

INTRODUCTION: TROPOLOGY, DISCOURSE, AND THE MODES OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

When we seek to make sense of such problematical topics as human nature, culture, society, and history, we never say precisely what we wish to say or mean precisely what we say. Our discourse always tends to slip away from our data towards the structures of consciousness with which we are trying to grasp them; or, what amounts to the same thing, the data always resist the coherency of the image which we are trying to fashion of them.¹ Moreover, in topics such as these, there are always legitimate grounds for differences of opinion as to *what* they are, *how* they should be spoken about, and the *kinds* of knowledge we can have of them.

All genuine discourse takes account of these differences of opinion in the suggestion of doubt as to its own authority which it systematically displays on its very surface. This is especially the case when it is a matter of trying to *mark out* what appears to be a new area of human experience for preliminary analysis, *define* its contours, *identify* the elements in its field, and *discern* the kinds of relationships that obtain among them. It is here that discourse itself must establish the adequacy of the language used in analyzing the field to the objects that appear to occupy it. And discourse effects this adequacy by a *pre* figurative/ move that is more tropical than logical.

The essays in this collection deal one way or another with the tropical element in all discourse, whether of the realistic or the more imaginative