

Wayne C. Booth

b. 1921

Wayne C. Booth was born in American Fork, Utah, and was educated at Brigham Young University and the University of Chicago. He returned to Chicago in 1962 as professor of English and sometime dean, remaining at Chicago through a long and distinguished career. He cofounded the influential journal *Critical Inquiry* and served as the president of the Modern Language Association in 1982.

Booth's prominence as a literary critic and rhetorical theorist began with the publication of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), which advanced the idea that authors imagined ideal audiences for their works and readers generally were willing to take on the role assigned to them. The rhetoric of fiction—or at least of nondidactic fiction—was thus a collaborative effort at communication. Much of Booth's work continued his analysis of rhetorical force in literature and art, notably in *The Rhetoric of Irony* and in the work excerpted here, *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*. Booth's commitment to the collaborative and communicative ideal of rhetoric may be found again in his brief memoir, "Confessions of an Aging, Hypocritical Ex-Missionary":

I've been learning the kind of rhetorical practice that these days I risk labeling with a neologism, "rhetorology": not rhetorical persuasion but rather a systematic, ecumenical probing of the essentials shared by rival rhetorics in any dispute—whether about religion or about other important matters. Though rhetorology shares many features with other "dialogical" efforts, what it perhaps most resembles is political diplomacy. But unlike skillful diplomats, rhetorologists do not just try to discover the rival basic commitments and then "bargain." Nor do they just tolerate, in a spirit of benign relativism. Instead, they search together for true grounds, then labor to decide how those grounds dictate a change of mind about more superficial beliefs. Any genuine rhetorologist entering any fray is committed to the possibility of conversion to the "enemy" camp.¹

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The beginnings of this view of rhetoric can be seen in *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*.

Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent is the published version of four lectures delivered by Booth at Notre Dame in 1971. In the introduction to the volume, Booth explains that he was moved to the analysis offered in the lectures by his reflections on the protest movements of the late sixties. On both sides of the issues, he discovered deeply held assumptions about truth and reason that obviated fruitful engagement. These assumptions, which he calls the "dogmas of modernism," are founded on a deep distrust of reason itself, leaving on the one hand a reliance on scientific "fact" as the only real truth and on the other a reliance on baldly expressed—or demonstrated, as in the political demonstrations of the time—assertions of belief. The former Booth labels "scientism" and the latter "irrationalism." Against these assumptions, Booth asks whether it is possible to know, in a rational way, when we should change our minds, or how we should talk about what to believe.

¹"Confessions of an Aging, Hypocritical Ex-Missionary," *Sunstone* 21:1 (March/April 1998): 25–36.

These are issues that require rhetoric, and particularly a rhetoric of systematic assent that recognizes good reasons of many kinds.

Booth distinguishes five dogmas that arise from accepting the fact-value (or object-subject) split that underlies scientism and irrationalism. *Motivism* regards all reasons as determined by innate drives or prior conditioning. Thus there are no real reasons, only rationalizations. The second dogma holds that *humans are atomic mechanisms* and are therefore purposeless from the ethical or moral point of view. The third follows, namely, that *the universe itself is value-free* and that nature is therefore indifferent to human values. The fourth is the belief that the proper activity of the intellect is *systematic doubt*, a position advanced by many influential philosophical systems. From these dogmas derives the fifth, that *the purpose of argument is to win*. That is, if no proof can be brought for values, if rational argument is impossible or irrelevant, then one's convictions may be defended by any means, from exhortation to demonstration to violence.

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Booth carefully dissects the dogmas and the underlying fact-value division to show their development and motives, their internal contradictions and their intolerable consequences in the world. He argues vigorously against the fact-value or object-subject split and is at pains, particularly in the extensive footnotes of the published version, to show the strength and appeal of the arguments opposing the split, arguments to be found particularly in philosophy and the social sciences. Booth thus pushes for a renewed respect for reasoning and rhetoric, which he defines as "the art of discovering warrantable beliefs and improving these beliefs in shared discourse."² Thus, like Chaim Perelman (whom he cites several times) and Stephen Toulmin, Booth fills in the areas of probability and good reasons that are denigrated by the search for certainty.

Our excerpt comprises most of Lecture 3 and part of Lecture 4. Lecture 1 elaborates the problem of the fact-value rift, particularly the problem of motivism. Lecture 2 analyzes Bertrand Russell as a main promulgator of the dogma of systematic doubt. The latter part of Lecture 4 deals with the uses of literature and the arts as argument. (We have excluded a number of the very long footnotes that provide bibliographic references to the philosophical sources of Booth's arguments against the dogmas.)

Selected Bibliography

Our excerpt is from *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). Booth's other main works dealing with rhetoric are *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (University of Chicago Press, 1961), *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (University of Chicago Press, 1970), *A Rhetoric of Irony* (University of Chicago Press, 1974), and *Vocation of a Teacher: Rhetorical Occasions, 1967-1988* (University of Chicago Press, 1989). In this last book, Booth argues, as a teacher of literature and composition, for the centrality of rhetoric in liberal education. Booth has written frequently about composition: See, for example, "The Rhetorical Stance," in *College*

²Wayne C. Booth, *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. xiii.

Composition and Communication 14 (October 1963): 139–45, an article that exerted real influence to renew interest in rhetoric in departments of English. He develops the rhetorical stance further in “‘LITCOMP’: Some Rhetoric Addressed to Cryptorhetoricians about a Rhetorical Solution to a Rhetorical Problem,” in *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap*, ed. W. B. Horner (University of Chicago Press, 1983).

Booth's career and influence are examined in *Rhetoric and Pluralism: Legacies of Wayne Booth*, ed. Frederick J. Antczak (Ohio State University Press, 1995). These fifteen essays appreciate and challenge Booth's work in literary criticism and rhetorical theory, recognize his influence in other fields such as music and economics, and seek to extend his key ideas about assent, ethics, and pluralism. In a charming afterword, Booth himself reflects on the essays, demonstrating his sense of “rhetorology.” This book also provides a complete bibliography of Booth's works and reviews of his works.

From Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent

THREE: THE DOGMAS QUESTIONED

In my first lecture I promised to grapple with the highly general question of when we should change our minds, not just about what people call matters of fact or about what is “scientifically proved” but about value questions—about what we should admire, what we should do, what political protests we should support, and what institutions reject. I then described a great world religion, modernism, the dogmas of which, if accepted uncritically, make my promise absurd. If man is essentially and adequately defined as an accidental collocation of atoms in a value-free universe, if he can in no sense be said to choose among more or less good reasons but rather is always simply driven or motivated or conditioned, and if the only method for discovering knowledge about such matters is to apply the universal solvent of doubt in order to prove what cannot be doubted, then the purpose of offering reasons, in all nonscientific domains, cannot be to change men's minds in the sense of showing that one view is genuinely superior to another. It can only be to trick or sway or condition or force or woo men to believe or do what the persuader desires.

Men will in fact continue, in this view, to

“change each others' minds” in another sense, even in that part of life in which scientific proofs are not available: they will produce changes in what men do and in what they say they believe. But the difference between good and bad persuasion will become simply a difference in skill, not knowledge or wisdom. Except in scientific matters, education and mutual inquiry will become indistinguishable from propaganda or “mere rhetoric.”

The test of any mode of influence now becomes whether it works; the whole range of ways to influence men becomes a single indiscriminate conglomeration of devices, to be chosen simply on the basis of likely effectiveness in gaining agreement or compliance. Brainwashing, subliminal advertising, operant conditioning will be only technically different from each other and from psychoanalysis; reasoning with an opponent will be always seen as disguised trickery or, at best, “control.”

In this view the how and the what of mental change can still be studied rationally, meaning scientifically: sciences of information theory, group dynamics, propaganda analysis, behavioral therapy, and semantics will be devised to explain how men in fact are conditioned to change. All of these will have ethical commands built into them,

some of them openly, more of them in disguised form: "men *ought* to be logical"; "men *ought not* to be swayed by anything but scientific proof"; "thinking straight is a kind of defensive study, a way of keeping your dukes up at all times"; "men ought to be trained to recognize irrelevant emotional appeals"; and so on. B. F. Skinner, the best known scientismist of our time, often tells us how we *ought* to think about so-called values: "We do not say that simple biological reinforcers are effective because of self-love, and we *should not* attribute behaving for the good of others to a love of others"¹ (my italics).

Many freshman English texts—those new mass media studied by hundreds of thousands of Americans—have in the past several decades been defensive rhetorics in this sense. Accepting without question the dogmas of scientism, they have taught—as I accuse myself of having taught, during my first losing battles with freshman composition—that the goal of all thought and argument is to emulate the purity and objectivity and rigor of science, in order to protect oneself from the errors that passion and desire

¹*Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York, 1971), p. 110. Skinner protects himself from the charge of inconsistency in his use of value terms in two ways: "The text will often seem inconsistent. English, like all languages, is full of prescientific terms which usually suffice for purposes of casual discourse. . . . The book could have been written for a technical reader without expressions of that sort (even without the implicit *oughts*?), but the issues are important to the nonspecialist" (pp. 23–24). More important, he would say that his moral imperatives are all conditionals; *If* you think that people ought to behave as I say, *then* you ought to follow my program (see chap. 6, "Values," esp. p. 112).

Needless to say, such protective coloration will not work for anyone reading him from nonbehaviorist points of view: the scholarly surface cannot conceal the presence of hundreds of unargued precepts. For example: (1) "These reactions to a scientific conception of man are certainly unfortunate. They immobilize *men of good will*, and *anyone* concerned with the future of his culture will do what he can to correct them" (pp. 12–13; my italics). (2) Mentalist explanations are bad, he tells us, because they bring "*curiosity to an end*" (p. 12). Leaving aside the obvious objection that *curiosity*, like *good will*, is certainly a mentalist term, why should I, in his terms, care? His formal answer, not provided when the term is used, would be that without curiosity my culture cannot survive. But it is clear that Skinner would, like the rest of us, value curiosity even if it had no survival value, and for reasons he does not mention. [Au.]

and metaphor and authority and all those logical fallacies lead us into.

As a teacher of literature I naturally lived an entirely different and more romantic life, asserting values aggressively and cheerfully, though often becoming cross with my students if they denied—using principles derived from my scientism—the literary values I tried to educate them to embrace. It should have been clear to me that the very word *educate* was suspect, if modernism were right: whenever I touched on values, all I could do was indoctrinate, unless in some sense the pursuit of literary values is reasonable.

Taken at face value, modernism thus sharply divorces all genuine thought or knowledge from those faiths we find in all nonscientific discourse. What had once been a domain with many grades of dubiety and credibility now becomes simply the dubious (for scientism) or the arena of conflicting faiths (for irrationalism). Where classical philosophers and rhetoricians saw gradations from ignorance to wisdom, we are given only a vast domain of ignorance or glorious personal preference. Where they saw a need for eloquence in the service of wisdom, so that moral and political and even metaphysical truth might be given its best chance for success in the world, we are given only a contest of skills and devices in the service of warring preferences and impulses and desires. Rhetorical probability, based on what is "commonly sensed," becomes propagandistic plausibility.

Such disastrous consequences of modernist dogmas could not be considered, for modernists, as genuine reasons for rejecting those dogmas. Irrationalists will gladly accept the license to reject any doctrine that are inconvenient or unpleasant, seeking rather truths of the "heart" or "body." And of course scientismists expected from the beginning that the objectivity² they sought would

²Though many now argue that such objectivity is impossible, since even the physical sciences and mathematics depend—and not just logically—on assumptions and values that cannot be objectively demonstrated, it is still often expressed as the ideal of human inquiry. C. C. Gillispie, for example, includes, along with a serious and sound account of how human desires have often delayed particular discoveries in the physical sciences, a completely nonscientific and unar-

disregard human results and follow only where the evidence leads. I could therefore go on till doomsday showing that, as "everyone already knows," modernism is intellectually and morally and politically intolerable; I would not, according to the dogmas themselves, have said anything against them, only against our failure to face unpleasant truths.

But consider once again just how strange a thing it is that we should feel no *argumentative* force in disastrous consequences. To show that a given truth destroys the possibility of life, and indeed, if taken with full seriousness, turns on itself and denies the possibility of truth itself, surely should constitute some reason for reconsidering such a "truth." But I know better than to rest with this argument today: as modernists all, we know that such thinking is not thinking but "wishful thinking," "rationalization." Indeed we often act as if the painfulness of a conclusion should reinforce our conviction: if it hurts it must be true.

gued running polemic for objectivity and impersonality in all things—except perhaps art. "The Latin genius speaks out in Galileo. His is the passionate objectivity of Machiavelli, which says that wishes do not signify—this is how the world works. He stripped from the skeleton of the cosmos the obscuring layers of sentience and pious moral and edifying lesson, and left as object of the search the hard, straight bones of Euclidean dimension" *The Edge of Objectivity* (Princeton, N.J., 1960), p. 40; see also pp. 197–201).

For social scientists, the questions are usually more complex—not only whether this or that kind of objectivity is desirable or possible in any science but also whether studying human beings requires a different method from that used in natural science. The issues are far trickier than I have been able to suggest here (see, for example, Dorothy Emmet and Alasdair MacIntyre, eds., *Sociological Theory and Philosophical Analysis* [London, 1970], esp. articles by Alfred Schutz, Sidney Morgenbesser, and Jürgen Habermas). The whole phenomenological movement could be described as an effort to show that man can make an end run around the forces of scientific objectivity and come out on the other side whole. A good introduction to the issues now being debated in this immensely diverse movement can be found in two books edited by James M. Edie, *Phenomenology in America* (Chicago 1967) and *New Essays in Phenomenology* (Chicago 1969). It is significant, I think, that in the second volume, one whole section is devoted to repudiating the irrationalism that threatens on the left flank whenever scientism is repudiated on the right (pt. 2, "Nihilism and the Absurd"). [Au.]

Changes of Scene and Dramatis Personae

I am not attempting in these lectures a direct and full disproof of any of the dogmas; the effort would be futile, because according to the dogmas themselves such matters are not amenable to proof. My hope is only to cast some doubt on doubt and to suggest grounds for confidence in exploring some forms of assent that have been suspect. But I think it is important to remind ourselves, as we begin, of how many major figures over the past three hundred years have attempted a systematic disproof of one or more of the dogmas.

To describe the full range of their attacks would require a lengthy history of thought from Descartes to the present. Perhaps I should say several histories, because the results would look very different depending on the historian's assumptions about the history of ideas. The history would differ, for example, depending on whether the historian thought it possible to deal with individual dogmas, or subdogmas, in isolation (Arthur Lovejoy, for example) or believed on the contrary that no idea can be caught alive except in its original context (for example, Harry Prosch). But what is a proper context for an idea? Very different histories will result, depending on whether we seek to relate a given refutation of a given dogma to the complete philosophic statement in which it is found (in which case, for example, we would give a full account of Kant's philosophy in order to show how Kant refutes the notion of a cold, hostile, and indifferent universe); or seek rather to relate each idea to the social and artistic currents and political forces surrounding it (for example, Marxists or Hegelians); or to the whole symbolic life of man (for example, Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, pt. 2). Further differences would depend upon whether the historian was more interested in metaphysical questions of substance or in epistemology or in questions about language or action.

Even if one narrows the field, as I am now going to do, to questions of how the mind is defined and how its works are divided, complexities still abound. The divorce between the logical or calculating or experimenting mind, the sole producer of *knowledge*, and the valuing organism

that irresponsibly commits itself to *all the rest* will be attacked in different ways, depending on convictions about what *the rest* amounts to. To choose terms for what is left over after the certainly provable has been deducted is already to commit oneself to some possibilities and to rule out others. It makes a great difference, for example, whether one's description of "the rest" distinguishes or lumps together terms like *intuition*, *will*, *action*, *choice*, *value*, *feeling*, *motive*, *drive*, *emotion*, *experience*, *wisdom*, *eloquence*, *the heart*, and so on. And as polemicists on all sides too frequently forget, the same word can cover contradictory concepts in two different systems; *reason*, for example, sometimes appears on the scientifically proved side and sometimes in opposition to it, and *knowledge* is sometimes contracted to mean only what is empirically known, sometimes expanded to include the statistically probable, or even the intuitively probable.

Aware of such complex differences among both philosophers and historians of thought, I offer the following "reminder of authorities on my side" with fingers crossed. As history it is surely useless. As classification of philosophers it is dangerously misleading. But as serious rhetoric, offering the good reasons of expert testimony, it can be taken as a preliminary effort at shaking confidence: look at all these major figures who have chosen *not* to divide up the mind, and hence the world, as modernists tell me I must if I am to qualify as thoroughly modern. (I do not really get around to establishing testimony as a valid kind of reasoning until the next lecture, yet I need it here; that's how life is in the domains of rhetoric. I ask the reader to add to the experts I now call to the stand, those I cite in Appendix B).

I have accused modernism of dividing man's responses to the world into two unequal parts, one of hard knowing and the other of soft faith or commitment. As we turn to refutations, it will be useful to divide the second part once again, into commitments or purposes on the one hand and feelings or passions on the other. We now have a tripartite picture of the human organism that is presumed to experience a change of mind, and the word *mind* has been immeasurably extended beyond the narrow calculator praised by scientismists or damned by irrationalists. Every human

being believes certain things to be true, acts for certain ends, and feels in certain ways, but we attach feelings to thoughts and actions in diverse ways. Belief or thought or knowledge, action or will or choice, feeling or emotion or passion occur in every theory of thinking, acting, or feeling; and though the terms shift, each of the three domains always appears somewhere, even if only for long enough to be dismissed as illusory or irrelevant. In this view, the challenge presented by the successive real triumphs of science, and by the related depredations of scientism and the defensive wails of irrationalism, was that of an arbitrary and destructive divorce of man's powers of thought from his necessity to act and his inescapable emotive life.

For scientismists, there has always been the promise of an ultimate reunion off somewhere in the future, when science will have been able to re-ingest all those other matters and then finally explain them. Behaviorism has only made explicit what all scientismists have hoped for: a way of reuniting science and values and feelings and actions under a scientific aegis. Both the enthusiasm and the hostility aroused by behaviorism result from its power as a representative extreme. We saw that Bertrand Russell at one time felt that he ought to be a behaviorist but couldn't quite make the grade. Russell was able to live with the resulting cognitive discord, though he struggled against it. Less protean minds have tried harder for harmony, either going all the way—behaviorism is perhaps now more widely espoused than ever before—or seeking for some other harmony between nature and value.³

Nature and Knowledge Revivified

One obvious possibility is to develop a religious or metaphysical counterpart to behaviorism—that is, to try to build new pictures of man-in-nature that will see men's values as in-

³ I must repeat that what follows is, like almost everything in my absurdly brief encyclopaedia of all thought since God died, a terrible oversimplification. My truncated catalog of harmonies lumps together philosophers with many different languages and methods, and it thus distorts each of them. I take little comfort in knowing that everybody else's classification seems to me unfair to most or all of the views classified. [Au.]

separable from God's or nature's values. To the claim, "All values and emotions and preferences are simply the result of environmental controls that can be described in the language of scientific fact," many have replied, "The universe is made of, or permeated by, values; all (or many) facts can and should be described in the language of value or purpose." All of man's ethical and political and aesthetic and emotive life is thus taken back into the natural, and new ways are sought for talking about the old scholastic notion of an analogy of being between God and man.

Thus the reduction to the physical is countered by an elevation to the metaphysical. To see nature or "the way things are" or—in Wittgenstein's words—what "the case is" as essentially including human processes and values leads to new speculations, now to be found in great numbers, about how values are embedded in reality. This was, as I understand it, the major effort of Whitehead: "It should be the task of the philosophical schools of this century," he said, "to bring together the two streams (the one from Descartes and the other from Leibnitz) into an expression of the world-picture derived from science, and thereby end the divorce of science from the affirmation of our aesthetic and ethical experiences." By changing one's picture of the natural world from the mechanical, value-indifferent thing that Russell clung to, despite his many reservations, to a picture of the world as a collection of self-fulfilling (and hence valuable) processes or "procedures of organization," one can import values back into the domain of knowledge. In this view it is naturally good for all natural processes to be fulfilled; if the universe is, in its ultimate constitution, a pattern of purpose—directed processes and relations—value is inextricably bound in its workings, and man's valuing can be as rational as his most scientific endeavors.

Whitehead's process philosophy is only one of many efforts in this direction, though perhaps the most impressive. One could even describe Marx's scientific materialism as a redefinition of reality that makes possible a science of ethics and politics without reducing them to physics; and the Hegelian idealism that Russell first embraced and then rejected could equally be described as a

grand effort to reunify, under scientific laws of how the world really acts, parts of the world and of man's nature that had been alienated from each other.

Recent decades have seen many further attempts to reconstitute a universe in which values inhere in the nature of the facts. Revivals of Thomistic metaphysical inquiries in the work of Étienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, and Bernard Lonergan; phenomenological inquiries into our modes of knowing facts in feeling and value, and feeling and values in the factual; and logical inquiries into "good reasons" by recent inheritors of the "ordinary language" tradition; these and many others have been challenging the divorce of fact from value, of the subjective from the objective, of the world of inert and value-free nature from the world of man's desires.

Nature as Will or Act

A second possibility is to expand the domain of action or will to repudiate or encompass the scientific picture of a value-free world. We find innumerable modern existencialisms claiming that though the universe, scientifically considered, may be absurd or unknowable, we can honestly affirm our purposes, and thus escape the trap of meaninglessness. What we *know* is our own existence, and we can *will* that existence to be whatever we want it to be, in opposition to the absurdity of the universe that created us. We need not worry over rational doubts about free will or the objectivity of values: we can simply affirm ourselves and thus in a sense come to know our freedom.

It has seemed clear to many philosophers, though perhaps not to many lay intellectuals grasping at straws, that this existentialist affirmation leaves us in a sense right back where we started, with our minds divided. Though our human dignity and freedom are in one sense restored, an essential part of the mind has been violated. Popular existentialism has always been full of shrill attacks on reason and the mind, and the shrillness springs, I think, from a sense that something is wrong somewhere still: Bertrand Russell¹⁴ and B. F. Skinner are laughing at us up

¹⁴In Lecture 2, Booth distinguishes three contradictory

their sleeves. What fools these affirmers of absurdity be, not to recognize as we do that these affirmings are logically—and thus rationally, and thus finally—undefensible.

To me a much more satisfactory effort at reunification under “will” was that of the pragmatists, especially Peirce, Dewey, and James. Our purposes and their fulfillment are here taken as something we really know, and scientific knowledge becomes a special case of fulfillment of human purpose—the purpose to know. Logic is no longer here an abstract propositional logic seeking truths that are certain, objective, divorced from man’s needs and desires: it becomes instead the logic of inquiry, and inquiry is a process informed by purpose and hence by human values. That I desire certain qualities, know and pursue certain relations, and “live my purposes” can here no longer be relegated to epiphenomena—purposes are as real and known as anything can be, and the world and nature are thus transformed.

Reality as Feeling: The Wisdom of the Body

A third possibility is to expand the domain of feeling to absorb all of what is called thinking and all other grounds for action. Sometimes the new center is an undefined feeling, as in Hemingway’s repeated formula that what is good is what feels good, or Lawrence’s attacks on the murderous intellect in the name of the darker gods. Sometimes it is art or a metaphysics of art, as in Wallace Stevens’ notion of a supreme fiction, or Nietzsche’s early claim “that art, rather than ethics, constituted the essential metaphysical activity of man, . . . [and] that existence could be justified only in esthetic terms. . . . God as the supreme artist, amoral, recklessly creating and destroying, realizing himself in-

differently in whatever he does or undoes.”⁵ Or it becomes some physiological center of wisdom, as in Wilhelm Reich’s offering of salvation through orgasm, or Norman O. Brown’s celebration of the “polymorphous perverse.” And sometimes it has been a carefully articulated philosophy in which Platonic identities of truth and goodness with beauty (or art) are explored, as in the work of George Santayana.

In all these views, taste or sensibility or—as in Henry James—“quality of consciousness” becomes the supreme arbiter; art can become the last, best schoolmaster or legislator of the world. What we call wrong is simply what is ugly; the final test of truth, even in the sciences, becomes elegance or harmonious simplicity. The arbiter is not what we cannot doubt, as in scientism, nor what we can know of totality, as in metaphysical renovations, nor what we find has instrumental value, as in pragmatism, but what we find gratifies our most delicate sensing apparatus.

There is no theoretical reason why such view must lead to extreme expressions of irrationalism; it can be as reasonable (as I shall suggest later on) to follow the reasons of art as the reasons of scientific inquiry. But in practice the hyperirrationality of scientism, of reducing the world to nature, has been countered by the two branches of the countermovement of the late ‘60s: the political activists, reducing the world to blind will; and the counterculturalists, reducing it to blind feeling. A leader of the Weathermen group cries, “principles-schminciples,” in the name of action without thought or feeling, and Leary cries, “Tune in, turn on, drop out,” in the name of feeling as against either thought or action.

Divers Orders, Divers “Logics”

All three of these directions have thus yielded, I think, both philosophically cogent refutations of the modernist slicings and popular reductions that restore the slicings and fight for the superiority of this or that slice. The philosophers would be decisive for anyone who took the trouble (sometimes immense, as in the case of White-

positions espoused at different times by Russell, or as Booth puts it, three roles in which Russell cast himself. These Booth calls Russell I, II, and III. Russell I “sought certain knowledge about what he called ‘matters of fact’ or ‘the world’” (p. 46). Russell II, “the ‘man of reason,’ often of rational protest, tried to disestablish certain past beliefs and establish the more adequate beliefs taught, so he said, by science” (p. 47). And Russell III was “the man of action and passion, the poet and mystic” who fought for political causes (p. 47). Page references are to Wayne C. Booth, *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). [Ed.]

⁵“A Critical Backward Glance” (1886), commenting on *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1871), as translated by Francis Golffing in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (New York, 1956), p. 9. [Au.]

head, and always great for anyone who begins with different presuppositions) to understand them. If my goal were to find a single systematic philosophy that could be embraced once and for all, I clearly ought to choose one of the three and develop—from a conflation of “the genuinely known” or the “validly willed” or the “truly felt”—my alternative to modernism. But it is immediately clear, when I say that all three have yielded decisive alternatives that I am exploring a different, pluralistic direction. My goal is (once again) not to establish a philosophy: my concern is with a befouled rhetorical climate which prevents our meeting to discover and pursue common interests. What we must find, I think, are grounds for confidence in a multiplicity of ways of knowing. Such grounds need not be what was sought by philosophers who based themselves in science: a theory providing fixed and proved principles from which all genuine reasoning could proceed. It need only be a revitalization of what we naturally assume as we go about our intellectual and practical business in the world: namely, that there are many logics, and that each of the domains of the mind (or person) has its own kind of knowing.

There have been comprehensive philosophies built on just this assumption. For Aristotle (and Aquinas and Maritain), there is first the domain of theoretical truth, which can be sought in every subject matter but which can yield “positive” knowledge only in natural, mathematical, and logical inquiry; in other subjects we can have probable or useful knowledge but not certainty. There is, secondly, the domain of practical deliberation, which must take into account whatever scientific knowledge is available but which in itself must at best be imprecise and chancy; still, as everyone knows, there really is a difference between a wise man and a fool, or between a good senator and a bad; and part of the difference is in what they know. Finally, there is productive activity and thought about it, yielding a knowledge of how to make and enjoy the graces of life that life’s other natural processes fail to provide; the arts are created and enjoyed not in a meaningless, relativized bedlam of “what each person happens to like” but in communities that share, through direct experience and through talk about it, the knowledge of good makings.

What I am attempting here is, however, a considerably looser assemblage of good reasons than such systematic philosophers construct. There may be, though I doubt it, a grand new philosophical synthesis hiding in the wings somewhere, or looming over the horizon—some smooth beast ready to stride proudly toward the twenty-first century to be born. But even if there is, we will not be in a condition to attend to it until we can once more believe in the ultimate value of attending. If finding such a belief depends on establishing a single philosophy, the history of ideas would seem to teach that we are doomed. But if there are good reasons for confidence in the values of discoursing together, then we can get about our business, whatever that may be: philosophers disputing the merits of rival philosophies, the rest of us finding other rhetorical communities that will differ from problem to problem, discipline to discipline, political and social need to political and social need. If we can find some way to rely on our common sense—what we “sense” and know in common—we can once again trust whatever standards of validation our reasonings together lead us to.

We do not begin, then, with theories about the mind or knowledge or the universe or semantics. Instead we remind ourselves of our experience—good empiricists all—and of the fact that when we make mistakes, whether in political and ethical choices or in aesthetic judgment, we find that they always include bad thinking as well as “feeling.” When we look at either the fanatics or the hyper-rationalists who seem to us most threatening in what they do to their fellow men, we find as many signs of bad thinking and corrupted emotion in one group as the other. Fanatics are always “reasonable” in the sense of seeing rational connections between their abstract principles and their conclusions; their irrationality often consists in choosing the wrong principles validated by an inadequately considered group of “significant others.” They have lost their “common sense”—they do not test their commitments by seeking a genuinely common ground shared with the relevant fellow creatures. And the value-free scientismist is from this point of view equally irrational, because he too has chosen, on abstract principles, a validating group that ignores

what the common sense he shares with his fellows would teach.

Let us forget, then, for a while, the strangely compelling, seemingly self-evident notion that we know with one part of our minds or souls or selves or bodies, and will or feel with some other part. We can then search for what we agree on, what we meet in, where we *are* together.

Doubt and Assent

The full meaning of the choice I am making, with its deliberate embrace of circularity, will be clearer as I go along. For now it is enough if you will entertain the possibility of a kind of social test for truth: "It is reasonable to grant (one *ought* to grant) some degree of credence to whatever qualified men and women agree on, *unless* one has specific and stronger reasons to disbelieve." Abstract commands to "doubt pending proof" are now to be replaced with the ancient and natural command to "assent pending disproof." We will weigh many kinds of evidence, including testimony and authority; we will work as hard at discovering good witnesses as Russell would work at spotting logical fallacies. We will thus appraise more or less dubious reasons, assenting to the degree that *in the particular case* seems warranted.

You will remember that the dogma I am here proposing to replace teaches that we have no justification for asserting what can be doubted, and we are commanded by it to doubt whatever cannot be proved. In that view one never is advised (except by those who have an axe to grind—disreputable pushers of values, religious or political fanatics, mere rhetoricians) to see the capacity to believe as itself an intellectual virtue. Though few have ever put it quite so bluntly as the young Russell in his more prophetic moments, to doubt is taken as the supreme achievement of thought. The burden of proof is thus always placed on assent: to say, "I will believe unless I am given a *reason* to doubt" is self-evidently absurd.

The Criterion of Falsifiability

In its most sophisticated form, the principle of doubt becomes in Karl Popper's widely influential development, the "criterion of falsifiability."

We do not know anything Popper says, unless we know the operations that might disprove it if it were untrue, and unless we know that those operations do not in fact falsify it. Popper's criterion, already implicit in much intellectual activity, rapidly became a commonplace; it seemed to provide the most precise formulation of the only good way to rid the world of its intellectual rubbish. Notice how Edmund Leach assumes that an appeal to it will buttress his unsympathetic account of Freud and his questions about Lévi-Strauss's theories:

Lévi-Strauss on Myth has much the same fascination as Freud on the Interpretation of Dreams, and the same kind of weaknesses too. A first encounter with Freud is usually persuasive; it is all so neat, it simply must be right. But then you begin to wonder. Supposing the whole Freudian argument about symbolic associations and layers of conscious, unconscious and pre-conscious were entirely false, would it ever be possible to *prove* that it is false? And if the answer to that question is "No," you then have to ask yourself whether psycho-analytic arguments about symbol formation and free association can ever be anything better than clever talk.⁶

Here there are only two choices: either a doctrine passes this test, or it is nothing but "clever talk."

The test is a powerful one, in dealing with certain problems; I use it myself in trying to test my own guesses about how literary works are put together. But stated as a universal dogma it is highly questionable, as Popper himself sometimes seems to acknowledge. How, we may ask, does one know that *it* is true or valid? Can the criterion itself be put in falsifiable terms according to its own dictum? I would say that it cannot—that it claims status as knowledge without satisfying its own demands. (It is also, by the way, a value judgment on human intellectual operations, put in the form of a factual claim, and as a value judgment it is not, according to the dogmas, falsifiable.)

Aside from presenting this logical difficulty, the test is obviously crippling when applied to

⁶Frank Kermode, ed., *Lévi-Strauss* (London, 1970), chap. 4, p. 54. Popper's basic formulation, modified in later works, is in *Logik der Forschung*, trans. as *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London, 1959; 2d ed., 1968). [Au.]

our practical lives. If we know only what survives after we have done our best to doubt, we are driven to conclude that most of our action has no cognitive base, since we must almost always act on propositions that have not been proved in this sense. "How can you argue that men should be reasonable," a colleague asks, "when you know that we never have enough information to be *sure* about anything. I take a stand, on this or that war, on this or that act of injustice, and my choices cannot be rational because I simply cannot know enough." He is right, if "to know" must mean to be certain, to have scientific proof, to have propositions that have been tested by the criterion of falsifiability. But this is not in fact the choice we make.

Being reasonable in practical affairs is more like a process of systematic assent than systematic doubt. If my wife says, "I have a sudden terrible pain. Call a doctor quick!" I must and will act at once. Only if I have specific reasons to doubt her—if I know, let us say, that she is a notorious and sadistic practical joker—do I have warrant to intrude doubt into the process of assent. I do not and should not pause for skeptical probings, for proof; and I certainly should not take time to rephrase my hypothesis, "he is suffering," in falsifiable form.

Nor do I take time to bring to conscious testing the moral principle, "When my wife suffers, I ought to try to help." If I know anything, if *anything* about my life and the world makes sense, I know that this principle holds. Yet if I did pause to see whether it could survive the tests of systematic doubt, I would have great difficulty even in phrasing it in a form that could be falsified by any standard empirical test.

How could one do so, even if one had time for prolonged testing? "If it is true that one ought to help a loved one or friend in pain, *then* I should call the doctor." No empirical tests seem to follow from any version I can devise. "If it is not true that I ought to help a loved one in pain, *then* I have no moral command to help my wife now." The conclusion is absurd, but only because its absurdity follows from my knowledge that the premise is absurd, and *that* knowledge comes from principles of assent that cannot be stated in falsifiable form. Even if, as I believe, they are

principles that will finally withstand the most aggressive philosophical probing—like that, for example, of Plato, Kant, or the recent analytical philosophers I have mentioned—they will not withstand the scientific test of falsifiability. As Popper says of various faiths held by science, there are no strictly empirical observations (as even Bertrand Russell finally admitted) that could falsify either the proposition "Thou shalt help thy neighbor" or its opposite, "Thou shalt ignore thy neighbor's pain."

But let us push a bit further. "If it is true that one ought to help a friend in pain, *then* it must be true that if I do not help him, I will suffer, in my conscience." Here at last is a proposition in testable form: if it is false, my conscience won't hurt, and I know that my conscience usually, perhaps always, hurts when I act against the proposition. But I have really made no progress in satisfying empirical demands, because I will be told that the evidence is subjective and that therefore it does not hold. Besides, my conscience is simply the product of conditioning. Factual statements cannot, the dogma runs, validate normative statements—the question remains whether my conscience *ought* to hurt. Thus the proposition is not really falsifiable. "If . . . , then it must be true that she will not help me when I am in need," or "if . . . , then it must be true that society will fall apart, because it depends on people helping each other." Both of these might conceivably be tested, but not *until it is too late*. Besides, I know (on other grounds) that these consequences are not my main reasons but secondary arguments I fall back on only because men working with systematic doubt have put me on the defensive.

Finally, "if . . . , then it must be true that I would find life intolerable in a world in which husbands ignored their wives' needs." Again the experiment cannot be performed, and even if it were performed, it would yield only subjective "nonreplicable" results. ("What does *intolerable* mean, scientifically speaking?") If the principle turned out to be true and the experiment replicable—in the sense that what I found subjectively intolerable everyone else found subjectively intolerable—the result would still come too late: society would already have become intolerable for everyone.

Meanwhile, of course, the doctor has not been called, because I have pretended not to know something I know very well; that I ought to try to help when I encounter pain in a loved one.⁷ I know this through the way I know the world in the first place, that is, through a willing assent to the process of making an intelligible world with my fellow creatures. Together we have constructed and named a world, and just as I know what doubt means only through assent to other men's namings, so I know what at least some of my responsibilities are.

We have learned, we moderns, to chant the qualifications: "there are many borderline cases"; "the circle of my duties is not clearly defined in advance"; "I cannot possibly respond adequately to all the pain of all my friends, let alone my neighbors"; "men seem more often than not to deny my knowledge by hurting each other, and the proposition thus seems to be 'falsified' daily, hourly." But how strange it is that such qualifications, real and troublesome as they can be, should have been allowed to obscure the essential ground that is being qualified. None of the qualifications makes any sense unless the original process of knowing-through-assent makes sense, because each of them depends on assent to communal definitions and norms which if tested by systematic doubt can be quickly destroyed.

Systematic Assent

In view of these troubles with systematic doubt, it scarcely seems unreasonable to try out other ways of looking at what we know. Instead of making doubt primary, let us see what happens if we know whatever we can agree together that we have no good reason to doubt, whether or not we can apply other more formal tests of doubt. In this view, assent becomes the prior act of knowing: what we believe together with sureness is given "the benefit of the doubt"; the doubts I en-

ertain must offer reasons for themselves at least as good as I have for the initial belief.

The differences between the two formulations may not at first seem great, but their consequences differ tremendously, as would be shown if I paused here to listen to the chorus of objections that have occurred to some of you. Am I not now forced to accept any piece of silliness that any fanatic wants to advance, provided only that he can get somebody to assent to it and that it cannot be clearly refuted with particular disproofs? Charles Manson will be confirmed by the assent of his witches, Hitler by his SS troops, every Christian sect by its hundreds or millions of adherents, and indeed every political and religious program by its ability to present witnesses.

There is a kind of plausibility conferred on this objection by the widespread conviction that you can't "prove" a general negative. "You can't prove that there are not ghosts." "You can't prove that alchemy is a false system, or that astrology doesn't work." "You can't even disprove the existence of God." We would be left floundering in conflicting nonsensical schemes if we accepted all the views that we can't really disprove.

If giving up the principle that doubt is the essential, primary tool of thought meant embracing everything not refutable in this scientismist sense, I would thus be forced to accept abstract doubt in self-defense. But it is clear that we are again here victimized by a needlessly narrow definition of proof and disproof. As William James said in "The Will to Believe," when we decide to believe pending disproof we are not suddenly flooded with every belief that anyone offers. We begin only with those beliefs that really recommend themselves to us, whoever we are and wherever we find ourselves. We are all moderns or postmoderns here, and most of us have as part of our structures of perception a belief in natural law as firm as Hume's or Bertrand Russell's. Though we may not be as sure of what the laws of the universe are as Hume the skeptic seemed to be, we needn't give ready credence to any report—of ghosts or astral projection or flying saucers—that does not in some degree fit our own experience. Since I have never seen a ghost and do not even know anyone personally who

⁷The principle of course applies to all fellow creatures, not just to those we love; in some ways the argument is cleaner, as Kant taught the world, when affection is not involved and duty counters other inclinations. My more sentimental example is chosen to represent a kind of knowledge that even the least altruistic reader will share. [Au.]

has claimed to see a ghost, and since most people I know who have thought about it do not believe in ghosts, I give my tentative assent to our collective experience. I need no disproof, though at the same time I see quite clearly that all of us could easily turn out to be wrong on this one; there are so many countervailing "experts" claiming to be heard. When I meet, as I did last year, a young Forest Service employee who believes that men on earth can project themselves instantaneously to Venus and back again, I do not grant assent pending disproof; I have no impulse to assent at all, since the claim runs counter to all of my experience. Similarly, I have very good specific reasons to doubt many of the claims of alchemy and astrology and phrenology, and I can therefore doubt them, for those reasons; on the other hand, if I find, as I do with the alchemical "humours," a certain kind of poetic truth overlooked in simpler modern psychologies, I needn't embrace all the chemical guesses simply because I have demoted the criteria I use in rejecting them. I have no need for a supreme, abstract command to doubt whatever has not been proved, as long as I am ready to reject whatever *has* been disproved. The geology of the Old Testament and the physiology of (say) Descartes have been disproved; I reject them. But I do not as a result leap, like Bertrand Russell cataloging the "intellectual rubbish" of the past, on every Biblical or Cartesian claim to truth that I cannot specifically prove.

Thus nonsense is no more threatening in this view than in any other, so long as I do not require scientific *disproof* of what is nonsensical. If "we" know that a belief is nonsense, we will not believe it, even if we cannot disprove it in any scientist's sense: in this respect, my new formulation simply accepts what is in fact our practice when faced with absurd doctrines that we cannot disprove.⁸

⁸The process is nicely illustrated whenever anyone advances an irrefutable but implausible hypothesis. When P. H. Gosse, Edmund's father, tried to refute evolutionary theory with his *Omphalos* (London, 1857), he argued that the world had indeed been created all at once, about 4004 B.C., but that of course it had been created with all of the geological strata and fossil records that it would have had if it had evolved through endless time. At the moment of creation everything had to be in order for a going universe, right down to faecal

What is thus demanded by the principle of systematic assent is more rigorous thought than is customary about who "we" are, the group of relevant judges, the axiological experts whose shared experience confirms what we know together. Nobody ever gives equal weight to every voice. What satisfies us in practice, though the practice always can and should be refined, is the discovery that a given belief that fits our own structures of perception and belief is supported by those qualified to know. It is true that we often make the mistake of reversing the process, conferring the status of qualified expert on someone because he agrees with us. But this elementary human error, found in all groups, does not invalidate the conviction that a belief is confirmed *in some degree* whenever "someone who knows" shares it.

This is in formal structure—as Michael Polanyi among others has shown—the process of validation used even by scientists for a great share of their scientific beliefs. No scientist has ever performed experiments or calculations providing more than a tiny fraction of all the scientific beliefs he holds; the whole edifice of science depends on faith in witnesses, past and present—

matter in Adam's colon. Now there is simply nothing in logic or in empirical science that could ever refute that position. It cannot be falsified, but neither can the scientific belief that it was designed to combat. Those who believe in a single natural order would of course say that Gosse violates the law of parsimony, that to invent the hypothesis of such a whimsical God is to complicate the world rather than explain it. But every man prefers his own way of applying Ockham's razor, and it is clear that no theory of evolution has ever been as simple and efficient and parsimonious as Gosse's, judged from his own point of view. With it he can account for any future scientific discovery about the world, while his opponents must go on debating about spontaneous mutation and natural selection and percentages and missing links. If scientists really believed only what they can state in falsifiable form, they would have struggled—hopelessly—to devise crucial experiments that would test Gosse's views as against their own anticatastrophism. Or they would have felt driven to show that Gosse's theory was in fact untestable and therefore meaningless.

But nothing so absurd happened. Though there were some negative reviews, Gosse was mainly refuted by the old-fashioned method of silence and indifference. Nobody felt the least bit threatened, and since he could get nobody else to take his views seriously, they were by that fact alone "refuted" and properly ignored. [Au.]

on testimony and tradition. There is nothing wrong in this, Polanyi argues; indeed, science would grind to a halt were it not so. Though scientific traditions of faith often support errors, making it difficult for new and sounder ideas to be embraced, no one could begin or carry through any experiment, to say nothing of writing a paper or attending a scientific conference, without relying (blindly?) on the traditions that make such errors inevitable.

Thus science is, in its larger structures, validated by the same social processes that I am arguing for in "all the rest." Even when we look in detail at how an individual scientist thinks when he is testing his ideas, we find, Polanyi suggests, that the appeal is more to an ideal "universal scientist" than to any particular person or group.⁹ The scientist is most convinced that he is right when he is most nearly convinced that *any* thoroughly informed and rational—that is, any thoroughly qualified—human being would agree with him.

We will follow the same rule. Needless to say, the various fanatical defenders of nonsense or viciousness, even if backed by millions of SS troops, cannot claim that kind of support. The Nazis, for example, could never claim that all reasonable and informed men would be forced by reason to agree to the extermination of all

Jews: self-evidently, the Jews must be included in any reasonable decision about their fate, and self-evidently, without even the need for consultation, they will be known to disagree with any attempt at a consensus about their extermination.

But we need not go so far from this room to illustrate the procedures I am playing with. Suppose we say that we here "know"—that is, have good warrant to assent to—whatever *everyone in this hall* really believe, regardless of whether we can think of abstract arguments about why his belief is *not* proved by other tests. Instantaneously our domain of knowledge is immeasurably increased, just as it was immeasurably decreased by the slow triumph of scientism from Descartes to Russell. Our knowledge is of "whatever we have good reason to believe," in the sense of "having no good reason to doubt." There will of course be gradations of such knowledge—truth will no longer be made up of what is certain, in contrast to "all the rest." When any belief seems self-evident and we find empirically that we can think of nobody who in fact doubts it, we will be sure about it; when we find, as we usually will, that some men deny what we all agree to, we will be less sure but still able to act on our knowledge with confidence, so long as we

⁹See, for example, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), esp. pp. 63–64: "The popular conception of science teaches that science is a collection of observable facts, which anybody can verify for himself. . . . But it is not true. . . . In the first place, you cannot possibly get hold of the equipment for testing, for example, a statement of astronomy or of chemistry. And supposing you could somehow get the use of an observatory or a chemical laboratory, you would probably damage their instruments beyond repair before you ever made an observation. . . . Scientists must rely heavily for their facts on the authority of fellow scientists." See also *ibid.*, pp. 67, 80.

For a perceptive account of some of the problems encountered when scientists attempt "persuasion" and "conversion" in matters not amenable to what they think of as proof, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago, 1970), esp. chap. 12 and "Postscript," secs. 5–7. For Kuhn there can be no proof except empirical, logical, or mathematical proof. Nevertheless, in matters not amenable to such proof there can be "good reasons for being persuaded," and we need, if we are to understand this kind of reason, "a sort of study that has not previously been undertaken" (p. 152). A new rhetoric?

In my judgment, Kuhn fumbles the question of "good reasons," because he is unwilling to question his assumptions that in choices of values and paradigms, neither party to a dispute can be "convicted of a mistake. . . . There is no neutral algorithm for theory choice, no systematic decision procedure which, properly applied, *must* lead each individual in the group to the same decision" (pp. 199–200; my italics). In other words, unless absolute proof, decisive for all inquirers is available, one cannot speak of mistakes or of correctness of choice. One is either totally, demonstrably mistaken, in a scientific sense, or no correction is possible. And yet "good reasons" are somehow possible, and in the truncated rhetoric that Kuhn offers, it is clear that he is moving toward a notion of a reasonable persuasion that would be as respectable, in its way, as scientific proof (see pp. 153–59). But despite his awareness that the fact value and objective-subjective distinction have become mere tags and can sometimes be destructive of thought, he allows himself to imply, again and again, that most of the reasons scientists might offer in debate about theories and values are necessarily more subjective and hence somehow less respectable than their scientific endeavors (see esp. p. 156). [Au.]

think we could persuade any reasonable person. But when we find ourselves or the postulated experts disagreeing, we will become more tentative in proportion to their qualifications and our own sense of where the good reasons lead us. And finally, we will be aware that there can be a genuine conflict of this kind of knowledge, in those areas where genuine values in fact clash: we have no reason to assume that the world is rational in the sense of harmonizing all of our "local" values; in fact we know that at every moment it presents—as in the conflict of values exhibited by every slaughterhouse and every feeling time in the wilderness—sharp clashes among good reasons. The sparrow and the sparrow hawk each has its reasons which reason, with a little effort, can ferret out, but we need not expect to find, at this local level, a Reason that will persuade the hawk to starve itself or the sparrow to sacrifice itself joyously to the hawk's noonday meal.¹⁰

¹⁰See Alan Gewirth, "Categorical Consistency in Ethics," *Philosophical Quarterly* 17 (October 1967): 389–99; idem, "Positive 'Ethics' and Normative 'Science,'" *Philosophical Review* 69 (July 1960): 311–30. Those who know classical rhetoric will be aware that I am experimenting with the old notion of the *topoi*, those places, *loci*, or shared "standpoints" where good arguments could be found because in them men did in fact discover warrantable beliefs. The *topoi* have often been treated as simple devices of trickery: you probe around in a "place" until you find some assumption, however ridiculous in your own view, that your opponent will accept, and then you argue from it to conclusions you want him to adopt. But what would happen if you probed and found what assumptions your own intellectual convictions *really rest on*, then tested them against other people's assumptions, and finally concluded with more or less confidence, depending on who agrees with you and for what proffered reasons. You would thus be developing as you went along a collection or perhaps to be fashionable I should say a "structure" of more or less probable (*probe-able*, *provable*) assumptions, assumptions that become principles usable not only in argument but in your own inquiry.

The collection of *topoi* from which such principles come would have become an organon, always to some degree shifting and uncertain, but reliable in discovering not only what you yourself believe but what you *should* believe: you should accept whatever you discover in testing discourse with others who are reasonable and in any sense qualified.

Instead of making an *a priori* list of topics at a high level of generality, as those who revive classical rhetoric sometimes do, I shall pursue the consequences of this notion inductively, as we inquire here together into our shared beliefs. [Au.]

In short, there is no assumption here like the one found in that growing cult of so-called reason, the Ayn Rand objectivists, that all truly reasonable men will always finally agree. On the contrary, it is assumed that reasonable men of differing interests, experience, and vocabulary will disagree about some questions to which reason, nevertheless, must apply. Consequently they not only can but must, by virtue of their common problems, search for meeting places where they can stand together and explore their differences about the choices life presents.

What Do We Know about Ourselves and Our "World"?

What do we know about the *arena of change*, the mind or self, if we know whatever no one in this hall seriously doubts? Remember: we must not cheat and fall back into modernism. It will not do to say, "Of course I can doubt that, if I put my mind to it." In this game you are allowed to doubt only what you cannot *not* doubt, only what you have persuasive reason *to* doubt. If I seem to repeat myself, it is partly because I know from my own experience how hard it will be for some of us not to claim doubt except when we *really* doubt.

1. You and I and Bertrand Russell know, as surely as we know anything, that men are characteristically users of language. Though we don't know much about the language of other animals, we do know, more surely than we know anything about the stars or the nucleus, and immeasurably more surely than we know about the chemistry of man's brain, that men in all ages and cultures have employed symbols—not just the grunt language of immediate signs or pointing, but modes of referring both to particulars not present to the senses and to concepts that generalize intelligibly about particulars. We know this is not simply by a tautological use of definition: "What I mean by man is a symbol-using animal." We know it from innumerable observations and reports of all known human cultures: all have language. In other words, we know that what we are doing at this moment—discoursing together, trying to understand each other—is done in some form by every man and woman in all cultures in all ages.

Even the deaf and dumb "become human," as Helen Keller and others have argued, the moment when language in this sense enters their lives. I am hungry; let's go hunting. I think it will rain; let's build a shelter. I love you; let us mate. I have just discovered that the sum of the angles of a triangle will always be 180 degrees; let me show you.

2. Not only do we talk and write and create art and mathematical systems and act as if we shared them: we really do share them, sometimes. Sometimes we *understand* each other. That is, we are often successful in exchanging ideas, emotions, and purposes, using not only words but a fantastically rich set of symbolic devices, ranging from facial expressions that seem much more resourceful than those available to other animals, bodily stances, dancing, music, mathematics, painting, sculpture, stories, rituals and manipulation of social groups in war and politics. Except for occasional monstrous births, each man born of woman infers grief, anger, love, through symbolic interchange. Even madmen go on, for the most part, talking and painting and singing; those who recover usually report that even in the depths of madness the process of inferring other people's conditions through symbolic clues goes on at a great pace. Some investigators would even argue that human madness consists precisely in this process running to riot; though animals can be conditioned to various forms of breakdown, only human beings can suffer from a wild excess of symbolic activity, with too little exchange and too much private inference. What we ordinarily mean when we say that a deformed birth is a "mere puppy" or "only a vegetable" is at the other end of the scale of normality: symbolic interchange as we know it is impossible, and the condition of being fully human has not been attained.

In short, we know other minds, sometimes, to some degree. That we often do not, and that the knowledge is never complete, is at this point irrelevant, though it has been sometimes talked about as if it proved that we are all hopelessly alone.

3. Not only do human beings successfully infer other human beings' states of mind from symbolic clues; we know that they characteristi-

cally, in all societies, *build* each other's minds. This is obvious knowledge—all the more genuine for being obvious. What an adult man or woman is, in all societies, is in large degree what other men and women have created through symbolic exchange. Each of us "takes in" other selves to build a self.

Other animals, too, are to some degree formed by their fellows, but the difference between the power of symbolic influence in man and in all other creatures is—as all students of society and culture have noted—tremendous. It is true that we all have some sort of common genetic base, and that base *may* include, as some recent theories would suggest, a kind of universal determination of the basic patterns of human speech, in all languages. But the existence of language and hence of a greatly enriched power for symbolic influence has meant that men are fantastically malleable by their fellows.

4. What is more, we know that we characteristically *intend* to change our fellows by symbolic devices, to "make them" or at least make them different. Though it is true that much of the cultural molding of minds that goes on, especially in childhood, is quite habitual or unconscious, people universally intend meanings, and hence intend changes of mind in other people (perhaps I should remind you once again that I am using the word *mind* much more broadly than is often the case: it includes those operations of the brain that are often attributed to the "gut" and "heart"; intentions in this sense need not be conscious).

5. Further, we are endowed with the capacity to infer intentions, not just in the linguistic sense of meanings but in the sense of purpose. One of the most curious impoverishments in the long retreat I have described is the exclusion of intentions from knowledge. At first, in the seventeenth century, intentions were excluded from the heavens, but as in all the other progressions of scientism, what was first denied to God was later denied to man: purposes became unknown and unknowable. And they are unknowable, if one accepts from the beginning that one knows only what one can prove by observation. I can observe only actions and physical processes: nobody has ever observed a purpose direct, except in himself,

"subjectively." But we all know (in our new sense of the word) that everyone can sometimes "read" intentions successfully.

This point is sufficiently important to justify spending a bit of time on it. There has been a good deal of work on intentions and how we know them, but for the most part it has been ignored, until very recently, by modernists attempting to be rigorous about what we really know.¹¹ We really know only facts, and intentions are not facts but states of mind. We do not *know* them, even in ourselves: they are intuitive states of consciousness. We certainly do not know them in others; rather, we infer them and our inferences have at best a very low level of probability. Or so one tradition says.

I would like to suggest, in contrast, that of all things I know, some intentions, both of myself and of other persons, are what I know most surely. We should not allow ourselves to be confused because we often are mistaken about intentions; they are of course easily faked, as con men teach us daily. But to admit that we make mistakes about some intentions no more rules intentions from the realms of knowledge than to say that we make mistakes about the physical world forbids knowledge about the physical world. The question is whether in knowing intentions we ever know something that is real, whether they are, as William James and other pragmatists insisted, matters of fact, even though clearly they are also in one sense subjective. If we do, then I think we not only have good reason to repudiate the hard distinction between objective and subjective worlds, but we also have a major step in the discovery of how facts and values are combined.

Of all the kinds of intention, the most revealing to us here are those found in works of art.

¹¹See, for example, G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1957); and E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn., 1967). The first is in the tradition of linguistic analysis; the second is strongly influenced by the phenomenologists, especially Husserl and Gadamer. Both would agree (though in different languages) with my elementary claim that we know intentions. For a careful account of current debate about intentions as causes, see Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1971), esp. ch. iii. I deal with intentions more fully in *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, 1974). [Au.]

When someone paints a picture or tells me a joke, when someone writes or performs a tragedy, when someone recounts the Passion according to St. Matthew in a Gospel or in an oratorio, I can sometimes come to understand and share his intentions and the shared intentions of others participating with me; and I sometimes know them with a sureness that has often been overlooked. That the resulting knowledge is a kind of indwelling (as Polanyi calls it), that it includes subjective states not provable or demonstrable by ordinary hard tests should not trouble us by now in the least.

Suppose I were to violate decorum by telling a joke at this solemn moment, and suppose further—oh, fond fantasy!—that it is as uproariously successful as the best joke you've heard in the last year. And then suppose a critic were to tell you that you do not know whether I was joking or not, that for all you really can prove, I was intending to communicate my tragic sense of life. What we know, in his view, is what we can prove, in his notion of proof. I submit that we would have every right to call him unreasonable, dogmatic, and in fact a bit foolish, because our communally shared knowledge of joke telling, its purpose, its conventions, its effects, is very secure stuff indeed. My joke would of course reveal other intentions than merely to make you laugh: you would know, at this stage of my third lecture, that I intended the joke and the laughter as illustrative. If the critic tried to convince you that I intended anything else by it than to make you laugh in order to illustrate our communal understanding, you would have every right to call him unreasonable, or even—if you wanted to be playfully contentious—unscientific.

But let us rise to more formal literary jesting, choosing as a second illustration a piece of the kind of stuff that some modernists like to say demonstrates how ambiguous everything is and how impossibly isolated we all are: of course I mean irony. You will look for a long time in scientific treatises on communication without finding any analysis of even the simplest ironies. Indeed, even in the philosophers who specialize in "ordinary language" one finds almost nothing about a symbolic practice that is so ordinary that you and I experience dozens of instances of it

daily; I have searched with reasonable diligence through the works of Wittgenstein, for example, and with all his talk about language games, I find almost nothing that even approaches an account of the intricate game you and I securely play when we open, let us say, that marvelous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."

We experience this sentence—that is, we take it in as a complex ironic meaning, a very special kind of indirect and intricate kind of unspoken point. We reconstruct an elaborate set of meanings quite different from the surface meaning of the words, and we conclude that we have understood Jane Austen's special brand of irony. She does not think that all wealthy bachelors are seeking wives; she knows that it is *not* a truth universally acknowledged but a belief held only by a very special kind of social group. In fact, her point includes the notion that some people, especially needy and greedy mothers with unmarried daughters, are eager to find wealthy sons-in-law; it also includes the extraordinarily complex notion—one that you and I have not the slightest difficulty with—that such people are proper objects of ridicule. What is more, it includes Jane Austen's inference about *us*, a flattering but justified conception of our powers to reconstruct unstated subtleties! Our performance together is, like mental meeting through other kinds of figurative language, too intricate to allow for brief explanation. But even without the full account that I have recently attempted in *A Rhetoric of Irony*, we can see that to claim to reconstruct such an intention is to claim an important and neglected kind of knowing.

I say that I know Jane Austen's intentions with the sentence, at least in its main lines. But can I really call what I know in this sense knowledge? It is clearly subjective, it cannot be proved by any deductive chain of reasoning or by any ordinary laboratory experiment, and it is obviously doubtable both in the sense that many readers will not see it and can doubt it honestly and in the sense that anyone who is determined to doubt what cannot be demonstrated can say he doubts it.

Yet if I remember that the dogmas of scientism are themselves unproved by observation and

then ask whether I have good and adequate reasons for my conclusions, I see at once that I *know* what Jane Austen intended with the sentence far more solidly than I know many conclusions dignified with the name of knowledge—for example, that the universe is ten or twelve billion years old, or that Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, or that energy equals mass times the speed of light squared. All of my reasons are what some objectivists would call subjective, but they provide, when added together, a very solid platform indeed. Here are the main ones that occur to me but there are undoubtedly others:

a. First, I have my own strength of conviction. As everyone knows, and as Russell never tired of saying, "subjective certainty" is no criterion of truth. But of course "everyone" has been wrong: it is *one* criterion, though one that is, like all the others, unreliable. My conviction is in itself worth something, though not a great deal until it is challenged and I have a chance to see how strongly it can stand up under probing. Convictions vary in intensity, and thought about them reveals that some which feel certain are in fact only hopes and wishes (though the *only* should not be used to mean *necessarily* false) while others, like my conviction that Jane Austen's intent is ironic, look stronger and stronger the more I push at them with further tests of their strength.

b. Agreement with other "subjects." If I have read a sentence as ironic and I find that all about me readers are taking it literally and defending their view with confidence, my degree of conviction should diminish—though only to the degree that I have good reason to trust their judgment; it can never be a matter of simple democratic vote.¹² About this sentence I have in fact never

¹²My statement ignores the complicating fact that all of us can apparently be shaken out of our firmest convictions, including those we think of as scientific, by mere social pressure, if it is heavy and prolonged. Experiments proving such malleability, which have been often used as shocking evidence for the relativity of values, can be read as showing that we are indeed made in symbolic exchange and that our moral and aesthetic worlds are constructed by the same processes of validation as our scientific worlds. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), esp. part 1, "The Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday Life."

met anyone except totally inexperienced readers who saw no ironic joke, and even they were easily persuaded that they had missed the point.

Let us take a vote, by show of hands, of those who have read *Pride and Prejudice*: How many of you think you know that an ironic jest was not intended? (Pause.) Well, the level of intersubjective agreement shown by your unanimity about the sentence is, I would say, at least as high as about any current scientific proposition except the almost universally accepted (though unprovable) assumption that nature will somehow always and everywhere be the same. I read in the morning paper, under the headline "Laws of Universe Put into Question," that "rarely in history have theorists [in the physical sciences] questioned so fundamentally the precepts of their time"—this in a report from an international conference. I am not surprised. But you could shock me into catatonia with the headline, "Majority of Experts at Annual MLA Convention Deny Irony in Austen's Works."

I am not making the foolish claim that the

level of agreement will be similarly high about all other literary interpretations; naturally I have chosen what I take to be a clear and simple case, since if I can earn the right to call even one act of subjective literary interpretation *knowledge*, I have broken, irremediably, the hard division between the subjective, personal world of feeling and value and the objective, impersonal world of knowledge and truth or reality.

c. Coherence with other kinds of knowledge. The circularity of all proof about anything becomes highly evident here—but with no resulting scandal. My conviction that the sentence is ironic was arrived at in a "flash of intuition," as I found its literal meaning incompatible with many things that I know and then discovered a new ironic meaning compatible with everything I know. Now, testing the truth in the hard light of good reasons, moving around the circle in the opposite direction, I find that the intuition was indeed coherent with every relevant piece of knowledge I can think of, whether I look at the work itself or at so-called external evidence.

The fact that one or a million voters have been persuaded is never in itself adequate reason for concluding that they are right. In rhetorical inquiry we must always take into account both the reasons and the voters' qualifications. Aristotle makes this point partly by his way of defining rhetoric. It is not the art of persuading, or of winning in an argument. It is the "faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (*Rhetoric*, 1355b 25. Rhys translation). The best rhetorician who ever lived might easily fail in a given "impossible" situation, as Burke failed to persuade the British parliament to change their policies toward the American colonies. My definition, of course, goes further in the direction of evaluation even than Aristotle's; if rhetoric is the art of discovering warrants for assent, the notion of finding good reasons, not just what look like reasons, is built in from the beginning.

Confusion about this point is as widespread as the sharp and simple distinction between "factual" and "evaluative" statements. Consider for example what a student will learn from the following exercise, given by Young, Becker, and Pike (*Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* [New York, 1970], p. 211): "Classify the following statements as either descriptive or evaluative. Descriptive statements usually can be verified empirically; evaluations usually cannot. As a guide, ask yourself whether it would make sense to vote on each statement. An evaluation, being a matter of opinion, can be voted on; to vote on a descriptive statement, however, would be absurd, since it can be verified empirically.

1. John lives at 25 Avon Street.
2. The food was poor.

3. I am a freshman.
4. I am only a freshman.
5. He's a beatnik."

Quite aside from the point that both (1) and (3) *could* be highly charged with value in certain contexts, what is the validity of saying that (2), (4), and (5) might be voted on? Their validity or falsehood is of course established communally, in some kind of intersubjective agreement. But does it make sense to say that they are in no way descriptive? If I am served spoiled meat, or concentration-camp soup, and I say, "The food is poor," my statement is as factual, as descriptive, as (1) or (3). Moving to less extreme examples the same claim can hold: "The soufflé is poor" will be descriptive of a fallen soufflé, among those who know what a good soufflé is. Soufflé experts and concentration-camp inmates, both served the same poor soufflé, will probably vote differently; the latter might say, "The food today was marvelous," meaning "by comparison." Both groups would be right, but again their conflicting descriptions are both factual and evaluative; the rightness is not found in a vote but in a discussion that shares understandings. (A group of experts might of course properly vote on two excellent soufflés.) Finally, it is not hard to think of contexts in which a jury might find itself voting on (1), or a panel of deans voting on the truth of (3).

The authors go on to suggest that the student make comparable lists and explain "the basis of your classification. Are any of your statements difficult to classify? If so, why?" One hopes that many students will finally see that the reason for difficulty lies in the original disjunction. [Au.]

Looking at the rest of the novel, we find that its fits the sentence only if I read the sentence as ironic. Within a few lines, for example, I find Mr. Bennet refusing to acknowledge the "truth *universally* acknowledged"; unless Jane Austen is a slovenly novelist—and everything in my field of awareness tells me that she is not—the incongruity between literal statement and literal fact must be intended. Therefore: irony. Secondly—and here feeling becomes an inescapable part of hard knowledge—the sentence and many others like it ("Wickham is my favorite son-in-law") give delight in themselves and as a growing pattern of human vision if they are read as I have read them, ironically. They yield nothing but insipidity if read otherwise. These are value judgments, of course, and we all have been told that value judgments are one thing, and knowledge and fact quite another. But again we see the claims as flatly wrong. My knowledge is inextricably bound with my conviction that this kind of pleasure is valued by myself and other readers, and that our valuing was intended by Jane Austen. (That she shared it is perhaps less sure but still highly probable; what *she* felt and valued is harder to know than what she intended *me* to feel and value.)

It would be tedious to run over all of the good external reasons I have for thinking that the sentence is ironic: what Jane Austen said about her work; what every critic says about Jane Austen or about this novel or about this sentence; what expectations are built by her other works; and so forth. If I find—as I do when I come to other sentences in Austen—that some experienced critics see them as ironic and some do not, my confidence about them should diminish, but only to the degree that is required by the reasons given. I will call my convictions knowledge only when I have good reasons shared—or at least shareable—with weighty witnesses. And I will expect, as in even the "hardest" of the scientific fields, that there will be borderline cases in which the intersubjective sharing of reasons yields no resolution.

d. A final criterion is teachability or corrigibility. If we know what we can teach other men to know, by showing how we correct mistakes about it my knowledge of Jane Austen's irony is

knowledge. Every English teacher has had the experience of difficulty in teaching ironic works. But no teacher has ever had more difficulty teaching students to see this kind of irony than every science teacher has had in teaching the elementary concepts in his field. There are perhaps some readers who are irony blind, just as there are many students who cannot seem to grasp simple mathematics or simple physical processes. But their errors are corrigible, if they will attend to arguments of correction. I'll warrant that a larger percentage of your students will share your knowledge of Jane Austen's intention in that opening sentence—and without unfair bludgeoning—than all but the best science teachers can get to understand the second law of thermodynamics.

6. A sixth kind of knowledge we share is inseparable from what has gone before: in knowing intentions we often know them under the aspect of values. (Perhaps we always do, but that step is not essential to us here.) My knowledge that Austen is teasing is apprehended as a set of shared values—both the values that are being played with and the value of the act of play. To ask whether my propositions are propositions of fact or propositions of value is meaningless, because they are inextricably both.

If a skeptic says that though I can infer Austen's intentions, I know nothing about their value, since other men might value them differently, particularly if they were from another culture I can reply that such disagreements, though real, have nothing to do with the claim. The question is whether anyone whose opinion the skeptic respects *on this subject* would quarrel with the claim. If there is anyone here today, at this hour, who thinks that the world would not lose an important value if it lost Jane Austen's kind of irony, let him speak up now.

To clarify this point about our inference of value *as we infer intention to create value*, here are two more examples:

a. It is Easter time, 1971, and I am sitting in Orchestra Hall in Chicago, listening to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. After the final grand chorus, climaxing more than three hours of listening, I sit in the silence—we have been asked not to applaud—with tears in my eyes. As I recover what

we call my "self" slightly, I become aware that my wife on one side and my sixteen-year-old daughter on the other are weeping too, and that in fact handkerchiefs are visibly and audibly at work all over the hall. As we get up to leave, I meet a friend who is ordinarily loquacious; he lowers his reddened eyes and does not speak. Later in the corridor, another friend, ordinarily fluent, says, "That was really..." and bogs down, unable to say what it was, really.

Now I ask you, what do I *know* about the various persons and acts implicated in this "sentimental" experience? I am not asking you only what I feel (though it is true that part of what I know is what I feel) but what I know, using standards as rigorous as you care to devise. I submit that I know a good deal about Bach's artistic intentions across the gap of nearly two hundred and fifty years—not of course his motives, in the sense of my first lecture, but his artistic reasons, what his art was designed to do or be. If someone says to me, "Bach really intended to make you laugh, not weep, with that final chorus," or, "The whole thing was in fact an elaborate parody or put-on—in fact a satire composed to attack the foolish pretensions of believing Christians as well as the conventions of baroque choral music," I know that he is wrong. I may still be wrong in many details of my "reading," but if so it will not be because he is right—the issue cannot be resolved by saying that his opinion is right for him and mine is right for me.

(My sense of sureness is partly a product of my intense feeling, and I must consequently be cautious. A questioner after this lecture said that all of this was mistaken because he sees the *Sr. Matthew Passion* as a grotesque piece of sentimentality, a work that could never move *him* to a deep emotional or spiritual experience, though it tries hard enough. But it seemed to me that the objection itself confirmed my point: he did not and could not doubt that the work intended an effect in that general range of effects. Even the skeptic thus knew something about the music that we sentimental weepers also knew. What is more, I'm sure that he would concede if pressed that Bach's attempt, though for him a relative failure, was not worthless. If I gave him a choice between attending to it for three hours and at-

tending to my own soulful rendition of "Red Sails in the Sunset" repeated steadily for the same period, we know that he and every music lover in the history of man would choose Bach. Here's consensus enough for my purposes.)

My confidence about shared intentions and values is thus a product of my final feeling multiplied by the conviction that all other listeners who have ever qualified themselves by really listening to that music would agree with me, regardless of whether they shared the feelings on a particular hearing: nobody has in fact ever suggested the interpretation of Bach as satirist of Christianity or of musical conventions and we can say with great confidence that no informed listener ever will.

What is more, I can say roughly the same about the meanings of the tears in my wife's and daughter's eyes, as also of what they report about the concert afterwards. They have shared with me Bach's intentions and my valuing of those intentions, and we thus know a great deal about each other through the sharing. If a skeptic suggested to me that my daughter was faking the tears in order to gain credit with Daddy, I would safely bet far more on my reply than on the conclusion of most arguments in the latest copy of *Science*. It is by no means certain, and I cannot prove it to you. But I would be mad indeed if I refused to credit it as knowledge, just because it is not subject to standard empirical tests.

There will of course be loose edges about this knowledge—the total content of her response will be much different from mine, and mine will have elements in it that Bach could not have intended. What is more, different conductors will read the score somewhat differently. But such peripheral vaguenesses affect this conclusion in no degree whatsoever. There are simply vast numbers of moments, most of them less complex than this, about which I can be sure that the central intentions of other minds are what I in fact receive.

b. I shall now create an art work, a neatly turned couplet:

The Beatles are greater than Bach
And Einstein is smarter than Mach.

Is there anyone here who would like to argue that my artistic achievement and the intentions you

infer behind it are superior or equal in value to any famous poem I might now quote—say Blake's "London"? (Long pregnant pause!) But if we all agree, as we seem to, surely we have again found a value judgment that is factual—subjective, yes, but not in the old sense; artistic values can be known, at least some of them can be, and judgments about them *can* be factual, in precisely the sense that a judgment that Arnold Palmer is a better golfer than I am is a value judgment and a factual judgment simultaneously: we know the criteria and the achievement, and though the act of relating the two can be more difficult and hence more often controversial in artistic and moral matters than in sports or mouse-trap making, the process of mutual validation by qualified judges can be as valid in one case as the other. The whole problem is reduced, as Hume said, to determining who are the qualified judges.

Many of us here have qualified ourselves in some degree in the judgment of poetry. It is easy to imagine a challenger who will say that he knows as much about poetry as we do and that we are wrong: Booth's simplicity and clarity are better than Blake's metaphoric fuzziness. Is the question of our comparative expertise subjective or is it "a matter of fact"? Clearly the dichotomy has become meaningless. Nobody here, we know, will accept the skeptic's preference for Booth's poem. We have known many instances of consummate skill in poetry, and the question of whether our skeptic's experience qualifies him as a challenger is a question of fact—regardless of how difficult it is to determine. If he is to persuade us to reconsider, he must, in practice (and in our rhetorical theory), win adherents who seem to us qualified as experts in the question. And this is just another way of saying that he must convince us that he knows the facts about what words like *better*, *skill*, *couplet*, and *art* mean.

It is important to be clear that we are not agreeing merely to the fact that we all agree, or that we all prefer Blake to Booth. You and I know that the difference in quality is not merely a matter of preference or a matter to be settled by vote; except when we are being doctrinaire skeptics, we know that the one is a better work of art,

according to every criterion except usefulness as an example in this lecture. In other words, some preferences are merely subjective, in the old sense, and some are also objective—intersubjectively validated, as some sociologists put it. They can, like judgments of other factual matters, be right or wrong; they are corrigible in responsible discourse.

7. Finally, we know that despite these many agreements, men's firmly held values, known and tested in these ways, often conflict; we produce a great flood of value-ridden rhetoric directed, as it were, against one another. We talk ceaselessly to each other—and quite evidently have done so from the beginning—trying to show that *this* value is genuinely superior to *that*. And we all do so as if persuasion really mattered, and as if choices among values could be judged as really right or wrong. Rhetoric in this sense is not something that was invented at an advanced stage of civilization when men began to make highly formalized speeches in law courts and public assemblies. It was practiced when the inventor of the wheel said, "Hey fellows, here's something interesting I want to show you—it's more important than your dice game." It was practiced when the first mother or father went beyond simply caressing or physical restraint and managed to convey, in sound or picture or sign language, "No, *because* . . ." or "Good *because* . . ." completing the primitive sentence with a reason not present to the senses at the moment.

This speculative point about the origin of language in opinion exchange is usually made about material objects and the words that stand for them symbolically; we all know about Helen Keller and her leap into the human community when she learned that the letters traced on her hand meant *water*. But it is impossible, I think, to separate the first real symbolic usage—the first time even a seemingly neutral word like *water* or *fire* was used to stand for water or fire not present—from intentions to assert value (and thus, potentially, to change other minds about value). That's precisely what such usage is—an intention to "call to mind" and thus place some sort of value on what is not sensibly present. When anything is called to mind, in this sense, mind is

changed. There is always an implicit "ought," if only "You ought to attend to *my* way of perceiving and naming." . . .

The Purposes of Rhetoric

It remains only to consider what is perhaps the most significant change made by this redefinition of man as rhetorical animal, what it does to our view of the purpose of trying to change other men's minds. In the scientismist view, you'll remember, the only conceivable purpose of changing minds was to implant our pre-formed views by any available means: force, conditioning, brainwashing, trickery, or at best what Kant calls "wooing." Except in scientific matter, rational persuasion was impossible, because proof was impossible, and persuaders could only propagandize their view of the world.

But if all men make each other in symbolic interchange, then by implication they *should* make each other, and it is an inescapable value in their lives that it is good to do it well—whatever that will mean—and bad to do it badly. If even the most austere, isolated laboratory scientist cannot even claim to exist except as a social self who was made and is still being made in symbolic exchange with others (or the totality of "the other," including the symbolically responsive nature that answers his questions), then his very existence depends on the many values he affirms when he respects the truth, refuses to cook his evidence, relies on the traditions and methods taught him by his mentors, and so on. The supreme purpose of persuasion in this view could not be to talk someone else into a preconceived view; rather it must be to engage in mutual inquiry or exploration. In such a world, our rhetorical purpose must always be to perform as well as possible in the same primal symbolic dance which makes us able to dance at all. If it is good for men to attend to each other's reasons—and we all know that it is, because without such attending none of us could come to be and questions about value could not even be asked—it is also good to work for whatever conditions make such mutual inquiry possible. Whatever imposes belief without personal engagement becomes inferior to whatever makes mutual exchange more likely.

The purpose of mental change is thus to fulfill one's nature as a creature capable of responding to symbolic offerings. The *process* of inquiry through discourse thus becomes more important than any possible conclusions, and whatever stultifies such fulfillment becomes demonstrably wrong. But this is not quite the same as the popular irrationalist claim that conclusions do not matter, or the favorite dodge of social scientists when their data won't jell: "To raise questions is more important than to try for answers." The process fulfills itself only when the reasons are as good and the conclusions thus as solid as the problems and circumstances allow for. Rhetoric is a supremely self-justifying activity for man only when those engaged in it fully respect the rules and the steps of inquiry. And this holds as much for a "primitive" priestess persuading with myth, ritual, and omens as for a modern scientist who knows that his conclusion are at best tentative.

How then should men change each other's minds? If fact and value are not implacably separated but inextricably intertwined in man's nature, we can feel free to seek the answer to our "ought" question by looking at the facts of what we do and at what we say about persuasion. Just as all of us knew, in advance of my arguments here, that other men ought to change their minds when we give them good reasons, we know now that this is not just a personal preference. The very process that led men to the modernist dogmas depends for its validity on denying those dogmas.

If a committed doubter says to us that he will not accept the valued fact of man's rhetorical nature, we see now that he cannot avoid illustrating it as he tries to argue against it: we discuss our doubt together, therefore *we are*. If he chooses to deny the value we are placing on the fact that this is how we are made, we cannot, it is true, offer him any easy disproof, in his sense of the word. But we can point out that to be consistent he must apply his doubt to the value of everything, including every scientific pursuit, every mathematical proof, every thought or private experience that is in any sense derived from human converse—every act, in short, except blank silence

love

or suicide. And if he persists, we have only to ask him, "What are your reasons? Give us good ones for believing that we should not seek good reasons and attend to them when they are given." If he offers reasons, we ask him whether we *should accept* them. Does he feel any argumentative force in them? If he says yes, he has accepted our premises. If he says no, his direct challenge to our claims is of course removed, though we may well continue to worry—as in effect I have been doing here—about the intellectual climate that can make his kind of intellectual game seem less in need of defense than our own.

By this route, as by many another, we are forced to recognize—though without quite as much anguish as modernist discoveries of man's "absurd" plight have produced—what looks like an absolute limitation on our mental powers. Augustine says, "Unless you believe, you shall not understand." For Aristotle no science can prove its own first principles, and some principles can be discerned only by the intuitive reason. Gödel proved that no system can prove all the premises it needs. In our rhetorical terms, we can't get anywhere on any problem unless *we agree* on some knowledge for which the best proof is that *we agree* about it. In any formulation, it is just as irrational to shut oneself off from discourse about other men's affirmations of value as to ignore their skeptical doubts about logical proofs or "the facts."

That disputes about values often seem more difficult to resolve than disputes about fact should no longer mislead us; some disputes about what we call fact are harder to resolve than some disputes about more obviously value-laden assertions: (a) Is it a *fact* that space is curved? (b) Would it be *right* for me to conduct an experiment on a group of orphan children who are in my charge, blinding them slowly to observe the effects on their perceptual worlds? Except when we are victimized by dogmatic doubt it is clearly much easier to settle the second of these questions.

Besides, "all of us here would surely agree that there is something wrong"—note my formula again—about refusing to wrestle with hard questions. So long as we have good reason to

know that disputes about values can *sometimes* be debated productively and resolved, we have good reason to tackle any dispute that seems to us, jointly, worth bothering about, no matter how hard it is.

To talk in this way is to leave a lot of questions unanswered. Tomorrow I shall try to give some examples, both of difficult cases when values conflict, and of some forms of warranted assent that are opened up to us through this view of things. If I am right, forms of assent that are often called irrational—assent to religious groups, to dramatic and fictional appeals, to music, to political leaders—are in this view restored to potential intellectual respectability and thus to meaningful debate.

FOUR: SOME WARRANTS OF ASSENT WITH NOTES ON THE TOPICS OF PROTEST

Rejecting the dogmas of modernism can in itself settle no questions; indeed, for a true believer it can be positively unsettling. For the scientismist who has clung to the dogmas as his last hold on reason in a world gone mad, questioning them will seem just one more failure of nerve. For the irrationalist who has relied on them as his license for unbridled romantic assertion and thoughtless action, the questioning can threaten a return to chains. In one sense a rhetoric of assent attempts merely to be a commonsensical defense of the way we naturally, inescapably work upon each other, because we are made in rhetoric. But for an age of dogma—and that is what I am calling our open-minded tolerant time—it will have far more wrenching implications than any one of us can foresee.

If the whole "scene" of the atomic self, isolated in a cold universe, is undermined, the great liberal, critical fiat, "Make up your own mind," no longer quite makes sense. If the self is in fact a kind of value-permeated field in which a value-permeated universe creates and is in turn "processed" by what is really a history of selves in interaction with selves, the handbooks of logical and rhetorical proofs and fallacies must be

rewritten.¹³ If systematic doubt is to be replaced by systematic assent among such selves, the whole history of Western thought begins to shift under one's gaze, and the lines between friends and enemies become blurred. If language is not a means of communication but the source of our being, and if the purpose of rhetoric is not to persuade but to meet other minds in the best possible symbolic exchange—that is, to maintain or improve the “source” itself—then a very great deal that is conventionally said about improving communication begins to look highly questionable. If there is, finally, an inescapable, natural command to “make minds meet,” then suddenly a host of commandments that men have said were simply

¹³In a quick check through several elementary handbooks that include lists of fallacies, I find that each author has inevitably committed a fair share of the fallacies he lists, most notably that prop without which all of us would fall, *petitio principii*.

Monroe C. Beardsley's *Thinking Straight* (1950; 3d ed., New York, 1966), one of the best and most widely used handbooks to clear thinking, relies on a model of logical thinking which would preclude much of Beardsley's own argument. He tells us, for example, that argument from analogy is “an unsound form of the inductive argument” (pp. 130–36, 284). But he himself often and inevitably argues from analogy, most notably the analogy of straightness or clean linearity dramatized in his title. Though much of what such books have taught (see, for examples of the best, L. Susan Stebbing, *Thinking to Some Purpose* [Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Eng., 1938]; and Robert H. Thouless, *Straight and Crooked Thinking* [New York, 1932]) must still be learned by every serious student of thought, their almost complete denigration of argument from authority, witnesses, and testimony, and their uncritical divorce of thought and emotion (the latter almost always for their suspect) will have to be revised. They further illustrate the belief that the chief task is seeing through other men's fallacies and confusions: “Analyze the fallacies and confusions in the following passage,” Beardsley tells the student again and again. These authors do not dwell on human failures caused by “correct” thought purified of emotion.

Max Black is open about this deficiency: “But what are we to say about the criticism of *feeling*? When is a man justified in expressing hate, indignation, approval, etc.? These questions, important as they are, take us out of the subject matter of this book into the fields of ethics and aesthetics. They illustrate the limitations of logic” (*Critical Thinking*, 2d ed. [New York, 1952], p. 176). They do indeed, but these books all imply that *here* is how we *think*—and then there are all those other things that somehow get in the way of thinking. [Au.]

an interesting, perhaps precious but finally indefensible heritage from this or that tradition become genuine imperatives again. If existence is unthinkable without the struggle to make minds meet, everything we value, including the achievement of science and mathematics, depends on this fact which is a value: men ought to attend to whatever good reasons are offered them by other men.

In short, if good reasons apply, many of those views that we have conveniently explained away with this or that form of motivism come flooding back in upon us, demanding a fair hearing. But the question of what is a fair hearing is now more open than any book of rules for clear thinking has ever suggested.

I don't know whether this position—many aspects of it are new to me in the past year, though some are old as the hills—will make me seem a flaming revolutionary or a last-ditch traditionalist. What I do know is that the questioning I have here traced has been for me enormously unsettling, and that the chapter of consequences I turn to now thus seems a deeply unsatisfying though at the same time exhilarating collection of hints and guesses.

The Great Reservoir of Good Reasons

A satisfactory account of good reasons in any one domain of life would necessarily require a sizable book. The repertory of good reasons could never be constructed by any one person, since it would include all good discourse about the grounds of valid discourse in any subject. What I do here should thus be viewed as an invitation to push even further the many recent efforts to develop methods of pluralism and manifold logics of inquiry, and to oppose assimilating all proof to a single paradigm.

Classical rhetoric, following Aristotle, distinguished three kinds of proof: (1) substantive arguments about the case to be established; for example, to say that we are not as well prepared for war as our enemy can be a cogent argument for not going to war at this time; (2) “ethical proof”—arguments based on the character of the speaker or his opponent; for example, to say that the king's counselor has lied to you frequently in

the past is reason for you to disbelieve his claim that we are not ready to wage war; (3) "emotional proof"—arguments appealing to the special emotions or attitudes of the audience; for example, to argue for peace before a group of middle-aged mothers I will stress "death of our sons" more strongly than I would when speaking to senators.

Almost everyone has agreed with Aristotle that the first kind, if available, is somehow superior as proof to the other two. Example and enthymeme, the rhetorical versions of induction and deduction used in dialectic, are the core of persuasion; and Aristotle often implies that whatever is not valid under one of these heads is very weak proof indeed. And even these as used in rhetoric are inferior to positive proof: "The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us"—so far so good—"in the hearing of persons who cannot take in at a glance a complicated argument, or follow a long chain of reasoning."¹⁴ Other and better audiences would clearly be preferred if life could only be managed that way. It should be evident by now that for a rhetoric of assent, these priorities are questioned and perhaps in a sense even reversed; ethical proof—the art of taking in by contagion—now looks much more important.

Aristotle at least knew that practical life required rhetoric and that rhetoric could not be reduced to logic. But many modernists have moved in the contrary direction, not only making logical proof prior but, as we have seen, eliminating all other kinds entirely. The history of rhetoric since the seventeenth century could be described as a mounting suspicion and final rejection of ethical

and emotional proof and then a progressive narrowing of the range of what is accepted as substantive proof.

To reconstruct our languages according to a rhetoric of assent will be an immense task, as the efforts of the last two decades have shown. The reconstruction will not, if we do it honestly, lead to any comfortable set of rules for clear or straight thinking, though some rules will still be useful for limited cases (presumably physicists will still work at ruling out their emotions and preferences when assessing theories about black holes and quasars, even when they have recognized that they cannot do so in assessing their theories about big bangs and continuous states). It will not even lead to a reconstruction of a clear distinction among the three kinds of classical proof. Emotional and ethical proof will often turn out to be "substantive," and logical proof useless and misleading. But if we recognize that the distinctions will now be hazier than in any traditional rhetoric, it is still useful to discuss our restored reasons under the three traditional heads, substantive or logical, ethical, and emotional. I can only hint, with an example or two in each case, at what a world of reconsiderations we now face.

Value Terms and Substantive Proofs

If what we have said about the potential status of value judgments is true, efforts to establish value through discourse can no longer be dismissed, in Russell's language, as "mere preaching." Values can in some sense be demonstrated.

In classical rhetoric, three kinds of persuasion about values were usually distinguished: judicial or forensic, about the value-ridden facts of guilt or innocence concerning past actions; deliberative, about policy for the future; and demonstrative, praising or blaming persons or institutions in the present.¹⁵ In such a scheme, our modern

¹⁴My quotations are from the W. Rhys Roberts translation. I am not following Aristotle strictly (*Rhetoric* 1357a and passim) but rather what seems to me the most common Aristotelian tradition. Perhaps I should add, for those who care about such matters and who are therefore likely to wander into a footnote this far along in a book like this, that the rhetoric of assent is not by any means Aristotelian: for my purposes here, Aristotle is much too interested in being scientific. Though I have resisted the temptation to attack him as the first scientismist, there is a sense in which he seems to say, Oh, yes, indeed there are many other forms of proof besides the apodictic proof that scientific demonstration affords, and I will deign to give you a book about them; but isn't it, after all, a pity that it cannot all be done with greater rigor. [Au.]

¹⁵The best discussion of these kinds is still the source itself: Aristotle, esp. bk. I, chaps. iii–x. For a rhetoric of assent the three types addressed to issues in past, present, and future would, I think, be supplemented by a rhetoric of ultimate values; the rhetoric of sciences and philosophy, inquiring into what was once called "eternal truth." In such a scheme, much

demonstrations, designed to protest this or that evil or to demand this or that good, take on a special interest. If value can in fact be demonstrated in ways other than by public demonstrations of force or violence, it is also true that extreme public displays of commitment always say something real to anyone seriously inquiring into the values at stake in any conflict. To pretend that a display of commitment, even an extreme act of violence, is necessarily unrelated to how we think about such matters is, in our present view, to forget that the way we establish values is the way we establish anything: by earning communal validation through trying them out on other men.

To try them out in simple direct acts of physical protest has become a national habit partly because people seem convinced that they cannot try them out meaningfully in other ways. Thus we once again polarize ourselves, rationalists claiming that demonstrations demonstrate nothing, irrationalists claiming that nothing can be demonstrated without power or violence. The former talk of blind passion, senseless destructiveness, and fascist oppression by self-intoxicated and self-righteous mobs; the latter talk of inhuman and unfeeling machines, of bureaucrats rationalizing the status quo, and of fascist oppression by the entrenched elite. I scarcely expect that anything I say here will transform such groups into mutual inquirers; name-calling, like war, often achieves what we call results, and most men most of the time will probably fail to see the good reasons for rising above their local interests. But those who prefer to use their heads as well as their mouths and bodies need have no shame, if fact-values or valued-facts are accessible to reason.

*Example 1: Finding a Concurring Public
vs. Getting on the Bandwagon*

Modern rhetorics have often listed the bandwagon technique as one fallacious kind of argument. In deciding what I want to believe or do, it is said, I must not be swayed by the fact that everyone's doing it. "Everyone" does a lot of

crazy things; fads and fancies fill the air. Clearly the man who respects his mind will make his own decisions and not follow wherever the winds of group assent would carry him.

But of course one man's bandwagon is another man's reasoned consensus. A teacher may find himself arguing against the bandwagon technique in his composition course and then feeling annoyed when students in literature courses refuse to respect what *his* bandwagon says about the importance of literature or of critical thought. "Why should I think Shakespeare is great just because everybody says so?" the student asks, and the liberal teacher says, "Oh, of course you shouldn't; you should make up your own mind"—even while thinking that perhaps something has gone wrong if the weight of generations of thoughtful and sensitive critics counts for absolutely nothing as against the opinion of a green, arrogant, and analphabetic youth.

We should now be able to see (and to seek ways of teaching) that to resist one bandwagon is often to embrace another—possibly but not necessarily one that is older and "better established." The young student cannot make up his own mind about Shakespeare, if by that is meant coming to an opinion about Shakespeare uninfluenced by one tradition or another—even if it is only the tradition of taking TV shows as a standard of dramatic value. And to tell him not to jump on bandwagons because he should think for himself is once again to define his self negatively, as what is left over after all influences have been discounted. No wonder so many of his kind finally tell us, in effect, that whatever bandwagon comes along—Jesus freaks, Devil's Disciples, Hell's Angels, Children of God—is better than no bandwagon at all. After all, we have taught that there's no disputing about taste in bandwagons.

When established universities and their critics have clashed in recent years, the defense has often been in the name of a dispassionate neutrality, while the attackers have claimed, quite rightly, that the universities and colleges are not neutral, that they are defending their own commitments and interests. Professors and administrators have argued, again with justice, that they cannot pursue truth if the truth is prejudged by

music and some literature (for example, poems like Eliot's *Four Quartets* that explicitly address metaphysical or religious truths) would become a "rhetoric of the timeless." [Au.]

political or social commitments of the kinds sought by protesting students. And students then have replied—after more or less perfunctory efforts to discuss matters—that “we tried to reason with you, but you wouldn’t listen, so we were forced to resort to sit-ins or violence.” (The same pattern of argument is heard, needless to say, in national disputes about racial injustice or the Vietnam war or women’s rights.) Again and again I’ve heard people on both sides say, “Well, of course, you can’t deal rationally with differences about values.” The academic defenders then go on to argue, in an obvious circle, that it is highly important to humanity to preserve institutions which pursue questions in an objective spirit, untainted with values. And the students, having heard the message that values are beyond dispute, grasp the other horn of the false dilemma, and say, “Since according to your own teachings, O my mentors, we cannot hope to deal rationally with our value differences, and since values matter to us more than they do to you, let us then deal with them irrationally: burn it down!” Or words to that effect.

But having examined critically the dogmas of modernism, we can rediscover what never should have been forgotten: that some values are in fact better-grounded than others, and that disputes about them can yield results that *ought* to be accepted by all parties to the dispute, even though they cannot be called certain or positive. A rational protest is possible, in short, about any violation of any value we hold dear. When I enter into the lists, I cannot be sure, it is true, that I will come out unchanged, since my protest may be invalidated—now that I have learned that listening is important—by the reasons offered by my opponents. But I have no good reason to believe, in advance of a conflict, that reasons will prove irrelevant simply because values are at stake. It is not only that most disputes about values turn out, on examination, to be about means and not ends (even the dogmatic modernists admit, most of them, that dispute about means can be rational). It is also that ends are themselves subject to meaningful communal inquiry.

I think, for example, that in pursuing a rhetoric of assent we have at the same time been discoursing about ends and pursuing the grounds

for a rationally legitimated protest. Or, to put it another way, I have been making what I take to be a reasonable protest against many of the modernist assumptions (and the practices that those assumptions imply) that have been felt to be dehumanizing and soul-destroying by some of the irrationalists who have protested in less discursive ways.

Since I know that I cannot disprove the dogmas in a positivist sense, one way to proceed might have been to organize a sit-in at my university, demanding that all dogmatic modernists be fired. But so long as I believe that the dogmas can and should be tested in another sense, by this kind of discourse, I could never resort to a kind of action that in effect proclaimed reason to be helpless and precluded my discovering how and where I am wrong. A protest, even the most violent protest, becomes legitimated when and only when the affirmations on which it is based are *in fact* (not just in personal conviction) supported by good reasons, good reasons shared or potentially sharable by the community that is relevant.

It is often said, by those who want to defend the rightness of individual protest, that one man plus God makes a majority. The formulation ignores the opposite truth, that one man plus the devil can make a hell on earth. If we are to make our protests not just self-satisfying, not just “sincere,” not just desperate and ineffectual last-ditch stands, we must validate them in the courts of communal exchange.

But if there really are such things as good reasons about ends, this is not so difficult a thing as we have often been led to believe. Whenever any person or institution violates the inherent values of free human exchange among persons, imposing upon anyone a diminution of his nature as a rhetorical animal, he is now shown, in this view, to be wrong—not just inconvenient or unpleasant but wrong. There are genuine values, intersubjectively demonstrable, that judge his wrongness. Those same values will of course sit in judgment on any mode of protest against the violation. I am not free to choose whether it is right to silence you because you would silence me: of course it will be wrong to silence you. I may of course be forced to do so in opposing a greater wrong, even knowing that my means are evil, as

we had to work at silencing the Nazis once they had set out to use force to silence the rest of us. But as I do so I will know that the justice of my action is determined by whether what *look like* good reasons for the employment of warfare are *in fact* good reasons. And that can only be determined in social or potentially social converse with reasonable men, not in private, isolated, "logical" consultation of my atomic self and its wisdom: as ethical theorists are fond of saying, I must act so that the principles of my conduct are reversible, against myself, universally applicable. Rhetorically speaking, this means that I must have good reason to believe that if my opponent would open his mind to full rhetorical exchange, he would be led, by good reasons, either to come to my view or at least to tolerate it as one reasonable view.

In some such way as this the philosophy of good reasons leads us to a reaffirmation of those central human values that other philosophies and religions have reached by other routes: of tolerance, of justice or fairness, of "democratic" equality of vote in all matters that concern all men equally. Kant once remarked that the result of all his philosophizing was to establish a rational basis for the pious beliefs of his ancestors: the golden rule reappears for him as the categorical imperative, and it reappears in our rhetorical view as the command to pay as much attention to your opponent's reasons as you expect him to pay to yours. This traditionalism of our results doesn't bother me: I revel in it, partly because it is so radical. Here we depend on the obvious and age-old belief that if there is any hope for man it can be found neither in repudiating all past truths nor in repudiating all revolutions. We must select, as always, from old and new by testing in

discourse which truths meet circumstances that are always both novel and precedented.

A society cannot exist, the past seems to teach us, unless it can somehow constitute itself as a rhetorical field, as what Dewey called "a public,"¹⁶ and this means that we cannot exist without recognizing that *some* of our shared values carry an inescapable weight for all of us. Too often our way of talking about the increasing fragmentation of publics is to throw up our hands: "You can't talk with them because they have gone beyond the pale." In other words, we decide to declare war. Though I hold no great hope that a revitalized rhetoric can ever eliminate "warfare"—lying, trickery, blackmail and physical persuasions—I think the command upon us is inescapable: we must build new rhetorical communities, we must find a common faith in modes of argument, or every institution we care about will die. . . .

¹⁶See Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* (New York, 1927), esp. final chap. The point has of course been made by many sociologists, though in recent years it seems to have become more and more "anthropologized"—see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), esp. sec. 2, "Society as Objective Reality." I cannot trace here what seems to be a general infiltration of the social sciences with "the rhetoric of structuralism," according to which—to put it crudely—everything relates to everything else; every belief in a given culture will rely for its credibility on the total structure of beliefs and practices. All societies are in this view rational, in one sense, but no element can be proved outside its context unless, as many structuralists assume, all societies are *in fond* alike, in which case a Supreme Anthropologist could discern a Supreme Public and its Problems, and He could write that ultimate Lévi-Strauss—an ultimate rhetoric of assent. Lacking such, we can still work with confidence as we assent to more localized publics. [Au.]