

NARRATION AS A HUMAN COMMUNICATION PARADIGM: THE CASE OF PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT

WALTER R. FISHER*

This essay proposes a theory of human communication based on a conception of persons as homo narrans. It compares and contrasts this view with the traditional rational perspective on symbolic interaction. The viability of the narrative paradigm and its attendant notions of reason and rationality are demonstrated through an extended analysis of key aspects of the current nuclear war controversy and a brief application to The Epic of Gilgamesh. The narrative paradigm synthesizes two strands in rhetorical theory: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme.

The corrective of the scientific rationalization would seem necessarily to be a *rationale of art*—not, however, a performer's art, not a specialist's art for some to produce and many to observe, but an art in its widest aspects, an *art of living*.

Kenneth Burke

WHEN I wrote "Toward a Logic of Good Reasons" (Fisher, 1978), I was unaware that I was moving toward an alternative paradigm for human communication. Indications of it are to be found in the assumption that "*Humans as rhetorical beings are as much valuing as they are reasoning animals*" (p. 376) and in the conception of good reasons as "*those elements that provide warrants for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical*" (p. 378). While the assumption does not seriously disturb the view of rhetoric as practical reasoning, the conception implies a stance that goes beyond this theory. The logic of good reasons maintains that reasoning need not be bound to argumentative prose or be expressed in clear-cut inferential or implicative structures: Reasoning may be discovered in all sorts of symbolic action—nondiscursive as well as discursive.

That this is the case was demonstrated in an exploration of argument in *Death of a Salesman* and *The Great Gatsby* (Fisher & Filloy, 1982). The authors concluded that these works provide good reasons to distrust the materialist myth of the American Dream (Fisher, 1973, p. 161), for what it requires to live by it and for what it does not necessarily deliver even if one lives by it "successfully." This finding confirms Gerald Graff's thesis that a theory or practice of literature that denies reference to the world, that denies that literature has cognitive as well as aesthetic significance, is a *Literature Against Itself* (Graff, 1979). In other words, "some dramatic and literary works do, in fact, argue" (Fisher & Filloy, 1982, p. 343).

The paradigm I was moving toward did not become entirely clear until I examined the current nuclear controversy, where the traditional view of rationality did not serve well, and I read Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (1981). What impressed me most about the book was the observation that "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal"

*Walter R. Fisher is Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences, University of Southern California. He wishes to acknowledge the constructive readings of early drafts of this essay by Ernest G. Bormann, Kenneth Burke, W. Lance Bennett, Wayne Brockriede, John Angus Campbell, Bruce E. Gronbeck, Michael Calvin McGee, John S. Nelson, Calvin O. Schrag, and Herbert W. Simons.

(p. 201). Given this view, "enacted dramatic narrative" (p. 200) is the "basic and essential genre for the characterisation of human actions" (p. 194). These ideas are the foundation of the paradigm I am proposing—the narrative paradigm. Thus, when I use the term "narration," I do not mean a fictive composition whose propositions may be true or false and have no necessary relationship to the message of that composition. By "narration," I refer to a theory of symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them. The narrative perspective, therefore, has relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to stories of living and to stories of the imagination.

The narrative paradigm, then, can be considered a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme. As will be seen, the narrative paradigm insists that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements. The narrative paradigm challenges the notions that human communication—if it is to be considered rhetorical—must be an argumentative form, that reason is to be attributed only to discourse marked by clearly identifiable modes of inference and/or implication, and that the norms for evaluation of rhetorical communication must be rational standards taken essentially from informal or formal logic. The narrative paradigm does not deny reason and rationality; it reconstitutes them, making them amenable to all forms of human communication.

Before going further, I should clarify the sense in which I use the term "paradigm." By paradigm, I refer to a representation designed to formalize the structure of a component of experience and to direct understanding and inquiry into the nature and functions of that experience—in this instance, the experience of human communication. Masterman designates this form of paradigm "metaphysical" or as a "metaparadigm" (1970, p. 65; see also Kuhn, 1974). Since the narrative paradigm does not entail a particular method of investigation, I have not used a designation that might be suggested: "narratism." The narrative perspective, however, does have a critical connection with "dramatism," which will be discussed later.

Consistent with Wayne Brockriede's concept of perspectivism (1982), I shall not maintain that the narrative paradigm is the only legitimate, useful way to appreciate human communication or that it will necessarily supplant the traditional rational paradigm of human decision-making and action. As already indicated, I will propose the narrative paradigm as an alternative view. I do not even claim that it is entirely "new." W. Lance Bennett has published a book with Martha S. Feldman, *Reconstructing Reality in the Courtroom* (1981), and two essays that directly bear on the present enterprise, one concerning political communication (Bennett, 1975) and one on legal communication (Bennett, 1978; see also, Farrell, 1983; Gallie, 1964; Hawes, 1978; Mink, 1978; Schrag, 1984; Scott, 1978; Simons, 1978). Except for these studies, I know of no other attempt to suggest narration as a paradigm. There is, of course, a tradition in rhetorical theory and pedagogy that focuses on narration as an element in discourse and as a genre in and of itself (e.g., Ochs & Burritt, 1973). In addition, there is an increasing number of investigations involving storytelling (e.g., Kirkwood, 1983). Here again, narration is conceived as a mode, not a paradigm, of communication.

The context for what is to follow would not be complete without recognition of the

work done by theologians and those interested in religious discourse. The most recent works in this tradition include Goldberg (1982) and Hauerwas (1981). It is worth pausing with these studies as they foreshadow several of the themes to be developed later. Goldberg claims that:

a theologian, regardless of the propositional statements he or she may have to make about a community's convictions, must consciously strive to keep those statements in intimate contact with the narratives which give rise to those convictions, within which they gain their sense and meaning, and *from which they have been abstracted*. (p. 35)

The same can be said for those who would understand ordinary experience. The ground for determining meaning, validity, reason, rationality, and truth must be a narrative context: history, culture, biography, and character. Goldberg also argues:

Neither "the facts" nor our "experience" come to us in discrete and disconnected packets which simply await the appropriate moral principle to be applied. Rather, they stand in need of some narrative which can bind the facts of our experience together into a coherent pattern and it is thus in virtue of that narrative that our abstracted rules, principles, and notions gain their full intelligibility. (p. 242)

Again, the statement is relevant to more than the moral life; it is germane to social and political life as well. He observes, as I would, that "what counts as meeting the various conditions of justification will vary from story to story. . . ." (p. 246). I will suggest a foundation for such justifications in the discussion of narrative rationality.

With some modifications, I would endorse two of Hauerwas' (1981) 10 theses. First, he claims that "The social significance of the Gospel requires recognition of the narrative structure of Christian convictions for the life of the church" (p. 9). I would say: The meaning and significance of life in all of its social dimensions require the recognition of its narrative structure. Second, Hauerwas asserts that "Every social ethic involves a narrative, whether it is conceived with the formulation of basic principles of social organization and/or concrete alternatives" (p. 9; see also Alter, 1981; Scult, 1983). The only change that I would make here is to delete the word "social." Any ethic, whether social, political, legal or otherwise, involves narrative.

Finally, mention should be made of the work on narration by such scholars as Derrida (1980), Kermode (1980), and Ricoeur (1980). Especially relevant to this project are essays by White (1980; see also, White, 1978), Turner (1980), and Danto (1982; see also Nelson, 1980; Todorov, 1977).

PURPOSE

If I can establish that narration deserves to be accepted as a paradigm, it will vie with the reigning paradigm, which I will refer to as the rational world paradigm. In truth, however, the narrative paradigm, like other paradigms in the human sciences, does not so much deny what has gone before as it subsumes it.

The rational world paradigm will be seen as one way to tell the story of how persons reason together in certain settings. For now, it is enough that the narrative paradigm be contemplated as worthy of co-existing with the rational world paradigm.

I shall begin by characterizing and contrasting the two paradigms. I shall then examine the controversy over nuclear warfare, a public moral argument, noting particular problems with the rational world paradigm and indicating how the narrative paradigm provides a way of possibly resolving them. Following this discussion, I shall reconsider the narrative paradigm and conclude with several

implications for further inquiry. Needless to say, this essay does not constitute a finished statement. It offers a conceptual frame which, I am fully aware, requires much greater development for it to be considered compelling. At this point, as I have suggested, it is sufficient that it receive serious attention. From such attention, a fuller, more persuasive statement should emerge.

THE RATIONAL WORLD PARADIGM

This paradigm is very familiar, having been in existence since Aristotle's *Organon* became foundational to Western thought. Regardless of its historic forms, the rational world paradigm presupposes that: (1) humans are essentially rational beings; (2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is argument—clear-cut inferential (implicative) structures; (3) the conduct of argument is ruled by the dictates of situations—legal, scientific, legislative, public, and so on; (4) rationality is determined by subject matter knowledge, argumentative ability, and skill in employing the rules of advocacy in given fields; and (5) the world is a set of logical puzzles which can be resolved through appropriate analysis and application of reason conceived as an argumentative construct. In short, argument as product and process is *the* means of being human, the agency of all that humans can know and realize in achieving their *telos*. The philosophical ground of the rational world paradigm is epistemology. Its linguistic materials are self-evident propositions, demonstrations, and proofs, the verbal expressions of certain and probable knowing.

The actualization of the rational world paradigm, it should be noted, depends on a form of society that permits, if not requires, participation of qualified persons in public decision-making. It further demands a citizenry that shares a common language, general adherence to the values of the state, information relevant to the questions that confront the community to be arbitrated by argument, and an understanding of argumentative issues and the various forms of reasoning and their appropriate assessment. In other words, there must exist something that can be called public or social knowledge and there must be a "public" for argument to be the kind of force envisioned for it (Bitzer, 1978; Farrell, 1976). Because the rational world paradigm has these requirements and because *being rational* (being competent in argument) *must be learned*, an historic mission of education in the West has been to generate a consciousness of national community and to instruct citizens in at least the rudiments of logic and rhetoric (Hollis, 1977, pp. 165-166; Toulmin, 1970, p. 4).

Needless to say, the rational world paradigm, which is by and large a heritage of the classical period, has not been untouched by "modernism." The impact of modernism has been recounted and reacted to by many writers (Barrett, 1979; Booth, 1974; Gadamer, 1981, 1982; Lonergan, 1958; MacIntyre, 1981; Rorty, 1979; Schrag, 1980; Sennett, 1978; Toulmin, 1972, 1982; Voegelin, 1952, 1975). The line of thought that has done most to subvert the rational world paradigm is, along with existentialism, naturalism. One of its schools starts with physics and mathematics and makes the logical structure of scientific knowledge fundamental; the other school, involving biology, psychology, and the social sciences, adapts this structure and conception of knowledge to the human sciences. According to John Herman Randall, Jr.:

The major practical issue still left between the two types of naturalism concerns the treatment of values. The philosophies starting from physics tend to exclude questions of value from the field of science and

the scope of scientific method. They either leave them to traditional non-scientific treatment, handing them over, with Russell, to the poet and mystic; or else with the logical empiricists they dismiss the whole matter as "meaningless," maintaining with Ayer, that any judgment of value is an expression of mere personal feeling. The philosophies of human experience—all the heirs of Hegel, from dialectical materialism to Dewey—subject them to the same scientific methods of criticism and testing as other beliefs; and thus offer the hope of using all we have learned of scientific procedure to erect at last a science of values comparable to the science that was the glory of Greek thought. (1976, p. 651)

It is clear: With the first type of naturalism, there can be neither public or social knowledge nor rational public or social argument, for both are permeated by values. As Habermas notes, "the relationship of theory to practice can now only assert itself as the purposive rational application of techniques assured by empirical science" (Habermas, 1967, p. 254; Heidegger, 1972, pp. 58–59).

With the second type of naturalism, one can hope with Randall that it produces the work he sees possible in it. But the fact is that no science of values has appeared or seems likely to do so; further, Dewey (1927) himself noted the eclipse of the "public" and doubted its reemergence. His hope was the development of "communities." Interestingly, 55 years later, MacIntyre concludes *After Virtue* with the observation: "What matters at this state is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained" (1981, p. 245).

The effects of naturalism have been to restrict the rational world paradigm to specialized studies and to relegate everyday argument to an irrational exercise. The reaction to this state of affairs has been an historic effort to recover the rational world paradigm for human decision-making and communication by: (1) reconstituting the conception of knowledge (e.g. Bitzer, 1978; Farrell, 1976; Habermas, 1973; Lyne, 1982; McGee & Martin, 1983; Polanyi, 1958; Ziman, 1968); (2) reconceptualizing the public—in terms of rational enterprises, fields, and/or communities (e.g., McKerrow, 1980a,b; Toulmin, 1958, 1972; Toulmin, Rieke & Janik, 1979; Willard, 1982; see also the first 19 essays in Ziegelmüller & Rhodes, 1981); (3) formulating a logic appropriate for practical reasoning (e.g., Fisher, 1978; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Toulmin, 1958; Wenzel, 1977); and (4) reconceiving the conceptions of validity, reason, and rationality (e.g., Apel, 1979; Ehninger, 1968; Farrell, 1977; Fisher, 1980; Gottlieb, 1968; Johnstone, 1978; McKerrow, 1977, 1982). Many of the studies cited here intimate, if not specifically state, proposals for reconstructing the concept of argument itself. Writers explicitly working on this task include Brockriede (1975, 1977), Burleson (1981), Jacobs and Jackson (1981), McKerrow (1981), O'Keefe (1977, 1982), Wenzel (1980), and Willard (1978).

The motive underlying these various studies, and the movement of which they are an energizing force, is, as I have suggested, to repair the rational world paradigm so that it once again will serve everyday argument. One may well applaud the motive and the movement and yet ask two questions: (1) Has the reformation been successful? (2) Is there a more beneficial way to conceive and to articulate the structures of everyday argument? It is too early to answer the first question with finality but one cannot deny that much useful work has been done, especially in establishing at least the semblance of rationality for fields of argument. I shall maintain, however, that similar progress has not been made in the arena where argument is most general and is most obviously concerned with values, public moral argument, as the examination of the nuclear controversy will show later.

This failure suggests to me that the problem in restoring rationality to everyday argument may be the assumption that the reaffirmation of the rational world

paradigm is the only solution. The position I am taking is that another paradigm, the narrative paradigm, may offer a better solution, one that will provide substance not only for public moral argument, but also all other forms of argument, for human communication in general. My answer to the second question, then, is: "Yes, I think so." Adoption of the narrative paradigm, I hasten to repeat, does not mean rejection of all the good work that has been done; it means a rethinking of it and investigating new moves that can be made to enrich our understanding of communicative interaction. Representative of the good work that has already been done on public argument are essays by Cox (1981), Goodnight (1980), Hynes, Jr. (1980), Lucaitas (1981), Pryor (1981), Sillars and Ganer (1982), and Zarefsky (1981).

THE NARRATIVE PARADIGM

Many different root metaphors have been put forth to represent the essential nature of human beings: *homo faber*, *homo economicus*, *homo politicus*, *homo sociologicus*, "psychological man," "ecclesiastical man," *homo sapiens*, and, of course, "rational man." I now propose *homo narrans* to be added to the list.

Preliminary to an attempt to delineate the presuppositions that structure the narrative paradigm, I should indicate how the *homo narrans* metaphor relates to those that have preceded it. First, each of the root metaphors may be held to be the master metaphor, thereby standing as the ground, while the others are manifest as figures. In the terminology of the narrative perspective, the master metaphor sets the plot of human experience and the others the subplots. When any of the other metaphors are asserted as the master metaphor, narration is as it is considered now: a type of human interaction—an activity, an art, a genre, or mode of expression.

Second, when narration is taken as the master metaphor, it subsumes the others. The other metaphors are then considered conceptions that inform various ways of *recounting* or *accounting for* human choice and action. *Recounting* takes the forms of history, biography, or autobiography. *Accounting for* takes the forms of theoretical explanation or argument. *Recounting* and *accounting for* can be also expressed in poetic forms: drama, poetry, novel, and so on. *Recounting* and *accounting for* are, in addition, the bases for all advisory discourse. Regardless of the form they may assume, *recounting* and *accounting for* are stories we tell ourselves and each other to establish a meaningful life-world. The character of narrator(s), the conflicts, the resolutions, and the style will vary, but each mode of *recounting* and *accounting for* is but a way of relating a "truth" about the human condition.

Third, the *homo narrans* metaphor is an incorporation and extension of Burke's definition of "man" as the "symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal" (Burke, 1968, p. 16; Cassirer, 1944, p. 26; see also Langer, 1953, pp. 264 ff). The idea of human beings as storytellers indicates the generic form of all symbol composition; it holds that symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common, in communities in which there is sanction for the story that constitutes one's life. And one's life is, as suggested by Burke, a story that participates in the stories of those who have lived, who live now, and who will live in the future. He asks: "Where does the drama get its materials?" I would modify the question to read: "Where do our narratives get their materials?" And, I would accept his answer:

From the "unending conversation" that is going on in history when we are born. Imagine that you enter

a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for awhile, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in process. (Burke, 1957, pp. 94-97; for a discussion of the nature of conversation as narration, see MacIntyre, 1981; Campbell & Stewart, 1981).

As Heidegger observes, "We are a conversation . . . conversation and its unity support our existence" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 278; Gadamer, 1982, pp. 330ff; Rorty, 1979, pp. 315 ff).

To clarify further the narrative paradigm, I should specify how it is related to Bormann's (1972) concepts of "fantasy themes" and "rhetorical visions," and to the Frenzt and Farrell (1976) language action paradigm. Fantasy, Bormann holds, is a technical term, meaning "the creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need" (1983, p. 434). Fantasy themes arise "in group interaction out of a recollection of something that happened to the group in the *past* or a dream of what a group might do in the *future*" (1972, p. 397). When woven together, they become composite dramas, which Bormann calls "rhetorical visions" (1972, p. 398). From the narrative view, each of these concepts translates into dramatic stories constituting the fabric of social reality for those who compose them. They are, thus, "rhetorical fictions," constructions of fact and faith having persuasive force, rather than fantasies (Fisher, 1980b). Nevertheless, without getting into the problem of how group-generated stories become public stories, I would note that Bormann (1973) and others have demonstrated that "rhetorical visions" do exist (e.g., Bantz, 1975; Kidd, 1975; Rarick, Duncan, Lee & Porter, 1977). I take this demonstration as partial evidence for the validity of the narrative paradigm. (For further empirical evidence, see Bennett, 1978; Campbell, 1984.)

With minor adaptation, I find no incompatibility between the narrative paradigm and the language action paradigm. Indeed, language action is meaningful only in terms of narrative form (Ricoeur, 1976). What Frenzt and Farrell (1976) designate as "form of life" and "encounters"—implicit matters of knowledge, aesthetic expectations, institutional constraints, and propriety rules—can be considered the forces that determine the structure of narratives in given interpersonal environments. What they call an "episode," a "rule-conforming sequence of symbolic acts generated by two or more actors who are collectively oriented toward emergent goals," can be thought of as the process by which one or more authors generate a short story or chapter—deciding on plot, the nature of characters, resolutions, and their meaning and import for them and others (p. 336).

I do not want to leave the impression that the narrative paradigm merely accommodates the constructs of Bormann, Frenzt and Farrell. Their work enriches the narrative paradigm. I shall rely specifically on the language action paradigm in what follows.

The presuppositions that structure the narrative paradigm are: (1) humans are essentially storytellers; (2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is "good reasons" which vary in form among communication situations, genres, and media; (3) the production and practice of good reasons is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character along with the kinds of forces

identified in the Frentz and Farrell language action paradigm; (4) rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings—their inherent awareness of *narrative probability*, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing *narrative fidelity*, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives (narrative probability and narrative fidelity, it will be noted, are analogous to the concepts of dramatic probability and verisimilitude; as MacIntyre (1981, p. 200) observes, “The difference between imaginary characters and real ones is not in the narrative form of what they do; it is in the degree of their authorship of that form and of their own deeds”); and (5) the world is a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation. In short, good reasons are the stuff of stories, the means by which humans realize their nature as reasoning-valuing animals. The philosophical ground of the narrative paradigm is ontology. The materials of the narrative paradigm are symbols, signs of substantiation, and good reasons, the communicative expressions of social reality.

The actualization of the narrative paradigm does not require a given form of society. Where the rational world paradigm is an ever-present part of our consciousness because we have been educated into it, the narrative impulse is part of our very being because we acquire narrativity in the natural process of socialization (Goody & Watt, 1962–1963; Krashen, 1982). That narrative, whether written or oral, is a feature of human nature and that it crosses time and culture is attested by historian White: “far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which trans-cultural messages about the shared reality can be transmitted . . . the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself” (1980, p. 6); by anthropologist Turner: “if we regard narrative ethically, as the supreme instrument for building ‘values’ and ‘goals,’ in Dilthey’s sense of these terms, which motivate human conduct into situational structures of ‘meaning,’ then we must concede it to be a universal cultural activity, embedded in the very center of the social drama, itself another cross-cultural and transtemporal unit in social process” (1980, p. 167); and by linguist-folklorist Dell Hymes: “the narrative use of language is not a property of subordinate cultures, whether folk, or working class, or the like, but a universal function” (1980, p. 132; see also Barthes, 1977; Ong, 1982).

Gregory Bateson goes so far as to claim that “If I am at all fundamentally right in what I am saying, then *thinking in terms of stories* must be shared by all mind or minds, whether ours or those of redwood forests and sea anemones” (1979, p. 14). And Burke observes that “We assume a time when our primal ancestors became able to go from SENSATIONS to WORDS. (When they could duplicate the experience of tasting an orange by saying ‘the taste of an orange,’ that was WHEN STORY CAME INTO THE WORLD)” (1983, p. 1.).

In theme, if not in every detail, narrative, then, is meaningful for persons in particular and in general, across communities as well as cultures, across time and place. Narratives enable us to understand the actions of others “because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 197).

Rationality from this perspective involves, as I have proposed, the principles of narrative probability and narrative fidelity. These principles contrast with but do not contradict the constituents of rationality I have outlined earlier (Fisher, 1978, 1980).

They are, in fact, subsumed by the narrative paradigm. The earlier notion was attuned to the rational world paradigm and essentially held that rationality was a matter of argumentative competence: knowledge of issues, modes of reasoning, appropriate tests, and rules of advocacy in given fields. As such, rationality was something to be learned, depended on deliberation, and required a high degree of self-consciousness. Narrative rationality does not make these demands. It is a capacity we all share. It depends on our minds being as Booth (1974, pp. 114–137) represents them in *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, a key point of which is: “Not only do human beings successfully infer other beings’ states of mind from symbolic clues; we know that they characteristically, in all societies, build each other’s minds. This is obvious knowledge—all the more genuine for being obvious” (p. 114). The operative principle of narrative rationality is identification rather than deliberation (Burke, 1955, pp. 20–46).

Narrative rationality differs from traditional rationality in another significant way. Narrative rationality is not an account of the “laws of thought” and it is not normative in the sense that one must reason according to prescribed rules of calculation or inference making. Traditional rationality posits the way people think when they reason truly or with certainty. MacIntyre notes, “To call an argument fallacious is always at once to describe and to evaluate it” (1978, p. 258). It is, therefore, a normative construct. Narrative rationality is, on the other hand, descriptive, as it offers an account, an understanding, of any instance of human choice and action, including science (Gadamer, 1982; Heidegger, 1972; Holton, 1973; Ramsey, 1969). At the same time, it is a basis for critique, because it implies a praxis, an ideal democratic society (McGee, Scult & Kientz, 1983). Traditional rationality implies some sort of hierarchical system, a community in which some persons are qualified to judge and to lead and some other persons are to follow.

For the sake of clarity, I should note that, while the narrative paradigm provides a radical democratic ground for social-political critique, it does not deny the legitimacy (the inevitability) of hierarchy. History records no community, uncivilized or civilized, without key story-makers/story-tellers, whether sanctioned by God, a “gift,” heritage, power, intelligence, or election. It insists, however, that the “people” do judge the stories that are told for and about them and that they have a rational capacity to make such judgments. It holds, along with Aristotle (1954, bk. 1, ch. 1, 1355^a20) that the “people” have a natural tendency to prefer the true and the just. Neither does the narrative paradigm deny that the “people” can be wrong. But, then, so can elites, especially when a decision is social or political. And neither does the theory deny the existence and desirability of genius in individuals or the “people” to formulate and to adopt new stories that better account for their lives or the mystery of life itself. The sort of hierarchy condemned by the narrative praxis is the sort that is marked by the will to power, the kind of system in which elites struggle to dominate and to use the people for their own ends or that makes the people blind subjects of technology.

Narrative rationality, then, is inimical to elitist politics, whether fascist, communist, or even democratic—if traditional rationality is the prevailing societal view. And this seems to be the case with American democracy, as subsequent examination of the nuclear controversy will show. The prevalent position is that voters are rational if they know enough about public issues, are cognizant of argumentative procedures, forms, and functions, and weigh carefully all the arguments they hear and read in a systematic, deliberative process. Contrary to this notion is that of V.O.

Key, Jr. In a classic study of presidential voting between 1936 and 1960, he concluded that "voters are not fools," which is what they must be considered if measured by traditional rationality. His data led him to conclude that the American electorate is not "straitjacketed by social determinants or moved by subconscious urges triggered by devilishly skillful propagandists." They are moved by their perceptions and appraisals of "central and relevant questions of public policy, of governmental performance, and of executive personality" (1966, pp. 7-8). These perceptions and appraisals of political discourse and action become stories, narratives that must stand the tests of probability and fidelity. And these stories are no less valuable than the stories constructed by persons who are rational in the traditional way. There is no evidence to support the claim that "experts" know better than anyone else who should be elected president.

Obviously, as I will note later, some stories are better than others, more coherent, more "true" to the way people and the world are—in fact and in value. In other words, some stories are better in satisfying the criteria of the logic of good reasons, which is attentive to reason and values. Persons may even choose not to participate in the making of public narratives (vote) if they feel that they are meaningless spectators rather than co-authors. But, all persons have the capacity to be rational in the narrative paradigm. And, by and large, persons are that—at least in the fashioning of their daily lives. Persons do not have the capacity to be equally rational in the rational world paradigm. Because persons have the capacity of narrative rationality, it is reasonable to have juries of lay persons and popular elections, as Bennett (1978; Bennett & Feldman, 1981) has well demonstrated. I want to stress, however, that narrative rationality does not negate traditional rationality. It holds that traditional rationality is only relevant in specialized fields and even in those arenas narrative rationality is meaningful and useful.

Certain other features of the narrative paradigm should be noted before moving to the case of public moral argument. First, the paradigm is a ground for resolving the dualisms of modernism: fact-value, intellect-imagination, reason-emotion, and so on. Stories are the enactment of the whole mind in concert with itself. Second, narratives are moral constructs. As White asserts: "Where, in any account of reality, narrativity is present, we can be sure that morality or a moral impulse is present too" (1980, p. 26; Benjamin, 1969). Third, the narrative paradigm is consonant with the notion of reason proposed by Schrag: "Reason, as the performance of vision and insight, commemoration and foresight, occasions the recognition of a process of meaning-formation that gathers within it the logic of technical reason and the *logos* of myth" (1980, p. 126). The appropriateness and validity of this view of reason for the narrative paradigm is supported by Angel Medina (1979). In a statement that reiterates several of the points I have made, he writes:

it is necessary to define our reason primarily as biographical, that is, above all narrative and then symbolic. Human reason is narrative because it extends from its inception and in every one of its acts toward the foreshadowing of its total course. It is symbolic in that the major aim in the formation of this totality is its own self-presentation within the dialogue of consciousness. The meaning of my whole life is communicative; it emerges, as such, for the benefit of another consciousness when I attempt to present myself totally to it. Reciprocally, the meaning of another life becomes a totality only when received fully within my life. (p. 30)

And, fourth, as I will attempt to show, the narrative paradigm offers ways of resolving the problems of public moral argument.

THE CASE: PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT

It should be apparent by now that I think that MacIntyre's (1981) *After Virtue* is a remarkable work. Equally remarkable, in its own way, is Jonathan Schell's (1982) *The Fate of the Earth*. Schell's book is exemplary of contemporary moral argument intended to persuade a general audience, the "public." His concluding argument is:

Either we will sink into the final coma and end it all or, as I trust and believe, we will awaken to the truth of our peril, a truth as great as life itself, and, like a person who has swallowed a lethal poison but shakes off his stupor at the last moment and vomits the poison up, we will break through the layers of denials, put aside our faint-hearted excuses, and rise up to cleanse the earth of nuclear weapons. (p. 231)

The validity of Schell's argument is not the question here. Our concern is its reception, which reveals the limits, perhaps the impossibility, of persuasive moral argument in our time, given the rational world paradigm.

Critical response to *The Fate of the Earth* is of two sorts. The first is celebratory. Reviewers in this group are obviously in sympathy with the book's moral thrust, its depiction of the results of nuclear war and its call for action—for life instead of death—but not with every detail of its argument. Although reviewers in this group include distinguished figures from a variety of professions: journalists Walter Cronkite, James Reston, and James Kilpatrick; historians Harrison Salisbury, John Hersey, and Henry Steele Commager; and politicians Barry Commoner, W. Averell Harriman, and Walter Mondale; none is a current member of the federal administration or the defense establishment. Each of them bears witness to an attitude—opposition to nuclear annihilation—but none testifies to the technical merits of Schell's representation of "deterrence theory," his inferences about its meaning in regard to strategy and tactics, or his conclusions about national sovereignty. They, like Schell, are not "experts" in the field in which the argument is made. They, like Schell, are active in the realm of rhetorical knowledge, in the sphere of social-political policy and behavior (Bitzer, 1978; Farrell, 1976).

Reviewers in the second group, on the other hand, are purveyors of ideological, bureaucratic, or technical arguments. Such arguments may overlap, be used by the same arguer, but each is distinguished by a particular privileged position: political "truth," administrative sanction, or subject matter expertise. The thrust of the ideological argument is that one violates ultimate "facts," is fundamentally wrong-headed; the bureaucratic argument stresses feasibility in regard to administrative approval; and the technical argument alleges ignorance of the "facts," that opponents are "unrealistic," meaning they do not have a firm grasp on reality. These are, of course, the lines of refutation or subversion. Their opposites would be constructive arguments of affirmation or reaffirmation.

The subversive pattern of ideological, bureaucratic, and technical arguments is evident in the following attacks on Schell's reasoning. McCracken (1982) labels Schell an "alarmist" and concludes: "The danger is that Mr. Schell's followers may triumph and bring about a freeze that by making present inequities permanent will prove destabilizing in the short run and in the long run productive of both redness and deadness" (p. 905). Focusing on the lynch-pin arguments of *The Fate of the Earth* (Schell's interpretation of deterrence theory and his suggested solution of abolishing national sovereignty), Hausknecht (1982) first cites Alexander Haig and then observes that "It is not hard to imagine Ronald Reagan saying, 'Okay, so it may be the end of the species, but we can't let the bastards get away with it.'" In regard to

Schell's solution, he concludes that "Successful political action demands significant but realizable goals" (p. 284). The same charge is leveled by Pierre (1982), who approves the moral force of Schell's position but then charges "Schell provides no realistic alternative to our nuclear policy based on the concept of deterrence. His argument—that knowledge that nuclear weapons can extinguish mankind must be the new deterrent in a disarmed world—is very weak" (p. 1188).

The strategy of these reviews is clear: reaffirmation of the moral concern, subversion of the reasoning. The tactics are also obvious: juxtapose Schell's reasoning with what is right-headed, what is approved by the administration, or what is "realistic." Insofar as there is merit in these "arguments," it lies not in the way they foreclose dialogue but in their narrative probability and narrative fidelity. Yet, this is not their intended appeal or effect. The effects are to discredit Schell as an arguer and to dismiss his argument as unfounded. Public moral argument is thus overwhelmed by privileged argument. Put another way, it is submerged by ideological and bureaucratic arguments that insist on rival moralities and technical argument which denudes it of morality altogether, making the dispute one for "experts" alone to consider (see Farrell & Goodnight, 1981).

The question that arises at this point is: What happens when "experts" argue about moral issues in public? Before considering this question, however, it is essential to sketch the general characteristics of "public moral argument."

Public moral argument is to be distinguished from reasoned discourse in interpersonal interactions and arguments occurring in specialized communities, such as theological disputes, academic debates, and arguments before the Supreme Court. The features differentiating *public moral argument* from such encounters are: (1) It is publicized, made available for consumption and persuasion of the polity at large; and (2) it is aimed at what Aristotle called "untrained thinkers," or, to be effective, it should be (1954, bk. I, ch. 2, 1357^a 10). Most important *public moral argument* is a form of controversy that inherently crosses fields. It is not contained in the way that legal, scientific, or theological arguments are by subject matter, particular conceptions of argumentative competence, and well recognized rules of advocacy. Because this is so and because its realm is public-social knowledge, *public moral argument* naturally invites participation by field experts and is dominated by the rational superiority of their arguments. *Public moral argument*, which is oriented toward what ought to be, is undermined by the "truth" that prevails at the moment. The presence of "experts" in *public moral arguments* makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the public of "untrained thinkers" to win an argument or even judge them well—given, again, the rational world paradigm.

Public moral argument is moral in the sense that it is founded on ultimate questions—of life and death, of how persons should be defined and treated, of preferred patterns of living. Gusfield (1976) designates such questions as "status issues." Their resolution, he writes, indicates "the group, culture, or style of life to which the government and society are publicly committed" (p. 173). In addition to nuclear warfare, desegregation would be included in the category as well as abortion and school prayer.

Public moral argument refers to clearcut inferential structures, in the rational world paradigm, and to "good reasons," in the narrative paradigm. *Public moral argument* may also refer to public controversies—disputes and debates—about moral issues. The nuclear warfare controversy is an obvious case in point, but so are the others mentioned above. One could add disputes over pornography, ERA, and

crime and punishment. This characterization of public moral *argument* is attentive to argument as product and as process (Wenzel, 1980).

The problem posed by the presence of experts in public moral argument is illustrated by the dispute between Hans Bethe and Edward Teller over the 1982 nuclear freeze proposition in California. Their positions were published in the *Los Angeles Times* (1982, October 17, Part IV, pp. 1-2), so they were public. They obviously concerned a moral issue and they were reasoned statements. Both persons are credible. Which one is to be believed and followed? Who in the general public could contend with them? Teller answers the second question in unequivocal terms: "The American public is ignorant, even of the general ideas on which they [nuclear weapons] are based" (p. 2). Here is revealed the fate of non-experts who would argue about nuclear warfare. Only experts can argue with experts and their arguments—while public—cannot be rationally questioned. As Perelman (1979) notes, rationality in and of itself forecloses discussion and debate. In the audience of experts, the public is left with no compelling reason, from the perspective of the rational world paradigm, to believe one over the other. One is not a judge but a spectator who must choose between actors. From the narrative paradigm view, the experts are storytellers and the audience is not a group of observers but are active participants in the meaning-formation of the stories.

It may be asked at this point: How is it that freeze referendums were approved in eight out of nine states and in 28 cities and counties in 1982? One answer is "fear," the "most intelligent feeling of our time" (Wieseltier, 1983, p. 7). Another answer is "distrust," distrust of those responsible for the development, deployment, and use of nuclear weapons. This answer is, I believe, more accurate. It does not deny the existence of fear. It insists on the "rationality" of those who voted for and against the referendum. Those who opposed the referendum did so because of a basic distrust of Soviet leaders and a fundamental trust of our own. What I am saying is that there are good reasons for trust and distrust, that the response of voters was rational, given the narrative paradigm. The good reasons that are expressed in public moral argument relate to issues not accounted for in the rational world paradigm. These issues include the motivations and values of the characters involved in the ongoing narrative of nuclear warfare, the way in which they conceive and behave in respect to the conflict, and the narrative probability and narrative fidelity of the particular stories they tell, which may well take the form of "reasoned argument." Experts and lay persons meet on common ground, given the narrative paradigm. As Toulmin observes, "a scientist off duty is as much an 'ordinary' man as a tinker or a bus-conductor off duty" (1982, p. 81).

From the narrative perspective, the proper role of the expert in public moral argument is that of a counselor, which is, as Benjamin (1969) notes, the true function of the storyteller. His or her contribution to public dialogue is to impart knowledge, like a teacher, or wisdom, like a sage. It is not to pronounce a story that ends all storytelling. The expert assumes the role of public counselor whenever she or he crosses the boundary of technical knowledge into the territory of life as it ought to be lived. Once this invasion is made, the public, which then includes the expert, has its own criteria for determining whose story is most coherent and reliable as a guide to belief and action. The expert, in other words, then becomes subject to the demands of narrative rationality. Technical communities have their own conceptions and criteria for judging the rationality of communication. But, as Holton (1973) has demonstrated, the work even of scientists is inspired by stories; hence, their discourse can be

interpreted usefully from the narrative perspective. Holton writes tellingly of the "nascent moment" in science, the impulse to do science in a particular or in a new way, and how science is informed by "themes"—thematic concepts, methods, and hypotheses inherited from Parmenides, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Thales, and others (pp. 28–29; see also Ong, 1982, p. 140).

Viewed from the perspective of the rational world paradigm, Schell's case, his argument and its reception, evokes despair. If one looks to MacIntyre's *After Virtue* for relief, one will be disappointed and disheartened further, for he provides the historical and philosophical reasons for the fate of *The Fate of the Earth* and similar such arguments. His own argument is that "we still, in spite of the efforts of three centuries of moral philosophy and one of sociology, lack any coherent, rationally defensible statement of a liberal individualist point of view" (1981, p. 241). He offers some hope with the idea that "the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments." He observes, however, "the new dark ages" are "already upon us." The "barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict" (p. 245).

The reasons for this state of affairs are: (1) The rejection of a teleological view of human nature and the classical conception of reason as embodied in Aristotelian logic and rhetoric; (2) the separation of morality from theological, legal, and aesthetic concerns; and (3) the evolution of the individualistic sense of self and the rise of emotivism. The consequence of these movements is a situation in which ethical arguments in public are rendered ineffectual because of "conceptual incommensurability."

A case in point is protest—where advocates of reform argue from a position of "rights" and those who oppose them reason from the stance of "utility." MacIntyre observes:

the facts of incommensurability ensure that protestors can never win an *argument*; the indignant self-righteousness of protestors arises because the facts of incommensurability ensure equally that the protestors can never lose an argument either. Hence, the *utterance* of protest is characteristically addressed to those who already *share* the protestors' premises. . . . This is not to say that protest cannot be effective; it is to say that protest cannot be *rationally* effective. (p. 69)

Thus, when arguers appealing to justice and equality contend with adversaries who base their case on success, survival, and liberty, they talk past each other.

From the perspective of the narrative paradigm, the dynamic of this situation is that rival stories are being told. Any story, any form of rhetorical communication, not only says something about the world, it also implies an audience, persons who conceive of themselves in very specific ways. If a story denies a person's self-conception, it does not matter what it says about the world. In the instance of protest, the rival factions' stories deny each other in respect to self-conceptions and the world. The only way to bridge this gap, if it can be bridged through discourse, is by telling stories that do not negate the self-conceptions people hold of themselves.

It may be germane to note at this point that narrative as a *mode of discourse* is more universal and probably more efficacious than argument for nontechnical forms of communication (Fisher, 1982, p. 304). There are several reasons why this should be true. First, narration comes closer to capturing the experience of the world,

simultaneously appealing to the various senses, to reason and emotion, to intellect and imagination, and to fact and value. It does not presume intellectual contact only. Second, one does not have to be taught narrative probability and narrative fidelity; one culturally acquires them through a universal faculty and experience. Obviously, one can, through education, become sophisticated in one's understanding and application of these principles. But, as Gadamer observes, "I am convinced of the fact that there are no people who do not 'think' sometime and somewhere. That means there is no one who does not form general views about life and death, about freedom and living together, about the good and about happiness" (1981, p. 58; see also Ogden, 1977, p. 114; Lonergan, 1958, xiv-xv, xxii-xxx). In other words, people are reflective and from such reflection they make the stories of their lives and have the basis for judging narratives for and about them. On the other hand, appreciation of argument requires not only reflection, but also specialized knowledge of issues, reasoning, rules of rationality, and so on. Third, narration works by suggestion and identification; argument operates by inferential moves and deliberation. Both forms, however, are modes of expressing good reasons—given the narrative paradigm—so the differences between them are structural rather than substantive.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This essay began as a study of public moral argument—the nuclear controversy. It was undertaken with the rational world paradigm well in mind. The results of my analysis were disturbing not only in what I found to be the inevitable subversion of *The Fate of the Earth* and similar such arguments, but also in that the rational world paradigm was at least partly responsible for that fate. Then came MacIntyre's (1981) *After Virtue*. Reflection set in and the narrative paradigm came out of it.

I was concerned with the concept of technical reason and the way it rendered the public unreasonable; with the idea of rationality being a matter of argumentative competence in specialized fields, leaving the public and its discourse irrational; with the apparent impossibility of bridging the gaps between experts and the public and between segments of the public; and with the necessity to learn what was supposed to be of the essence of persons—rationality—so that one class of citizens can always be superior to another.

Although I do not mean to maintain that the narrative paradigm resolves these problems out of existence, I do think that it provides a basis for reconsideration of them. Before that, I am aware, the narrative paradigm itself needs further scrutiny. I know that I do not need to tell critics how to do their work—the examination of my representation of the rational world paradigm, the presuppositions of the narrative paradigm and its relationship to other constructs, my concept of public moral argument, and the analysis of the specific case. I welcome the "stories" the critics will tell.

In closing, I should like to make two additional comments. First, I think that the concepts of public and social knowledge should be reconceived in light of the narrative paradigm. The effect would be to give shape to these ideas as identifiable entities in the discourse of the citizenry, to give public knowledge a form of being. To consider that public-social knowledge is to be found in the stories that we tell one another would enable us to observe not only our differences, but also our commonalities, and in such observation we might be able to reform the notion of the "public."

Second, and closely related to the discovery of our communal identity, is the matter

of what makes one story better than another. Two features come to mind: formal and substantive. Formal features are attributes of narrative probability: the consistency of characters and actions, the accommodation of auditors, and so on. In epistemological terms, the question would be whether a narrative satisfied the demands of a coherence theory of truth. The most compelling, persuasive stories are mythic in form (Campbell, 1973; Cassirer, 1944, 1979, p. 246; Eliade, 1963). Substantive features relate to narrative fidelity. Bormann has proposed two concepts pertinent to the problem of narrative fidelity: "corroboration" (1978) and "social convergence" (1983, p. 436). These concepts concern how people come to adhere to particular stories. They do not solve the problem of narrative fidelity because both suggest that narratives are valid by virtue of consensus and provide no criteria by which one can establish that one narrative is more sound than another. While there is work to be done on the problem, I think the logic of good reasons is the most viable scheme presently available by which narratives can be tested. Its application requires an examination of reasoning and "inspection of facts, values, self, and society" (Fisher, 1978, p. 382). In epistemological terms, narrative fidelity is a matter of truth according to the doctrine of correspondence. Though the most engaging stories are mythic, the most helpful and uplifting stories are moral. As John Gardner wrote, "Moral action is action that affirms life" (1978, p. 23).

One may get the impression that the conception of rationality I have presented leads to a denial of logic. It does, but only as logic is conceived so that persons are considered irrational beings. With Heidegger (1973, p. 170), I would assert that "To think counter to logic does not mean to stick up for the illogical, but only means to think the *logos*, and its essence as it appeared in the early days of thought; i.e. to make an effort first of all to prepare such an act of re-flecting (*Nachdenken*)."¹ In an earlier essay, I attempted to make such an effort by showing the relationship of the logic of good reasons to Aristotle's concept of "practical wisdom" (Fisher, 1980, pp. 127-128).

Application of narrative rationality to specific stories may further clarify its nature and value. From the perspective of narrative rationality, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* must be judged a bad story. Although it has formal coherence in its structure, as McGuire (1977) demonstrated, it denies the identity of significant persons and demeans others. It also lacks fidelity to the truths humanity shares in regard to reason, justice, veracity, and peaceful ways to resolve social-political differences. On the other hand, one may cite the cosmological myths of Lao-tse, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Mohammed which satisfy both narrative probability and narrative fidelity for those cultures for whom they were intended—and many others across time and place. Far from denying the humanity of persons, they elevate it to the profoundest moral and metaphysical level the world has known. One could also cite such works as the *Illiad*, *The Odyssey*, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Virgils' *Aeneid*, Dante's *Commedia*, the plays of Shakespeare, and the novels of Tolstoy, Melville, Thomas Mann, and James Joyce. One could point to the lives of Jesus, Socrates, Lincoln, and Gandhi. Regarding political discourse, one could mention many of the speeches and writings of Adlai Stevenson and Winston Churchill. While these classic manifestations of religious, social, cultural, and political life have been celebrated by persons committed to traditional rationality, it has been because they have not restricted themselves to "logic" but have recognized and responded to the values fostered by them, by their reaffirmation of the human spirit as the transcendent ground of existence.

For a more detailed illustration of how narrative probability and fidelity can be usefully applied, I offer this brief analysis of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, “the finest surviving epic poem from any period until the appearance of Homer’s *Illiad*: and it is immeasurably older” (Sandars, 1982, p. 7). It is, in fact, 1500 years older.

The story, in sum, is as follows: Gilgamesh, the King of Urak, two-thirds god and one-third man, is possessed of a perfect body, unbounded courage, and extraordinary strength. He is a hero, a tragic hero, the “first tragic hero of whom anything is known” (Sandars, 1982, p. 7). His youth is spent in pursuit of fame as the means of immortality.

He is restless, with no one to match his appetites and physical feats. His people ask the gods to create a companion for him, which they do in Enkidu. Enkidu is Gilgamesh’s counterpart in strength, energy, and exuberance for life. After a wrestling match, they become inseparable, brothers in every way but birth. Gilgamesh learns what it means to love.

Because Enkidu begins to lose his physical prowess—he had been an inhabitant of the wilds and ran with animals—Gilgamesh proposes that they pursue and slay Huwawa, a terrible monster. At first, Enkidu is reluctant but is chided into joining the quest. The monster is met, subdued, and, because of an insult, is slain by Enkidu.

When they return to Urak, the goddess, Ishtar, proposes to Gilgamesh. He not only refuses her, but he and Enkidu heap scorn upon her. She goes to her father, Anu, and asks him to have the bull of heaven kill Gilgamesh. But Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the bull instead. It appears at this point that the “brothers” cannot be defeated by man, monsters, or the gods.

It turns out, however, that in killing Huwawa, Gilgamesh and Enkidu incurred the wrath of Enlil, guardian of the forest in which the monster lived. Enlil demands the death of Gilgamesh, but the sun god intervenes and Enkidu is doomed and dies.

With Enkidu’s death, the world of Gilgamesh is shattered. He has not only lost his loving companion, he must now directly confront the fact of death. Up to this point, he has lived as a willful child, acting as though the meaning of life is a matter of dominating it.

At first, Gilgamesh refuses to accept Enkidu’s death as real. He becomes obsessed with death and starts a quest to learn the secret of immortality. His journey is tortured and long. He finally arrives, after incredible hardships, at the island of Utanapishtim and asks him how one gains eternal life. Utanapishtim suggests that he try not to sleep for six days and seven nights. But he soon falls asleep, for seven days, a form of living death. He is awakened and realizes there is no escape from death. He resigns himself to his fate, the fate of all humankind, and returns home. On his return he learns to value the wall he has built around the city: immortality is, he apparently concludes, to be found in the monuments that one leaves behind.

The story provides good reasons to accept not only this truth, but others as well: Life is fullest when one loves and is loved; death is real; and maturity is achieved by accepting the reality of death. We learn these truths by dwelling in the characters in the story, by observing the outcomes of the several conflicts that arise throughout it, by seeing the unity of characters and their actions, and by comparing the truths to the truths we know to be true from our own lives. In other words, the story exhibits narrative probability and fidelity across time and culture (Jacobsen, 1976).

Finally, I do not mean to maintain that “knowledge of agents” is superior to “knowledge of objects.” With Toulmin, I would hold that “A decent respect for each

kind of knowledge is surely compatible with conceding the legitimate claims of the other" (1982, p. 244). With knowledge of agents, we can hope to find that which is *reliable* or *trustworthy*; with knowledge of objects, we can hope to discover that which has the quality of *veracity*. The world requires both kinds of knowledge.

Karl Wallace was right: "One could do worse than characterize rhetoric as the art of finding and effectively presenting good reasons" (1963, p. 248). MacIntyre is also right:

The unity of human life is the unity of a narrative quest. Quests sometimes fail, are frustrated, abandoned or dissipated into distractions; and human lives may in all these ways also fail. But the criteria for success or failure in a human life as a whole are the criteria of success or failure in a narrated or to-be-narrated quest. (1981, p. 203)

And that quest is "for the good life" for all persons.

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