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## IRONY

What is the job which a reporter of lectures is expected to do? Is he to state in as clear terms as possible what he thinks the lecturer said or hoped to say; is he to state what in his opinion the lecturer omitted to say; or, is he to use the lecturer's position as a point of departure (as book reviewers so frequently do) from which to launch forth into an exposition of some cherished ideas of his own which he has long hoped to shower upon an eager and an awaiting world? All these are doubtlessly elements which motivate the reporter of lectures. While promising himself to abide by the first, or at most the second of these elements, he all unknowingly has accepted the third.

Since the art of the lecture reporter depends both upon the lecturer and upon himself, and upon the circumstances of the occasion, and since it is therefore a very complicated art, it is probably not profitable and even hardly possible to suggest clearly the standards of this art. To say that the reporter must be simple and lucid, even when the lecturer has failed in these respects, is to state the only criterion to which everyone, I think, would agree.

A lecture by Mr. Ford Brown is always awaited with anticipations of pleasure. One knows that some interesting matter will be illuminated by his penetrating insight and wit. His audience will not be confounded or amazed; it will be amused and pleased, and incidentally, instructed. The

title of the recent lecture by Mr. Brown was "Irony". As it turned out, the title (except for length) might have been, "The Man who Wanted to be Archbishop of Canterbury". The lecture was hardly a dissertation on irony, although some definitions were suggested, or, more exactly, some questions were asked whose answers might lead to possible definitions: (a) Is irony a statement of the contrary, or something more than this; if so, what more? (b) Is the purpose of irony to mock? Is it to unmask those who wear masks of self-protection? Some definitions by a certain Rev. Mr. Blair, a non-conformist clergyman of about 1800, were introduced from a book written for the edification of youth. The classification of knowledge by this Mr. Blair into such sub-heads as ornamental knowledge, luxurious knowledge (physics, metaphysics), etc., and the inclusion of answers to problems, for tutors, shed more light (though unconsciously) upon the nature of irony than Mr. Blair's attempt at exposition of this figure of speech. This method Mr. Brown himself chose. Contenting himself with merely saying that there are at least two sources of irony: (a) Irony by man, (b) Irony by nature - usually called irony of fate, he proceeded at once to introduce an "immense specific example". This is a favorite device of Mr. Brown's. One has not forgotten his famous lecture on Shakespeare which took the form of a description of Chartres cathedral, with slides. Except for a warning at the beginning that the audience was to keep in mind at all times that this

was a lecture on Shakespeare, the word Shakespeare was never again mentioned nor was there reference to a single play of his. This method of "an immense specific example", though unusual, has certain advantages. The lecturer can construct his example artistically with beginning, middle, and end. He can employ all the devices of the playwright, including suspense. He can entertain his audience while instructing it. And above all, the audience sees for itself those things which other lecturers might be obliged to say too professorially and with too great a show of learning. In Mr. Brown's method, concession is being made to the slowness with which most of us develop a fondness for abstract thinking. The reporter is entirely unwilling to say more, pro or con, on the pedagogical value of Mr. Brown's device. That it is a pleasant one, no one can gainsay.

Mr. Brown's researches, extending over more than two decades, on Hannah More and the origins of Victorianism, soon led him to a consideration of the Wilberforces, *père et fils*. The elder, William Wilberforce (1759-1833), was a great reformer and his statue is to be found in Westminster Abbey; the son, Samuel Wilberforce (1805-1873) is the hero of Mr. Brown's "immense specific example". To understand the story, something must be said about the state of the Anglican Church at the time of the elder Wilberforce. The liberality of the Anglican Church, following the attempt to conciliate various groups at the time of the English reformation, led to a kind of easy-going habit in the church; prelates of the church, often a place where the younger sons of the upper classes found refuge, were frequently anything but devout or pious. Dr. Johnson once said that he had never

met a religious clergyman. Preferment was often "showered" on those whose only qualification was their friendship for some great family, for example, the Churchills. Bishops were to be sober and respectable but little more in the way of Christian qualities was expected.

It was quite natural that a revolt against this state of affairs should come within the church itself. The low-church party constituted itself a faction of reform against the high-church party. William Wilberforce became the leader of this reform. His field of activity, however, extended beyond the Anglican Church itself and he became a world reformer; he advocated the teaching of Christianity in India, he fought militantly against slavery throughout the world. Within the church this cleavage was shown by the fact that for the high church, baptism was enough as a first step toward salvation; for the low church a personal conversion was necessary. In the eyes of a low churchman, even a Bishop might not be a Christian.

Into this world of church factions, the young Samuel, our hero, was born. He became a brilliant young man, taking a double first at Oxford and bent on taking holy orders. The young queen made him Royal Chaplain, and he became Bishop of Oxford when only 39 years old, and later, Bishop of Winchester. In other words he was "showered" with preferment, and obviously only by deserting the tenets of his father. One can well imagine how the followers of the elder Wilberforce, now dead, detested young Samuel, who had forsaken them.

The plot is hastening to its conclusion. The Man who Wanted to be Archbishop of Canterbury is now thwarted at every step. The appointment of

the Archbishop is made by the prime minister, but Lord Palmerston, whose interest in church and religious affairs was so slight that it was said of him that he was not even an atheist, by a long concatenation of circumstances which the reporter will omit, left decisions on church appointments to his step-son Lord Shaftsbury, who was low-church! Disraeli who followed, was a convert to Christianity, a man of whom Mr. Brown wittily remarked that it was clear from what he had been converted, but that it was not at all clear to what he had been converted. Disraeli in matters of church appointments continued the policies of his predecessor. Gladstone, who followed Disraeli as prime minister, might have been willing to offer Samuel the coveted appointment but the incumbent refused to die. And so poor Samuel never won the longed-for place where he might have found a suitable outlet for the full force of his Christian activities! And the last "smile of the Gods" at him was that his brothers and a brother-in-law had gone over to Rome on the wave of the Oxford movement.

Such is the "immense specific example" of irony. Some will wish that something had been said about irony in Greek tragedy as contrasted with irony in Shakespeare. And one might ask a huge number of such questions on matters left untouched by the lecturer. But to have expected answers to such questions would have been to have misunderstood the lecturer's artistic purpose. It is upon the basis of the artistic structure of his specific example that the lecture must be judged. And upon that basis no fault can be found.

G. B.

## THE ADVENTURES OF CHICO

The process of growing up commonly kills in us some admirable sensitivities toward our world that we enjoy as children, particularly that feeling that the human child has for Nature's child. One of us is rarely a St. Francis; instead we keep pets (that is, animal substitutes for the offspring we don't have or for the slaves we may not have), and as a rule we assume these pets to be inferior creatures.

It is to avoid this state of mind that my wife and I prefer to have a cat in our menage, for a cat brought up with the dignity, freedom and minimum pampering that is his due as a personality and a life will, more than any other tamed animal, obey and insist on our obeying the fundamental Law of Nature that respect among creatures be mutual and equal.

Can we tacitly decide who is the hero of the enchanting adventures of Chico? Is it Chico's friend (never "pet"), the roadrunner, or is it Chico himself? The latter does predominate the action, but his function is of a necessary device to exhibit all the actors and provide an understandable narrative - Spanish being at least Indo-European in descent as opposed to the obviously meaningful but exotic Whirro-Cocoricán of the Paisanito.

Dick Edelman has suggested that Chico perhaps represents God, a hero nonpareil, in this little terrain, administering justice and necessity to its denizens; but how can this God be subject to his own greatest necessity, death? Whatever happens to any animal can also happen to Chico, who is, after all, an animal too.

Let us persist in thinking of Chico this way, an animal among animals; we shall arrive at a more in-

timate understanding of the universality and permanence of emotions and passions in the living world. Chico acts as mother to the orphaned road-runner, but certainly with not more affection and patience than the possum or the doe. The boy and the bird play and fraternize much like the two coatis do. And when death enters the drama, boy or cat can effect it callously, doe or bird can fight it bravely. But in any event, there is really no action or reaction peculiar to one of the actors which might set him apart as protagonist or manipulator. This is the world, and these are its inhabitants, remarkably alike in temperaments and lives and equivalently subject to a morality that is neither artificial or disparate.

We should see more adventures of this sort, from Pain-Levy's microcosms to the planetarium's macrocosms, and thereby acquire a sense of humor and proportion that can never even be imagined in the excess footage of surrealistic psychoses, Hollywood panaceas and the self-consciousness shadow-boxing of the art film.

Bob Parslow

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#### THE WESTERN TRADITION

Of the three movies, *The Great Train Robbery*, *The Last Card*, and *The Covered Wagon*, offered as a program of "Westerns", only the first actually qualified as a "Western". The "Western" is a form that is rigid and unvarying. If the elements are omitted then, though the picture may be very good and very interesting, it must have these qualities as considered under some other category.

Every true "Western" must have two clearly defined groups known to

the junior critics as the good guys and the bad guys. Undue characterization must be avoided. No member of either group can have any understandable past before the film begins, nor any reality that will permit him to have a conceivable future after the close of the film. Both good guys and bad guys must be portrayed in black

and white and their perceptions of their world must permit no shades of grey. At the beginning of the film the bad guys must be engaged in some utterly nefarious, illegal and unjust project. They set about this project with all the subtlety of a large bull critically inspecting a set of fine Dresden. From the beginning the good guys are required to be so obtuse that they do not even suspect what is afoot. Since the audience has fathomed the whole thing some half hour before the good guys even suspect, the degree of density required of the good guys is readily apparent. However, once the good guys do begin to move, law, justice, and the eternal fitness of things rectifies the whole matter with a majestic and overwhelming display of force. (Perhaps the moral to all this is that force, exercised by good guys of course, solves all problems and eradicates all evil.) The trappings for this American morality play include lots of horses, enough powder expended in blank cartridges to have supplied the Meuse-Argonne offensive, and at least one antiseptic saloon dance hall and gambling hell. There may be a girl involved. If so, she had better be the object of the schemes of the bad guys and not the object of romantic interest for the hero. After all, the hero's best friend is his horse and it would be too bad to have anything come between them. If all of the above items are

present and the producer can manage to include several howling anachronisms for the delectation of the more alert patrons we have a real "Western". A little thought might be applied to the problem of why this particular stereotype has so much popularity in this country. Personally I suspect Pangloss of inventing the whole thing.

To turn now to some specific comment, *The Great Train Robbery* was not only the only "Western" on the bill but it was the only one of the films shown that seemed to understand that a moving picture should have motion. The sense of motion was achieved without moving the camera and with the limited technical facilities available in 1903. Perhaps it would be a good thing for Hollywood if technical matters weren't quite so simple. To put it bluntly, most producers of 1900 had a better idea of what the shooting was all about than those of 1950. *The Covered Wagon* is a case in point. It might very well be renamed *An Evening on the Couch with the Stereopticon*. Motion has been largely lost. Perhaps this is a good thing if the rate of progress of a trip overland in an ox drawn wagon is the subject. The picture certainly cannot be called realistic but it does achieve, particularly by long distance diagonal shots of the wagon train, a sense of slow massive relentless movement. The characterization of the guide given by Torrence is well worth noting as being unusually well done for any period of movie production. The shooting match shows some familiarity with early frontier stories where such bouts are portrayed with some frequency. *The Last Card*, a Bret Harte sort of thing, is just unfortunate. The story is too complex to be carried by the action, and the film resorts to excessive use of subtitles. One might just as well

stay home and read a book. If you have any interest in female wrestlers, the encounter between the ladies is interesting as a fore-runner of the classic in *Destry Rides Again* where Dietrich does some fancy grappling. Personally, I'll take Dietrich.

These three films suggest to me two problems. First, if the "Western" is an American morality play, what can we infer about our concepts of law, justice, force, and evil; and second, how did the movies manage to forget so much so fast?

Blair Kinsman

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#### MR. KLEIN'S LECTURE

A lecture is like a book in that the measure of its benefit is proportional to the degree of inspiration it has produced in its reader or listener. It is this inspiration which gives the impetus to the reader or listener's own thinking, and this is the primary aim of all education, whether through the medium of books, lectures, or the classroom. Inspiration is produced by our views' being suddenly widened and deepened by the superior understanding and greater depth of thought of the lecturer, author, or teacher. Excited by the new realms opened to us, we work in them, comparing with our former views, explaining facts by them, relating, questioning, extending; in short, *thinking*. The result is deeper understanding for ourselves.

In a lecture, a necessary prerequisite to the inducing of this inspiration is that a lecturer have enthusiasm for his subject. Unfortunately too many lectures are given at St. John's and elsewhere by misplaced persons, -persons mislaced in respect to

their subject, which is at a good distance from the sphere of their life and natural interests, and for which they haven't the necessary enthusiasm. Such lectures are a waste of time for all concerned. However, when a lecturer speaks on a subject of vital interest to him (this often is *not* the profession he is occupied in), his own enthusiasm is communicated to the listeners and induces a like interest in them. He has successfully established the true teacher-learner relation, and henceforth the measure of his benefit is unlimited, being proportional to the depth of his thinking on his subject. Such lectures stand out in the memory a long time after the others have slipped away, and serve to make the Formal Lecture one of the most important functions of the St. John's Program.

Those of us who heard Mr. Klein's lecture last year on the Seventh Book of the *Republic* could have expected no less than to have a number of insights opened to us during his recent Plato lecture. The subject this time was the understanding of the Dialogues, and the particular Dialogue he chose to exemplify what he had to say was the *Meno*. We are not to sit back and passively read the Dialogues, we were told, but must enter into them actively, considering the questions asked in the course of the Dialogue as being aimed at us, trying to answer them ourselves, and watching closely as the drama unfolds. Plato is communicating more by the action of the Dialogue than by the words; by the human drama enacted as Socrates bares the soul of Meno and tries to teach him, than by the mere answers to the questions raised in the Dialogue. To understand what Plato is communicating through the action requires that we look very closely at the Dialogue, that we understand the implications of such questions as Meno asks

and how Socrates deals with Meno as he shows himself in these implications. But how much of all this we see is dependent upon our own thinking on the problems the Dialogue is concerned with. We cannot see the difficulties of Meno until we have tried to define for ourselves what virtue is, and then his necessity for constant relapse into enumerating virtues will be understood; and in turn we will wonder at the sophistry of Socrates in not accepting such a definition, only to find finally his ulterior purpose in trying to bring Meno to a true confronting of the problem by shaking his confidence in his rememberings and laying him open to recollection. When we have reached this plane of understanding of what Plato is saying, we can see how Socrates' maneuverings, digressions, definitions are all under the control of this ulterior purpose, and are not sophistries as we thought before, nor playful sporting with a less adent antagonist, nor simply serious attempts to find what virtue is, as we should suspect on the first reading. Meno speaks the truth but does not know it, as Socrates realizes from the first. For this reason he sets traps for Meno in the attempt to turn him from considering the subject of virtue with his surface intellect only, -with regard to logical consistency and agreement to others' definitions, and to bring him to really wonder what virtue is. It is an attempt to change a soul.

If we turn to the question of what virtue is itself, rather than to the playground the question provides for the drama enacted, we find that this is also taken care of in the unfolding Dialogue. Mr. Klein showed how Meno implied in one of his first questions that virtue was knowledge. And the episode of the slave boy showed that whether it is taught or had by nature

are not alternatives: though Socrates as teacher was a necessary concomitant to the boy's learning, he could not have learned without having the truth in him by nature. Here again we are taught by the action of the Dialogue rather than the words.

The magnificence of Plato's art was amply shown during Mr. Klein's lecture as we saw how the Dialogues were wrought to communicate Plato's meaning on the finest level as well as on the grossest. No matter how closely we look, even to the turn given to the words to show the expresser's nature, and to the apparently chance choice of cognates, we find Plato communicating

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#### A D R A M A

What screaming demon's precipice  
Looms through sulfurous miasma,  
Mocking, portending abortiveness,  
So violent 'gainst the stoic drama's  
Cold, impassive, rigid peace.

What belching, sick, polluted beast,  
Existing in the crude emotions,  
Twisted in moribund convulsions,  
Longs its death, remains to be

This gory, insane scene of sordid  
Souls slowly dying, bathed

By the macabre mist's abjectivity  
A peasant's horror, a mad man's dream,  
Amidst the imperturbity.

G. R. C.

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Farewell to humility, may you ever  
Rest in the bosom of your own paradox.  
We lead the best lives, eat the best  
Food, do the best things and die the  
Best deaths; of course it's still death.  
In honor of *FLAIR* - by the printer

to us. As Mr. Klein said, the content and form cannot be separated.

Mr. Klein divided the readers of a Dialogue into three classes. The first consists of those who read or listen to the Dialogue for the first time. To them everything is dark. The second class are those who have read this and other Dialogues enough to recognise recurrent themes and to be able to reconstruct the Socratic doctrine. Classical scholars belong to this class. The third class consists of those who aim at the level of understanding of those in the Academy, who knew Plato. This degree of understanding is approached by examining the complications, recognizing the problems, the artful distortions by Socrates, -by watching every letter. This is our task, said Mr. Klein, and his lecture was certainly such as to inspire us to it.

Anton G. Hardy

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Where there is death  
And flights of nightingales  
And usually the stillnesses of  
Stark-pure angels  
I would charitably find this  
Alone  
Without even you beside me  
(Whoever you are Then)  
On some infinite moon. . .

And, O, to return this image  
I flew upon  
Unviolated to your now  
Adoring breast—

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Loved One: mystify this secret  
I withhold deep  
Deep beneath our most  
Gradually violent tongue!

C. R. Powleske

## MCDOWELL: IDEA AND IDENTITY

Serious discussions about architecture have been set off by the new President's projects for the development of the College. In order of importance, a new heating plant, a laboratory, an auditorium and a dormitory are envisaged. In this way a practical problem of a different nature from the idle talk about an ideal St. John's community confronts us and challenges our capacity to translate our ideas about the way men ought to live into the specific consideration of integrating new buildings built for the activities of the New Program with ones not so designed but already adapted by our usage and growing conventions.

Granting that there are already these many buildings on the campus, several of them of considerable distinction, it is obvious that the style of the proposed new ones is somewhat restricted. Everybody will agree that any construction must harmonize with what is here already. But it seems rather inappropriate that the pseudo-colonial style so well-adapted to the State University should intrude itself upon the fundamental integrity which St. John's by now represents to the whole country. The popular mistake about St. John's has been to assume it recommends a sentimental and slavish imitation of the ancients disregarding the modern scene; whereas, of course, it only insists that the problems of the past are always with us, demanding a constantly fresh statement and new resolution. What greater confirmation of our critics could be found than for us to attempt pallid copies of the great architectural achievements of eighteenth century Annapolis, instead of restating and renewing the ideas which are responsible for this greatness?

Clearly the mistake to which we are all prone is to assume that unity among the buildings is the same as uniformity, a uniformity which is already sadly compromised by the notion of a Georgian boiler-house. Furthermore, the assumption that flat roofs, blank walls, glass bricks, steel and concrete are synonymous with contemporary architecture is false and deceptive. The real accomplishment of modern architecture is that for the first time since the Renaissance architects no longer plunder the buildings of the past putting together Greek and Tudor, Gothic and Roman into a constantly shifting potpourri, but instead resume the tradition begun in the remote past and dominant until the Renaissance, of designing buildings whose every aspect has a strict connection with the special character of the life in and around it. With reference to the particular problem on the campus, it is conceivable that the use of red brick and white trim in the design of these new buildings might satisfy the basic demands for coherence with the old, without meaning that we must build "colonial". After all, what besides these materials unites the library and McDowell? (The reader is referred to the new brick law office on Duke of Gloucester street, just off Church Circle.)

Actually the question of materials and indeed of all these architectural details can cloud the real problem and prevent its consideration altogether. The greatness of the architecture that flourished in Annapolis was both to reflect and define certain ways of life and ideas about living that have dignity for us when we view both their public and private buildings. The vitality of St. John's is contained in its also having definite ideas about how men should act and

many formalities that attempt to embody these ideas. If its architecture fails to respect their originality and independence, it will impose on us false and degrading postures. Instead, our presumption at the seminar table where we speculate and define freely for ourselves, in the presence of Socrates and Shakespeare, should give us courage to find and make an architecture of our own in Annapolis.

*Philip Lyman*

*Dick Edelman*

## ANTI-HYPOTHESIS

Every hypothesis conceived has its anti-hypothesis. By the latter term is meant the body of facts and considerations opposed to complete acceptance of the hypothesis. In considering, or judging, we place the hypothesis on one side of a balance, the anti-hypothesis on the other, and according to which way the beam tips, declare ourselves in favor of or against the hypothesis. However, since all hypotheses are formed when there is incomplete knowledge of facts pertaining to the case, there will always be a factor, more or less large, consisting of the unknown, and it is what is done with this that determines whether we approach our balancing scientifically or not. The existence of this unknown is what allows for so much argument and discussion in the world, for usually it is a large enough factor to determine the tipping of the beam, making possible the holding of either the hypothesis or a contrary. The most fertile and everlasting subjects for discussion are those whose unknown factor is the largest, such as the existence of God, or (worse yet) the character of God, existence of the soul, life after death, etc.

What is proof in terms of hypothe-

sis? When the anti-hypothesis reaches zero, proof is attained. To take some example, Harvey's hypothesis of the circulation of the blood most will say was more favorable than the anti-hypothesis at the time of his expounding of it. The beam was tipped even more in favor of the hypothesis when the microscope enabled us to see the capillaries. Until we have seen the blood circulating in a whole body, however, (the microscope showing movement in only one small segment at a time and telling us nothing of what is going on in the rest of the vascular system), there is still anti-hypothesis, however slight it may be. This anti-hypothesis would become zero on sensible perception of the circulation and the hypothesis could then be said to be proved. Another example is if we connect two hollow glass rods by a rubber hose, and running a colored liquid through one of the glass rods we see it come out of the other, we hypothesize that the liquid has also run through the connecting hose. We have not seen it, but other possibilities are so impossible of consideration that the anti-hypothesis is almost zero. The argument for the existence of a prime mover is of this nature. Although we don't know the cause of all movement, we are unable to conceive of a possibility other than a first unmoved mover and so hypothesize it as the cause. We cannot say that the existence of a prime mover is proved, however; we can only say that in our state of experience and imagination the anti-hypothesis is low. But our state of experience is all-important. Since it extends to the happenings during the time of only a few million years and to the space of the immediate terrestrial surface plus what extensions the telescope and microscope give us, our imagination or hypothesis-

conceiving can deal only with what happenings in this limited space-time we have experienced and their extrapolations. There is much outside of our particular space-time that could be, but not being subject to our experience, is totally outside of our conception. Consequently, in the prime mover hypothesis as well as many other metaphysical questions where we are admittedly dealing with happenings outside our space-time, we have to say that the unknown factor is too large for any balancing. This, in effect, limits our speculation to such things as have come in our experience and are possible of verification by it.

The scientific method consists of accurate weighing, which in turn consists of 1) an accurate knowledge of the facts on both sides of the balance, 2) a knowledge of what facts pertaining to the case are unknown, and 3) an *objective* disposal of these facts according to probability, or if there is not enough information to determine the probability of the individual facts, a holding them in suspension during the balancing.

These three disciplines are performed by different people in varying degrees. Some are predisposed toward extreme hypotheses. They put their foot on one side of the balance and the most overpowering and patient piling up of facts on the other side will not budge them from their views. And of course they claim the whole body of the unknown for their side, becoming dogmatic about the unverifiable facts constituting it. Other people, less extreme, will allow that there is something to be said for the other side and will listen patiently to an opponent, but will stick tenaciously to the one side as long as the unknown factor will be enough to outweigh the other's proposal.

A method is scientific in inverse proportion to the degree of emotion that is brought to the balancing. Likes, dislikes, fears, desires, hates and all classes of emotion are of course prejudicial to an objective disposal of the unknown facts, and recognition of the known. Since knowledge is accurate according to the degree in which it has been approached scientifically, can we say that those two parts of man, his knowing or intellectual part, and his emotions or that part which lends what warmth and happiness life has for him, are opposed? Must the advance of the one always be at the expense of the other? Each person has his own answer to the problem according to the degree of emotionality and intellectuality he has by nature, and needs expression for. We place a dividing line at some point separating a realm for science from a realm for faith. In the former sphere, it is agreed that objective weighing of hypothesis and anti-hypothesis is the best method of procedure; in the latter, however, since the unknown factor is too large for any determination by balancing and since we need *some* belief about such things for our happiness, we believe to be true what we would like to be true (often adding a *priori* rationalization). Some need a belief in most of the things the doctrine of the Christian church has for objects of faith; others, such as Emerson, don't care about the particulars but postulate only the supremacy of the good in the universe: still others forbear judging these, to them, hypotheses, but occupy themselves with the knowable world, needing only the faith that 1) the world is knowable or ordered, and 2) they can in some measure know it.

Anton Hardy