Perelman, Adhering, and Conviction[1]

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Chaim Perelman has his eye on the chance that the traditions of philosophy and rhetoric might help renew each other. For philosophy, Perelman wants to reenact a variant of the Socratic founding move, calling the activity down from the heavens to dwell again among citizens. The competing claims of privileged access to self-evidence, he believes, have served over the years only to wear each other down. Philosophers have shown too much anxiety over the relation between their propositions and the truth. Perelman proposes instead to renew philosophy by attending to the relation between a philosophical proposition and the philosopher adhering to it. Philosophy proceeds through free choice of adherence. This choice is and ought to be made like any other choice, with the philosopher situated right in the middle of the problems and opportunities supported by her culture, her discipline, her traditions. With choice comes responsibility; the philosopher engages herself when she adheres philosophically. So the new philosophy needs a new organon: reasons for choosing that are more than arbitrary, but less than necessitated. It is rhetoric, taken as the discipline of practical reasoning about choice of adherence, that will perform this function.[2]

Rhetoric, meanwhile, has grown old, the classical wisdom frittered away into a jumble of devices. Philosophy can aid its renewal by attending again to the conceptual underpinnings of the art. Perelman rediscovers the three facts about persuasive discourse: that there are audiences, that there are adherences, and that there are arguments (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1951, 252). These three facts he links together in his often repeated first principle: arguments are "the discursive techniques which allow *inducing or increasing of the adherence of minds to the propositions presented for their assent*" (1969, 4; emphasis is Perelman's own).[3] Any discursive activity that induces or increases the adherence of audiences, to that extent is an activity ruled by the new rhetoric. Since philosophy, politics, law, religion and even a person's interior conversa-

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tion all involve inducing and increasing adherence, all fall within the borders of *l'Empire rhétorique,* Perelman's *Realm of Rhetoric.*

Both of Perelman's projects of renewal rest heavily on adherence: it is the principle activity of the philosopher, the orator's *telos.* In this paper, I will inquire whether the concept can bear the weight Perelman puts on it. I will argue that it cannot: important features of both civic and philosophical discourse cannot be accounted for just in terms of adherence. Before beginning the argument, however, it will first be necessary to determine what Perelman thinks adherence is.

I

Perelman does not define *adherence*—no great flaw, since his use of the term seems to rely on its ordinary meaning. At the core of both *adhésion* and its standard Englishing is the notion of adhering, that is, sticking. We say that two things are sticking when (1) they are next to each other, (2) they resist being parted, and (3) the origin of the resistance lies within or between them. Representative instances of sticking include magnets, which stick together by mutual attraction; things glued together, which stick on account of the glue between them; and suction cups, which stick because of a vacuum—one could say, because of nothing. These are distinguished from things that resist separation by being bound, sewn, or tied together from the outside. We determine if two things are stuck together by trying to separate them and gauging the resistance. We also conclude that two things are sticking if, as Aristotle somewhere says, they move together: if with no apparent external cause their contiguity remains stable though the things themselves shift.

In talking of adherences, Perelman wants to extend the concept of sticking to cover as well the sticking of a person and a proposition. He appears to have something like the following in mind. Although we do not ordinarily speak of propositions as being next to persons, there does seem to be a sense in which propositions are close to a person if they are at hand for her use. Thus some kind of contiguity is implied when a person *finds* a proposition to be true or false, when she *gives, takes,* or *holds* it; *stands on* or *by* it; *comes to* a judgment about it; *proceeds from* it; *rests on* it. A readily available proposition, however, still might be readily set aside. We call something an adherence only when we find resistance to ef-

forts, for example, by means of argumentation, to make the proposition less available. And the origin of this resistance must be within or between the person and the proposition, since we do not say that a person adheres to a proposition when she is under threat of force to keep it close to hand—say, repeating it or acting upon it. (In such cases, we say that she is *bound* to accept the proposition.) The examples above suggest that it is often the person who is the origin of the sticking; it is she who holds, takes, finds, and so on. Still, other possibilities are imaginable. A person might find a proposition so compelling as to force her adherence, as it were, against her will.

We can be more assured that Perelman himself would ratify this sketch because what counts as an adherence under it will do what his theory requires. Perelman's adherences take their place in a system of persuasion. They are (inter alia) the premises that the orator finds in the auditor. The orator commonly wants to induce her auditor to use a proposition in making a decision, and she wants to be able to count on the proposition being thus available. A proposition to which the auditor sticks will be both ready to use and reliably so. Why it is also important that this stable contiguity be due to something within or between the auditor and the proposition is less apparent. It may be because Perelman is trying to guarantee that persuasion is not imposed from outside, but rather arises from the auditor herself. An adherence, however, may not be able to perform this function as Perelman desires. I will return to this issue at the end of the paper.

Adherence of persons and propositions, like other types of sticking, permits degrees. Things can be more or less strongly, firmly, permanently, surely, tightly, or (in Perelman's common language) intensely affixed to each other. Indeed, Perelman often announces this as his second principle: "What is characteristic of the adherence of minds is its variable intensity" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 4).[4] It is further one of his reasons for consolidating philosophical with more ordinary argumentation. If we refuse to grant "the absolute validity of the criterion of self-evidence"—which, according to Perelman, philosophers have traditionally asserted—then "the difference between truth and opinion is no longer one of kind but one of degree. All opinions become more or less plausible, and the judgments that form the basis of that plausibility are not themselves clear of all controversy. There is no longer any knowledge that is objective or impersonal" (1963, 131). At the

cost of reducing the privilege of the philosophical, Perelman thus rescues the ordinary from being dismissed as irrational. His insight is that the diverse degrees of sticking have diverse and reasonable uses. We keep a sort of easily removed "post-it" adhesive for the flux of daily assessments, employ an ordinary household glue for longer-lasting political and ethical beliefs, and reserve a super-strength epoxy for such self-evident propositions as "I exist" and "the future will resemble the past." All, however, are equally forms of sticking; all are equally absorbed into Perelman's system.

Adherence is the starting point for argument. It is also what an effective argument achieves. But this does not exhaust the service that sticking—though not under the rubric "adherence"—renders to Perelman. The potential an argument has to persuade arises for Perelman from the transitivity of the relation of sticking: a person's adherence to one proposition can be transferred to a second through an intermediate sticking between the two, a *liaison* (1982, 21, 49). Such proposition-to-proposition connections are distinguishable by kind, and it is the burden of the *New Rhetoric* to expose, inventory, and order these kinds. The capacity of propositions to stick together also underwrites other aspects of Perelman's system. Successful arguments and socialization leave behind in a person residues of stuck-together propositions that eventually congeal into sizeable clusters (1982, 49; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 20, 513). A person retains adherence to such clusters because of natural inertia and the reinforcing effects of epideictic discourse (Perelman and Olbrects-Tyteca 1969, 105–6 and § 11). It is the cluster of propositions thus maintained that defines an audience to the orator and provides enough material from which to argue. And it is the cluster that partially defines rationality. A particular adherence is made rational—rationalized—when it is made to stick with the cluster of existing adherences. It is coherent if it can cohere. The clusters themselves are rationalized as the particular adherences that constitute them are refined one by one through argumentation (1982, 24; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 42–43, 62). Perelman hopes therefore that through persistent public controversy the overarching clusters that define our common life will evolve slowly in the direction of increased soundness (1982, 160; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 514).

All this is how Perelman uses our ordinary concept of adhering. In doing so, he takes on a heavy burden. He needs to show that

persons and propositions, and propositions and propositions, are the sorts of things that can in fact stick together. And he needs to show that all rhetorical phenomena can receive a complete account just in terms of sticking. It is this second claim that I want to examine further.

Perelman relies so heavily on the notion of adhering in part because of its apparent generality. By it can be overcome distinctions between domains of argument—distinctions that at least prevent a unified theory of discourse from being developed or at worst relegate some whole domains to logical oblivion (Arnold 1986, 40; Wintgens 1993, 452–53). Both opinion and knowledge are, qua adherence, the same, both facts and values, both the propositions admitted by the dialectical opponent and those more tacitly in the back of the rhetorical auditor's mind. Perelman does not admit differences in kind among adherings, only differences in degree. If an auditor (of any type) sticks to one proposition, then any proposition that sticks with that proposition (in the forms Perelman catalogs at length) is an available argument. But the cost of generality is often paid in particularity. Not all phenomena of rhetorical interest can be accounted for just in terms of adherence. In specific, I will argue in the next section that Perelman is unable to give an account of at least one important relation of persons to propositions, namely, that which is involved when a person has a conviction.

II

In one common meaning, a conviction is a strong belief, as when we say "it's my conviction. . . ." A belief is strong when it is has great force, vigor, or compelling effect: in the situations of interest to Perelman, a belief is strong when it compels the person to keep it at hand for making decisions. If a belief has great force, we expect it to exert that force successfully and routinely; a conviction is thus an adherence that, other things being equal, is followed. At the same time, "conviction" refers to what the person holding a strong belief experiences. It is a feeling of certainty or assurance as opposed to doubt. Often the strong belief and the strong feeling are the result of some special process. A person is thought to gain convictions through being convinced: by observing facts, by self-evidence, by rational argument, and so on. Convictions under criminal law may be paradigmatic here. The conviction pronounced against the ac-

cused expresses a judgment that will be followed; it must be beyond a reasonable doubt, and it must arise out of a process due the accused.

Perelman has no trouble taking this sort of conviction into his system. He is happy with degrees of adherence, he is willing to admit a procedural difference springing from address to the universal audience, and he argues—though somewhat obscurely—that he can account for the feeling of conviction as well (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, § 6).[5]

There is another meaning of *conviction,* however, that will give Perelman more trouble. This is the conviction we refer to when we say that a person is a person of convictions or that she has deep convictions. Religious and political faiths provide environments in which convictions flourish; propositions that from time to time have been the object of conviction would include the following:

> All men are created equal.
> God is the only god.
> Jesus is lord.
> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Commitments to such propositions are thought to be relatively permanent and are expected to exert influence on many different aspects of a person's life. They appear to be necessary to the person committed to them; they stand among the things she must live up to. Thus despite the indicative grammatical mood of the above expressions, conviction seems directed not so much toward observable states of things as toward the inner meaning or significance of those states. So convictions are like ideals: a person must act to make them true. For the person of conviction, "the history of . . ." has the force of "let's have a revolution."

Such conviction counts as strong adherence in Perelman's use of the term. It is, indeed, adherence a person might willingly die for. But it cannot receive an account just in terms of its degree of intensity. Everyone—except those irredeemable skeptics—has had convictions in the first sense, e.g., has had a strong belief about the current state of the weather. But not everyone is a person of conviction. With conviction of the second sort we move into distinctly ethical terrain: This is adherence that not only is, but also ought to be, strong. It ought to be so on account of the relation that holds between the adherence and the person adhering. To make this clear,

it may help to consider how we respond when conviction of this second type is called into question.

A person may be convinced that a candidate is the best candidate for an office or that a party is the best party to lead her community. If, knowing this, we see her vote against the candidate, we register surprise. It is unexpected that she would not act in accordance with her strong adherence, for a strong adherence just is one that we expect to be regularly followed. We infer that she must have changed her mind. We might therefore criticize her for hasty judgment or even for a habit of hasty judgment; but the change of adherence itself would receive no blame. If, however, we know her to be a party member from conviction, our reaction is more directly evaluative. She then is showing herself to be not the person we took her to be. Perhaps she is less of a person than we thought: perhaps irresolute or unsound—she doesn't seem to "have it together." Or more severely, we might conclude that she had misled us about who she was and charge her with hypocrisy. In both cases the change of adherence is itself the focus for criticism. The questioning of the adherence has brought into question who the person is.

The person's own experiences run in parallel with these reactions. When a person discovers that she has adhered to a party line with more intensity than is justified, she may be embarrassed that she judged so quickly or so ill, but the lessening of adherence will not itself be a source of pain. Rather, she may feel a small pride connected with showing herself capable of improving her adherences. This does not seem to be the case with the second sort of convictions. These are not changed but lost. The loss leaves a gap. An aspect of her life that had been important to her has been emptied of its meaning. She will likely experience grief; she will likely experience shame, her self seeming smaller to herself. Missing her sense of where she stands, she may also feel disoriented. Conviction is thus compatible with intense doubt—a matter well enough understood by such religious traditions as require faith—since even small threats to conviction have the potential to undermine a person's sense of who she is.

These responses to the questioning of the two sorts of conviction differ not in degree, but in kind. This implies that the convictions also differ in kind. A conviction of the second sort appears to be an adherence that both the person and others take as determining who she is. This conclusion was already implicit in the phrase

with which I opened the discussion, for a conviction is what makes a person, a person of conviction. Still, this less defines conviction than points to the region where further definition could be sought. What does it mean to say that an adherence "determines who a person is"? It at least means that the person adhering stands in a special relation to the adherence: that a convictional adherence is an adherence, plus. We speak of convictions of the second sort—which from here I will call simply convictions—not only as intense, but as deep. Depth, unlike intensity, is not a matter of degree. A person of conviction takes adherence to heart. The conviction then lies at the very bottom of the structure of her other beliefs, likings, attachments, and so on. It is a fundamental or foundational belief, providing the ground from which the structure rises and without which the entire structure would topple. It is in fact what makes the structure a structure, for without some organizing principle, the beliefs, likings, attachments would be only a disorganized heap, lacking fundamental integrity. Thus *principle* and *person of principle* are near synonyms for *conviction* and *person of conviction.* It is not surprising that such foundational beliefs are relatively enduring, nor that a person is willing to sacrifice to live up to her convictions. The sacrifice is only a trade in kind. She denies some lesser aspects of her life in order to remain true to who she really is.

This much is the folk psychology of conviction; further precision could probably be obtained. Edwin Black in "Idioms of Social Identity" (see 1992, 21–50) suggests that conviction contributes to what we now call a person's identity. Indeed, we do identify ourselves and others by our convictions, as Christians, as Communists, as Americans. "Convictional identity" thus joins our other loyalties: (for Black) to race, culture, or nation; or to party, gender, land, profession, person. Any of these memberships can mark off a person in a relatively stable way, making her identifiable in a minimal sense. It becomes part of her identity, however, only through some further, reflexive, move: perhaps when the person comes to say "that's mine," or even, "that's me." This takes place when she commits herself, dedicates herself, or devotes herself to the adherence, that is, when she identifies with it. Still, this way of talking about the matter leaves several questions open. It is not clear what is involved in "identifying with" anything; what it would mean, in particular, to "identify with" an adherence to a proposition; whether with convictions, or at least convictions of rhetorical

import, we are dealing with some particular aspect of identity—as Black says, "social," namely, "who *we* are"—and if so, what that means. Philosophers wanting to aid the renewal of rhetoric might continue to take up such questions.[6]

But even without further precision we are better placed now to inquire whether Perelman is able to account for the rhetorical properties of convictions—for example, to account for the specific ways we argue to people holding them. Convictions are not reducible to strong adherences; the route of giving the account in terms of degree in intensity is therefore blocked. Perelman needs instead to proceed by establishing a typology of adherence to match his typologies of audience and argument. When he tries to do so he will face the following difficulty. His system holds itself out as applying uniformly to all adherences: that is its pride. But a typology of adherence would have to allow convictional and nonconvictional adherences to receive different treatment. Not all arguments available in addressing one are equally available in addressing the other. For example, by the connection between a person and her acts (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, §§ 68–69), a convictional adherence to some proposition requires the person live up to it, while a nonconvictional adherence does not. Such determinacies cannot be accounted for by reference to the proposition adhered to, for the proposition adhered to in a convictional and a nonconvictional adherence may be the same. The historical facts of the life of the man Jesus provide a ready example of this. So Perelman has a chore to finish: to establish a typology of adherence, he must be able to distinguish among adherences in a way that accounts for their specific rhetorical properties without disrupting the generality of his system.

Convictions are not alone in making Perelman toil. The rhetorical and dialectical traditions accumulated, if nothing else, a treasury full of small determinacies in the names and precepts that pack the treatises. From this, parsimoniously, Perelman withdraws only audience, adherence, argument. Nevertheless, some other remnants have retained their value. To this routine difficulty Perelman responds routinely. Anything of other theories worth preserving can be translated into the terms allowed by his own: to be exact, it can be accounted for in terms of the adherences of the audience. One old rhetorician, for example, wanted to distinguish among audiences on the basis of the function each performs. This idea Perelman finds useful (albeit primitive), and he incorporates

it by making the audience's function arise from the audience's adherences regarding its function. Another of the venerable men proposed that a speech should possess organic form. Perelman agrees—if, that is, the audience also adheres to that notion. And the situations that call forth discourse—yet another interesting relic of the past—Perelman thinks are constructed from the audience's adherences about the occasions requiring speech.[7] He intends no discourtesy by thus translating the insights of others; he willingly gives his new rhetoric the same treatment. The universal audience, clearly a key item of Perelman's system, is itself only a cluster of adherences (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 33).

On its face this strategy appears promising. It does seem likely that adherence to a certain cluster of propositions could have different rhetorical properties than adherence simpliciter; that "adherence plus" could mean an adherence, plus some more adherences. But it is still undetermined whether Perelman is able to perform on his promise. To do so requires him to specify what is in the cluster of adherences that makes up conviction. This, I will try to show, he cannot adequately accomplish.

Perhaps Perelman means that a person has a conviction when she adheres to

(1) All men are created equal.

plus a cluster something like:

(2a) Proposition 1 is for me a conviction.
(3a) A person should live up to her convictions.
(4a) It would be a shame to lose conviction.

and so forth, specifying the actions and passions consequent to conviction—and assuming that adherences play a part in coming to feel in some way parallel to their part in coming to act. Will this work? It seems not. The trouble arises at (2a): it excludes some instances of conviction. A person need not have the concept of conviction in order to have a conviction. Otherwise it might be impossible for any of us to have convictions, or at least it would be impossible for anyone who had not had a certain formal education, which does not seem to be the case. Perelman ought to admit this readily, by analogy with what he must say about the universal audience. It cannot be that anyone need adhere to any proposition explicitly about the universal audience in order to address the universal audience; otherwise, again, it would not have been possi-

ble to address the universal audience before the middle of this century.

So perhaps Perelman would prefer to weaken the cluster by excising the explicit reference to conviction and submitting whatever formula seems most accurate:

(2b) My adherence to (1) determines who I am.
(3b) A person should live up to who she is.
(4b) It would be a shame to lose things that determine who one is.

Here there is no assumption that the person need have the concept of conviction in order to have a conviction. Proposition 2b, however, remains a problem: now, it embraces too much. This cluster of adherences picks up both authentic and deluded adherents. At stake in having a conviction is not whether the person adheres to (2b), but whether (2b) is the case. A person could fool herself about her convictions. She could think that adhering to (1) was necessary for her, without it actually being so. But a person suffering from such self-deception would not be a person of conviction. Whatever it means for a person to "identify with" an adherence or to "take it to heart," it means something more or other than for her to think she does so.

So Perelman might finally choose to eliminate (2) entirely, leaving:

(3c) I should live up to my adherence to (1).
(4c) I would be ashamed to lose my adherence to (1).

This list—if extended long enough—at least has the advantage of attaining descriptive accuracy. A person of conviction acts as if she adheres to a cluster something along these lines; she and these propositions "move together." But what has been lost is all explanatory power. Proposition 2 explained why adherence to (1) was a reason for the person to act as specified in (3) and (4). With this link gone, what remains appears merely contingent: it could be otherwise. Why just these adherences? Perelman routinely accounts for such observed regularities by invoking social or institutional norms that serve to maintain a cluster in just this form.[8] But it is remarkable that such norms could engender this degree of uniformity, especially since (in Perelman's view) the norms themselves are only clusters of adherences, subject to interpretation, argument, evolution. Further, the norms stand outside of our expe-

rience of what it is to have a conviction. They are not the reasons a person uses in her reasoning about conviction, and it is this reasoning that rhetoric, even the new rhetoric, aims to represent. Why, for example, could a person of conviction not adhere to

(4d) I would be happy to lose adherence to (1)?

That, of course, does not specify the proper response from a person losing conviction. Even folk equipped with the "folk psychology" can say why, but Perelman cannot.

It may be a matter of taste. We relish an orderly, catholic system that requires ad hoc elaborations to account for what we see around us—"the inevitable effect," as Gibbon remarked about another Empire "of immoderate greatness." Or we relish middle-sized theories (Leff 1978; Merton 1967) with greater explanatory power, but which with equal inevitability neither explain everything nor fit together neatly. There would be no reason to spurn Perelman's unified theory of new rhetoric if convictions proved only a little bitter to it. This, however, does not appear to be the case. Edwin Black, in "The Mutability of Rhetoric" (see 1992, 171–86), has argued that a capacity—indeed, an appetite—for conviction must stand among the main determinants of modern rhetorical practice. Here I will try only to provide some modest support for this claim by pointing to one contemporary discourse that both demands regard from the student of rhetoric (i.e., is canonical) and requires an understanding of conviction to receive even a partial account.

III

If people are to be people of conviction, they must somehow become so. It seems obvious than an orator might want to play a role in this becoming, and that Barbara Jordan in her "Keynote Address" to the 1976 Democratic National Convention[9] attempted to do so. It should be equally obvious, however, that there are difficulties facing any orator with such an aim. For one thing, although we are familiar with how to induce an adherence, we are less acquainted with how to induce someone to stand in a certain way toward it. In "Idioms" (1992, 42–44), Black asserts that conviction arises from decision, which would place it back in more familiar territory. But it appears equally plausible that conviction is something a person discovers in herself, perhaps after a process of education (in the sense of *paideia* or *Bildung*) or a precipitating

conversion experience.[10] And we do not have a firm grasp of how discourse could contribute to such discovery. Even if it could, it is not clear that it should. Intervening in another's affairs or intruding on her personal possessions is likely to occasion justified resentment; meddling with a more intimate matter—who she is—will be that much more objectionable. Even assuming an orator has the right to demand assent to certain propositions, she does not appear to have an equal right to demand that her auditor be a certain sort of person, that is, a person who identifies with those propositions. Conviction (or the lack thereof) seems instead precisely what tolerance requires citizens to respect in each other. And finally, there are difficulties connected with what could constitute a reason for having a conviction. Dedication is risky. Should the dedication turn out to be well founded, the person may be required to sacrifice in order to live up to it. Should the dedication turn out to be ill founded, she would have to deny part of herself in denying it. Unless benefits can be proved that outweigh these risks, it might seem the course of prudence to avoid having convictions.

A way toward untangling these difficulties can be found by looking at what Barbara Jordan does to overcome or avoid them. At the heart of her speech, Jordan lists four or five propositions that, she says, are what "we believe." Thus, "First, we believe in equality for all and privileges for none. This is a belief that each American regardless of background has equal standing in the public forum, all of us. Because we believe this idea so firmly, we are inclusive rather than an exclusive party. Let everybody come." She is not here asserting just the existence of these beliefs, for it might be equally true, but clearly inappropriate, to say that "we" believed some proposition about the weather. Instead, the beliefs Jordan recites are those that, "because we believe" them, make "us" who "we are"—in this case, "an inclusive . . . party." They are "deeply rooted" and "firmly etched," as Jordan also says; they are "bedrock" and "foundations"; they are "guiding principles." So what Jordan asserts has rather to do with the status of these beliefs: namely, that they are convictions.

It might be possible just to describe the convictions held by Democrats, as if to inform a foreigner about American politics. But again this cannot be what Jordan is doing: she is speaking as the spokesperson of the Democrats to an immediate audience of committed Democrats, and such information would be superfluous. The listing of fundamental beliefs is rather a confession of faith. In confessing, a person owns what she confesses: she openly

acknowledges it as her own.[11] By openly acknowledging it, she also commits herself to be judged on the grounds it provides. When a belief is confessed, it is put forward as the conviction of the confessor and acknowledged as a standard she must live up to if she is to avoid justified criticism. Jordan makes these commitments explicitly; thus "we are an inclusive . . . party" has in her hands an imperative force: "let everybody come."

As keynote speaker, Jordan is confessing these beliefs not only before, but for her immediate audience of Democratic faithfuls. In doing this, Jordan is not attempting to induce convictions in them; she offers no reasons why "we" should believe. Rather, she is articulating for them where they stand already. The auditors may not be fully aware of their own stance. Their convictions may not be articulated—in the sense of marked off, or distinct—until Jordan articulates them. This allows Jordan some hermeneutic power to form the proposition she will bring forward: for example, by dropping the "men" and the "created" from her expression of proposition 1, and adding an additional sentence of qualification. But this power is limited. She stands, as she confirms from the opening of her speech, in a tradition of Democratic conventions and platforms. Although she may "adapt" the tradition when she confesses the Democratic faith on behalf of the party, she may not "reject" it without incurring criticism.

Her confession might work for the broader audience as well—for, roughly, the American people. Jordan claims that her list does capture the fundamental beliefs of the whole nation. She points to the evidence of the past, when the people had, in her words, "identified with" the Democratic Party on account of just these beliefs. But Jordan also acknowledges that at the moment "exposition on the beliefs of the Democratic Party . . . is not sufficient reason for the majority of the people of this country to decide to vote Democratic." This is because the American people are in a state of doubt about the security of their convictions. "We are a people," Jordan explains, "in search of a national community." Being "in search of" implies that the American people are no longer in full possession of their "national community." In other words, the American people are troubled by a lack of just the sense of identity that Jordan articulates for the Democrats. And Jordan cannot confess convictions that are not actively held.

But admitting that one is searching already implies the possibility of finding. The American people can take the loss of community as grounds to "feel cynical, angry, frustrated" only if they

cherish the commonality they think they have lost. It is not Jordan's task, therefore, to found a national community. Her task instead is to "restore belief" in it. This, she insists, only the people can accomplish for themselves. Still, if Jordan cannot "require the American people to form a national community," she can at least do something less intrusive: she can show that the holding of Democratic convictions is possible and, as it could be called, impressive. She does not show the truth of the propositions she expresses; that she treats as admitted. Instead, she shows forth the nature of the people committed to them. While speaking to her party's convention, Jordan makes visible to the wider audience the life of those who believe as "we believe"—the "plus" of "adherence plus." Again, it is the Christian tradition that provides the most apt vocabulary for describing what she is doing: bearing witness.[12] By leading her immediate audience through acts that display the depth of their commitment, Jordan displays as well the personal integrity of those thus committed. She has the delegates confess again, this time publicly owning responsibility for their past failings. She has them openly rededicate themselves to live up to their beliefs in the future: by continuing to hold themselves "strictly accountable," by "sacrifice" when sacrifice is needed, by articulating a "vision of the future." She also offers her own person as "evidence" that the vision can be realized: it shows that even a Barbara Jordan may eventually give a keynote address. And to close her speech, Jordan leads the Convention to take pride in again proclaiming before the wider audience their own commitment to equality—a proclamation borrowed with inclusive ease from a Republican president. That wider audience, onlookers to this pride, are invited to share it; the "we" of "we believe" stands as an offer to enter in.

IV

The force of some prominent civic discourse thus depends essentially on who the citizens are: they must be people standing in a certain tradition, either holding the convictions supported by that tradition or at least living with doubt about them. The discourse would not be effective if addressed to citizens who lack all conviction. Perelman wants philosophical discourse to be similarly situated, to depend essentially on who the philosophers are. But he will not be able to achieve this by way of convictions. To the extent that it is cogent to make such descriptive statements, I believe it can be said

that philosophical discourse in the modern tradition is not informed by convictions. Some philosophers have convictions, and some philosophizing is affected by them—it could hardly be otherwise. But in general nothing a philosopher says on a subject nowadays depends essentially on anyone having a conviction about it. The talk could influence, if not interest, those of little faith. The common run of publications do not articulate principles, confess faith, or bear witness. Nor are the other genres of discourse made available by convictions well represented: not appeals to live up to convictions, not demands for respect of convictions, not accusations or insults conspicuously showing disrespect for convictions, not replies to such accusations or insults.[13] There are spectacular exceptions to this generalization (one of the reasons why it is mildly impertinent to talk thus of philosophy). But the signs of strain are evident in the discourse of deviant masters like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, and the attractive power of the normal modes of philosophizing manifest in the speed with which epigones are drawn to resemble more their neighbors than their fathers in philosophy.

Although philosophy may not be a matter of convictions, still it might be a matter of adherences, and that in turn might be sufficient to situate it among the people philosophizing. For Perelman, adhering is a matter of choice. A person gives adherence "by an act which commits him [or her] and for which he [or she] is responsible" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 62). Thus the philosopher's adherence involves some form of commitment; she engages her own person in her philosophy. If this is not the full measure of devotion required from a person of conviction, it is at least something like it.

This strategy for situating philosophy will fail, however, because the conception of adherence that Perelman offers cannot be maintained. Adherence, the sticking of a person and a proposition, is not necessarily the result of a choice for which a person is responsible; a person need not give adherence in order to have an adherence.

It is only by admitting such unchosen adherences that we can make sense of the notion that arguments have force. A proposition or its presentation can compel a person toward adherence. Faced with a solid argument presented by another, a person feels not that she sticks to it, but that she is stuck with it. She has not chosen to be so, although she may have some choices about how she responds to her predicament. In such cases the source of the stable contiguity between the person and the proposition lies at least in part outside the person; adherence is not something she does.

It is also the case that a person need never have taken any attitude

at all toward a proposition in order to adhere to it in Perelman's sense of the word. (Or, what is roughly the same thing, neither English nor French allows a person to "adhere *that*.") Tacit beliefs—a standard example is the belief that station wagons are inedible—though never previously articulated are nevertheless immediately and routinely "at hand" for use. Perelman himself asserts that many of the rhetorically most important adherences always remain thus "implicit and unformulated." Culture and language furnish each person with a multitude of unarticulated adherences about the nature of her world (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 511–13; see also 8 and Perelman 1982, 48–49). Never articulated, such tacit beliefs can hardly be a result of choice.

There is finally the following point. Perelman wants the person adhering to take responsibility for the proposition adhered to. Ordinarily, when we talk of taking responsibility for a proposition, we mean specifically taking responsibility for its truth. But Perelman chooses to start from the concept of adherence just in order to get away from demands for truth. And given his aim he chooses well, for adherence is not dependent on truth. That a proposition is true may be a good reason for a person to stick to it; that it is false, a good reason not to keep it around. But a person could stay in contiguity with a proposition for many other reasons—to follow the crowd, for the beauty of it—or for no reason at all. Adherence has no necessary relation to truth. Therefore a person does not by virtue of adhering take responsibility for a proposition.

If adhering is neither chosen nor responsible, then philosophy is not situated among philosophers quite as Perelman would have it be. Philosophy does on his account depend on there being propositions that, as it happens, are sticking to a person. But that sticking is not necessarily something the person does; it is not by choice, nor does it involve taking responsibility. So philosophy, under this conception, does not need an organon of practical reasoning. If students of rhetoric are to contribute to a renewal of philosophy, a new conception of the activity needs to be developed. In particular, we will need to acknowledge some facts about what a person is able to *do* with a proposition—facts exceeding Perelman's three. There are a variety of proposals already on the table. Perelman himself often slips into talk of assent. It has also been possible to attend to the forms of discourse consequent to holding a philosophical proposition.[14] Such approaches have the advantage of binding philosophical discourse more richly to the persons engaged in it, as well as to the traditions in which it takes place. But they are also

anti-imperialist: as Perelman himself recognized, not all persuasive discourse, not even all philosophical discourse, seeks just to induce or increase assent or holding. To account for the determinacies of discourse, therefore, we need to foster yet further local autarchy in what is already at its most centralized only a federal republic of rhetoric.

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Notes

1. I thank Hanns Hohmann, Fred Kauffeld, and Michael Leff for their help in forming the aims of this paper.

2. Perelman expresses this line of thinking most clearly in "Philosophies premières et philosophie régressive" (1952); see also Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (1969); "Opinions and Truth" (1963); Ch. Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric* (1982); and "Réponse à une enquête sur la métaphysique" (1970).

3. Here and elsewhere I may alter the translation slightly.

4. An early (1950) expression of the "second principle" is given in "Logique et rhétorique" (1952b), 1; a late (1981), in "Formal Logic and Informal Logic" (1989), 11.

5. The mysterious bit runs, "At first sight, this distinction [between persuading and convincing] based on the characteristics of the audience addressed, does not seem to explain the difference between conviction and persuasion as it is experienced by the hearer himself. But it will be seen that the same criterion can nevertheless apply, if one bears in mind that the hearer imagines the transfer to other audiences of the arguments presented to him and that he concerns himself with the reception they would obtain" (29).

6. For arguments along rather different lines, but converging on a conception of identity as dependent upon beliefs, desires, attachments distinguished in kind from ordinary beliefs (etc.), see Harry Frankfurt (1988), esp. chaps. 2, 7, and 12; and Charles Taylor (1989), esp. chaps. 1–3.

7. For audience function, see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3, 1358b; and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 21. For organic form, see Plato, *Phaedrus* 264c; and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 508. For rhetorical situation, with apologies for anachronism, see Lloyd F. Bitzer 1968, 1–14, and Perelman 1952b, 18–19, and 1982, 10.

8. See Perelman's remarks on audience function and rhetorical situation, supra n. 7.

9. The speech appears in *Great Speakers and Speeches* (2d ed., 1992, 315–17). I use this collection for the presumptive canonical status it confers on its selections.

10. Thus Charles Taylor, who argues in *Sources* (1989) for a more "inarticulate" view of conviction.

11. Thus the *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "confess": "I.4. To acknowledge or formally recognize (a person or thing) as having a certain character or certain claims; to own, avow, declare belief in or adhesion to." See also *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* s.v. *homologéō* and *pisteúō.*

12. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* s.v. *mártus; New Catholic Encyclopedia,* s.v. "witness to the faith."

13. As examples, see the following: for "articulating principles," Thomas Jefferson's "First Inaugural Address"; for "bearing witness," Angelina Grimke's "Address at Pennsylvania Hall"; for a "live up to" appeal, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream"; for "demanding respect," Martin Luther's "I'll Take My Stand"; for insults and accusations—of failure to have principles, of misrepresenting them,

of failure to live up to them—Frederick Douglass's "Fourth of July Oration" (all of these are in Lucaites and Bernabo 1992); and for this last, possibly also Lincoln's jibes against Stephen Douglas's "Don't Care" attitude in the 1858 Senate campaign.

14. As perhaps in "holding on to" sc. against disagreement, the starting point adopted by Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (1959), chap. 2.

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