Critical Response

III

Toward Uncritical Practice

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In their essay "Against Theory," Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels challenge in the most uncompromising terms the value and even the bare possibility of "doing theory." Given the present sanctified status of theory one can appreciate the authors' iconoclastic impulse, but their discussion remains provocative in ways that call for a response. If I were to take it seriously enough (and the authors leave room for suspicion that they are in earnest), the antitheoretical position would entail a significant, and in my view retrogressive, change in professional attitude.

Before elaborating on this charge I must acknowledge that the authors attempt an antitheoretical *argument.* It is one that in essence denies an ability to establish any (logical?) vantage point prior to, or superior to, practice, and hence denies an ability ever to determine, from an extrapractical standpoint, any fundamental principle capable of founding or rationalizing interpretation. Practice, we are told, is always institutionally or otherwise given, always encompasses us, and belated attempts to seize control in the name of principle are consequently foredoomed. "Doing" theory accordingly becomes a mode of impotent presumption equivalent to doing nothing, while the theoretical impulse represents nothing more than a desire to escape from practice. (In the zero-sum world of these authors, theory always "loses"—has always already lost—what practice "wins.")

Such in outline is the argument against theory, one that depends on a particular understanding of the nature and limits of theory but even more on an assumption of the inviolable (if unrecognized) sovereignty of practice. By implication practice *contains* and legitimizes all the theory it

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ever needs, making any further theory, or independent theoretical principle, superfluous. Practice thus becomes self-sufficient and all-encompassing, while any opposition to it, whether formal or actual, is vain.

Although I will have to look more closely at this argument in order to assess it, one can already anticipate its effect of exalting practice. But since this promotion is unaccompanied by any further account of practice (Do we all know what practice entails?), one may also recognize that manipulation of the terms "theory" and "practice" may result in a forensic triumph for the latter. This is indeed the hollow victory for which I see the authors contending, but it should not be assumed on that account that nothing is really at stake in the attempt.[1] Not only are the authors' own terms revealing when we examine them, but there is more to being "against theory" than has thus far appeared. The argument I have paraphrased is yoked to an elusive conception of pragmatic interpretation, and it is also made to justify a number of surprising claims about the nature and power of belief.[2] And the exceptional significance of the antitheoretical message is advertised by a rhetoric of unusually high pressure and premature dogmatism. What are we to make of it all?

In my own view the antitheoretical argument (which could rank as a contribution only *in* the field of critical theory, from which it never escapes) is here at the service of an emergent ideology of the interpretive caste or guild, an ideology under which a privileged status quo would be secured against fundamental questioning. My aim will be to suggest what this ideology consists in and also to question the antitheoretical argument used to justify it. I will not, however, feel obliged to defend (perhaps unnecessarily) the theoreticians whose work Knapp and Michaels pronounce "mistaken" or "incoherent," though I will implicitly defend theory. If Knapp and Michaels might say that I have already missed the point—that what they consider failures are not those of named individuals but of any theoretical undertaking at all—I would

1. The authors consistently describe theory as a form of impotent delusion, of error rather than evil. They thus leave unexplained the point of being so vehemently "against theory." What can it possibly matter?

2. The authors might reasonably claim that pragmatism is being thrust upon them, since that is not how they choose to characterize themselves. I would welcome any other term they might supply to name their own position, since such a term is "missing" at present.

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reply that they draw the wrong conclusions from their evidence and, indeed, exploit that evidence to uphold a prejudicial characterization of theory. Insofar as they consider failure *inevitable* on the theoretical plane, they are themselves forced to settle not for a properly emancipated practice but for an attitude of precritical primitivism. Thus what might seem, given the history of the profession during the past two decades, like a timely move beyond theory turns out in fact to be a return to a condition "before" theory.

For the particulars let us turn to what is actually said in "Against Theory":

> By "theory" we mean a special project in literary criticism: the attempt to govern interpretations of particular texts by appealing to an account of interpretation in general. [P. 723]

It is not clear at once if all or only some of "theory" as generally understood is included here, nor is it clear what "a special project" refers to. We are, however, offered some help in the next sentence: "literary subjects [*sic*] with no direct [?] bearing on the interpretation of individual works, such as narratology, stylistics, and prosody" are excluded. But since these exclusions are also designated "empirical" (i.e., nontheoretical anyway?), the value of the clarification is doubtful. How much of currently recognized theory is "inside" practice and how much is extrapractical assumption? We will never know.

What we are left with, however, is a definition of theory ("doing" theory) that significantly excludes any reference to processes or conditions under which "an account of interpretation in general" might be formulated, desired, or derived from practice. Doing theory thus excludes what might normally be considered definitive concerns of the theorist, while theory itself is taken preemptively to be an illegitimate imposition *on* practice, never a term dialectically paired with practice or the product of a theoretical moment that need not forever preclude the moment of practice. The prescriptive nature and motivation of theory is seemingly taken for granted as is the passive-restrictive attitude of the theorist.

In view of all this we might assume that the authors are indeed confronting a special and perhaps illegitimate case of theory—that that is what "a special project" means—but their refusal to qualify the general term or to exclude anything explicitly means that more can always be understood (or intended) than the limited case. It is hard to believe that this is an accident. The impression prevails that theory itself is on the line, and the issue is not resolved either way once Knapp and Michaels begin to deal with particular cases. In the act of defining their own terms, moreover, Knapp and Michaels present something like an already deconstructed or unmasked version of theory, one that purports to show

theory for what it is as a tool of institutional domination. Doing theory involves nothing more than trying to *govern* (illegitimately control?) practical interpretation by *appealing* (passively, improperly?) to a source of authority as given. The nullity or arbitrariness of the source is presupposed in the terms of the definition, as a result of which the question of *theory* is in a sense begged throughout the essay. Although Knapp and Michaels later try to account (with what degree of plausibility we will see) for the genesis of theory, is the a priori nature of the beast that is insinuated in the opening definition, remaining to color all their conceptions? (It should not be supposed, however, that opposition to the dominating effects, or at least pretensions, of theory promises any emancipation from such effects, which will be relocated in practice.)

A certain latitude and infelicity—a cavalier treatment of logical and semantic distinctions—mark the antitheoretical argument as it unfolds:

> Some theorists have sought to ground the reading of literary texts in methods designed to guarantee the objectivity and validity of interpretations. [P. 723]

If some theorists *have* done this, it is also true that grounding interpretations in "methods" constitutes an activity of a different order from that of appealing to a general account. The effect of the statement, introduced without any explanatory transition, is thus to broaden the scope of theory, at the same time bringing a second order of grounding and perhaps a second class of offenders under suspicion. Moreover, distinctions that may not be commensurate and generate radically different kinds of discourse cease to count from the standpoint of pure practice, the flattening reductiveness of which appears in the equivalent treatment of such terms as "valid" and "objective," or "valid interpretation" and "meaning."[3] (It might seem carping to mention this if it did not anticipate the systematic denial of logical and semantic distinctions that later emerges as the grand principle on which the authors proceed.)

There is more to come:

> Others, impressed by the inability of such procedures to produce agreement [about valid interpretation] have translated that failure into an alternative mode of theory that denies the possibility of correct interpretation. [P. 723]

Does the original definition of theory still hold, since it seems that it must now include the *derivation* of a new principle from failures in practice? And can it accommodate the apparent shift from an attempt to govern

3. The authors might suggest that they merely reproduce the usage of those they oppose, yet they fail effectively to distinguish where reporting ends and their own terminology begins.

practice to the practical discovery, subsequently formalized, that that interpretation is ungovernable? Is the *denial* of any single correct interpretation equivalent to governing interpretation? And is the original definition still being unpacked or (again?) rewritten when we are told that:

> Theory attempts to solve—or celebrate the impossibility of solving—a set of familiar problems: the function [?] of authorial intention, the status of literary language, the role of interpretive assumptions, and so on. [P. 723]

As defined, theory does not attempt to solve these problems or ones like them but rather appeals to a general account under which heterogeneous problems of this order either cease to be problems or are solved preemptively, at least in principle. And if that is what the authors "obviously" meant anyway, will we have to regard the nature and motivation of theory somewhat differently, recognizing in it a principle of interpretive economy?

The point to be made here is not just that Knapp and Michaels assail theory—to which they are entitled—but rather that a leapfrogging imprecision and facility in their characterization of theory call for resistance. The theory they oppose is theory superficially characterized, stripped down to stark alternatives, and denied its own claims, while the opposition is conducted in a style of sweeping incrimination that does not condescend to pause over details. If theory "loses," it is hardly surprising under the circumstances.

The next phase of the argument against theory, like all succeeding phases, is greatly facilitated by the trojan-horse definition with which the essay begins: concede *that* and everything else falls into place. But without succumbing to this preparation, let us consider the alleged origin of theory in error, an origin that virtually constitutes "theory" as "error" and vice versa. The "mistake" theorists always make, we are told, but which also remains the sole enabling condition of theory, is to divide what is in reality indivisible. Theorists always fail to recognize "the fundamental inseparability of the elements involved" (p. 724). (To the question "Involved in *what?*" the antitheoretical answer, repeated indefinitely, can only be "reality.") So in making a distinction, for example, between the meaning of a text and its authorial intention, theorists divide what is in reality indivisible, whatever "it" may be. They also presumably divide what should be a unified critical discourse by articulating their own arguments on one of the paired terms; thus we may get discursive theorists of intention, instead of practical critics doing what comes naturally.

Having once divorced meaning from intention (to continue with the same example), the theorist can then take the next step, which is to

privilege one of the paired terms as a so-called grounding term, to derive from it the second term, and to make the grounding term at once the object of his theory and the source of his control over practice. Thus "intention" may become the grounding term from which "meaning" is derived; if we want to know the meaning of a text we will, as theoretical "intentionalists," proceed to recover an authorial intention in the light of which meaning can be established.

But, say Knapp and Michaels, in reality (i.e., in "always already" on-the-go practice) there is simply no difference between the meaning and the authorial intention of an interpretable text; to "have" one is to "have" the other simultaneously and indistinguishably. To attempt any distinction is "unreal," while to make one term the object of theory is always to have presupposed the other as well, making any procedure of grounding and derivation "incoherent." That is all there is to it.

Setting aside the question of whether there might be a way of doing theory that could acknowledge such difficulties (i.e., a conscious way of doing theory rather than a blindly wilful one), I will suggest only that such antitheoreticalism is an argument of extreme innocence or premature despair. Making distinctions where they do not exist "in reality" may be a condition (it is certainly a recognized risk) of any form of understanding whatever. The alternative, regrettably, is not always a closer lived proximity to the real but more often a blind, ritualistic practice that adheres to a forever mystified first cause. The practice envisaged in "Against Theory" might thus indeed be mysterious, either in the sense that it could be like that of an enthusiastic cult without a formal theology or (more likely) in the sense that it could mean business as usual, a defensive adherence to the procedures and values of the guild (in which case the roles of apprentice and master would exclusively define professional existence).

It apparently does not occur to Knapp and Michaels—at least not with enough force—that to deny distinctions is not *thereby* to reenter in practice the condition of reality, nor does it seemingly occur to them that the existence of logical and semantic distinctions does not necessarily imply a prior undivided substance. Such artificially constructed distinctions may require us to *posit* an undivided entity to which they analytically refer, but to assume that the undoing of distinctions will leave the mind directly in touch with the real stuff is to yield to naive reification or literalism. In collapsing any possible distinction between "intention" and "meaning," for example, Knapp and Michaels may find that they are not left with the reality in which those terms are subsumed and annulled, but with nothing at all—that those distinctions, or ones like them, constitute a reality that may simply disappear as the terms are collapsed. But in fact the authors cannot even do without the terms. While denying E. D. Hirsch and others the right to make distinctions or to advance on a theoretical plane, Knapp and Michaels take advantage of precisely those

existing distinctions to reaffirm an underlying substance (or immanent textual "presence") on the basis of which practice is licensed to continue.

So the authors have it both ways: they stigmatize distinctions as illusory or "incoherent" but immediately recoup both terms "together" to secure practice. "Doing what we have always done" (we? always? what?) is thus placed beyond doubt and beyond interrogation, becoming a newly entrenched uncritical practice. One might describe as an instance of "bad faith" this maneuver in which the authors disqualify a distinction only to appropriate its effects; the rhetorical ambience in which the maneuver is conducted prompts me however to call it smash and grab, or s. & g. for short.

The frequent recurrence of s. & g. in "Against Theory" shows that the authors simply cannot find a basis on which to *oppose* theory, an authentic opposition demanding a practice of such unprecedented vitality that it "speaks for itself." In reality, the authors stage an opposition that belies a continuing dependence, particularly on the disqualified intentionalism—the terminology and assumptions—of Hirsch. And since the authors are not "free" of theory, their opposition must also entail *correction* of the errors of theory. We will recall that theorists always make two mistakes: that of privileging a grounding term, which itself follows (the authors might say necessarily follows) the first mistake (the authors might almost say original sin) of division. Correction thus requires a reversal of this process of error, which is accomplished once the authors have, so to speak, got two back into one again and the pernicious effects of division have been eliminated.

If antitheoreticians are themselves secure against relapses into error, it is because they respect the power of self-evidence and thus remain the arbiters of reality, not fugitives from it:

> But once it is seen that the meaning of a text is simply identical to the author's intended meaning, the project of *grounding* meaning in intention becomes incoherent. [P. 724]

The illusoriness of the *apparent* division will, in other words, expose itself in the fullness of time ("once") and without any intervention on the part of the observer, who need only stand and wait until "it is seen." What then becomes *self*-evident is that the two terms are actually one ("identical"), after which "they" (or whatever they jointly designate) can continue to dispense "their" beneficial effects. What the authors might say, but do not, is that the discovered "identity" of terms raises questions about logical misconstruction, about the tautologous results of trying to equate "meaning" with "authorial intention," or about the question-begging nature of a particular argument. Their own claims notwithstanding, the authors do not take it that *no* result has been achieved

and that the argument has short-circuited but that the *wrong* result has been achieved. All that is needed to rectify matters is a refusal to distinguish at all, a refusal that constitutes the universal nostrum of the pragmatic interpreter.

So much for the theory (supertheory, antitheory) to end all theories. It is a theory that does not presume to alter practice but only to disclose the primordial character and authority of practice, thus defining itself as a petty theodicy of the guild. But since it challenges theory, not only in the name of practice but through a kind of *reductio ad absurdum,* let us turn to the example, destined no doubt to become famous, of the "wave-poem." We will have to recall that the example is offered by its inventors as both a concession and a rebuke to theoretical ways of thinking—as the kind of absurdity that theoretical thinking makes unavoidable—but not as an example called forth by pragmatism. We may however find this example, too, being subjected to S. & G.

We are asked to suppose that while walking along a beach we find the first line of a stanza, "A slumber did my spirit seal," traced in the sand. We naturally suppose that an earlier passerby has traced the words, but then comes a wave that erases the line only to leave in its place the second line of the stanza. It now appears that the wave has *written* the poem by some nonhuman, nonintentional process. Shortly afterward, a submarine surfaces and some dialogue spoken by white-coated figures on board (maybe scientists) indicates that after all a human agency has been responsible for tracing the words; it only seemed that a wave could write the same poem Wordsworth wrote. The point of the example is to make us think, or rather show that we cannot think, of intentionless meaning, which is what we have to attempt while in the grip of a belief that the wave has written the poem. While we believe that the wave is the author of the poem, we can no longer think of it as meaningful; therefore in considering the poem meaningful, as we have always done, we have also always taken for granted its author's intentionality. We cannot even for a moment think of meaning in the absence of intention, which is always (fully?) a co-presence with meaning, therefore any theoretical distinction will be "incoherent." To "have" meaning is identically to "have" intention.

If this example induces a feeling of *déjà vu* rather than illumination, perhaps that is because it is an ornate though significantly weakened version of the familiar example of monkeys on typewriters eventually producing the works of Shakespeare. Let us nevertheless concede the example and see what can be deduced from it. While the example is one that a theorist of any of the schools Knapp and Michaels censure might easily construe in his own favor, it is an example designed to work against theory; we are thus to accept that it "really" shows the flat impossibility of what any theoretician must believe in order to proceed.

Alternatively, it shows the unreality of the situations that theory supposes to be capable of existing. Theory can no more exist in reality than a wave-poem can. (Antitheoreticians inhabit a world of stark realities and unrealities, in which there is no admissible place for fictions, constructive or otherwise.) But now the s. & c. begins: the example *against* theory begins to work *for* pragmatic interpretation. It usefully shows, first of all, what it is both necessary and possible for a pragmatic interpreter to believe in order to sustain his practice; since he, too, would not have been able to interpret the wave-poem, it follows, not that intention is necessary, or that meaning is necessary, but that both are necessary "all at once." The example also usefully enables the authors to determine what the status of a wave-poem would be, supposing that one could be found.

According to the authors the wave inscriptions are uninterpretable in practice because in essence they *are* not words, not sentences, not a poem, not even language. What makes all the difference, restoring interpretability, is the arrival of the submarine with a passenger who can ontologically reconnect those inscriptions to a human-intentional source. But if the wave-inscriptions are practically uninterpretable, what are we to make of them? The safest answer from a pragmatic standpoint might well be nothing. If something has to be said, perhaps that is because the marks are not random or unintelligible; they conform to known rules of syntax, prosody, orthography, and so forth. So Knapp and Michaels do say something. They say that the marks *are* not words, sentences, poetry, language, and so forth but merely *resemble* those things.

To say this is to go overboard for metaphysics in a way that is at least superficially odd in any pragmatic context. It is quite radically to deny that the forms of language possess any defining power; it is also to deny that wherever those forms exist there is inescapably a question of interpretation, even if not an easy one. What normally and irreplaceably defines a sentence, no matter whence it emanates, is a regular grammatical form. Of course this is a matter of convention, in the absence of any "real" definition of a sentence. But to suppose, as the authors evidently do, that the authentic property of the sentence is conferred on it by interpretive belief, irrespective of conventional form, is to be reborn into a condition of "true belief" extreme even in these times for solipsistic intransigence. Alternatively, the supposition that forms are merely empty betrays an obliviousness of the socially constructed and consensual nature of linguistic significance.

Knapp and Michaels, then, *resolve* the status of intentionless inscriptions by introducing with more emphasis than argument the term "resemblance." We are entitled to eject that term as soon as it appears, since in their own example the wave-poem does not *resemble* a poem by Wordsworth but is actually identical to one. What the authors have,

whether they like it or not, is a wave-*poem* that happens not to lend itself to pragmatic interpretation; the problem is theirs, but "resemblance" is not the solution. Even to speak of "resemblance" here is to give a wholly arbitrary ontological groundedness to the difference between an interpretable and a noninterpretable text (even when they are the same text); it is also to *secure* interpretation by assuming the power to disqualify (by reduction to its own image or shadow) any poem that fails to meet pragmatic requirements. Unquestionably it is possible to work on such a basis; all that is questionable is the value of doing so.

Since, in the absence of substantial pragmatic argument, not much more can be said about the self-resembling text (the text that is not quite "itself"), let us turn to the question of belief, to which pragmatism attaches great importance. Indeed, the authors might suggest that this is where attention should have been focused all along, since their own investment is in the epistemological rather than the ontological side of the question. Although they are obliged by the perversity of theorists to talk about grounding, that is not a matter with which pragmatism is vitally concerned. Alternatively, their own quasi-grounding is supplied by belief rather than by any inherent property, particular origin, or altogetherness of the text.

True as far as it goes—yet I have tried to show that the ontological grounding of practice is what the authors quietly effect before moving on to the chosen terrain of belief, so by the time they arrive there any problems have been solved in advance. By practicing S. & G. extensively, the authors have reified the object or substance of their belief while at the same time securing that object by placing it beyond analysis. Accordingly no difficulties arise about the nature or force of a belief that can confidently be pronounced identical to knowledge.

The authors' discussion of belief, which is really little more than an assertion of the sufficiency and philosophical invulnerability of belief, implicitly raises more issues than can easily be dealt with or than the authors remotely seem to recognize.[4] But paradoxically the emphasis on belief in the closing stages of "Against Theory" is not such as to compel an extended argument. Before it explicitly comes up, the question of belief has already been begged and defused to such a degree that it is scarcely a *question* any longer; moreover, the problems of belief and

4. The difficulty of response is compounded by the sudden and extreme dependence of the argument on work done by Stanley Fish in *Is There a Text in This Class?* ([Cambridge, Mass., 1980], pp. 350–71). It may seem almost necessary here to confront Fish directly; alternatively, Knapp and Michaels might claim that they are entitled to trade in the normal way on points established by Fish. Since a direct confrontation with Fish would require at least another essay, and since I do not acknowledge the appropriateness of the use to which his arguments are put in "Against Theory," I simply claim the right to limit liability to the authors.

knowledge are mischaracterized to such a degree that the triumph of belief is as facile as it is meaningless.[5] There is in effect nothing to engage with here other than the authors' assertion of the unsurpassable force of belief. I will however revert briefly to the wave-poem, approaching it now from the "belief" side rather than the "substance" side in the hope that that will enable me, if not to settle anything profound, then at least to suggest the insufficiency of pragmatic reliance on belief.

Epistemologically speaking, the pragmatist deduces from the example of the wave-poem that while we *believe* the poem to have been written by the wave we cannot interpret it, and it is correlatively disqualified as a poem. What makes all the difference, everywhere, all the time, to everything, is our possession by belief. No knowledge can transcend or replace belief, which accordingly constitutes the highest epistemological plane on which the human mind can function (as God in his own way said to Adam). What we happen to believe at a given moment about the authorship of the poem is absolutely determining. Knapp and Michaels acknowledge that the spectacle of a wave writing a poem might give rise to speculation—we might wonder, for example, if Wordsworth has become the genius of the shore, writing or perhaps reinscribing his poems from another plane of being—but such speculation must terminate in the *belief* that the wave has written the poem. Certainly no knowledge can come to our rescue; conversely, a "true" belief constitutes sufficient knowledge. And seeing, without too much ado, is believing.

But let us reconsider the sequence of events. We begin under the unquestioned (seemingly unquestionable) assumption that Wordsworth is the human author, presumed to have had effective intentions, of the poem. This unproblematical assumption, on which a whole interpretive practice may depend, is drastically challenged—shattered, denied—leaving us with a new belief about the poem that forecloses any further practice (all of which may reveal more about the limits of pragmatic interpretation than about those of interpretation in general, or reality in general). The submarine then appears, after which the status quo ante (or perhaps something equivalent to it) is restored, and enabling belief revives. What is the moral of the story?

A nonpragmatist might suggest that we have begun with an unquestioned belief or naive faith from which certain practices "naturally" follow. This belief is replaced not by just another belief but by an in-

5. This will no doubt seem prejudicial to the argument. But consider, for example, how we are told that a commitment to knowledge, as opposed to belief, leaves us only two ways to "go," either a "realist" way or an "idealist" way. The choice—the entire range of possibilities, discourses, interests—is thus typically narrowed down until it lies between a realism that, as defined, is wholly unphilosophical and an idealism that, as defined, is philosophically unrecognizable. Given such alternatives, belief is attractive. We may also choose to repudiate the zero-sum game in which belief (for reasons that I simply invite readers to examine) "wins" and knowledge "loses."

hibitingly negative belief *in relation* to the one first held. The effect this second belief produces is thus equivalent to a loss of faith in Wordsworth as author, in the poem as poem, and in our capacity to interpret. The appearance of the submarine may restore our faith and everything that depends on it. In other words, we have not passed through a simple succession of positive beliefs but have reverted to a belief (if that is still the word for it) that can never again be naive, unsuspecting, or natural. (In fact, it requires the spectacular artifice of the submarine *deus ex machina* to "save" our practice.) Maintaining our recovered power or determination to interpret following the traumatic shock of "ungroundedness"—following a revelation of the painful contingency of our practice—may require something more, or something other, than a childlike faith wedded to appearances.[6] It may even require that we reassess in general our position as authoritative interpreters, recognizing in it a presumption that needs to be either justified or abandoned.

No doubt this "requirement" will seem quixotically unreal—or incapable of being satisfied—in the institutional setting of literary interpretation; a degree of politic accommodation will thus have to be acknowledged. But the rejection of theory and corresponding exaltation of practice not only relaxes a constitutive tension within critical activity but also deprives practice of its primary source of justification. The practice envisaged will thus expose itself to charges of endless arbitrariness or redundancy, or it will be forced to invoke its own institutional existence as the "sign" of its legitimacy. In neither case will this "liberated" (ungoverned?) practice be capable of claiming status as a discipline, and it will in fact define itself as an indulgence or abuse to be tolerated.

6. The conception of belief as an innocent given and/or as a state of possession seems fundamental to antitheoreticalism. Like the "practice" it complements, "belief" is withdrawn from the structural oppositions as well as from the historical circumstances that might at once limit it and render it more meaningful. The authors also remain locked into a tautology in which what is truly believed becomes equivalent to truth, while truth becomes equivalent to whatever is truly believed. Finally, their conception of belief is one that assigns a kind of fullness and immediacy to the condition, whereas, almost by definition in our culture, "belief" has a proleptic character; a *lack,* even if only temporary, of justifying knowledge or "groundedness" is implicit in the conception. The verbal intensification of "belief" into "true belief" not only fails to solve the problem but opens up certain ironic vistas.