unpolitical in source and motivation. Without wishing to claim the polar opposite — that Herder was first and foremost a political thinker, or politically motivated thinker — I find this view hard to accept. Herder was, indeed, in a real sense anti-political in outlook, but he was scarcely apolitical or unpolitical. Berlin may well be closer to the mark in identifying Herder's *Nationalgeist*, *Volksseele*, and even his concept *Nationalismus*, with populism rather than nationalism (especially in its power-political and bellicose connotation), yet this must not disguise the fact that of all States the nation-State was for Herder the most natural or the least unnatural form of political association, nor wrongly suggest that historical Populism was free from violence.

Even a casual glance at the "isms" (which Professor Berlin discerns as Herder's most original contribution to the history of ideas) will reveal that they are made to carry meanings which do not readily correspond with the sense in which they are widely understood. Thus "populism" is intended to mean — as Berlin makes perfectly plain — a gut feeling or sentiment of belonging, of having roots in a collectivity of fellow-men, based on language, a shared memory of the past, common customs and traditions, and the countless, elusive forms of life which Sumner called folkways. "Belonging" must not, however, be confused with political citizenship. To be conscious of being a German does not entail being a citizen of the *Bundesrepublik*, or a past citizen or supporter of Hitler's or Wilhelm's *Reich*, just as the sense of being a Quebecois does not entail a demand for Quebec's separate existence as a sovereign State. Indeed, the very opposite is implied by the notion: a perfectly mature, fully developed sense of belonging no longer *requires* the trappings of institutional statehood, of political government. Populism, thus understood, is therefore not so much non-political or apolitical, but quite decidedly *anti*-political, in its pronounced hostility to all political rule and organization. Berlin does not say so, but it would, I think, not be altogether fanciful to associate certain strands in the North-American farmers' movements in the prairies with this conception of

## SELF-REDEMPTION

democratic and peaceful populism.

"Belonging" is indeed, as Berlin maintains, "at the heart of all Herder's ideas". (p. 195) Neither "expressionism" nor "pluralism", as employed by Berlin, is intelligible if abstracted from the notion of belonging. For "expressionism", in this context, refers not to any specific school of art, literature, or music, but to all forms of human activity that *constitutively* derive from a person's consciousness of being a member of a distinctive group or collectivity. When, therefore, we speak of (or search for) a distinctive Canadian "identity", we would have to envisage some constitutive characteristic by means of which we recognize who or what belongs to Canada, for, presumably, it *expresses* what only Canadians would do, feel, believe, expect, and aspire. But there is an even deeper significance in the link between "populism", in the sense of *belonging*, and "expressionism", in the sense of distinctive *being*. To appreciate it to the full, a distinction has to be made between derivativeness in origin and derivativeness in purpose. While "expressionism" presupposes a distinctively derivative source — a particular social collectivity — it postulates, at the same time, a strictly non-derivative end or purpose. For whatever characterizes an activity as "expressionistic", in the sense indicated above, does so by virtue of being done for its own sake, and not in order to produce this or that result — commodities or services. Men do what they do in order to *be* what they *are*, out of an inescapable need for self-expression. Each such expressive activity carries its value and justification within itself. Finally, since every act of self-expression is made contingent on the existence of a sentiment of being a member of a distinct social configuration (*Gestalt*), it follows that self-expression (and thus self-realization as well) requires a socio-cultural context to which the individual can relate. Self-enactment is a function of belonging or, what amounts to the same, "belonging" is the indispensable condition of "expression" per se. Although Berlin does not formulate things quite the way I have done here I hope to have captured the spirit of his exposition of "expressionism".

"Pluralism" is the notion that is obviously closest to Berlin's own heart. It denotes, for him, not merely multiplicity, but the incommensurability of each distinctive form of "expression", since the centre of gravity, Herder's *Schwerpunkt*, lies *within*. Its nature and value can, accordingly, be understood only in its own terms, through an act of imaginative *Einfühlung*. Incommensurability means, moreover, that we cannot assume some absolute standard or hierarchy of values. Different ideals may be equally valid for different men, under different circumstances, at different periods. This, in turn, implies a recognition of the contestability of values, and their potential incompatibility. Thus, what "pluralism" in Berlin's intended sense clearly negates is the classical notion of absolute ideals, the idea of a model man or a model society. He remarks therefore quite correctly that on this view such notions become "intrinsically

## F. MECHNER BARNARD

incoherent and meaningless'. (p. 153) Equally clearly, "pluralism" in this context is something altogether different from the 'interest group theory of American pluralism which many of its critics regard as the very definition or expression of pluralism, a term that it may well have appropriated with rather doubtful credentials.

### IV

"*Die vollständige Wahrheit ist immer nur That*" (Complete truth is always only the Deed) Herder wrote in 1774, before Fichte or Hegel — as Professor Berlin significantly adds in a footnote. This was the basic article of faith in all his intellectual endeavours, as it was Vico's before him. But while Vico largely confined himself to the discovery of an epistemological basis for this faith, Herder sought to enlist it as a battle cry for changing the world, urging man to be "his own god upon earth". (*Werke*, VI, 64) Both men saw in man's imaginative sensibility a vital key to knowledge, and both saw it threatened by the unimaginative application of the established methods of scientific enquiry, by mere data collection and rational dissection. But whereas Vico was content to enlarge human self-understanding, Herder had hopes for human self-redemption. Running through the three "isms" which Berlin selected as Herder's supreme achievements is the doctrine of active being through active cooperation (*Zusammenwirken*), of individual creativity in and through social existence. And where Vico threw out hints, leaving their diverse interpretations to his posthumous commentators, Herder boldly and clearly spelled out the political and social implications of this doctrine, as he saw them.

It is better for man to actively participate in the forging of his social existence, whatever the result, than to be efficiently (or stupidly, or criminally) governed; for creative faculties rot if they are not used. Man is only truly man when he no longer requires a master to rule him. Everybody should be a "somebody", a master in some sphere, but no one should be a master in all spheres. It is the most blatant example of unreason in the history of human reason that those unborn should be destined to rule over others not yet born because of wealth or dynastic pedigree. There is no such thing as a "father of the nation"; a wife requires a husband, a child parents; a herd a leader: these are natural relations; the notion of a father, however, who keeps his children permanently under age, is not. Nor is it natural for Europeans to subjugate other continents, to defraud and plunder them. There is no *Favorit-volk*. Men lose their humanity by living on others and by the labour, ideas, and creativeness of others. If men exist only to serve others or the state they rob themselves of something essential, of themselves.

These are but celebrated samples of Herder's socio-political application of his doctrine of *Zusammenwirken*. And while Vico treated political issues like

## *SELF-REDEMPTION*

dolphins treat a ball, Herder doggedly adhered to his political convictions throughout his entire life. In this regard there certainly is incomparably greater unity and continuity in Herder's thought than in that of Vico. But it is a moot point if, in either case, we can meaningfully speak of "the unity of theory and practice" as an analytic description of their shared faith in truth through the deed or in knowing through doing. Professor Berlin seems to think that we can, and that, presumably, when Marxists speak of the unity of theory and practice they are but echoing Vico and Herder. Similarly, when he approvingly quotes (p. 114) Professor M.H. Fisch (the eminent authority on Vico) as saying that Vico shares with the Marxists "the positive view that the essence of humanity is the ensemble of social relations", I fail to see what, precisely, is being said. Moreover, I believe that Professor Berlin would concur in the view that Vico's and Herder's achievements can stand on their own. The prevailing thrust of his exposition certainly lends support to this assumption. His book is a masterly example of scholarship devoid of dullness. It not merely opens to us a panorama of intellectual peaks; it incites us to climb them.

Department of Political Science  
University of Western Ontario