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## Method as the Embodiment of Reason

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### The introductory ideas

Through [the writing of laws on the body by modern discourses], living beings are 'packed into a text' (in the sense that products are canned or packed), transformed into signifiers of rules (a sort of 'intextuation') and, on the other hand, the reason or *Logos* of a society 'becomes flesh' (an incarnation). (de Certeau 140)

I begin with a quote from Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, because this quote describes the point at which I want to enter the debate on the topic at hand, Reason.<sup>1</sup> I want (through this quote) to identify the focus of this essay: the intersection between body, society, and the *Logos*. I believe that the discourses of Reason function today simultaneously to subject the individual body to their laws and to cause the individual body to assist in the reproduction of these laws. Therefore, I address within this essay how the constraints of societal discourse function to "make Reason flesh," in the process preventing "the flesh" (the everyday practices of our lives) from becoming incorporated into Reason.

This is not to suggest that we, as the bodies in this situation, are doomed merely to fulfill the demands of an anonymous discourse. As de Certeau argues, the closed circle described by this relationship between societal discourse and individual can be—and continually is—*broken*. This breaking through/away from such societal discourse does not, though, occur through political activism, nor does it find its basis in political theory. This individual movement away from the discourses of Reason is, instead, enacted in our everyday lives. De Certeau shows how we, as individuals are not passive consumers of the world around us. We are, rather, *active*

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<sup>1</sup> I also want to begin with an acknowledgment: I am indebted to Edward Schiappa, Calvin Schrag, William Rawlins, Myrdene Anderson, and an outside reviewer for their many instructive comments about earlier versions of this essay.

participants in a world. In our daily activities of walking, cooking, telling stories, we appropriate and reinscribe: we individualize society, make it our own and can, in the process, *change it*. It is in this spirit that I offer the following essay; as an appropriation of one aspect of the modernist legacy, that of traditional notions of method, and as a reinscription and redescription of what we mean by "method." As I write these words on Reason, I write about the laws/words/assumptions that I have inherited, and, at the same time, create an alternative conception of method, an alternative space for my own research.

Use of the term "research" might be taken to signify "academic" writings, and thus distinguish them from "non-academic" work. However, my use of the term implies no such distinction. I want to break down the distinction invoked between "academic" and "non-academic" discourses, and move *toward* the study of everyday experiences and actions. I argue that a redefinition of "method" is one way in which such a move can be made. Within the boundaries of this essay, therefore, I turn to the world of academia and discuss the ways in which the legacies of Reason separate everyday activities from "methodical" activities. In the second half of the essay, I consider an alternative way to view "method," in the hopes that such a redefinition can open up the discourses of academia to allow consideration of different ways of engaging the world, an embrace of the many different practices of everyday life. I take for my organizing principle two related meanings of the following phrase: method as the embodiment of reason.

**Method as embodiment of reason (pt. 1):**

**"method" as a source of legitimacy**

As a participant in academia, I have found that one of the more important and ubiquitous legacies of Enlightenment Reason is the notion of "method." Traditionally, research in social science (not to mention natural science) has relied a great deal upon the articulation and application of proper methods. This reliance is based upon a conception of "method" as an instrument that, when used properly by the scholar, yields valid results. One origin of this conception of "method" can be found in Descartes' "Discourse on Method," where he explicitly creates linkages between Reason and method.

Descartes argues that the goal of his research has always been "to distinguish truth from falsehood, so that I could make intelligent decisions about the affairs of this life and act with greater confidence" (9). In order to achieve this goal, Descartes writes that he determined to "seek no other knowledge than that which I

might find within myself, or perhaps in the book of nature" (8). For Descartes, what separates his quest for knowledge about the world from those of others is not the scholar conducting it; rather, it is the *method employed* in the inquiry. He notes that "differences of opinion are not due to differences in intelligence, but merely to the fact that we use different approaches and consider different things . . . [T]hose who walk slowly can, if they follow the right path, go much farther than those who run rapidly in the wrong direction" (4).

For Descartes, therefore, a correct understanding of reality involves a striving to find and follow the correct path. Indeed, Descartes notes that he spent much time preparing for his inquiry into the truth of reality by "seeking the true method of obtaining knowledge of everything which my mind was capable of understanding" (14). Since he feared the obscuring of his results through the influence of prejudgments and preconceptions, he resolved to eliminate everything from his reasoning "unless it presented itself so clearly and distinctly to my mind that there was no reason or occasion to doubt it" (15). Rationality for Descartes was achieved through discovery and application of a correct method—moving forward from ideas that appeared clear and distinct, moving from evident truths to further truths. In this way, Descartes hoped to shut off his own preconceptions and speak the language of reality. He hoped to achieve this by establishing rules for himself in advance, "ma[king] a firm and unalterable resolution not to violate them even in a single instance" (15). By devotedly following these rules, by "conducting all [his] thoughts according to [the method's] rules" (22), Descartes argued that he could ensure the validity of his results. He argued that he could sort out the questionable prejudices from acceptable truths.

For Descartes, therefore, knowledge about the truth of reality came from the deduction of truths from truths according to an explicit set of rules. His method, his rules or criteria laid down in advance, ensured that he would not allow his own prejudgments to influence his conclusions. Indeed, according to Descartes, "I began with the most simple and general, and each truth that I found was a rule which helped me to find others, so that I not only solved many problems which I had previously judged very difficult, but also it seemed to me that toward the end I could determine to what extent a still unsolved problem could be solved, and what procedures should be used in solving it" (17). Therefore, Reasoned inquiry became a matter of rule-following based upon clear and distinct ideas. Reason became a matter of eliminating via method all thoughts that do not correspond to the truth of nature. Descartes believed that he had found a method that enabled him to validly reason about subjects in all areas of inquiry. He believed that he had discovered

the correct path, the correct method for rationally determining truth from falsity (17). Thus, for Descartes, the methodical scholar became the epitome (or embodiment) of Reason in inquiry.

Indeed, Reason and method are still linked in this way today. An illustration: when I entered graduate school and turned my focus to rhetorical criticism, I was not just turned loose with a word processor and a text to examine. Rather, I was *trained*. Trained, that is, in the methods of analysis proper to this field. As one author of a basic textbook on rhetorical method writes, "we engage in the process of rhetorical criticism constantly and often unconsciously, but with some formal training, we can become more adept and discriminating in its practice" (Foss 3). This, I suggest, is a very common experience for those of us in academia—but it is precisely the experience that reinforces and recreates the distinction between the activities we normally engage in and "methodical" practices.

This is not to say, however, that such an experience is *limited* to those of us in academia. In everyday life, we can easily see such the status accorded "methodical" activities. For example, in the realm of music, there are books and videos for the beginner labeled guitar or piano "method." Smokers also can find programs that teach the "proven method" to stop smoking; other advertisers during daytime television frequently claim that their product is "more effective than any other weight-loss method." Although I am going to restrict my focus to the realm of academia in this essay, it is clear that "method" enjoys a privileged status in both "academic" and "non-academic" discourses. This privilege enjoyed by method is, I believe, derived from the identification of Reason with method.

Due to the equation of Reason with method, any activity that does not qualify as "methodical" is, by definition, irrational—and is delegitimized automatically. The traditional conception of "method," therefore, marks a division between those practices that are conducted under the auspices of Reason and those that are not. Such a distinction, I believe, functions to prevent many everyday practices of our lives from being considered as legitimate, rational analyses of the world. I argue that there are three interrelated assumptions that set activities traditionally defined as "methodical" apart from those seen as "non-methodical": a method is a path leading to a desired goal, a method follows rules established in advance, and a method exists separately from the critic.

First of all, a "method" is a path that leads to a particular destination. Indeed, "method" is derived from the Greek term *methodos*, meaning "following a road" or

"following a way." It appears in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, where Aristotle defines "method" (in the context of rhetoric) as answering "how and from what sources we may reach our objective" (1.1.14). When "method" is tied to the directive notion of moving along a "path" or "way," it becomes easy to see the necessity of finding the right path. If we are using an "improper method" or no method at all, we find ourselves traveling upon a path that does not go in the desired direction. Thus, in order to reach the destination of our choice, we need the right method.

Our method, then, becomes a sort of guarantee: if we use the right method, we will find what we are looking for. For example, when interpreting a text, we need to choose a method that will reveal the secrets we seek in the text. If I want, therefore, to uncover the motives that are inherent in the situation presented in John Barth's novel *The Floating Opera*, I turn to Kenneth Burke's pentad. The assumption here is that the pentad gives me access to the text such that I can see a character's motives as they really are in the text. Finding the right method consequently can be seen as securing an epistemological guarantee. A method is like a conveyer belt; if I get on the right one, it takes me to my destination. This assumption is evident in Descartes' text; he argued that he was able to solve difficult problems and arrive at certain truth because he had found the right method. As a rhetorical critic, the right method similarly allows me to state definitively what a text means by providing me access to the text as it really is.

However, in order to reach the truth of the text, I need to be able to distinguish what I see in the text from what is really there. In other words, I need to be able to make sure that my analysis is not skewed by my own preconceptions. This introduces the second assumption of "method" as traditionally defined. A method enables us, according to Descartes, to eliminate any of our biases that might affect our results because it involves adhering to criteria and rules that are specified in advance. We can ensure that we are following the correct path because we can match our procedure against the steps of the method. In determining the motives in *The Floating Opera*, I will know that I am on the right track because I can make sure that I follow a few simple steps. I first identify the protagonists in the dramatic situation of the novel: the agent, the act, the agency, the scene, and the purpose. Finally, I examine the ratios that are inherent between any two terms. Following these steps of the pentad will quite naturally lead to my discovery of the motives inherent in the text.

One important thing should be noted about the rules that are followed. The rules of the method are established in advance—they are not derived from my en-

counter with Barth's text. This is because, as Descartes argued, antecedently specifying the rules to be followed prevents one's preconceptions from influencing the results. The method is derived prior to its application, so that using the method requires merely measuring the object of study against the method's criteria. This means that the object of study is not analyzed according to the impressions that I receive from it, impressions that might be mistaken. Rather it is evaluated using rules that have already proven true. Thus, biases are neutralized because the evaluation of the object of study is performed not by any individual person (who may be prejudiced or deceived), but by the method, which is the voice of truth.

In my analysis of *The Floating Opera*, therefore, I will know that I have determined the motive as it really is given in the text because I did not discover my procedure in the text itself. Rather, the pentad has already proved valid as a method to establish motives in texts. I will, therefore, know that what I find in the text is really there because I am not finding anything in the text; the pentad is doing the finding. The antecedently-established rules thus eliminate possible bias and, therefore, guarantee that following the right method leads to the desired result.

Implied in the above discussion is the final assumption of "method" as traditionally defined: method is separate from the person using that method. What this means is that a method is seen as something that exists independently of the person using the method. Method is neither a part nor an attribute of the critic; it is something that aids the critic in his or her analyses. Method is applied or utilized, created or revised. It is an instrument, something that can be taught in a textbook or a class on method. There is, therefore, a distance between the scholar and the method that he or she uses—the two are not coextensive. When I examine *The Floating Opera* using the pentad, there is a difference me and the tool that I use on the text, the system that I apply to the text, the lens through which I look at the text.

This assumption is based upon a traditional distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. In this view, there is a difference between what I experience as inside myself and what I experience as outside myself. My "inside" is myself as a subjectivity; that outside me is experienced as objectivity. I am separate from the rock that I trip over; I am not the same as the text that I study; my neighbor and I are distinctly different. I am separate from my method just as I am separate from all of these.

My neighbor and I are both subjectivities, and we both confront an objective world, a world that is "out there." Finding ourselves in this situation, we can both

make assertions about the things that are outside ourselves. However, we might be mistaken in our assertions; we might not be seeing the world in its objectivity. In other words, our subjectivities might color what we see. Therefore, we check our assertions against the assertions of others, combining our subjectivities into an intersubjectivity. We can thus attempt to get as close as possible to the objective world by achieving intersubjectivity.

I argue that this is where "method" enters the picture. The traditional conception of method functions to assist the achievement of intersubjectivity because it allows for replication. "Method" is separate from the person using it; therefore, in this view, method acts as a sort of guarantee that my findings correspond to *The Floating Opera*. This is because anyone who is versed in the method that I am using can "check my work." Any such person can merely replicate the procedure that I have followed in my analysis of the text. This person, then, can compare the results that he or she achieves with my own; they should be compatible. The interpretive community to which I (and my research) belong can work together to "correct" any subjective biases that might slip into my analysis.

Therefore, because "method" is assumed to be something that I use and not something that is a part of me, I can use the same method that Kenneth Burke used. Other people can use the same method that I use. Furthermore, I can use the same method repeatedly over time. It does not matter if the person using the method changes, because the method itself is the same—and, thus, the results obtained should be the same. It is in this way that method guarantees intersubjectivity; method is common property, not unique to a particular individual. This, I believe, is what is implied by Descartes when he notes that the only difference between himself (who could reach the truth about reality and solve difficult problems) and others was the method used.

In this view, the important part of rationality lies in the method itself; the person using the method is secondary. What sets apart Descartes' research is not Descartes himself; rather it is the method that he used. According to Descartes, others can use this method to the same effect. Differences between people, therefore, are eliminated from the rational process of engaging in a methodical analysis. A proper method works to circumscribe the individuality of the person conducting the research. The method allows us to talk about how our research results correspond to the way things really are, they allow us to show how our results can be applied beyond our own experience. Method, in this respect, guarantees that the research has meaning outside of an individual body at a particular time in a particular situation.

Therefore, in the Enlightenment quest for certainty, "methodical" activity becomes the only type of rational activity. Method shows that the research engaged in was rational, and thus is seen as the epitome or the embodiment of Reason.

**Method as embodiment of reason (pt. 2):**

**locating reason and method in everyday activities**

The problem that I have with the traditional definition of "method" articulated in the previous section lies in the exclusionary function that this definition plays: all activities that do not qualify as "methodical" also do not qualify as rational. Thus, this definition of "method" limits what is admissible as a rational analysis within academia. The implication is that many everyday activities, activities that may be legitimate and interesting ways of knowing the world, are excluded from consideration. Indeed, as Calvin Schrag notes, this excludes such activities as poetry and painting from counting as rational analyses of our world (*Resources* 54). How, then, do we account for Maurice Merleau-Ponty's description of Cézanne as a phenomenologist?<sup>2</sup> How do we evaluate Alfred Schutz's argument that Mozart was a better philosopher than any philosopher of his time?<sup>3</sup> The conceptualization of method that I described in the previous section would reject the activities of both Cézanne and Mozart as irrational or "non-rational." I argue, instead, that there are many activities such as painting, making music, cooking, and walking may have much to tell us about the world around us, and thus should be considered rational analyses of our world.

Does this mean that we must reject the notion of "method" altogether in order to broaden notions of rationality? Do we need a new term to replace "method" in the equation of Reason and method? Although that is one possible strategy, I believe that we can instead engage in a reconceptualization of what we mean by "method." Such a redefinition of "method," in conjunction with and based upon Schrag's redefinition of rationality, would allow us to broaden our discussion of rationality to include the many different activities that illustrate the many different ways to engage the world around us.

In *The Resources of Rationality*, Schrag attempts a refiguration of rationality, one that moves away from the "despised *Logos*" of the Enlightenment, but one that

<sup>2</sup> This refers to Merleau-Ponty's wonderful essay, "Cézanne's Doubt."

<sup>3</sup> This refers to Schutz's essay, "Mozart and the Philosophers."

retains the ability to guide our interactions in our socio-historical situation. As Schrag argues, "our proposal is that reason is operative in and through the transversal play of discourse and action, word and deed, speaking and writing, hearing and reading, in the guise of three phases of communicative praxis: (1) discerning and evaluating critique; (2) interactive articulation; and (3) incursive disclosure" (*Resources* 9). In short, transversal rationality, as a form of communicative praxis, is inevitably bound up with the various interactions, experiences, activities, and projects that make up our lives as human beings (*Resources* 9). Throughout the rest of this essay, I attempt to develop an alternative description of "method," one that expands the range of what counts as a rational analysis in academia. This project is necessarily intertwined with Schrag's, but it is more limited in scope. It should be noted, however, that my use of the term "rational" or "reason" in conjunction with my redefinition of "method" is referring to the expanded notion of rationality that Schrag provides in his text.<sup>4</sup>

As I noted above, critiquing the traditional way that "method" has been conceptualized does not necessitate a jettisoning of the concept of method altogether. We can try to formulate new descriptions of what it means to "have a method." The redefinition that I attempt in the following pages begins first with a critique of the three assumptions identified in the last section as implicit in traditional "method." I then conclude with a brief discussion of what implications this expanded notion of "method" might have in the realm of academia.

First of all, traditional notions of "method" assume that following a method leads to the desired goal. "Method," then, becomes sort of a talisman; finding the right path means that one will end up at the destination of one's choice. Such an assumption means that applying the pentad to Barth's text leads necessarily to an understanding of the motives implicit in the novel, that use of Burke's method gives me unmediated access to the reality of the text. However, the problem with such an assertion is that it assumes that we can use a method to separate how we see things from how things really are, that we can move past changing appearances to get at unchanging natures.

<sup>4</sup> Do I therefore accept the equation between Reason and method? I believe that the two are necessarily intertwined: an expanded notion of "method" must be based upon a similarly expanded notion of what it means to be rational. However, I do not mean to reduce this rationality to this notion of "method." I would argue, with Schrag, that redefining "method" is, instead, one part of a redefinition of rationality.

This assertion is problematic because, as Richard Rorty argues, use of a method cannot remove us from our position within human reality. A view of unchanging natures *cannot be achieved* unless we can somehow step outside of our participation in human communities and human language. We would have to have a "God's-eye view." I argue that we cannot achieve such a standpoint, and that a method, as developed and expressed in human language, will bring us no closer to such a view. The key point of the argument is that we are dealing with *language* when we "represent" reality: "you cannot *check* a sentence against an object . . . You can only check a sentence against other sentences, sentences to which it is connected by various labyrinthine inferential relationships" (Rorty 100). We do not have direct, unmediated contact with absolute reality. We compare our assertions to other linguistic representations—not a picture of reality as it "really is."

This rejection of the "God's-eye view" means that we cannot discover the essence or nature of reality and separate this out from the other properties that we, or our language, ascribe to them. It is problematic, therefore, to view using a method as "cracking codes, peeling away accidents to reveal essence, stripping away veils of appearance to reveal reality" (Rorty 89). Indeed, I argue that we can "talk about" the marks on a page of Barth's novel, but that we cannot link our discussions of a text to the text as it "really is." As Rorty argues, this problematizes "the idea that the text can tell you something about what *it* wants, rather than simply providing stimuli which make it relatively hard or relatively easy to convince yourself or others of what you were initially inclined to say about it" (103).

The text, like nature, cannot tell us what to think or say about it, it can just cause us to hold beliefs. I argue, then, that "reading texts is a matter of reading them in the light of other texts, people, obsessions, bits of information, or what have you and then seeing what happens" (Rorty 105). In this view of analyzing texts, I do not apply a method to a text in order to discover a bit of truth about the text as it is in reality. I cannot achieve a view of the text as it is in reality. Rather, I engage in a reading of the text based upon my own predispositions, beliefs, favorite authors, and habits of action. Thus, I might read Barth in light of my reading of Jacques Derrida; similarly, I might read Barth based upon my own experiments with creative writing. Such a type of reading is less an attempt to reach the essence of a text than an activity engaged in by an individual in response to a text.

This shift in the stated goal of analysis problematizes the second assumption underlying traditional conceptions of "method": following a method entails following rules laid out in advance. If we reject the notion that we can achieve a contact

with reality through use of a method, it could be argued that we would not need to follow a set of rules drawn up ahead of time. However, there is a further problem with the idea of *a priori* criteria. As Schrag argues, when we determine our criteria in advance, we do not (as Descartes believed) avoid biasing our encounter with the object of study. Instead, the reverse happens: we skew our results. We determine in advance what we will find.

As Schrag argues, the use of *a priori* criteria determines our results in advance because stating our criteria in advance also creates a justification for one's results in advance. Thus, the reasons that the findings of the inquiry are "correct" are the same as the criteria stipulated at the beginning of the project (Schrag, *Resources* 54). In other words, stating what one is looking for prior to the encounter with the text both determines what one is going to find and justifies those findings ahead of time. A clear example would be if, as a part of my reading of *The Floating Opera*, consulted two critics' texts on the novel, two texts that offered competing interpretations of a particular chapter. If I determine my criteria ahead of time, stating "I will use the text that offers an explanation for a greater amount of the text," I will determine the text I will select ahead of time as well. Moreover, I will have already provided myself with a reason for the choice. Similarly, stating the rules of the method in advance means that I will determine what I will find in the text before I even begin analyzing it.

This does not mean, however, that we must throw out all notions of criteria altogether. Indeed, as Schrag notes, we can merely reject the notion of *a priori* criteria. Such a rejection attempts to capture the spirit of "discernment" that was originally in the root of the term "criteria." This spirit operates in what Schrag terms praxial critique, "a discernment that draws upon the wider functions and faculties of the soul in its response to the social practices that extend transversally across the *polis*, providing at once an assessment of these practices and criteria for decision and action" (*Resources* 60). Schrag notes that, in praxial critique, we use criteria that are not specified in advance when reacting to a text or making a decision. These criteria are instead derived from such elements as our experiences, our beliefs, our involvement in a particular community, and our language (Schrag, *Resources* 64). They are predispositions that are activated in some combination in particular cases—and allow us to make decisions based upon those predispositions (Schrag, *Resources* 60).

Thus, praxial critique is a notion that allows us to problematize the notion of criteria specified in advance, but does not deny the possibility of a rational scholarly

research. In my encounter with *The Floating Opera*, I am already laden with experiences, preferences, prejudices, and beliefs that already orient me to the world (and to the novel itself) in some way. Criteria for the decision are then already a part of me. The encounter with the text, however, might cause one or more to become relevant in my reaction to and analysis of the situation. My favorite film might become relevant in my reading of Barth's text; similarly, my reading of the text might call to mind my fascination with old-fashioned steamboats. Indeed, Kenneth Burke's texts may even come to mind. In this case, Burke's discussion of motives may guide my reading of Barth's novel, without turning into a recipe that I must state ahead of time and strictly follow. In this view, I would be engaged in an analysis based upon discerned rules, not an attempt to achieve the reality of the text through following *a priori* rules.

In this redefinition of "method," thus, the rules or criteria used in the analysis arise from the predispositions of an individual as they become relevant in the encounter with the object of study. This implies a rejection of the third assumption underlying traditional assumptions of "method": a method is separate from the person using it. In the arguments provided above concerning the first two traditional assumptions of "method," we have moved toward a more individualized conception of method. Insofar as we both move away from viewing method as a path to truth and associate the rules or criteria of a method with the preconceptions of the scholar, we move toward an association of the method itself with the individuality of the scholar.

Such an individualized description of method is suggested by de Certeau's text as well. The main thesis of de Certeau's text is that societal discourse (for example, a method such as the pentad) is always *individualized* by those who are the consumers of such discourse. Thus, we might argue that it is quite possible (and, indeed, certain) that the hegemonic method is personalized by the idiosyncrasies of the scholar engaged in an analysis. As de Certeau argues in the case of reading a text, the individual reader "invents in texts something different from what they 'intended.' He [or she] detaches them from their (lost or accessory) origin. He [or she] combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meaning" (169).

In the case of method, then, our analyses are personalized by the use to which we put any particular method, the connections that we make between any particular method and any other part of our experience. De Certeau might illustrate this personalization of method by comparing it to renting an apartment. He notes that dis-

courses, like apartments, are individualized by those who inhabit them: "renters make . . . changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories" (xxi). Therefore, individuals essentially engage in improvisation, appropriating but changing an existing discourse. The result, according to de Certeau, is a creative consumption: "Barthes reads Proust in Stendhal's text; the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news" (xxi). Therefore, we can argue that it is impossible to consider a method apart from the uses to which particular people put it (xiii).

In our redefinition of "method," therefore, we find that we cannot separate the scholar from his or her method. Each scholar personalizes a particular method in the particular uses to which the method is put, the connections that are drawn between this particular method and another item in the scholar's experience, as well as the motives that make that particular method relevant to the scholar. It is in the analysis, then, that these differences become evident—the scholar's creativity is shown in his or her improvisation upon the themes of the method. It is in this sense that we can problematize the notion that two people can use the "same" method, or that one person at different times uses the "same" method. In both of these instances, we are not describing the "same" method: the method will vary between each situation because it will be individualized.

For example, the Burkean pentad, as it appears in my analysis of *The Floating Opera*, will differ from the pentad as it appears in Kenneth Burke's own writings. Moreover, the pentad in my analysis will differ from the pentad as it would appear in a colleague's analysis of Barth's novel. Indeed, the pentad in my present analysis will differ from the pentad as it would appear in my analysis of the same text twenty years from now. The difference between the methods involved in each of these situations lies in the personalized character of the method in each situation. The methods used in each case are not the same because they inevitably reflect individual differences between the people using the method. Thus, we do not apply a pre-existing instrument to a text. A method, instead, becomes a part of us when we appropriate it. Insofar as method is individualized, we cannot eliminate individual differences from the picture when we discuss issues of method.

In this redefinition of "method," we describe method as necessarily bound up with such things as the individual researcher's experiences, commitments, and beliefs. We might argue, therefore, that a research article displays the results of what happened when a particular researcher (with the aforementioned set of beliefs, commitments, and motivations) encountered a particular person or aspect of the



world. Thus, this redescription of "method" emphasizes the creative aspect of consumption that de Certeau describes. What becomes important in engaging in such an analysis is the result of the encounter between the scholar and the object of study. Indeed, we shift our focus from the details of the method that was used to the results of the analysis. We move from concern with replication of the researcher's results to the particular connections that are drawn by the scholar, the beliefs or experiences that become relevant in the encounter, the uses to which texts are put.

Does this, however, sacrifice the intersubjectivity that traditional conceptions of "method" provided by separating researcher and method? I argue that this is only the case if we continue to base our conception of "method" upon a traditional distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. Traditional assumptions discussed in the previous section, i.e. method as separate from the critic or determination of validity through application of *a priori* criteria, function to prevent individual preconceptions from biasing the results of the analysis. They therefore ensure that the results have a meaning that goes beyond the subjective experience of the particular researcher. In other words, they function as intersubjective "checks" to ensure the validity of the critic's analysis.

I believe that the effort to maintain intersubjective "checks" on the subjectivity of rhetorical criticism is based upon a problematic view of subjectivity. As Schrag argues, this traditional, centered view of subjectivity trades heavily upon distinctions between inner and outer, expression and meaning, private and public. Traditional conceptions of subjectivity privilege one half of the binary to the detriment of the other. He notes that such a conception of subjectivity associates "understanding" as what goes on within people (and, therefore, has a subjective meaning), while "explanation" concerns "external and objective states of affairs" (*Communicative* 76). This distinction, therefore, separates subjective meaning as that which is solely meaningful to one individual. Subjectivity, in this view, needs to be corrected in methodical research by intersubjective "checks" to ensure that the results are not merely meaningful to one person. However, I argue that we cannot make such a clean separation between subjective and objective meaning.

As Schrag writes, "expressive" statements are not merely "the articulation of private meaning by an autonomous speaker"; they always reveal the speaker's participation in a particular linguistic community (*Communicative* 36). Therefore, a critic's "subjective expression" *always* implies familiarity with the intersubjective history and conventions of a particular language. A scholar's discourse always already implies intersubjective agreement, at least at the level of spoken and written

language. Indeed, Schrag argues that we cannot separate "inner" subjectivity from "outer" objectivity because, in the process of communication, the subjective and the objective, the "I" and the "you" emerge in a mutual process of constitution:

the indexical posture of 'I' is dialectically bonded with the posture of 'you' as the one being addressed. I as speaker emerge in the presence of you as hearer . . . . I am able to say 'I' only because of an acknowledgment of you as my interlocutor within the dynamics of the dialogic encounter. The 'I' and the 'you' are as it were coconstituted, sharing a common, intersubjective space. (*Communicative* 125)

Therefore, I agree with Schrag that no speaker "is an island, entire of itself" (*Communicative* 125).

Moreover, an individual's intended meaning in his or her expressive discourse and/or action is also subject to interpretation by the individual's audience, and therefore expression can have public, intersubjectively-created meaning as well as an individual's private, intended meaning (Schrag, *Communicative* 40). Thus, this problematizes the traditional distinctions made in discussion of "method" between inner and outer, public and private, subjective preception and significant meaning. I agree with Schrag that a conception of subjectivity based upon such distinctions needs to be replaced with a conception of subjectivity that encompasses both halves of the traditional dichotomy. This new conception of subjectivity is offered by Schrag as one in which "the articulated meanings of individual speech acts and gestures are at once displays of the intentions of particular speakers and the inscriptions of sense in the history of publicly spoken language" (*Communicative* 47).

One implication of the blurring of the distinction between "inner" and "outer" in our definition of "method" is that the individual scholar's voice becomes more important in his or her own method. This emphasis upon the voice is similar to that called for by Susan Krieger in *Social Science and the Self*. In this text, Krieger proposes that "we ought to develop our own different individual perspectives more fully in social science, and we ought to acknowledge, more honestly than we do, the extent to which our studies are reflections of our inner lives" (1). Krieger argues that we are directly affected (and, conversely, our research is directly affected) by our personal experiences as bodies living in and through the world (29). Thus, according to Krieger, we should acknowledge that "the self is not a contaminant, but rather that it is the key to what we know, and that methodological discussions might fruitfully be revised to acknowledge the involvement of the self in a positive manner" (30).

Indeed, my redefinition of "method" would allow us also to engage in such a reconceptualization of the relationship between scholar and his or her object of research. Rather than seeing the two as separate (or as separable), we would argue that continuing the processes of interpretation and reinterpretation would allow us to talk in meaningful ways about our experiences of ourselves, other people, and the world that we live in. In this redescription, we, as scholars, would not try to eliminate our own voice in the research. Our voice, like the voices of others that we might interact with, is an important part of the ongoing dialogue. As Krieger writes, she does not want to speak of herself "because I am generally applicable (like a theory) or because I am an instance of a more widespread phenomenon (like a piece of data), but because I am someone in particular" (34).

The final consequence of this redefinition of "method" refers to the exclusionary function that notions of "method" typically perform. As I noted in the beginning of the essay, traditional conceptions of method reinforce the conception that, insofar as we use a method when talking about our world, we are "rational," and, insofar as we are not trained in method or do not use one, we are engaged in "irrational" or "non-rational" research. A traditional notion of "method," therefore, erects "methodical" activity as a privileged way to interpret the world. This is similar to a situation de Certeau describes in terms of texts:

the use made of the text by privileged readers constitutes it as a secret of which they are the 'true' interpreters. It interposes a frontier between the text and its readers that can be crossed only if one has a passport delivered by these official interpreters, who transform their own reading (which is *also* a legitimate one) into an orthodox 'literality' that makes other (equally legitimate) readings either heretical (not 'in conformity' with the meaning of the text) or insignificant (to be forgotten). (171)

When, consequently, we redefine the idea of "method," we can open the realm of "methodical" activity to practices heretofore excluded as "irrational." Therefore, the many different ways of engaging with and responding to the world around us can become a significant part of our scholarly discourse. Indeed, the individualization of method described above situates "methodical" activities in the many different beliefs, experiences, and practices of individual scholars.

Expanding notions of "method" to include everyday activities also works to blur the distinction between those in academia and those outside it. We expand the notion of "rationality" to cover not only the Enlightenment project of certainty and the hegemonic *Logos*, but also the experiences and attitudes of those who are "non-academic," those who are actively engaged in movement through and interpretation

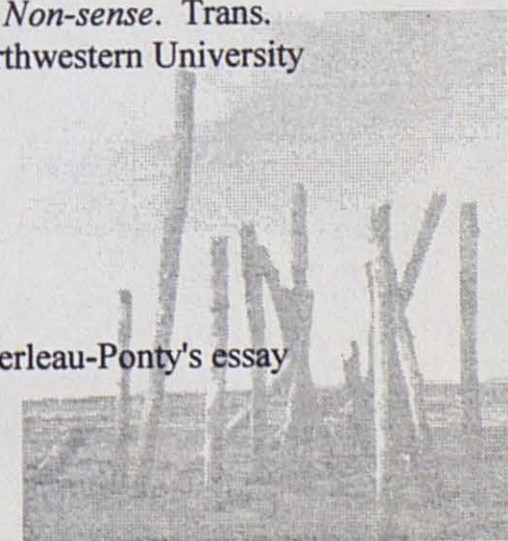
of the world of everyday life. We situate reason and rationality in the individual bodies that make up societies, the bodies that interact and communicate in the production and interpretation of meaning. Therefore, we allow the work of individual people/bodies such as novelists, journalists, musicians, painters, social activists, and construction workers to be legitimate statements about the world that we live in. Mozart and Cézanne, for example, can clearly be considered philosophers in such a redefinition of "methodical" activity.

In the process, we can expand the typical focus on deduction and induction, procedures that, some argue, do not function in the way that they are articulated in traditional research.<sup>5</sup> We can instead allow some space for method as *abductive*, a creative "aha!" that shows the performative character of the individual's encounter with what he or she is studying. De-mystifying method, then, and situating it in the "practices of everyday life" works to subvert one of the important barriers that separate academia from other people's lived experience. We then conceive of method as (in a second, empowering sense) the *embodiment* of reason, and, thus, we work to bring those of us in academia closer to that which we claim to be studying.

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the discussion of induction in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man."



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