

## 6: Free Choice Established

### A. Introduction

In this chapter, we attempt to establish *Sfc* as defined in chapter one. In chapter one, we clarified the controversy over free choice and defined *Sfc* and *Nfc* as contradictories; in chapter four, we defended this formulation. In chapter five, section E, we showed that the *PNfc* must seek to rationally affirm *Nfc*. In the present chapter, we argue that if *Nfc* can be rationally affirmed, then *Nfc* will be falsified by any rational affirmation of it. We also argue that if *Nfc* cannot be rationally affirmed, then any attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* will be self-defeating. We call “self-refuting” any statement which is necessarily either self-referentially falsified or self-defeating.

We argue in this chapter that the self-refutation of *Nfc* together with other considerations establishes *Sfc*. In attempting to rationally affirm *Nfc*, the *PNfc* necessarily accepts conditions which entail free choice. If these conditions obtain, as we assume in sections B through F, then *Nfc* is falsified. In section G we assume, for the sake of argument, that these conditions do not obtain—an assumption shown in section F to be equivalent to *Nfc*. On this assumption, the *PNfc*'s attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* cannot succeed; his act of affirming will be merely putative. A thesis which cannot be rationally affirmed is self-defeating. In sections H and I, we supply further considerations which warrant the inference from the self-refuting character of *Nfc* to the truth of *Sfc*.

Because of the complexity of this chapter, we provide the following detailed outline.

In sections B through F, we assume that the conditions for rationally affirming *Nfc* do obtain—that is, that *Nfc* can be rationally affirmed. Our

purpose in B through F is to show that on this assumption every statement of *Nfc* is inevitably falsified by its own affirmation.

In B we give the first formulation of the argument. In C we establish two key premises of the argument in B, numbers (7) and (11). In D we lay the ground for the second formulation of the argument which we give in E. In F we argue that free choice is entailed by the normativity to which the *PNfc* appeals in rationally excluding *Sfc*. Thus, in F we defend a key premise of the argument formulated in E—that is, premise (7\*). Section F completes the phase of our argument against *Nfc* which assumes that *Nfc* can be rationally affirmed.

In G we grant—for the sake of argument—the opposite assumption: that the conditions required to rationally affirm *Nfc* do not obtain. We show that if these conditions do not obtain, then any attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* is self-defeating.

In H we consider the objection which naturally arises against any attempt to refute *Nfc*—that any attempt to refute it is question-begging. In this case the objection is formulated as the claim that the *PNfc* need not attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc*. We show that the *PNfc* cannot remain in *Sfc/Nfc* if he does not rationally affirm *Nfc*. In I we show how the self-refuting character of *Nfc* together with other considerations grounds the rational affirmation of *Sfc*.

In chapter two, we considered many previous attempts to refute *Nfc* and to establish *Sfc*. We showed these attempts to be question-begging. In J we return to a consideration of these previous attempts and we show that while these attempts fail, each of them includes an important insight which is part of the total solution of *Sfc/Nfc* on the side of *Sfc*. We also show that the limitations of each of the previous attempts to refute *Nfc* are overcome by our refutation. In K we make some concluding remarks.

## B. First formulation of the argument

In this section we assume that the conditions necessary for the rational affirmation of *Nfc* do obtain. We also argue from an analysis of various modes of normativity which we will provide in section C. This formulation of the argument also has an empirical premise that there are only certain modes of normativity consistent with *Nfc*. This premise will be eliminated in the second formulation of the argument.

The proposition we attempt to prove in this section is: If *Nfc* can be rationally affirmed, then *Nfc* is falsified by any rational affirmation of it.

- 1) The *PNfc* rationally affirms *Nfc*. (By assumption.)
- 2) If *Nfc* is rationally affirmed, then the conditions obtain whereby *Sfc* can be rationally excluded. (By the clarifications in chapter five, section E.)

3) The conditions obtain whereby *Sfc* can be rationally excluded. (From [1] and [2].)

4) If the conditions obtain whereby *Sfc* can be rationally excluded, then some rationality norm must be in force. (By the clarifications in chapter five, section F.)

5) A rationality norm adequate to warrant an affirmation which excludes *Sfc* is in force. (From [3] and [4].)

6) If any norm is in force, its normativity does not require the truth of *Sfc* for the norm to be in force. (Entailed by *Nfc*.)

7) Paradigmatic, creative, logical, and technical normativity meet the condition specified in (6). (To be established in section C.)

8) Only the kinds of normativity mentioned in (7) meet the condition specified in (6). (Empirical premise discussed below.)

9) The normativity of any rationality norm appealed to by one who rationally affirms *Nfc* is such that *Sfc* is not a necessary condition for that norm's being in force. (From *Nfc* as its performatively self-referential instance.)

10) The normativity of any rationality norm appealed to by one who rationally affirms *Nfc* must be either paradigmatic or creative or logical or technical normativity, or some combination of these. (From [8] and [9].)

11) The normativity of the types specified in (10) cannot rationally exclude *Sfc*. (To be established in section C.)

12) No rationality norm adequate to warrant an affirmation which excludes *Sfc* is in force. (From [10] and [11].)

13) (5) and (12) are contradictories.

14) (5) falsifies *Nfc*. ([5] states a property of any rational affirmation of *Nfc*. [12] states a proposition entailed by the conjunction of *Nfc* with other propositions a *PNfc* must grant.)

The following observations are intended to clarify the argument.

The fact which falsifies *Nfc* is that its affirmation rationally excludes *Sfc*. This fact falsifies *Nfc* because any kind of normativity consistent with *Nfc* cannot rationally exclude *Sfc*.

As we explained in chapter five, section D, a proposition is falsified by its own performance if and only if the performance has a property such that the statement that the performance has this property and the statement of the proposition itself are inconsistent with each other.

Steps (1) through (5) of the argument show that the rational affirmation of *Nfc* has a property—the property of being conditioned by a rationality norm which is in force and which is adequate to rationally exclude *Sfc*. The statement made in (5)—that the rational affirmation of *Nfc* has this property—is inconsistent with *Nfc*.

Steps (6) through (11) show that any *PNfc* must affirm (12), which is

inconsistent with (5). If the normativity which conditions the act of affirming  $Nfc$  is limited to the kinds specified in (8), then the statement in (10) is a necessary consequence of  $Nfc$ .

In other words, the fact that the rational affirmation of  $Nfc$  rationally excludes  $Sfc$  is inconsistent with  $Nfc$ . But by assumption the rational affirmation of  $Nfc$  does rationally exclude  $Sfc$ . Therefore, there is a property of the very act of rationally affirming  $Nfc$ —its property of rationally excluding  $Sfc$ —which falsifies  $Nfc$  whenever it is rationally affirmed. Since the kinds of normativity specified in (8) cannot exclude  $Sfc$ , another kind of normativity must be involved in any rational affirmation of  $Nfc$ .

Steps (7) and (11) are defended in section C. There we show the consistency of certain types of normativity with  $Nfc$  and their inadequacy to condition a rational exclusion of  $Sfc$ .

Steps (8) and (10) are based upon an empirical assumption. The types of normativity listed in (7) are the only types we know of consistent with  $Nfc$ . The only other type of normativity we know of entails  $Sfc$ , as we shall show in section F. This empirical assumption seriously weakens the argument in its present formulation. However, we dispense with the empirical assumption in the second formulation of the argument in section E. We will be able to dispense with it because the analysis we will carry out in section D will show what kind of normativity the  $PNfc$  requires if he is to rationally exclude  $Sfc$ .

### C. Normativity consistent with “No free choice”

In this section we do two things. First, we distinguish several types of normativity consistent with  $Nfc$  and show their consistency with it. Second, we show the inadequacy of these types of normativity to fill the role of the normativity required to rationally affirm  $Nfc$ . The first part of this section establishes step (7) of the argument in B. The second part of this section establishes step (11) of the argument in B.

We distinguished various meanings of the word “ought” in chapter two, section B. These are the only types of normativity we know of. All but one of them is consistent with  $Nfc$ . Here we deal only with the types of normativity consistent with  $Nfc$ .

A kind of normativity is consistent with  $Nfc$  if and only if it does not entail  $Sfc$ . A kind of normativity would entail  $Sfc$  only if  $Sfc$  were a necessary condition for the norm to be in force.  $Sfc$  would be a necessary condition for a norm to be in force only if the norm could not be fulfilled unless  $Sfc$  were true.

The normativity of what we call a “paradigmatic norm” is the normativity of certain characteristics of a class vis-à-vis members of the class. These characteristics are taken to be normal or expected and they are a standard for evaluating the members as proper or normal members of the class.

This kind of normativity does not entail *Sfc*. The alternatives which it distinguishes are not, of themselves, alternatives for choice or action. The alternative to meeting a paradigmatic norm is to be abnormal. "The roses ought to bloom in the spring" exemplifies this kind of normativity. It is characteristic of roses to bloom in the spring; if they fail to bloom as expected, they are regarded as abnormal specimens. However, this kind of normativity does not entail that a specimen which fails to conform to it could conform by choice or action. Thus, paradigmatic normativity is consistent with *Nfc*.

The normativity of what we call a "creative norm" is the normativity of the product of creative activity vis-à-vis its own components.

This product, to the extent that it is creative, establishes norms for evaluating its own components as they are unified in the work. For example, "The red at the top of the painting ought to be more intense" evaluates a painting by a standard which in this case was not realized. The peculiarity of this norm is the fact that it is given—often imperfectly—only as a consequence of the activity whose outcome it evaluates. This kind of normativity does not entail *Sfc*. The alternatives, one of which it prescribes, are not alternatives for choice, because these alternatives are known as alternatives from the norm consequent upon the activity. Before the standard is in some way understood—that is, before the creative act—this normativity is not operative. Therefore, the normativity of creative norms is consistent with *Nfc*.

The normativity of what we call "logical norms" is the normativity of the demand that one be consistent and avoid incoherence. Logical norms prescribe how one is to think and talk if one is to do so in a coherent manner.

The normativity of logical norms does not entail *Sfc*. This normativity does not prescribe one of a set of alternatives which are open to choice. The normativity of a logical rule excludes one alternative as incoherent; what is incoherent cannot be an alternative for choice. The alternative excluded by a logical norm remains possible only so long as one is unaware of the incoherence involved in violating the norm. This is not to say that one cannot choose to overlook a contradiction. Overlooking is a possibility; even assuming *Nfc*, it is within one's power. But it is not within one's power to choose what one knows to be impossible. Therefore, the normativity of logic is consistent with *Nfc*.

The normativity of what we call "technical norms" is the normativity of consistently pursuing one's desires. These norms prescribe necessary conditions for achieving one's purpose. They are sometimes called "hypothetical imperatives." Their normativity can be seen by contrasting them with factual conditional statements. "If you wish to get to Chicago quickly, then you should fly" contains a prescriptive element which is lacking in "If you wish to get to Chicago quickly, then you will fly." The latter states only a matter of fact; the former, while no doubt based in part upon the latter, states a rule of action.

The normativity of technical norms does not entail *Sfc*. There are alternatives

here, but they need not be possibilities for choice. The possibilities are alternative means for achieving a purpose. The purpose, which is assumed, can determine which alternative will be pursued.

Someone might object that if the possibilities are not really open, then there is no difference between a factual conditional statement and a technical norm. The “ought” in a technical norm suggests a possibility of nonfulfillment. There are two grounds for this possibility. First, the complexity of the world and the limitations of human knowledge render it possible that a definite goal not specify a necessary means with its definiteness. Second, the multiplicity of definite goals pursued by an individual renders it possible that a conflict occur such that the necessary means to one goal is not employed because of priority given to another goal.

Neither of these two possibilities, however, necessarily implies *Sfc*. The first indeterminacy can be settled by weighing probabilities—a purely cognitive procedure. The second possibility can be eliminated by the predominance of an individual’s motivation toward one goal rather than another. Therefore, the normativity of technical rules is consistent with *Nfc*.

In summary, there are four kinds of normativity we know of consistent with *Nfc*. Next we show why none of these four kinds will be adequate to fulfill the role of the normativity required as a condition for affirming *Nfc* if it is to rationally exclude *Sfc*.

The normativity of paradigmatic norms cannot exclude *Sfc*. Using this notion of normativity, someone might affirm *Nfc* because it is the expected or the normal position to accept. This kind of normativity cannot, of itself, exclude a position as less reasonable. To do this, one must have a further norm which states that what is normal or expected is more reasonable. Without such a norm, this normativity states only a fact about what does and what does not measure up to the standards set by the defining characteristics of a certain kind of object. Clearly, then, this kind of normativity cannot of itself exclude any proposition as less reasonable. This kind of normativity might exclude the *PSfc* as abnormal, but does not exclude *Sfc* as less reasonable. Therefore, if the normativity involved in the affirmation of *Nfc* is understood as the normativity of a paradigmatic norm, then the affirmation of *Nfc* does not rationally exclude *Sfc*. Paradigmatic normativity would exclude an affirmation as less reasonable only if one assumed that every rational preference is the normal preference and showed one act of affirming to be more nearly normal than the other.

The normativity of creative norms cannot exclude *Sfc*. The possibilities for the evaluation of which a norm is required define *Sfc/Nfc*; they are shared by all who argue either side. Hence any difference in creativity between the *PSfc* and the *PNfc* cannot affect the quality of their positions, although such a difference might well affect the quality of their efforts to articulate and defend their

positions. Thus, a *PNfc* could only implausibly appeal to a creative norm. He might argue, for example, that his work—or some *PNfc*'s work—presents a creative achievement of the intellect by which other attempts to argue either side in *Sfc/Nfc* are to be judged. Such a norm could justify a claim that efforts to argue for *Sfc* have been uninspired, but not that *Sfc* is less reasonable. This is made clear by the fact that an even more creative effort might some day be made by a *PSfc*. Therefore, if the normativity involved in the affirmation of *Nfc* is understood as the normativity of a creative norm, then the act of affirming *Nfc* does not rationally exclude *Sfc*.

The normativity of logic cannot exclude *Sfc*. As already noted, the norms of logic can exclude only inconsistency and the nonsense which arises from it. The norms which condition the affirmation of *Nfc* are not in this sense logical norms. They are norms for preferring one account, description, or interpretation over coherent alternatives. Suppose, however, that these norms could be understood as logical norms. In this case *Sfc* would have to be excluded as self-contradictory—as, for example, the fatalist attempts to do. If *Nfc* were a logical truth, then *Sfc* could no longer be a coherent hypothesis, description, or interpretation of the world. But as has been shown in chapter three, section B, the contradictory of *Nfc* is not self-contradictory, nor is *Nfc* a logical truth. Therefore, if the normativity involved in the act of affirming *Nfc* is understood as logical normativity, then the affirmation of *Nfc* does not exclude *Sfc* as less reasonable.

The normativity of technical norms might seem the most likely candidate for the role of the normativity by which the affirmation of *Nfc* excludes *Sfc*. Clearly, any of the rationality norms which might be assumed in affirming *Nfc* are prescriptions for carrying on inquiry and making affirmations. Thus, a rationality norm might appear to be a technical rule which states what must be done to achieve one's theoretical goal. But the normative force of technical norms is also insufficient to exclude *Sfc*. A necessary condition for the force of a technical norm is that one share the purpose of the activity which it directs, since the norm states what is necessary to achieve this purpose. The force of such a norm is always conditional. But such a conditional norm could rationally exclude *Sfc* only conditionally. If a *PSfc* shares the very same purposes as the *PNfc*, then this condition will be fulfilled and he will feel the force of this kind of normativity. It could be reasonable for such a *PSfc* to give up his position. But it is indeed unlikely—as we showed in chapter three, section F—that every *PSfc* will share the precise purposes of the *PNfc*.

If the *PNfc* presents the *PSfc* with a technical norm, and if this norm is in force for the *PSfc*, then the *PSfc* in fact shares the goal upon which the norm is grounded. In this case, the actual prescriptivity of the norm arises from the irrationality—which amounts to inconsistency—of wanting a certain end more than any other yet still rejecting a necessary means to it. In other words, the

prescriptivity of a technical norm in this case is reducible to matters of fact and rules of logic.

Someone might object that certain technical norms might have a normativity other than that which we have attributed to them. Such norms would prescribe one of two coherent alternatives, such that the openness of these alternatives would not arise merely from the complexity of the world nor from the multiplicity of purposes—all equally reasonable to pursue—which various individuals do pursue. The openness of the alternatives would arise on some ground which nevertheless established one of the possible purposes as unconditionally more reasonable to pursue. We will show in section D that precisely this sort of normativity is required to rationally exclude *Sfc* in the rational affirmation of *Nfc* by a *PNfc*. We show in section F that this sort of normativity entails *Sfc* and thus is unavailable to the *PNfc* even if the rule which he uses to express it takes the form of a hypothetical imperative.

In sum. Technical normativity actually prescribes only if the one to whom a technical norm is proposed shares the goal on which its prescriptivity is conditioned and has no conflicting goal to which he gives priority. This fact limits the usefulness of technical norms in rationally excluding one of a pair of contradictory propositions. Whenever it is rational for a particular person not to share in desiring a certain purpose, then no technical norm derived from that purpose is in force for him. Thus, he is not unreasonable if he ignores the norm and any affirmation which is conditioned by it. Therefore, if the normativity involved in the affirmation of *Nfc* is that of a technical rule, then the act of affirming *Nfc* does not rationally exclude *Sfc*, except in cases in which the normativity which happens to be formulated in a technical norm is of the peculiar sort discussed in the preceding paragraph.

The preceding discussion of the inadequacy of technical rules to rationally exclude *Sfc* can be illustrated as follows.

There might be a social scientist who became convinced by the evidence available to him that belief in *Nfc* has socially bad consequences—for example, that it lessens individual initiative and the sense of social responsibility. From this he might conclude that *Sfc* is the more reasonable position, although a deterministic hypothesis is more attractive in other respects. As a social scientist, such an individual would have basically the same goals of describing, explaining, and controlling behavior as any *PNfc*. He is not rationally required, however, to respond to a *PNfc*'s appeal to rationality norms which they both agree upon, because this hypothetical social scientist considers one of these norms for inquiry—namely, that explanations should be morally and socially useful—to be overriding in this situation. Like the determinist, his purpose is partly theoretical. Yet his concrete idea of what theoretical inquiry is to achieve is different, and this gives rise to his use of different rationality norms.

The *PNfc* cannot exclude such a position as unreasonable, if his normativity

is only that of technical norms which state necessary conditions for achieving goals of inquiry which he happens to want most strongly to achieve, but which not everyone need share.

#### D. Normativity required to affirm “No free choice”

Step (8) of the argument in section B is an empirical assumption. In the present section we replace this empirical assumption by means of an analysis of the normativity required to rationally affirm *Nfc*. This analysis will yield a positive characterization of the requisite normativity. This positive characterization of the properties of the normativity required to rationally affirm *Nfc* will enable us to dispense with the empirical assumption in B and thus to formulate a definitive proof in E. The proof in E will not depend upon the characterization in C of types of normativity compatible with *Nfc*; hence, it makes no difference if there are types of normativity compatible with *Nfc* not considered in C.

Someone might observe that in C we did consider a type of normativity which might fill the role of the normativity required by the *PNfc* to rationally affirm *Nfc* and exclude *Sfc*. The normativity in question would be of a sort which meets three conditions. First, it could be expressed by a technical rule; second, it is grounded in a purpose which allows that there be alternative ways of acting in respect to it; and third, it prescribes one of these ways as unconditionally more reasonable to follow. We agree with this observation. In the remainder of this section we show that the normativity necessary for rationally affirming *Nfc* prescribes unconditionally and prescribes one of two open but incompatible possibilities. We show in section F that this sort of normativity entails *Sfc*; if this sort of normativity is in force, then *Sfc* obtains.

The arguments in C that the kinds of normativity compatible with *Nfc* are inadequate to rationally exclude *Sfc* already provide some indication—a negative one—of the properties of the normativity necessary to rationally affirm *Nfc*.

Unlike the normativity of a paradigmatic norm, the normativity required to rationally affirm *Nfc* must prescribe an alternative as more reasonable and not simply as a proper member of a certain class. Unlike the normativity of a creative norm, this normativity must prescribe an alternative which is unconditioned by a given product. Unlike the normativity of a logical norm, this normativity must prescribe one of two alternatives, both of which are logical possibilities. Unlike the normativity of a technical norm, this normativity must prescribe unconditionally; a person must not be able to escape the force of the norm merely because he happens to have different—but equally reasonable—goals and priorities. There emerge here certain features of the normativity required to rationally affirm *Nfc* insofar as this rational affirmation excludes

*Sfc*. These features suggest a description in positive terms of the required normativity.

The normativity involved in the affirmation of *Nfc* has properties partly common to the normativity of logical norms and technical norms.

Like a logical norm, the norm required to rationally affirm *Nfc* has an unconditional force. Logical norms are conditioned neither upon one's purposes nor upon contingent states of affairs. Whatever one might wish to do or to think, one must be consistent. The exclusion of *Sfc* in the rational affirmation of *Nfc* is also unconditional.

However, the normativity needed to exclude *Sfc* is like that of a technical norm in that it prescribes one from among a set of coherent alternatives. *Sfc* is coherent, yet it is rationally excluded by the rational affirmation of *Nfc*.

Thus, the normativity required to rationally exclude *Sfc* unconditionally prescribes one of two coherent and incompatible alternatives. However, the unconditionality of this prescribing is distinct from that of logical norms. Also, the openness of the alternatives presupposed by this prescribing is distinct from the openness of the alternatives presupposed by technical norms.

The unconditionality of a logical norm consists in the fact that its violation is irrational in the sense of being incoherent. The unconditionality of the normativity required to rationally exclude *Sfc* consists in the fact that the *PSfc*'s violation of it—as the *PNfc* sees it—is irrational in the sense that it violates a rationality norm which both the *PSfc* and the *PNfc* must respect.

The alternatives, one of which is prescribed in rationally affirming *Nfc*, are not only logically coherent, but also physically and psychologically possible, and they are not such that either of them is indispensable for achieving a purpose necessarily shared by everyone. There are open alternatives; both *Sfc* and *Nfc* can be affirmed. However, if the affirmation of one alternative is rational, the other alternative is not open to a person who is committed to the rational pursuit of truth.

A *PNfc* might object to the foregoing analysis by saying that the normativity of the rationality norm which he assumes in affirming *Nfc* either precludes open alternatives to his affirmation or prescribes only conditionally. However, as we showed in chapter five, section E, in the context of *Sfc/Nfc*, *Nfc* must be *rationally* affirmed. Unlike other grounded affirmations—those based on immediate evidence and/or derived from logical truths—a rational affirmation does leave an alternative open as a possibility, but as one less reasonable to accept. Moreover, the *PNfc* who attempts to ground his affirmation by an appeal to a technical rule for achieving a particular purpose rather than to a rationality norm finds that he cannot exclude rational opponents. We made the latter point clear in our analysis and critique of operational grounds for affirming *Nfc* in chapter three, section F.

In this section we have shown that in rationally excluding *Sfc* the *PNfc*

requires a normativity which prescribes unconditionally and between open alternatives. This clarification of the kind of normativity required to rationally exclude *Sfc* permits us to dispense with the empirical assumption we made in our first formulation of our argument in section B. The second formulation of our argument will show that if the conditions obtain which are necessary to rationally affirm *Nfc*, then *Nfc* is inevitably falsified by any rational affirmation of it. After stating this argument in E, we will show in F that the prescriptivity of the *PNfc*'s rational exclusion of *Sfc* cannot be in force unless *Sfc* is true.

### E. Second formulation of the argument

- 1) The *PNfc* rationally affirms *Nfc*. (By assumption.)
  - 2) If *Nfc* is rationally affirmed, then the conditions obtain whereby *Sfc* is rationally excluded. (By the clarifications in chapter five, section E.)
  - 3) The conditions obtain whereby *Sfc* can be rationally excluded. (From [1] and [2].)
  - 4) If the conditions obtain whereby *Sfc* is rationally excluded, then some rationality norm must be in force. (By the clarifications in chapter five, section F.)
  - 5) A rationality norm adequate to warrant an affirmation which excludes *Sfc* is in force. (From [3] and [4].)
- (The preceding steps are identical with the corresponding steps in the first formulation in B; the following steps are different.)
- 6\*) Any norm by which a *PNfc* can rationally exclude *Sfc* has a normativity which prescribes unconditionally and prescribes one of two open alternatives. (Established in D.)
  - 7\*) Any norm which prescribes unconditionally and prescribes one of two open alternatives is in force only if the person to whom it is addressed can make a free choice. (To be established in F.)
  - 8\*) Any norm by which the *PNfc* can rationally exclude *Sfc* is in force only if the person to whom it is addressed can make a free choice. (From [6\*] and [7\*] together with the clarifications in chapter five, section F.)
  - 9\*) Someone can make a free choice. (From [5] and [8\*].)
  - 10\*) *Nfc* is inconsistent with (9\*).
  - 11\*) *Nfc* is falsified by (9\*). ([9\*] states what the *PNfc* does in rationally affirming *Nfc*, assuming that the conditions obtain whereby one can rationally affirm *Nfc*.)

The present formulation differs from the formulation in B; the present argument is based upon a statement of the property of any rational affirmation of *Nfc* in virtue of which the *PNfc*'s act of rationally affirming *Nfc* performatively falsifies *Nfc*. This property entails *Sfc* as we shall show in F; yet no

rational affirmation of *Nfc* can lack this property. Thus, if the conditions obtain whereby the *PNfc* can rationally affirm *Nfc*, *Nfc* is inevitably falsified. We consider in G what follows if these conditions do not obtain.

The argument depends upon an explication of the property of any rational affirmation of *Nfc*. We have provided a clarification in D which reveals this property; we do not refute *Nfc* by imposing conventions upon the *PNfc*. We assume nothing which any *PNfc* can deny.

The argument in B rested upon an empirical premise—namely, that the only kinds of normativity consistent with *Nfc* are the kinds dealt with in C. We admitted that this empirical premise leaves open the possibility of another kind of normativity compatible with *Nfc* and adequate to rationally exclude *Sfc*. However, the clarification in D permits us to dispense with that empirical premise. Thus, the present argument makes clear, as the argument in B does not, why any rational affirmation of *Nfc* is falsified by a necessary property of the *PNfc*'s own act of affirming his position.

Our present argument includes (7\*) as a key premise. The proposition in (7\*) is one of the most important theses in this work. If it is true, then no *PNfc* can avoid appealing in his very attempt to deny *Sfc* to a norm which entails *Sfc*. We next prove (7\*).

## F. Normativity and free choice

In this section we show that a norm which prescribes unconditionally between open alternatives has, as a necessary condition for its being in force, the ability to make a free choice on the part of the person directed by such a norm. We do not argue in the present section that *Sfc* is true. We are concerned here only with a conceptual relationship—that between a certain kind of norm and free choice. We express the necessity in this relationship by saying that this kind of normativity “entails” free choice.

There clearly is some sort of close connection between the relevant normativity—the normativity required by the *PNfc* in his rational exclusion of *Sfc*—and free choice. A choice is free if and only if there is a choice between open alternatives such that there is no factor but the choosing itself which settles which alternative is chosen. The normativity in question directs a person with respect to an act which he might choose as one of two open alternatives, and this norm directs him by prescribing unconditionally.

Nevertheless, the relationship between such normativity and free choice is not one of mutual entailment. If choices which are experienced and naturally judged to be free actually are free, then among such choices are many to which no normative demand seems relevant. For example, one might have the experience of choosing between staying in town over a weekend to entertain a visiting friend and going on a weekend vacation with another friend. One

experiences such a choice as his own and experiences nothing requiring either alternative, not only in the sense that he is aware of no condition determining him but also in the sense that he experiences no normative demand to choose one alternative rather than the other. In fact, his experience is simply that both possibilities are attractive, but the two are incompatible, and there is no way to settle which to do except by choosing.

Although the relationship between free choice and a norm which prescribes unconditionally between two open alternatives is not one of mutual entailment, still it is clear that if one is free, he could be bound by the kind of demand which the *PNfc* makes in rationally affirming *Nfc*. If one is free, then the two alternatives must be regarded as open; one can choose either of them. Yet one of them is prescribed—that is, one is rationally preferable.

For our argument, the important aspect of the relationship between free choice and a norm which prescribes unconditionally between two open alternatives is that free choice is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of such a norm. We argue for this thesis as follows. If one is determined by any factor whatsoever either to fulfill the norm or not to fulfill the norm, then there are not two open alternatives. The alternative to which one is determined will be the only one which can be realized, whether or not he is aware of this fact. But the sort of normativity relevant here is just the sort which implies that there are open alternatives; this was shown in D. Thus, nothing *determines* the fulfillment or the nonfulfillment of the norm. Although nothing can determine the fulfillment of the norm, still the norm does prescribe; it prescribes unconditionally. Thus, the norm must be able to be fulfilled, but it cannot be fulfilled by a necessitated or determined response. In other words, if the norm actually prescribes, then the person to whom it is addressed both must be able to bring it about that the norm be fulfilled and must be able to bring it about that the norm not be fulfilled—that is, he must be able to choose freely.

The preceding argument can be stated in another way. If a norm which prescribes unconditionally and between open alternatives is such that the one to whom it is addressed can fulfill it, but is not determined to fulfill it, then he can choose to fulfill it. Clearly, if one *can* but *need not* choose one of the alternatives, then he is free in that choice. The norm in question *is* such that a person directed by it can fulfill it but need not fulfill it; if he were determined, then the alternatives would not be open. We showed in D that the alternatives of affirming either *Nfc* or *Sfc* are open. If one were determined either to fulfill or not to fulfill the norm, then the norm would not prescribe unconditionally. We showed in D that the norm does prescribe unconditionally.

It has often been argued that when someone says: "This is what you ought to do," the person addressed intuitively takes the speaker to mean: "You have two alternatives; you can do either; you ought to do this one." Kant argues in this way in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.<sup>1</sup> But our argument in the present

section is different from Kant's argument, which depends upon the unconditional—that is categorical—character of moral norms. If a norm prescribes conditionally, then its fulfillment depends upon natural conditions. According to Kant, a norm can be unconditional only if it is based upon a reason. Kant's argument clearly begs the question vis-à-vis the *PNfc*; Kant assumes a reasons/causes distinction which no *PNfc* need admit. Moreover, there is at least one type of normativity—logical normativity—which prescribes unconditionally and which can actually prescribe even if the person who is directed by it could not make a free choice. A logical norm prescribes the only coherent alternative; thus there are no open alternatives and no need for choice.

Our use of the fact that the norm is unconditional is different from Kant's. In our analysis, it is the fact that the norm prescribes among *open* alternatives which precludes either of the alternatives being determined. The *unconditional* character of the norm according to our analysis requires that—if the norm is to be in force—it *can* be fulfilled even though, because the alternatives are open, it cannot be determined to be fulfilled.

Thus, Kant was correct in observing that “ought” implies “can.” His oversight was in not noticing that there are several meanings of “ought” which correspond to distinct meanings of “can.” In this section, we have shown that the “ought” which expresses the normativity required for any rational affirmation of *Nfc* implies the “can” which is included in the expression of *Sfc*.

### G. “No free choice”—either false or self-defeating

In the argument in sections B through F, we have assumed that the conditions for rationally affirming *Nfc* obtain. We have shown that on this assumption, although the *PNfc* can rationally affirm *Nfc*, it is inevitably falsified. Thus on this assumption, *Sfc* is established.

The self-referential argument in sections B through F catches the *PNfc* in action. But it is often conceded that even those who hold *Nfc* true cannot avoid thinking and talking as if they were free when they actually engage in some activity requiring deliberation and choice. Thus, it seems possible that the argument merely shows an instance in which the *PNfc* cannot help thinking and talking as if *Sfc* were true.

In other words, we assume in B through F that the conditions obtain whereby *Nfc* can be rationally affirmed. But there is another possibility. Perhaps the conditions required to rationally affirm *Nfc* do not obtain; if so, *Nfc* cannot be rationally affirmed. If any one of the conditions necessary to rationally affirm a proposition does not obtain, then the proposition in question cannot be rationally affirmed. If any of the necessary conditions for each and every rational affirmation never obtains, then in no case can *Nfc* be rationally affirmed.

The possibility we consider in the present section is that *Nfc* is true. But if a

free choice can never be made, then *Nfc* cannot be rationally affirmed. If *Nfc* cannot be rationally affirmed, then the argument against *Nfc* in B through F is inadequate, since that argument proceeds on the assumption that the *PNfc* can rationally affirm *Nfc*.

Thus, the *PNfc* might admit that at times he inconsistently thinks and acts as if *Sfc* were true. But the *PNfc* will insist that even if he, like all men, must at times think and act as if *Sfc* were true, still this inevitable state of affairs does not count against the truth of *Nfc*. Among the states of affairs in the world, all of which the *PNfc* regards as determined, the *PNfc* recognizes mistakes and illusions, even inevitable illusions.

We respond to this line of reasoning by showing why on this alternative assumption, the *PNfc*'s attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* is inevitably self-defeating.

A performatively self-referential proposition is self-defeating if the self-referential instance renders the affirmation of the proposition pointless. For example, unrestricted skepticism is self-defeating in this way. The performatively self-referential instance of "All affirmations are groundless" is "The affirmation that all affirmations are groundless also is groundless." Thus, skepticism renders any act of affirming it pointless; any ground one might have for affirming skepticism is removed by the assumption, implicit in that affirmation, that skepticism is true.

Any rational affirmation of *Nfc*—assuming *Nfc* true—is self-defeating in this way. *Nfc* implies that at least one condition required to rationally affirm *Nfc* never obtains. The reason why one condition for rationally affirming *Nfc* never obtains if *Nfc* is true is that the truth of *Nfc* entails the falsity of *Sfc*. The falsity of *Sfc* in turn entails the impossibility that the norm to which any *PNfc* must appeal in attempting to rationally affirm *Nfc* can be in force. The impossibility of this norm being in force entails that the rationality norm required for a rational affirmation of *Nfc* cannot be in force; thus the truth of *Nfc* entails the impossibility of rationally affirming *Nfc*.

As we have just shown, the performatively self-referential instance of *Nfc* requires that any rational affirmation of *Nfc* be impossible. If *Nfc* is assumed to be true, then it cannot be rationally affirmed. One might seem to rationally affirm it, but one's act would be putative, not genuine, for it would be conditioned upon a norm which was itself void inasmuch as what it required for its validity could not be given. The performatively self-referential instance of *Nfc* renders ineffectual any attempt to rationally affirm it. This instance requires that any affirmation of *Nfc* not be a rational affirmation, since any rational affirmation is conditioned upon a norm which cannot be in force unless *Sfc* is true. Thus, if *Nfc* is true any attempt to rationally affirm it is self-defeating.

Someone might object that if we are to be consistent with our stated assump-

tion in the present section, then we must grant for the sake of argument that *Nfc* is true. If *Nfc* is true, then surely it must be rational to affirm *Nfc*. For what could be more rational than to affirm a proposition which is, in fact, true?

But we have not conceded that *Nfc* is in fact true. The assumption—for the sake of argument—that *Nfc* is true is not equivalent to knowledge that *Nfc* is true. If one grants a proposition for the sake of argument, then one must grant whatever follows from the *proposition*; in other words, granting an assumption is granting whatever would obtain if the proposition were true. However, the claim to know that *Nfc* is true presupposes that the conditions obtain whereby the proposition *can be known* to be true. Thus, the claim to know that *Nfc* is true—that is, the claim that *Nfc* can be rationally affirmed—implies more than that the state of affairs obtains which would obtain if *Nfc* were true.

Our point here can be illustrated by a certain sort of agnosticism with respect to the existence of God. Some Christians hold that precisely because God exists and utterly transcends human reason, no one can know whether God exists or not. This position obviously is coherent. It would not be so if the truth-conditions of a proposition were identical with the conditions for affirming that proposition.

Inasmuch as any attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* is self-defeating, the *PNfc*'s inconsistency in thinking and acting as if *Sfc* were true when he tries to rationally affirm *Nfc* is not an avoidable inconsistency. The activity of rationally affirming is unlike other activities in which a *PNfc* might engage while inconsistently acting and thinking as if he were free. If *Nfc* is true, then the implicit appeal by the *PNfc* to a normativity which entails *Sfc* is futile. The norm cannot actually prescribe; the attempt to affirm *Nfc* necessarily fails. What is more, only if the attempt to affirm *Nfc* necessarily fails can the *PNfc* avoid the inevitable falsification which—the argument in B through F has shown—occurs on the assumption that *Nfc* can be rationally affirmed.

## H. The inescapability of the dilemma

In G we compared skepticism with *Nfc*. Any attempt to affirm skepticism is self-defeating. Unless *Nfc* is false, any attempt to rationally affirm it is self-defeating. The question is: Need the *PNfc* attempt to *rationally* affirm *Nfc*? Perhaps he can affirm *Nfc*, without rationally affirming *Nfc*. If so, the *PNfc* can escape. *Nfc* is not falsified merely because the *PNfc* affirms it, but only if he *rationally* affirms it. Likewise, *Nfc* is not self-defeating merely because the *PNfc* attempts to affirm it, but only if he attempts to rationally affirm it. It is only in attempting to *rationally* affirm *Nfc* that the *PNfc* must appeal to the normativity which entails *Sfc*.

The *PNfc* is faced with a dilemma. If his attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* can succeed, then *Nfc* is inevitably falsified, as we have shown in B through F. If

*Nfc* cannot be falsified—because it is true—then any attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* inevitably fails, as we have shown in G. Faced with this dilemma, the *PNfc* has only one escape. He can claim that he can affirm *Nfc* to be true, but that he need not attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* in the sense of “rationally affirm” which we clarified in chapter five, section E.

However, the clarifications in chapter five, section E, show that our use of the expression “rationally affirm” is not a convention established arbitrarily to refute *Nfc*. Rational affirmations are a sub-set of affirmations having epistemic legitimacy—that is, of grounded affirmations. Other sub-sets of this set are affirmations of formal truths and affirmations of propositions which articulate immediately experienced states of affairs. Affirmations lacking epistemic legitimacy are those wholly without warrant.

Thus, if the *PNfc*'s claim has epistemic legitimacy without being a rational affirmation in the sense defined, then *Nfc* must be either a formal truth or an immediately evident fact. As we showed in chapter three, sections A and B, it is neither of these. Moreover, *Nfc*, insofar as it is a general proposition about the world—*No one can* make a free choice—not only depends upon evidence, but also upon grounding the affirmation in the evidence. Rationality norms do this as we explained in chapter five, section F. Affirmations conditioned by such norms, as we showed in chapter five, section E, are rational affirmations.

There remains only one possibility. Perhaps *Nfc* can be affirmed, although the affirmation of it is not warranted. An affirmation which is not warranted might nevertheless be true. We agree that someone might affirm *Nfc* without claiming epistemic legitimacy for his affirmation. Necessarily lacking any rational ground, a *PNfc* might claim that *Nfc* is true. This position, if our argument in sections B through F is correct, is the only position the *PNfc* can take. To affirm one's position in this way, however, is to withdraw from the philosophical controversy.

Once more, we might be accused of question-begging. The preceding argument presupposes that the *PNfc* must *somehow* affirm *Nfc*. Perhaps he need not affirm it at all.

We admit that *Nfc* need not be affirmed. It can be posed as a question or included in fictional dialogue. Whether *Nfc* is true or not, its utterance can be considered to be part of a technique useful for solving social problems. *Nfc* can be used as a heuristic device, even by someone who considers *Nfc* false.

Someone might utter *Nfc* as part of a program of conditioning people to forget *Sfc*. Of course, this would not be an affirmation—that is, a claim that *Nfc* is or even might be true. If the utterance included any expression of a leaning toward *Nfc* rather than *Sfc*, then, as we showed in chapter five, section E, it would be an affirmation. But it need not be.

However, such an utterance of *Nfc* is not inconsistent with the affirmation of *Sfc*. Only an affirmation of *Nfc* can exclude the affirmation of the contradictory

proposition (*Sfc*) as false, less reasonable to believe, or in any way less likely to be true than *Nfc* itself.

Therefore, if any *PNfc* wishes to propose *Nfc* as true—or as at all more likely to be true than *Sfc*—then the *PNfc* must affirm *Nfc*. As we explained in chapter five, section E, “affirm” need not imply a claim of certitude. Thus, anyone who wishes to consider the possibility that *Nfc* *might* be true as anything more than a mere possibility is in a strange position. He either must avoid affirming *Nfc*, however weakly, even when talking to himself, or he must affirm *Nfc* without any warrant whatsoever.

We say, “He must avoid affirming *Nfc*, even when talking to himself.” For rhetorical reasons, we speak of the *PSfc* and the *PNfc* as if they were distinct persons. However, this distinction is irrelevant to the logic of our argument. As Plato says, reasoning can be a dialogue of the soul with herself. To affirm is not primarily to perform an act of communication, but to perform a propositional act, an act by which one seeking truth prefers one proposition to its contradictory. Whether one wishes to gain agreement with his affirmation or not, whether he even expresses it in speech, the conditions necessary for making it must obtain. Insofar as a rational affirmation depends upon a rationality norm, the act of rationally affirming a proposition can succeed only if the norm is in force. If *Sfc* is false, the rationality norm on which any successful rational affirmation of *Nfc* would depend never could be in force. Thus, no one could affirm *Nfc* rationally, but only groundlessly, even when talking to himself.

This is not to say that someone might not entertain *Nfc* without affirming it. In fact, he might express his thought to others. But there could be no argument between someone who affirmed *Sfc* and someone who nonaffirmatively expressed *Nfc*. The latter is not making a claim. This option, then, is not open to one who wishes to suggest that *Nfc* is true. Moreover, it follows that someone in this position cannot accuse his opponent of begging any questions. His “position” is not a position defended in argument; he takes no stand on a question which might be begged. In other words, this “*PNfc*” is not a *PNfc* at all. He utters *Nfc* but does not affirm it and thus does not deny *Sfc*. Only one who denies *Sfc* joins issue in *Sfc/Nfc*.

At this point there is another move which someone might wish to make. He might claim that he is not making an affirmation of *Nfc* because on his own theory affirmations cannot be made. His utterance *could* be nothing more than, for example, a conditioning device.

This position is not necessarily incoherent, but it is questionable whether anyone consistently maintains it. Either of two possible attitudes might be involved. One would be consistent, avoiding any attempt to rationally affirm any proposition, and withdrawing altogether from any attempt to participate in philosophic or other intellectual discussion. The other would be an inconsistent attitude, denying the possibility of rationally affirming propositions to the

extent necessary to render his own position impregnable to self-refutation, but at the same time assuming—perhaps, even, pretending, the better to condition us—that some possibility of rational controversy remains, and that a position such as this one could be considered, taken seriously, and perhaps even affirmed within such a controversy.

### I. Free choice affirmed

We have shown in sections B through F that any rational affirmation of *Nfc* is inevitably falsified, unless the act of affirming it fails because the normativity it requires is not in force. We have shown in G that the attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* inevitably fails; every such attempt is self-defeating. We have shown in H that the *PNfc* must attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc*. Thus, we can say without qualification that *Nfc* is self-refuting—that is, necessarily either self-falsifying or self-defeating. Yet we have not shown that *Nfc* is certainly false.

Since *Sfc* and *Nfc* are contradictory propositions, if the argument in B through H had shown *Nfc* false, it also would have shown *Sfc* true. However, the weaker conclusion we have thus far established—that *Nfc* is either self-falsifying or self-defeating—does not by itself entitle one to affirm *Sfc* as a proposition which is firmly established. We now show how the self-refuting character of *Nfc* together with certain other considerations does warrant a rational affirmation of *Sfc*. Our claim is that one can be said to “know” that *Sfc* is true in a very strong sense—in the same sense in which one can be said to “know” that there is an external world.

We showed in F that there is a kind of normativity which is in force only if *Sfc* is true. We showed in D and in G that in trying to rationally affirm *Nfc*, the *PNfc* cannot help assuming some norm or other having this kind of normativity. We did not invent this normativity nor did we characterize it by stipulation. Rather, we found it by explicating what is necessarily involved in the *PNfc*'s own attempt to rationally exclude *Sfc*.

Inasmuch as the normativity which entails *Sfc* is something one *finds*, it is a datum. Of course, it is not a sense datum, but it is given in the experience of engaging in rational controversy—in particular, in the experience of attempting to rationally affirm *Nfc*. The *PNfc*'s appeal to some rationality norm or other is a fact; moreover, it is an inescapable fact for him unless he ceases to be a *PNfc*. The normativity of the norm to which the *PNfc* must appeal is an aspect of this inescapable fact. In this sense, the normativity which entails freedom is a datum. One experiences this normativity somewhat as one experiences the normativity of rules of formal logic. Anyone who understands, follows, and appeals to any rationality norm—that is, anyone who makes or even considers making any rational affirmation whatsoever—has the phenomenon of this normativity present to his awareness.

The phenomenon of the normativity which entails *Sfc* is both like and unlike the phenomena of choice, of which the *PSfc* and the *PNfc* offer contradictory interpretations. These phenomena are alike in that the normativity of rationality norms prescribes the making of a choice and thus entails that *Sfc* is true, and the phenomena of choice provide a person with grounds for judging that he is making a free choice. They also are alike in that both the givenness of the normativity which entails *Sfc* and the givenness of the experience of choosing are logically compatible with *Nfc*. In other words, one can admit both data, yet affirm *Nfc* without contradicting himself.

But while the data of the experience of choice and the datum of the normativity which entails *Sfc* are similar in some ways, they differ in an important respect. Consideration of their difference yields results even more interesting than those yielded by consideration of their likeness.

The data of the experience of choice ground the judgment that one is making a free choice partly by something negative—that in making a choice a person *does not* experience anything making him make the choice he makes. Thus, these data are of evidential value only insofar as one considers them in a framework of expectation according to which what is not given is taken as significant by its absence. The normativity of rationality norms, insofar as this normativity is a phenomenon, has no similar negative aspects. One's experience of this normativity is not an awareness of something involving the absence of an awareness of something else. Thus, the phenomenon of the normativity which entails *Sfc* points to its truth without presupposing a framework of expectation according to which what is not given is taken as significant by its absence. In other words, the normativity assumed by one who attempts to rationally affirm *Nfc* entails *Sfc* no matter what other state of affairs obtains or does not obtain.

Thus, the data of the experience of choice and the datum of the normativity of a rationality norm present different obstacles to the *PNfc*. The *PNfc* must *explain* the data of the experience of choice; he succeeds in explaining them if he establishes *Nfc* and gives a plausible account of why people are unaware of the determining factors which make them choose precisely as they do. Thus, the evidential value for a *PSfc* of the data of the experience of choice can be undercut by the *PNfc*, without the latter having to dismiss the data as illusory. However, even if the *PNfc* could fully account for the datum of the normativity which entails *Sfc*, his explanation would in no way undercut the evidential value of this datum for a *PSfc*. No matter how the datum of the normativity of rationality norms originates, the *PSfc* can show, as we have shown in F, that this normativity entails *Sfc*. An account by a *PNfc* of the genesis of this normativity would be irrelevant. We ourselves think this normativity is prior to any free choice. But its being so is of no help to the *PNfc*. The normativity which entails *Sfc* is relevant precisely insofar as it functions as evidence. The

*PNfc* certainly is in no position to suggest that the fact that evidence and reasons derive entirely from factors other than a free choice provides any ground for thinking such evidence and reasons impotent to establish the conclusion of the argument.

Nevertheless, the datum of the normativity which entails *Sfc* does not by itself entail the *truth* of *Sfc*. The phenomenal normativity establishes *Sfc* only if the norm is in force—that is, if it actually prescribes, if it is not null, if it can be fulfilled. We have shown in F that if *Nfc* is true, the normativity cannot be fulfilled. If *Nfc* is true, then the phenomenon of a normativity which demands that *Sfc* be true must be an illusory phenomenon. Only if the phenomenon of this normativity is illusory is the normativity in principle null.

The normativity which entails *Sfc* might be rendered null in a particular case by a merely contingent fact. For example, a norm which demands temperance might be rendered null by the psychological incapacity of an addict to restrain himself. But the evidential value for the *PSfc* of the phenomenon of the normativity of rationality norms is in no way lessened by the possibility that the norms be nullified by contingent facts. Only if *Nfc* were shown to be true would the evidential value of the phenomenon of this normativity be undercut.

Arguments which proceed from experience take for granted that appearances are to be accepted at face value except to the extent that there is some reason for not so taking them. This assumption is a rationality norm: Phenomena are to be regarded as real unless there is some reason to distinguish between appearance and reality. On this rationality norm, the normativity which entails *Sfc* is to be regarded as real unless there is some ground to distinguish between appearance and reality. Moreover, since the phenomenon in this case is of evidential value without considering it in a framework of expectation according to which what is not given is taken as significant by its absence, a distinction between appearance and reality in this case can be made only if the phenomenon is an illusion. Thus, the rationality norm requires us to suppose that *Sfc* is true unless there is a reason to reject the phenomenon of the normativity of rationality norms as illusory.

Might the phenomenon be an illusion? Yes. The phenomenal normativity fails to demonstrate that *Sfc* is true because one can accept the normativity as phenomenon and yet affirm *Nfc* without contradicting himself. This phenomenon and the existential fact that someone has the ability to fulfill the norm's demand are distinct in such a way that they might exist apart without any logical absurdity. Facts are not logically necessary, and the givenness of one fact does not render absurd the supposition that a distinct fact not be given. Thus, the phenomenon of the normativity which entails *Sfc* might be an illusion—"might" here signifying mere possibility.

However, the conclusion that *Nfc* is self-refuting does establish something about *Sfc*. The *PNfc* attempts to rule out *Sfc* by showing that there is something

about choice or about man or about the world or about the nature of things which excludes this peculiar capacity. But we now know that the  $PNfc$ 's project is impossible in principle. Thus,  $Sfc$  is a proposition having a peculiar status. One might call it "epistemically necessary," meaning by this that it *cannot* be rationally denied. An epistemically necessary proposition might still be false, but its possible falsity is irrelevant in a rationally conducted controversy.

We have already shown that a very stringent rationality norm requires that  $Sfc$  be accepted as true unless there is a reason to reject the phenomenon of the normativity of rationality norms as illusory. It is possible that this normativity be an illusion, precisely insofar as it is possible that  $Nfc$  be true. But propositions which articulate mere possibilities give one no reason whatsoever for questioning data, much less for regarding them as illusory. Thus  $Sfc$  must be accepted as true. To refuse to affirm it is to groundlessly reject as necessarily illusory a phenomenon—the phenomenon of the normativity of rationality norms.

Someone who cares nothing for rational discourse might take his stand on the mere possibility that  $Nfc$  is true and that the phenomenon of the normativity of rationality norms is illusory. He might arbitrarily and groundlessly refuse to accept the truth of  $Sfc$  and even irrationally and dogmatically insist that  $Nfc$  is true. Such a person might at the same time pretend to participate in rational discourse; he might play the role of sophist. If the normativity of rationality norms were illusory, not only would one be unable to rationally affirm  $Sfc$ , one would be unable to rationally affirm any proposition whatsoever. The rational grounds for all discourse in science, philosophy, history, criticism, theology, and the practice of every liberal art and profession would be merely apparent. A sophist might rejoice in such a prospect; no sincere participant in the intellectual life can entertain it.

The conclusion that  $Sfc$  must be accepted as true is a conclusion about the world. The  $PNfc$  attempts to exclude a conceivable human capacity from the world.  $Sfc$ , then, not only means that there is a possibility that someone might make a free choice, it means that there is a person who has the capacity to make free choices.

Who is this person? At least anyone who understands rationality norms, who is aware of their normativity, and who is guided by them in a conscious pursuit of truth is such a person. At least anyone who deliberately engages in the intellectual life can make free choices. It is not a special capacity, like creative genius, reserved to a few. It is a common human capacity, possibly absent only from those who cannot make any rationally grounded affirmations in the context of a purposeful effort to reach truth.

There is a further question: Do people make free choices? Is the capacity to make free choices exercised?

To answer this question we must return to a consideration of the phenomena

of choice. People do experience making choices. This experience also is not something special, reserved to a few. It is a common human experience which most people have on many occasions during their lives.

In the experience of making a choice, as we explained in chapter three, section D, a person confronts purposes which are not commensurable. Prior to choice, one lacks an order of priorities sufficient to establish one alternative as preferable to another. In making a choice, a person does not simply experience himself ending deliberation and initiating action. He does experience this, of course, but in choosing the person who makes a choice also experiences himself setting a criterion, making commensurable what was not commensurable. A person experiences his endorsement of other necessary conditions for his choice; he experiences setting a priority which will stand unless he alters it by a subsequent choice.

In choosing a person has a sense of freedom because of all that is positive in his experience; he judges that he is making a free choice because he does not experience anything making him make the choice he makes, and he assumes that what he does not experience is not operative. The  $PNfc$  has an initially plausible case insofar as he points out that this framework of expectation could be undercut. One's judgment that one is making a free choice could be mistaken without the experience being illusory if one's choice actually were determined by some factor of which one remained unaware.

However, the person who makes a choice is by no means unreasonable in supposing that he is making a free choice; his judgment is rationally warranted until it is challenged. The rational warrant for the initial judgment that one is making a free choice when one has the experience of choice is simply that the apparent should be taken at face value unless there is some reason for supposing otherwise. In other words, the same rationality norm we stated previously in showing the evidential value of the normativity of rationality norms also applies to the experience of choice itself.

However, there is a difference. The experience of choice could be an inadequate warrant for the judgment that one is making a free choice without this experience being illusory. This is so precisely inasmuch as a person's judgment also depends upon his taking as significant his lack of awareness of any determining factor. However, since  $Nfc$  is self-refuting, there cannot be any way to displace in principle the framework of expectation. In other words, one could only show that a person never makes free choices when he judges that he does make them if one could show  $Nfc$  true, and this cannot be shown since  $Nfc$  is self-refuting, and its character as self-refuting together with the normativity which demands free choice establishes  $Sfc$  as true.

Thus, in general, if a person supposes that he is making a free choice, there is no reason to think that he is not making one.

Still, one can ask whether the judgment that one is making a free choice might not be mistaken in particular instances. In one sense, the judgment might be mistaken, for a person could fail to attend to his own experience, not have all that is involved in the experience of choice—for example, settle an issue by previously established priorities—yet afterwards think he has made a free choice. Similarly, a person can choose freely but not have as many available alternatives as he might suppose. These possibilities have been discussed in chapter three, section D. But what if a person does have the experience of choice, including the experience of determining himself to one alternative by establishing a priority which makes previously incommensurable purposes commensurable? Can a person with this experience be mistaken in judging that he is making a free choice?

We think a mistake in such a case is a logical possibility, but no more than that. The judgment cannot be undercut by any line of argument which would rule out its correctness on some general principle, for any such line of argument would include *Nfc*, and *Nfc* is self-refuting. To undercut the judgment that someone has made a particular free choice, one would have to point to some particular factor correlated with his choice and claim that this factor determined the choice. But how could such a claim be made good? A person who understands what free choice is will point out that there are many necessary conditions of his freely choosing as he does, and these conditions will correlate with his choice, but these conditions also are conditions for not making the same choice. To establish the relationship of the supposed determining factor to the choice actually made, one would have to show that without this factor, the choice would not have been made. In other words, one would have to show the truth of a subjunctive proposition about a particular state of affairs, a state of affairs which has a uniqueness—as choices do—such that it cannot be regarded as a mere specimen of a type.

The conclusion of this last line of argument seems to us to show that if a person has all the appropriate data of choice in a particular case, then his judgment that he has made a free choice is no more defeasible than is the general proposition, *Sfc*. The status of such a particular judgment, we admit, is a complex question, and so we are not as confident in this conclusion as we are in the conclusion that *Sfc* must be accepted as true.

In reaching the latter conclusion, we pointed out that to refuse to accept *Sfc* is to groundlessly reject as necessarily illusory a phenomenon which is given. Such groundless rejection is possible only because it remains to deny a truth based upon data when there is in principle no way to show these data as other than what they seem.

Michael Slote, arguing against skepticism with respect to the reality of the external world, points out that the skeptic does not contradict himself. Like us, Slote relies on rationality norms in his argument, although he calls such norms

“principles.” One of these he calls the “Principle of Illusion and Evidence,” which he states as follows:

. . . one who is (even in the slightest degree) rationally justified in believing any (fairly specific) causal claim must have evidence which he is rationally justified in trusting or using in order to support that claim, and must, therefore, not be rationally justified in believing that all his sense and memory experiences are illusory (non-veridical).<sup>2</sup>

This principle—or one very like it—can be put more briefly: If one cannot possibly have any good reason for rejecting experience as illusory, one ought to accept it as genuine.

It is possible that there be no external world. It is possible that *Nfc* be true. But in either case, one must reject data as illusory and in neither case can one possibly have any reason for doing so. Once this state of affairs becomes clear, it is speculation against the value of rational discourse to ask for proof that there is an external world or that *Sfc* is true. The demand for proof at this point is a demand which in principle cannot be met. It is a demand that one show a position—there is a world; there can be free choices—to be necessary when its contradictory is not logically, but only rationally, absurd. To refuse to affirm as rationally established positions such as these because one’s demand for demonstration of absolute necessity is not met is to arbitrarily reject rationally necessary positions by setting an impossible condition for affirming them.

A position which is rationally grounded, which in principle cannot be displaced, and whose contradictory is a mere possibility can be said to be “known.” Thus, *Sfc* is established. It is among the truths we know.

## J. Previous arguments for free choice

In chapter two, we considered previous arguments for *Sfc*. These were the argument of those who invoked immediate experience, the argument of those who proceed from the awareness of moral obligation, William James’s argument, Thomas Aquinas’s argument, and the arguments of those before us who tried to develop a self-referential argument against *Nfc*. Of all the self-referential arguments, we gave special consideration to James Jordan’s, because of its merits. We concluded in chapter two that all previous arguments failed to establish *Sfc*. Previous arguments either assumed that the evidence of choice by itself established *Sfc* or they required premises which a *PNfc* need not accept. Thus we concluded that previous arguments failed to accomplish what they attempted.

Despite this failure, previous arguments against *Nfc* are philosophically valuable. Each of these types of argument has a sound insight at its basis, and

each of these insights contributes to a full understanding of free choice. It is appropriate at this point to consider these insights and to place them within a comprehensive understanding of free choice, an understanding developed out of our argument against *Nfc* and our characterization of *Sfc*. As we integrate these insights into our own framework it will become clear how the defects in each of the previous attempts are overcome in our work.

Although prior arguments for *Sfc* taken together have almost everything necessary to establish *Sfc*, the errors and limitations of each approach renders impossible any mere synthesis of them. Thus, although we profit from what has been accomplished by others, we think our work makes its own contribution toward securing *Sfc*. This contribution depends to a great extent upon our concern to avoid question-begging against the *PNfc*. Thus, in what follows we take special care to point out how the argument we propose avoids question-begging in the ways in which previous attempts did not.

The argument from immediate experience was sound, at least to the extent that there is an experience of choice; any attempt by a *PNfc* to deny the elements of this experience is mistaken. Moreover, the experience of choice does lead to judgments—"I have made a free choice"—which on the whole surely are sound. These judgments, as we have explained in I, are not undercut and cannot be undercut by theories which attack as in principle mistaken the framework of expectation within which one considers his own experience. We have concluded that the individual who thinks he *knows* he has made a free choice does know it.

The defect in the argument from immediate experience is that it fails to provide any serious response to the challenge of arguments for *Nfc*. Many who defend *Sfc* on the basis of experience proceed as if *Nfc* simply does not exist in the field of philosophical controversy. However, if anyone—*PNfc* or *PSfc*—proceeds as if he simply has no opposition, he is dogmatic. Moreover, those who argue from immediate experience contribute little to the clarification of the nature of free choice or to the issues at stake in *Sfc/Nfc*. Only through developing arguments, we believe, can these issues and concepts be clarified. For our part, we think that in developing the argument for *Sfc* in B through I we have also clarified the concept of free choice.

Thus, if we are correct, our development of the argument for *Sfc* has remedied the defects of the argument from immediate experience.

The argument based upon moral responsibility certainly is correct in claiming that there is a normativity which entails *Sfc*. The normativity to which the *PNfc* appeals when he attempts to rationally affirm *Nfc* is a normativity to which the *PNfc* must appeal if he is to remain in *Sfc/Nfc*. In fact, the same normativity belongs to all rationality norms. All affirming in rational discourse appeals to the same normativity. Thus, it is clear that there are undeniable

examples of the sort of normativity which those who pressed the argument from moral responsibility use as their point of departure.

The *PNfc*, often in the role of compatibilist, tries to explain away the normativity to which the *PSfc* points in the argument from moral responsibility. However, the normativity to which the *PNfc* appeals in seeking to rationally affirm *Nfc* cannot be explained by reduction to any other sort of normativity. Thus, the concern of the *PSfc*, who argues for *Sfc* on the basis of moral responsibility, that *Nfc* would undercut morality is not an irrational fear.

The normativity which is discernible in any rational attempt to affirm anything whatsoever embodies a morality immanent in the intellectual life itself. As such, this morality is an epitome of man's moral responsibility in every field of action. This normativity is irreducible to any mere set of natural conditions; one cannot reduce this "ought" to any "is" which does not already embody it. However, the exclusion of naturalistic descriptivism does not require that one abandon the intellectual life—or human life in general—to arbitrary options. The demand of this normativity is both rational and unconditional, although one can choose to disregard it.<sup>3</sup>

The difficulty with the argument from moral responsibility is not that those who develop it appeal to anything unreal as their point of departure. The difficulty is that they simply assume the reality of a sort of normativity which they merely affirm to be incompatible with *Nfc*; they do not exhibit this sort of normativity and show its incompatibility with *Nfc*.

Precisely by showing in D that this sort of normativity is necessary for the *PNfc*'s rational affirmation of *Nfc*, and that no other sort of normativity will do, we show the irreducibility of the moral normativity which those who argue from moral responsibility wish to defend.

Moreover, those who argue from moral responsibility generally assume a point which seems intuitively obvious—namely, that "ought" implies "can." We have clarified the soundness of this intuition in F, and we think the point to be in need of the sort of defense we provided for it there.

In clarifying this peculiar sort of normativity, we also have shown in what way it is unconditional. Kant and many others distinguish categorical from hypothetical imperatives. But they fail to distinguish the unconditional demands of logical norms from the unconditional normativity which prescribes one of two open alternatives.

Thomas Aquinas's argument for free choice is based upon a distinction between man's ultimate good and the goodness inherent in any alternatives between which a person can choose. Any particular purpose embodies only a limited goodness, which can never appeal to every aspect of the human personality. Thus, for Aquinas, the goods between which human persons choose are incommensurable in themselves. By establishing a personal order of

priorities, choice makes limited goods commensurable with each other. In developing his argument, Aquinas provides one of the most accurate descriptions of the experience of choice. He also has a clear understanding of the normativity which corresponds to free choice and distinguishes this normativity from that of logical and of technical norms.

Aquinas's accurate understanding of free choice was most useful to us in clarifying the controversy. By stressing the special character of moral normativity and the incommensurability of goods, Aquinas provides insights which find their place in our argument's use of the special character of the normativity of rationality norms and in our account of the very possibility of action which is rationally directed but which, nevertheless, is not determined by the reasons which guide it. Aquinas's argument falls short insofar as he lacks the method of self-referential argumentation. Lacking this method, he is unable to show that *Nfc* is self-refuting. His exposition of free choice fails—if it is taken as a demonstration—to avoid question-begging.

The proponents of previous self-referential arguments saw the potentiality of settling *Sfc/Nfc* by this method. They contributed to the development of the method itself, and they made an important contribution to the controversy by compelling their opponents to begin to face up to the implications of what a *PNfc* is doing when he tries to rationally affirm *Nfc*.

However, previous self-referential arguments against *Nfc* lacked a fully explicit methodology. Moreover, proponents of previous self-referential arguments generally assumed the distinction between reasons and causes; in doing so their arguments became question-begging. By showing that the normativity involved in any rational affirmation is a type of normativity irreducible to other kinds, we articulated a basis for making a distinction between reasons and causes.

Again, previous proponents of self-referential arguments failed to make clear—as we pointed out in chapter two, section E—the distinction between the prescriptivity of logical norms and the prescriptivity of an unconditional norm which entails *Sfc*. What many philosophers, such as J. R. Lucas, fail to show is that if man is something more than a merely physical entity, then *Sfc* is true. This point cannot be taken for granted. Our argument has clarified this matter by distinguishing between logical normativity and that normativity which is required for rational affirmation. Without this distinction, there is a serious danger that, as with Kant, the unconditional normativity of moral requirements will be mistaken as a demand for logical consistency. Such a view makes it impossible to explain how people freely and knowingly choose to do what is morally evil.

Previous self-referential arguments against *Nfc* also failed to make clear the precise property of the *PNfc*'s affirmation which leads to the falsification or self-defeat of his affirmation or attempted affirmation. We have made clear (in

D) the property of the *PNfc*'s act of affirming which leads to the downfall of *Nfc*.

Again, previous self-referential arguments—including our own first attempt—did not take fully into account the way in which the experience of choice enters into the solution of the problem. When one first discovers the technique of self-referential argument, there is a temptation—which ought to be resisted—to suppose that it can yield results of value even if one ignores data other than those included in the position being refuted. We have shown in I how important the experience of choice is, and we have made clear that the refutation of *Nfc* does not of itself establish *Sfc*. The rational affirmation of *Sfc* has a very solid warrant, but this warrant is not independent of the experience of choice nor is it independent of the experience—a datum of another sort—of the normativity of rationality norms.

William James's argument took account of experience. He makes the point that any argument for *Sfc* in a certain way depends upon a free choice. As he says: "Freedom's first deed should be to affirm itself." In other words, James realized that one could, after all, choose to be a *PNfc*. James closely relates these observations to the difference between the world-views of those who affirm *Sfc* and those who deny it. For him, this difference has an important moral dimension; it distinguishes two basic stances toward reality.

James, however, fails to make clear the rational grounds for affirming *Sfc*. He seems to consider *Sfc* and *Nfc* to be on a par. We have shown how far this view is from the truth. While one can opt for either position, the option in favor of *Sfc* is as rational as any option can be, while the option for *Nfc* lacks any rational basis whatsoever.

James also tends to ignore an aspect of the problem most clearly understood by Aquinas—namely, that man must choose among incommensurable purposes, and that not all norms prescribe in the same way. Yet James certainly had a valuable insight. In section H we showed that although the *PNfc* cannot rationally affirm *Nfc*, yet must attempt to do so if he is to remain in *Sfc/Nfc*, still, on the bare logical possibility that *Nfc* could be true even though it is altogether indefensible, someone could continue to think *Nfc* true. James's analysis of opting throws some light on this possibility, especially to the extent that he takes into consideration the fact that *Sfc/Nfc* is not a merely theoretical issue, but also a practical issue, and in some sense a moral issue.

## K. Concluding remarks

Philosophy is unsatisfying in many ways, both to its practitioners and to its audience. Philosophical arguments often fail by begging the question; they are based upon assumptions which need not be granted. It is not surprising that philosophical arguments often fail in this way. Other disciplines proceed from

stable assumptions agreed upon by competent practitioners of each discipline and seldom questioned by them. Philosophy, by contrast, examines assumptions; ideally, it leaves nothing unquestioned.

Thus, practitioners of philosophy are engaged in continuous reexamination of the presuppositions of their inquiry. This fact gives philosophy its unsettled appearance. Philosophical questions appear never to be satisfactorily answered; the history of philosophy appears to show little progress toward the resolution of any important issue. *Sfc/Nfc* is a case in point.

But the appearance of interminable and futile argument is to some extent deceptive. One can reach definitive conclusions in philosophy; one can make progress in philosophy. We think the argument we articulate in this chapter is an example of what any philosopher can do. Of course, many a philosopher who has labored to produce a serious work has shared the same belief in the possibility of progress and has had the same fond opinion of the fruits of his labor. While we are confident that the argument we present is sound, we entertain the possibility that we are mistaken, for we are aware that our initial attempt to articulate a self-referential argument against *Nfc* was defective in many respects, although it seemed sound to us when we published it. Therefore, we welcome careful, critical examination of the present attempt. We are reasonably confident that the main lines of the argument can withstand criticism.

The method of self-referential argumentation described in chapter five and used in this chapter is not new. Plato used it. But so far as we know, no one has previously formulated it reflectively and applied it systematically. The present work was undertaken partly as an attempt to explore the potentiality of this method. We wished to see whether we could construct a cogent self-referential argument against *Nfc*, an argument which would avoid begging the question. Moreover, we regard *Sfc/Nfc* as one of the most important controversies in the whole of philosophy. The implications for human life—both for the life of the individual and for the life of society—of accepting either side are enormous. Thus, we undertook this work partly for methodological and partly for substantive reasons.

We think it better to *use* a philosophical method which seems to have promise than to limit oneself to describing its logical features and speculating about its promise. One success is more of a basis than many philosophers who have recommended a philosophical method have had for their confident expectation that it would bring about significant progress in the field. To the extent that the present experiment is a success, we think the method of self-referential argumentation gives good promise of further important success. For example, self-referential argumentation might be used to show the irreducibility of propositional knowledge to physical or behavioral events and processes; it might also be used to show the irreducibility of the physical world to

phenomena and/or ideas. We have not attempted to articulate a self-referential argument for either of these theses and we know of only sketchy attempts to do so. But in carrying through the present experiment, we have clarified—in ways we ourselves did not expect at the outset—the precise nature and limitations of self-referential argumentation.

Besides resolving *Sfc/Nfc* and clarifying the nature and limits of self-referential argumentation, we think the present work shows another point of considerable importance—namely, the role of rationality norms in inquiry. Other philosophers have noticed that there are such norms, but few have articulated what they are and few have made use of them in full awareness of what they were doing.

Our argument in sections H and I suggests that rationality norms are the ethics of inquiry and rational discourse generally—or, at least, an important part of this ethics. Moreover, we have shown that the ethics of inquiry and rational discourse is more intimately related to the content of reasonable affirmations than many philosophers have supposed. We have shown that rationality norms play a central role in one philosophical controversy—*Sfc/Nfc*.

The *PNfc* refutes himself in attempting to rationally affirm *Nfc*, for he appeals to a norm which is in force only if *Sfc* obtains. Thus, either the rational affirmation of *Nfc* falsifies it or the attempt to rationally affirm *Nfc* is self-defeating. Therefore, it is only by clarifying the implications of the rationality norms required to rationally affirm *Nfc* that our argument makes clear that *Nfc* is self-refuting.

Moreover, the truth of *Sfc* is not established solely by the self-refutation of *Nfc*. The self-refutation of *Nfc* shows that in principle *Sfc* cannot be rationally denied. One must appeal to a rationality norm to draw the further conclusion that *Sfc* must be affirmed. But this rationality norm is stringent. Thus, given that *Sfc* cannot be rationally denied, it is altogether unreasonable to refuse to affirm it, just as it is wholly unreasonable to refuse to affirm that there is an external world.

Of course, someone can choose to violate rationality norms. When one engages in inquiry and discourse, values other than truth are at stake; one can make an immorally excessive commitment to these other values and thus degrade the intellectual life. But anyone who sincerely engages in philosophical controversy is committed to conforming to rationality norms. Thus, the *PNfc* is caught between the implications of his own position, insofar as it is self-referential, and the implications of his participation in the intellectual community, insofar as he is thereby committed to use rational discourse in pursuit of truth.

We are inclined to think that clear understanding of the role of rationality norms in inquiry will help to solve other philosophical problems. Rationalists

have regularly treated rationality norms—for example, the principle of sufficient reason—as if they were metaphysical truths. In reaction, empiricists have tended toward skepticism with respect to conclusions rationally grounded by rationality norms. Such conclusions are neither evident matters of fact nor logically necessary truths, and so empiricists have felt free to deny them. At the same time, as our examination of arguments for *Nfc* in chapter three makes clear, empiricists have used—at least implicitly—rationality norms required for their own argumentation as readily and as uncritically as rationalists have used them. Clarification of the ethics of inquiry will make for more consistent reasonableness or, at least, will call attention to practices involving unreasonable inconsistency.

In claiming that we have established a philosophical thesis on a substantive and perennial question, we realize we make a claim which is unfashionable in many quarters. Of course, any *PNfc* will look for a fatal flaw in our argument. But if none is found, not only should the *PNfc* change his position, but also the proponent of the view that philosophy can establish no substantive theses should amend his view.

In claiming that we have established *Sfc*, we are not merely making a claim about how language is used or about how phenomena appear in consciousness. We make an ontological claim: Someone can choose freely. The proposition concerns human beings and their capacity for choice. The making of such an ontological claim is what is unfashionable. Moreover, our claim is especially likely to be unwelcome because it is for *Sfc*. A claim which would seem modest enough if it were made on behalf of a generally accepted position must seem arrogant if it is made on behalf of a position generally assumed to be as unacceptable as the entire worldview of which historically it was a part.

Even in recent years, while most philosophers have officially eschewed theory in philosophy, arguments for *Nfc*—or, what is more common, arguments which take for granted the theoretical truth of *Nfc*—have continued to be offered and to be well received. Yet *Nfc* is a paradigmatic instance of speculative metaphysics. Not only do most arguments for it assume the principle of sufficient reason, but also the thesis itself makes a very ambitious claim—namely, to comprehend the structure of reality sufficiently to exclude from it altogether any capacity of human persons to make free choices.

If *Nfc* is a metaphysical thesis, so is its contradictory. But *Sfc* is a far more limited position; it depends upon no extravagant claim about the whole of reality or the whole of the world. That someone can make a free choice can be rationally affirmed on the basis of limited knowledge such as we human beings are capable of. It is no ambitious piece of metaphysical speculation.

Moreover, we do not suppose that what we have done in the present work is the first stage in some grand, metaphysical synthesis. Metaphysical systems are fascinating, but history does not suggest that they are likely to settle important

controversies. Rather, speculative metaphysics creates the controversies which a more Socratic approach—an approach at once critical and open—must resolve or dissolve.

Even if, as we believe, the approach we have used in the present work can be used successfully in dealing with other philosophical problems, the result will never accumulate to form a description of the essential features of reality or even a complete inventory of what there is. Self-referential argumentation gets results by making clear the limits of reductionism; a self-referential argument works against a position which maintains “Reality is nothing but . . .” or “There is no room in reality for . . .” or “It is in principle impossible that . . .”

Of course, not every claim that something is in principle impossible is self-refuting. Some such claims are made on the basis of limited principles which do obtain in the limited regions to which our limited knowledge gives us access. Thus, we claim that it is in principle impossible that *Nfc* be rationally affirmed, but this claim is as far from the claim of a speculative metaphysics as the claims of contemporary physics are from the claims of Laplace, which we discussed in chapter three, sections C and E.

In sum, philosophy does make progress. Methods of argumentation which can yield substantive results are articulated. The implications of participation in the intellectual community are clarified. Substantive issues are settled, not merely dissolved. Yet we do not think there can be any science of reality as such. As human persons must choose among limited and incommensurable goods, they must be satisfied with limited and incompletely synthesized truths. Only so does one maintain openness to the Good and the Truth Itself.