I

It is generally thought to have been Hume's intention to reveal how it is that beliefs unamenable to confirmation by observation or logical demonstration must thereby be beyond the scope of reason, their assertion being at best an expression of subjective feeling or attitude. Even if we deplore this 'Humean' picture as just so much flawed verificationism we cannot casually dismiss it, for there is a deep sense in which philosophy has yet to adapt to, and feel at ease with, a conception of rational argument free from the weight of Hume's constraints.

Throughout John Wisdom's later papers this 'unspoken habit of thought' echoing the received version of Hume repeatedly appears as a source of philosophical problems spanning a central range of issues. And, he thinks, if we take on board Hume's recipe we head for disaster because the scope of reason would shrink too far. Yet it might be replied that without these controls on argument the disaster will be worse, for reasons would become almost anything we like.

So the recipe still grips firmly, despite the exorcism of positivism, and one sign of its life is the philosophical reception given to certain views of Thomas Kuhn. He is seen by his critics to have trans-
gressed the dogma that what is outside logic and observation is outside rationality, and the locus of the offence is his account of theory-choice. Kuhn's strategy, say his critics, makes choices between theories personal, psychological or subjective; they cannot be based on good reasons, there can be no objective control by shared observation or common standards; there is 'no room for any sort of rational deliberation' and decisions in science must, if Kuhn is right, be regarded as arbitrary in the end and 'are in no better state than those of religion'.

Strong stuff no doubt, but it does seem to be vindicated, surprisingly by premises which Kuhn himself supplies. For he insists that 'the issue of paradigm choice can never be unequivocally settled by logic and experiment alone' and 'debates over theory-choice cannot be cast in a form that fully resembles logical or mathematical proof'. With deductive proof and observation curbed there is 'an absence of criteria able to dictate the choice of each individual'; and when he claims that in place of appeal to logic and experience we have recourse to persuasion, it is excusable that Humean intuitions should unite in the thought that Kuhn has priced himself outside reason's range altogether.

Kuhn's own defence is disarming. There are indeed more or less standard and rational criteria for evaluating theories - accuracy, consistency, simplicity, scope, fruitfulness, perhaps others. And this is safe enough. But then all seems undermined when he tells us that they function as value judgments influencing choices, like heuristic maxims which guide but do not dictate decisions. These criteria are open to varying and individual interpretations; they rely, in part, 'on idiosyncratic factors dependent upon individual biography and personality'. Kuhn's urbane assurance that nothing in this thesis implies that good and decisive reasons are no longer to be found has seemed astonishing to his critics. And with the door to subjectivism apparently wide open, astonishment is understandable.