The reasonable man adapts himself to the conditions which surround him. The unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt surrounding conditions to himself. . .
All progress depends on the unreasonable man.

George Bernard Shaw

I. Introduction

This is the third in a five-part critical study of the work of Sir Karl Popper, based on a review of the Schilpp volume in his honour. The first study dealt with biology, evolution theory, evolutionary epistemology, and Popper's doctrine of the "Three Worlds." The second treated Popper's interpretation of quantum mechanics, probability theory, entropy, time, indeterminism, consciousness, and the body-mind problem.

This third instalment deals with rationality, criticism, and logic. Throughout, my goal is to contribute to creating a "body of informed and serious criticism" of Popper's thought. I aim to sketch the general problem situation within which Popper's thought has to be evaluated, and to indicate the current state of discussion of his theories. In the present paper, I shall build a connected argument relating to rationality, criticism, and logic — introducing Popper's views, and those of the contributors to the Schilpp volume, where they are relevant.
II. The Rational Way of Life

Although much of his written work relates to problems of rationality, Popper's most direct treatment of rationality dates to the mid nineteen-forties, and is found chiefly in Chapters 22–24 of The Open Society and Its Enemies (1945) and in several essays, “Utopia and Violence” (1948), “Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition” (1949), and “Humanism and Reason” (1951), reprinted in Conjectures and Refutations.

Rationality reemerged as an important theme of Popper's work, and of the entire Popper school, in 1959–63, partly as a result of a running dialogue between Popper and myself. Out of this discussion, a number of books and papers were written almost immediately. There were for instance my own The Retreat to Commitment (1962) and “Rationality versus the Theory of Rationality” (1962). Popper added an addendum on “Facts, Standards and Truth: A Further Criticism of Relativism” to the fourth (1962) and subsequent re-editions of The Open Society. At the same time, he made important revisions in his discussion of rationality in Chapter 24 of The Open Society, and added a new opening section on rationality to his unpublished Postscript. He also treated the matter in his Preface to Conjectures and Refutations (1962), and in his essay, “Truth, Rationality, and the Growth of Scientific Knowledge” (1962). Imre Lakatos applied these ideas in his “Infinite Regress and Foundations of Mathematics” (1962), as did J.W.N. Watkins in his “Negative Utilitarianism” (1963). Inspired by our discussion, Hans Albert, in Germany, began a long series of publications on rationality, culminating in his Traktat über kritische Vernunft (1968). From all this writing a large literature has grown.

The entire discussion touches issues of fundamental importance—more important than those broached in the first two instalments of this series. Biology and quantum mechanics are two areas where Popper’s ideas are applied. Theory of rationality, on the other hand, develops the fundamental ideas themselves. Nonetheless, rationality remains a comparatively little explored area of Popper’s work—at least where the English-language readership is concerned—despite its importance to his philosophy, which is, as a whole, often called “critical rationalism.” Like physics and biology, the theory of rationality is largely neglected in the Schilpp volume, although one paper in it, A.E. Musgrave’s “The Objectivism of Popper’s Epistemology,” reports some of the discussion of rationality to which I have just referred.

Many years ago, Popper himself used to complain about dis-