Vico in “On the Study Methods of Our Time” calls for a change in curriculum. Primarily he sees importance in including eloquence based on it being interdisciplinary, and the need for students to learn common sense. He believes that speech and thought are inseparable and as a result evolve together. To better understand the evolution and history Vico argues that it is necessary to reconstruct “the consciousness of the time” to better understand history and its impact.

He does not agree that we should repeat what was done before when studying the Ancients, or reject it because it is in the past. He thinks that it is important to attempt to “acquire, on the whole, more knowledge” than Ancients. This would require action based not on what they did because knowledge and methods evolved. Vico sees value in understanding the ways current knowledge and methods are inferior in same ways to bring about a resolution, despite the state of current methods and knowledge being mostly superior. “But the greatest drawback of our educational methods is that we pay an excessive amount of attention to the natural sciences and not enough to ethics” (p. 871).

He thinks too much attention is given to natural sciences because of the lack of agreement on ethics. He views common sense as the guiding standard of eloquence, and values memory and imagination.

It is necessary to learn eloquence before moving on to criticism, because criticism will stifle students, before they have an opportunity to receive an education in common sense. Ignoring eloquence, and teaching students “advanced philosophical criticism may lead to an abnormal growth of abstract intelligence, and render people unfit for the practice of eloquence” (868). Therefore, eloquence will continue to lose value, and over time be unable to be retrieved from history.

Vico attempts to give more value to rhetoric, because the current curriculum does not value it. The focus on the natural sciences moves students away from studying ethics, and eloquence. Students, according to Vico, need to have space to imagine and use their memory, because without imagination and memory ideas and arguments are unlikely to occur. Students need to learn eloquence, memory and imagination. With eloquence as the guiding standard of eloquence Vico gives value to eloquence as the means to which students can obtain common sense. This common sense is the springboard to ideas and arguments, based on the application of memory and imagination. Therefore Vico bases his argument on the need to change curriculum so it is more interdisciplinary on the need for eloquence, and the need to continue to break rhetoric/eloquence from the trivium.

This continues the conversation sparked by last week’s readings. In particular we yet again see more evidence, or attention given, to the notion that rhetoric (eloquence) is interdisciplinary, and serves numerous purposes in education. Vico links eloquence to common sense, in addition to imagination and memory to the invention of arguments and ideas. Here we see rhetoric as a means to a beginning, or continuation of a thought/idea/argument, and as vital to the education of students as opposed to a skill.