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The uncertainty principle in Vico's sense of self

It may seem that Vico's science of history has nothing to do with the quest for individual self-knowledge. His *New Science*, outlining the "courses the nations run," deals with histories of civilizations, not persons. Rather than championing the individual, Vico identifies the "sensus communis" in history: ancient cultures have common truths within their traditions which produce common histories. So familiar legendary characters, like Homer and Orpheus, are subjected to this collective common basis of ideas—in Vico's formulation they become characters, not actual individuals, who through their poetic origins influence the development of human civilizations.

Thus when Vico champions the ancient oracular injunction to "know thyself," one may conclude that he refers to a collective idea of selfhood. But do his study methods have any crossover with a search for the individual self? When one considers Giambattista Vico's substantial efforts to recount his own life story, it seems that the question of individual self-knowledge must play a role in his philosophy. Donald Philip Verene has asserted that Vico's autobiography can be seen as an application and verification, (though not in a directly literal sense) of his *New Science*. And Paul Archambault asserts that Vico put his own autobiography at a central intellectual position in his philosophical studies. Of all his writings, Vico's autobiography should be his clearest demonstration of his own theories about the individual self. This study will address the question of the conceptualization of individual history in the *New Science*; then it will move to a discussion of Vico's formulation of his own self identity in his autobiography. Finally it will address the question of Vico's thoughts on subjectivity as they relate to the theories of a few philosophers of the modern era and of Vico's day.