

person's character rather than by mounting any objective evidence against that person's contentions. And an appeal to emotion is just that: an appeal to subjective emotion rather than an exhibition of actual evidence.

Now, let us take a closer look at the arrangement of the jailer's "reasons," and let us do so by way of being as explicit and clear as we can about the *formal* argument he has accepted. For he has indeed accepted, is following, and is prepared to act upon a formal argument of which he seems to be completely unaware.

The jailer has been confronted with a formal argument of the kind we can describe as a *hypothetical* argument. You can think of a hypothetical argument as one in which at least one piece of evidence, one premise, is a *conditional* statement, namely, a statement that follows the "If . . . then . . ." pattern. Thus, one could easily construct the following argument of this sort: "It is my hypothesis, my guess, my prediction for the future, that *if* I fulfill the condition of seriously studying what I want to learn, *then* I will learn it well. I have seriously studied what I want to learn. Consequently, I have learned it well." In a nutshell, what this initial sort of hypothetical argument tries to do is to make explicit a linkage or relation between two sets of conditions or requirements, such that if the first or antecedent set appears, the second or consequent group should follow. Whether this relation is one producing absolute certainty or a kind of probability is not something we need to concern ourselves with at the moment. Nor do we need to concern ourselves at present with what relations there may be between a conditional statement's consequent and antecedent when considered *in that order*. It is this initial conditional relation of "If the antecedent conditions are present, then the consequent results will appear" that does interest our attention for now, especially when fleshed out in the illustration of the Philippian jailer.

Now, put yourself in the jailer's situation at just the moment when the order to imprison Paul and Silas had been uttered. The following hypothetical argument might pose itself.

Diagram 3.1

(Premise no. 1)

IF

(a) Paul and Silas have broken the law,

and

(b) the mob members, as witnesses, will attest to this,

and

(c) the magistrates thus judge them to be guilty,

and

(d) they order me to lock them up.

THEN

I must lock them up!

(Premise no. 2)

Conditions a, b, c, and d have indeed been fulfilled.

Thus, I must lock them up!

(Conclusion)

To this point, so far, so good for the jailer. All of the above seems like a reasonable enough procedure to him; convincing evidence is involved, he thinks, and he believes he will do well by himself to accept it. But the problem, of course, is that even in the midst of this formal argument, he has accepted as evidence items tainted by informal fallacies. In particular, the evidence of (b) above is weakened by the involvement of the mob and the emotions aroused. Likewise, the evidence of (c) is brought into question by the roles played by authority and *ad hominem* attacks.

In probable point of fact, given the jailer's past experience in such situations where Roman law seems to have been broken, where mob sentiment confirms this sort of observation, and where the relevant magistrate has pronounced guilt, the jailer would not have even pon-

dered the merits of this specific case for very long. That is, all of these events, thus far, agree with his beliefs, his habits, his "already-knowns." But then came the first part of his initial problem, namely, the earthquake. Surely a bit of doubt arose in his mind as a result: "This does not fit into my experience with the world at all!" Then came the second part of his initial problem: "Now wait, how is it that all the cells are now unlocked and all the stocks undone? All my prisoners have escaped and have run away!" Now a real problem has arisen for him, a problem real enough that he is prepared to kill himself over it: "This is my knowledge of such things, and this was my duty—my knowledge, namely, that locking Paul and Silas up was right, I still hold to be true; but I have failed altogether in my duty—my prisoners are loose. For this I will be held responsible. Now, in spite of my best but hasty efforts to examine all of this in a rational light, my final duty is clear. Or at least my fear of being dealt with by those damned magistrates and that mob is clear enough!" The jailer and his "reasons" wriggle against these circumstances that contradict his past experience, but they cannot, it seems, escape what appears to be quite clear-cut and final. And so he draws his sword to commit suicide. But the resolution of his doubt, of course, was perhaps literally just around the corner.

There are three points to notice and ponder in this illustration as a whole. The first we have already dwelt on at some length, but it is now time to make this point as explicitly and clearly as we can. It is this: the Philippian jailer proceeded, right up to and including the moment of starting to kill himself, according to the best principles of rationality and experience available to him. His "belief—doubt—belief" system was solid and intact. It was *so* intact for him that actually taking his own life, as a means to escape his problem, made sense to him! All of this seemed completely rational to him.

This only goes to reinforce an observation made time and time again by Peirce, namely, that when we are confronted with a real, living, obstinate doubt, we will resort to almost *anything*, including self-deception, in attempting to resolve that doubt and progress or return

to a condition of settled belief and habit. Now, while it is not being suggested that the jailer deluded himself about any of this business, in our example it remains quite clear that he was quite ready to attempt the ultimate "anything" to resolve his problem and the unbearable doubt it caused him.

The second point to bear in mind is that the resolution of his doubt, his release from this rational-seeming box from which death appears to him to be the only plausible escape, occurs in a nonrational manner. Now, yes, if you read a little further in the account you find that, as Paul and Silas were in fact Roman citizens and thus entitled to a formal hearing before being beaten and imprisoned, the whole bungled affair was from the beginning a legal mistake. The eventual resolution of the legal problem was, of course, a rational one. But what you should address your attention to is the immediate "moment of truth" for our jailer. At the moment *his* doubt is relieved, at his moment of religious experience, he uses no reasoning at all.

The jailer does not have his religious experience, his religious "moment of truth," based on a process of weighing the costs and benefits of rival religious groups in a rational, almost business-like manner. In reviewing verses 29–31 we see that when his moment arrives, the truth is, to him, undeniable *and unreasoned*. We might safely assume, perhaps, that after his moment of revelation or conversion, he proceeded with his life, yet again, in what to him seemed like a completely rational manner, especially given this new "premise" in his own belief system.

A third consideration from this exercise with hypothetical argument deals with the relations we see among rationality, irrationality, and nonrationality. For it seems, based on this evidence, that (a) rationally fixed belief can lead to irrational and disastrous consequences, (b) a true, living doubt generated in purely rational ways may, at times, be resolvable only by nonrational means, and (c) irrational effects and nonrational resolutions can produce rational tendencies. So, there do not appear, at least for now, to be any relations or connections among these three modes of belief that involve some sort of

"guarantee" as far as the results or consequences of their use are concerned. That is, neither rational, nor irrational, nor nonrational fixations of belief seem to be accompanied by guarantees that ensure their stability once they have appeared. To attempt to force these modes of belief into fixed, inflexible, anti-pragmatic forms actually narrows our options among the various raw materials used for knowing anything. In other words, these three modes—belief, habit, and knowledge—cannot be open to every possible option for acquiring and developing our knowledge. Indeed, we should not try to handle these modes of belief according to some sort of dogmatic, mechanically executable recipe that supposedly will, before and even in defiance of experimentation, produce absolutely guaranteed and desirable results.

Had the jailer dogmatically or mechanically clung to his belief, to his "already-known" view of the world, it seems it would have cost him his life at his own hand. But, instead of being a dogmatist, he recognized the doubt-provoking events occurring all around him and entered into an experiment that promptly resulted in a resolution of his doubt. There is a general observation to be made here about the experience of the jailer that reveals two primary interlocking aspects of what we can take to be the basic or fundamental method of truly knowing anything: thoroughgoing, rote dogmatism thwarts the acquisition and development of human knowledge, while pragmatism or experimentalism promotes them both. Dogmatism did not work for the jailer, and it will not work for us.

An examination of our private emotional states and of our artistic apprehensions has considerable bearing on this point of view about the relationship among nonrational insight, rational and irrational conducts of life, and dogmatism. Consider, for a moment, the intriguing business we like to call falling in love. Analogous to the jailer's moment of conversion, our experiences of falling in love may indeed be preceded and followed by various rational or irrational efforts, but at the moment of the experience, no reasoning seems involved at all. And, just like the jailer's conversion, falling in love may seem, at the time, to solve a number of our problems. For example, from time to

time many of us experience genuine and profound doubt about ourselves or about how we are getting on in the world. And we can become terribly dogmatic in this sort of doubt, even in spite of plenty of commonsense observations to the contrary. Falling in love can resolve this sort of doubt, at least for a while. But, then, so can getting drunk, at least for a while.

Yet whereas a nonrational insight resolved the jailer's doubt in a more savory manner than a maintenance of dogmatism would have, can the same be said for a profound transition in our private emotional states like falling in love? Indeed so. Just as the jailer's nonrational conversion literally saved his life, so the nonrational act of falling in love seems, at times, to prevent people from engaging in similarly self-destructive acts. And, of course, although falling in love with another person is doubtless the most familiar variety of this activity, it is not exclusive in this respect. We all know persons who appear to be quite in love with things other than other persons: the amateur sailor with his sailboat, the home craftsman with his workshop, the fanatically loyal fan with his football team. At any rate, by way of continuing our examination of nonrational resolution of doubt and fixation of belief, let us examine an illustration concerned with love and reason that balances both aesthetically and logically with the experience of the jailer's conversion.

One of the most disturbing kinds of irrational behavior, of clinging dogmatically to an already-known system of belief, involves the crime known, curiously enough, as "domestic violence." The problem is disturbing both because this category of criminal behavior usually involves men (husbands more often than not) beating up women and because this activity is far more pervasive in our society than official statistics might suggest. Let us suppose a hypothetical case of domestic violence and examine the reasoning of the victim. Such a case would surely involve, for any ordinary sane person, a condition of doubt as strong as any to be ordinarily encountered. The relevant, intensely private questions must arise, I would think, according to some schema like: "I married this person because of love, and yet now I am

being physically abused, and regularly, by this same person who supposedly loves me. Does this person really love me, or not? Do I, any longer, really love this person, or not?" This person is trapped, probably in more than just one way. But our question should address how this fundamental variety of doubt, this knowledge-issue, might be handled. And while they must never be completely ignored in such cases, please try to put the physical, financial, geographical, and other probably enormous material considerations of the victim aside for the moment and ask what, in terms of human knowledge and our methods for acquiring and developing it, could occur in such a situation to resolve this doubt?

Now in principle, it seems that the victim here is in exactly the same situation as the jailer was formerly. That is, a comfortable, probably doubt-free condition is put in jeopardy by external, autonomous circumstances. A dogmatic clinging to the "already known" will but perpetuate the doubt and the misery that accompanies it. An experimental resolution of the doubt that this dogmatism reinforces is possible, but it seems to be possible only in a nonrational way. The victim's friends and relatives, just like an easily imagined group of the jailer's cronies, can express their sympathy all they wish, and they might even try rational persuasion to assuage the relevant doubt, but until this present victim has his or her moment of *nonrational* insight and sees that there is no love left in this relationship, dogmatism and doubt will prevail.

Again, dogmatism thwarts the acquisition and development of human knowledge, while experimentalism promotes them both. Dogmatism will either (a) drive the victim back into the same situation of doubt, or, as some suggest, (b) simply replicate this doubt in a subsequent situation. And further as with the case of the jailer, an experimental, nonrational resolution of doubt here carries with it, in and of itself, no guarantee whatsoever that it will remain stable or lead to any "preset" results in either rational or irrational areas. But we know that dogmatism did not work for the jailer, and now we know that it will not work for the victim. Can it work for us in any other context?

A third area in which nonrational insight seems predominant, and where dogmatism has yet another sort of role to play, is the area of artistic expression and appreciation. The immediate or "brute force" nature of our apprehensions in the arts seems quite like the experiences of religious conversion and falling in love that we have already examined. That is, one may reason all one likes before and after a moment of profound artistic experience, but at the actual moment of the experience, no reasoning seems involved at all. In fact, it seems that an excessive amount of reasoning of a certain sort in these matters may yield only a staunch form of dogmatism. Consider, then, one general example from the visual arts and some very general remarks on classical music.

Most of us who do not spend much time looking into all the intricacies of art history have a sort of "realistic" expectation of the visual arts. That is, we generally expect paintings, for instance, to look like that which they represent. As an example, take a moment to examine the French impressionist Auguste Renoir's *Monet Working in His Garden*, painted in 1873 (see Gaunt 1970: 96). It does not take any great power of reasoning to detect something relaxing and calming, if you will, in this work. Everything in it seems familiar enough to us. We easily recognize the houses in the background, the trees, flowers, and wooden fence in the middle distance, and the figure of Monet with painting equipment in use that occupies the foreground. All these various parts seem to unite, effortlessly, into a coherent whole. It seems, as a whole, to "click" nonrationally into place for us. Nothing startles us in this work, nothing taxes our powers of reasoning; everything in it "looks" just as it should. In fact, the flowers seem so real, even in their two-dimensional plane, that we are tempted to reach out and try to pick one.

By contrast, spend a few minutes with the early fifteenth-century work by Hubert and/or Jan Van Eyck entitled *The Last Judgment* (see Janson 1966: 275). What do we see here? At the very least, what we see is not a depiction of a reality that is as familiar to us as was Renoir's. Is it actually a depiction of reality at all? We see what appears

to be a graduated continuum of beings ranging from Christ and several angels at the top of the frame down to, at the bottom, a half-dozen or so satanic-looking beasts surrounded by a chaotic mob of souls of the damned. Now this is not a reality, if it is a reality at all, that is easily familiar to us. It looks "wrong" to us overall. And there are some identifiable details that contribute directly to our puzzlement. Consider for a moment just the area of the work that deals with the region above hell. To our eyes, there are at least three major problems with this presentation. First, we note that all the beings depicted, except those falling into hell, are suspended in the sky. This violates our commonsense expectations about gravity. Second, the figures of Christ, Mary, and Joseph are markedly larger than the saints, clerics, and people of means immediately beneath them, who in turn are markedly larger than the condemned. This does not agree with our general observation that people do not vary in size, as they do here, by a factor of four. Third, something does not seem quite right with the attempt at perspective. The gigantic size of Christ, relatively speaking, seems somehow to nullify or at least make uncertain the attempt at a three-dimensional effect. What could be the meaning of all of this?

Obviously, this work is not realistic to our modern, Western minds. This work does not, and will not, "click" into place for us so long as we dogmatically cling to the same expectations as were so easily satisfied by *Monet Working in His Garden*. That is, the unruffled belief with which we approached and departed Renoir's work has now been challenged; doubt has arisen. And just as with the jailer and the victim of domestic violence, if we cling tenaciously to our "already knowns" in this circumstance this doubt will remain unresolved. What is it that we must come to know in this example that will lead to a new, secure fixation of belief? What we must come to know is a reality strikingly different from the one familiar to the modern, Western mind, namely, the reality of the medieval mind, the reality of the Middle Ages.

Now the dogmatist, in an attempt to rescue his or her belief, would maintain that *The Last Judgment* was put together by an incompetent. "After all," the dogmatist would say, "everybody knows that people

cannot suspend themselves in mid-air, that they do not vary so wildly in size, and that we live in a clearly three-dimensional world precisely describable by physics." But this, of course, is exactly the point. *The Last Judgment*, as a product of the Medieval mind, is not concerned with any sort of accuracy with regard to physical size, the very sort of unfounded accuracy that has our dogmatist in a rant, but rather is pre-occupied with a sort of accuracy with regard to theological size. That this is not an accident confined to the Van Eyck work is attested to by the fact that in 1420, about the time *The Last Judgment* was painted, only about one painting out of every twenty was on a subject other than religion (see Burke 1985: 78). And the rendering of religious subject matter in this work is not accidental, either. Nor is it the work of an incompetent. To the medieval mind it was only *natural* to have the theologically important figures suspended in the sky because, after all, that was the direction in which heaven was to be found. Likewise, Christ, Mary, and Joseph should be four times larger than the poor souls slipping into hell because they are, theologically considered, at least four times more important. And of course the looming figure of Christ can muddle up the seeming attempt at a three-dimensional perspective because Christ, as a part of the Holy Trinity, need pay no heed to ordinary rules of physical reality at all. All these, and similar considerations, made for something which, to the medieval mind, made sense.

Perhaps the most important thing to observe in this example is that *The Last Judgment* was not, for the medieval mind, only an exercise in preparing a canvas or a brush technique or the production of colored paints or other matters of technical interest. For medieval minds, this work depicted the way reality actually was, and it was that way for them, as a belief, just as strongly and securely as our belief that Newtonian and quantum physics accurately depicts our modern, everyday reality. This painting, then, in its context, was a "written down" version of the best explanatory hypothesis that medieval investigators had for how the universe actually worked. And we can rationally, and ruthlessly, consider the various aspects of comparative theological size, suspensions of the law of gravity, mismanagements of perspective, sal-