

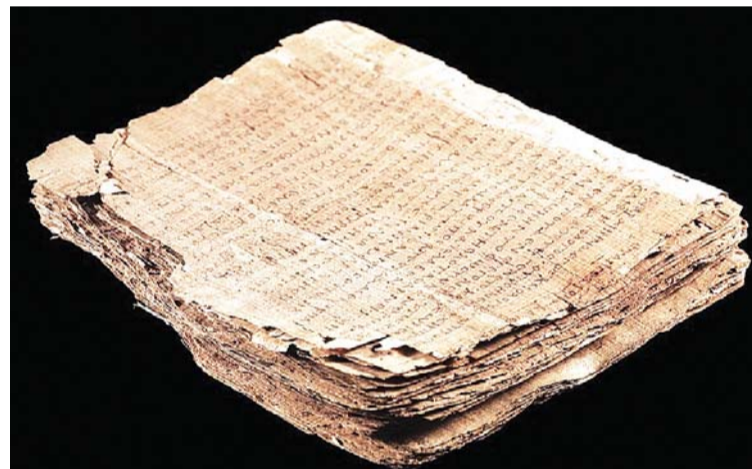
## World Sickle Cell Day: Raising Awareness About a Silent Genetic Disorder

Inscribed on June 19, World Sickle Cell Day aims to increase awareness about sickle cell disease, a serious inherited blood disorder affecting millions worldwide. The condition causes red blood cells to become crescent-shaped, leading to severe pain, infections and organ complications. The day highlights the importance of early diagnosis, genetic counselling and access to quality healthcare and treatment. Governments, health organisations and communities organise campaigns to promote screening and support affected families. By spreading awareness and encouraging research, World Sickle Cell Day seeks to improve care, reduce stigma and give patients hope for healthier, longer lives.

## #PAPYRUS TO PARCHMENT

# The Cost of Knowledge

The library of the University of Paris, one of the intellectual hubs of medieval Europe, held only around 600 at certain points in its early history



Imagine this: if papyrus had not existed, much of what we casually write today would have been inscribed on the skin of a dead animal. That contrast is not just poetic, it captures a real economic and material divide in the history of writing.

In the ancient world, especially in Ancient Egypt, writing flourished on papyrus, a relatively affordable and efficient material made from the papyrus plant. It was light, flexible, and far cheaper than alternatives. But outside regions where papyrus was easily available, societies turned to parchment, processed animal skin, often from sheep, goats, or calves.

To grasp the difference, think in everyday terms: the gap between papyrus and parchment was like the difference between buying a head of lettuce and a leather jacket. Papyrus was comparatively inexpensive and accessible; parchment was labour-intensive, durable, and costly. Producing a single sheet required skinning, cleaning, stretching, and treating animal hides. A full medieval manuscript could require dozens, even hundreds, of animals.

In medieval Europe, this had enormous consequences. Each page of a book, literally made from animal skin, carried significant value. It is often said that a single manuscript could cost as much as a house. Books were not just vessels of knowledge; they were luxury objects, symbols of wealth and power. Every line was written by hand, often by monks or scribes, adding further labour costs to

already expensive materials. As a result, books were rare and precious. Even the greatest centers of learning had surprisingly small collections by modern standards. The library of the University of Paris, one of the intellectual hubs of medieval Europe, held only a few hundred volumes, around 600 at certain points in its early history. These were among the richest collections in Europe at the time.

By contrast, parts of the Middle East, benefiting from paper-making technologies transmitted from China, developed larger libraries. Collections of 1,000 to 5,000 books were not unheard of, reflecting both cheaper materials and a strong scholarly culture. The spread of paper dramatically reduced the cost of writing compared to parchment.

Meanwhile, in China, innovations in papermaking, often using materials like mulberry bark, hemp, and later rice-based fibers, created a far more economical writing surface. Paper allowed texts to be produced, copied, and circulated on a scale that parchment-based cultures struggled to match. This material advantage played a crucial role in the expansion of literacy, bureaucracy, and knowledge systems.

The history of writing materials reminds us that knowledge has always been shaped by economics. What we write on determines who gets to write, what gets preserved, and how widely ideas can spread. From papyrus scrolls to animal-skin manuscripts to paper, each shift was not just technological, it was social and political.

# Greenland's Quiet Stand

After Denmark's fall, Greenland's colonial administration faced an unprecedented crisis. The island depended heavily on Denmark for political direction, trade, and administration. But now, there was no communication with Copenhagen, and the normal chain of command had effectively collapsed.



## • Verna Mohon

In April 9, 1940, during the early days of World War II, Nazi Germany launched a rapid invasion of Denmark as part of its broader expansion across Europe. The Danish capital, Copenhagen, surrendered quickly, bringing the country under German control.

But far across the Atlantic, Denmark's vast Arctic territory, Greenland, suddenly found itself completely cut off from its colonial government.

With communications severed and no instructions arriving from occupied Denmark, the responsibility for governing the isolated island fell largely on one man: Eske Brun, the Danish governor stationed in Greenland.

## A Colony Without Orders

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no communication with Copenhagen, and the normal chain of command had effectively collapsed.

Governor Eske Brun faced three difficult options:

1. Follow previous instructions strictly, even though the situation had dramatically changed.
2. Wait indefinitely for new orders from Denmark, which might never arrive.
3. Act independently, governing Greenland without formal authorization from the Danish government.

Choosing the third option required boldness and risk. Acting without official approval could have been seen as overstepping authority. Yet, waiting could leave the island vulnerable in the middle of a global war.

Brun ultimately made the decisive choice: Greenland would govern itself temporarily until Denmark was free again.

## Building New Alliances

With the war spreading across Europe and the Atlantic, Greenland's strategic importance quickly became clear. The island sat in a crucial location between North America and Europe, a perfect site for weather stations, supply routes, and military operations.

Recognizing this, Brun opened negotiations with the United States. Greenland's strategic value escalated due to its cryolite deposits at Ivittuut, the world's sole commercial source, essential for aluminum production in Allied war industries, and its geographic position enabling meteorological stations for North Atlantic weather forecasting and air routes bypassing Nazi-controlled areas. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed Greenland within America's defensive sphere in 1940, leading to the April 9, 1941, Defense of Greenland Agreement signed by Danish envoy Henrik Kauffmann, which authorized U.S. military protection, patrols, and base construction without initial approval from the occupied Danish government.

This facilitated installations like

the United States to establish American bases and infrastructure on the island. These installations supported Allied military operations during the war by providing weather data, Geopolitical tensions, such as Norway's 1931 occupation of East Greenland, resolved by the Permanent Court of International Justice in 1933 favoring Denmark, demanded vigilant border patrols and sovereignty assertions, diverting limited personnel from domestic priorities.

**Governing an Island Independently**  
Brun's leadership did more than just address military concerns. With Denmark occupied, Greenland also had to function politically and economically on its own. To manage this, Brun helped establish the Greenland Council, which allowed local leaders and officials to participate more actively in governance. Under this structure, different sectors of Greenland's



Eske Brun in the United States on USCGC Campbell in 1940.

## #ESKE BRUN



The cryolite mine in Ivittuut, summer 1940.

Blue West One (Narsarsuaq airfield), operational from summer 1941 and peaking at 6,000 U.S. personnel, alongside coastal defenses at Gronnedal, to safeguard the cryolite mine, whose exports funded Greenland's wartime economy.

Administrative reforms during this period were constrained by Greenland's isolation and dependence on Copenhagen but included initiatives to enhance economic resilience through diversification. Brun supported diversification in fox trapping, a key export via the Royal Greenland Trading Department (KGH), by encouraging licensed hunting quotas and cooperative models among Inuit trappers to offset declining pelt prices amid the global depression.

He also oversaw preliminary efforts to modernize fishing operations, introducing Danish techniques for cod and halibut processing to supplement subsistence economies, though implementation



was limited by lack of infrastructure. These measures aimed to reduce reliance on subsidized imports while maintaining the KGH monopoly, which faced operational strains but remained profitable on core trades like cryolite from Ivittuut (exporting 56,455 tons in 1939). Despite Greenland technically being a Danish colony, Brun allowed



Bank note with signature of Eske Brun.

administration began to develop more independently.

- During the war years:
- Economic activity expanded.
- Trade systems were developed directly with North America.
- Administrative institutions strengthened.
- Infrastructure and communications improved.

For the first time, Greenland was functioning with a level of practical autonomy that it had never experienced under Danish colonial rule.

Challenges were multifaceted, dominated by the Great Depression's ripple effects, which caused KGH deficits through 1938 due to crashed fur markets and reduced European demand, necessitating rationing of essentials like flour, tea, and fuel across districts. Enforcement of reforms encountered resistance from traditional Inuit practices, where communal sharing clashed with Danish licensing and taxation systems, leading to uneven compliance and administrative burdens on small colonial outposts. Public health crises, including rampant tuberculosis (affecting up to 20% of the population in some areas), compounded issues, as Brun coordinated scant medical resources amid slow supply ships and harsh Arctic conditions that isolated communities for months.

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## A Legacy of Self-Government

When World War II ended and Denmark regained its independence, Greenland returned to Danish administration. However, the wartime experience had changed the island permanently. The years of self-management demonstrated that Greenland could govern many of its own affairs. Over time, this helped fuel political reforms and demands for greater autonomy.

A major milestone came in 1979, when Greenland achieved home rule, granting the island significant control over its internal government and policies. In the decades since, autonomy has continued to expand, giving Greenland increasing authority over its political and economic future.

## The Legacy of Eske Brun

Eske Brun's decision in 1940 was made under extreme uncertainty. With no orders, no communication, and a global war unfolding, he chose to act in Greenland's best interests rather than wait for direction that might never come. His leadership not only helped protect Greenland during World War II but also laid the foundation for the island's long journey towards greater self-governance. Brun later continued his work in Greenland's administration and remained closely connected to the island's political development until his death.

Today, Greenland's growing autonomy stands as a reminder of how one leader's decisive actions during a crisis helped shape the future of an entire nation.

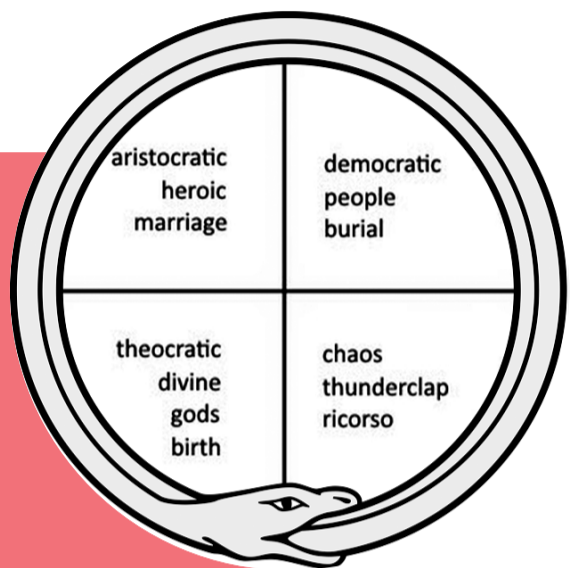
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## #PHILOSOPHIC MOTIVATION

# Civilization in Giambattista Vico's Thought

Vico described a pattern called the "corsi e ricorsi," meaning courses and recurses, cycles that repeat through time



In a small study in early 18th-century Italy, a struggling scholar quietly developed one of the most unusual theories about the rise and fall of civilizations. That thinker was Giambattista Vico, a philosopher whose ideas about history were far ahead of his time. Long before modern historians began exploring patterns in the development of cultures, Vico proposed a bold theory: civilizations move through repeating cycles. His work suggested that societies are not simply progressing forward in a straight line. Instead, they rise, evolve, collapse, and eventually begin again.

## A Scholar in Difficult Circumstances

Vico lived in Naples during the late 1600s and early 1700s. Despite his intellectual brilliance, he struggled financially for much of his life. Working mostly as a teacher and scholar, he spent years studying language, law, philosophy, and history. His most famous work, *The New Science*, attempted something few scholars had dared: to discover the underlying principles that guide the development of human societies. Instead of focusing only on political events, Vico tried to understand how culture, myth, language, and institutions evolve together.

## The Cycle Theory of History

At the center of Vico's philosophy is the idea that civilizations move through recurring stages. He described a pattern called the "corsi e ricorsi," meaning courses and recurs-



es, cycles that repeat through time. According to Vico, societies typically pass through three major ages.

## 1. The Age of Gods

In the earliest stage, societies are deeply religious and governed by fear of divine forces. Laws and customs are shaped by sacred authority, and mythological explanations dominate human understanding of the world.

## 2. The Age of Heroes

As societies grow more organized, power shifts to aristocratic elites or heroic figures. Social hierarchies become strong, and political authority is often held by noble families or warrior leaders.

## 3. The Age of Humans

Eventually, societies become more rational and egalitarian. Laws are based more on reason than myth, and institutions such as republics or democratic governments begin to appear.

However, Vico believed that this final stage contains the seeds of decline. As societies become increasingly individualistic and rational, they may lose the cultural unity that once held them together. This can lead to disorder, fragmentation, and eventually collapse, after which the cycle begins again.

## A Radical View of History

When Vico presented these ideas, they were revolutionary. Many thinkers of his time believed history followed a linear path of progress. Vico argued instead that history behaves more like a spiral, moving forward while repeating

familiar patterns. His work also emphasized something that modern historians now recognize as essential: the importance of culture and language in shaping civilizations. Myths, symbols, and collective imagination, he believed, reveal how societies think and organize themselves.

## Influence on Later Thinkers

Although Vico was largely overlooked during his lifetime, later scholars rediscovered his work and recognized its significance. His ideas influenced fields such as:

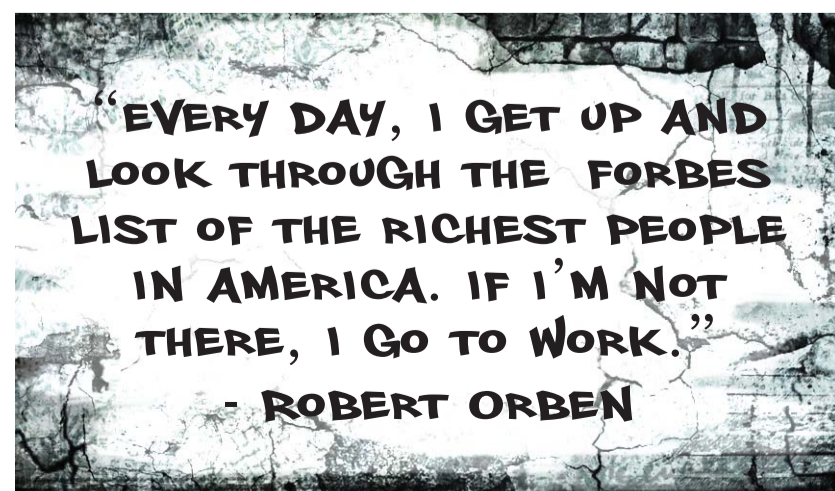
- Cultural History
- Anthropology
- Sociology
- Philosophy of History

Many later thinkers, who studied the rise and fall of civilizations, echoed themes similar to Vico's. His cyclical view of history foreshadowed later debates about cultural decline, societal renewal, and the long-term patterns of human development.

## Why Vico's Ideas Still Matter

In times of social upheaval or political instability, Vico's theory often reigns attention. His suggestion that civilizations naturally move through phases of growth, order, fragmentation, and renewal offers one possible framework for understanding historical change. While historians today do not universally accept his model as a strict rule, many acknowledge that Vico captured something important: societies evolve through complex cultural processes, and patterns from the past often reappear in new forms.

## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

