

MY Philosophical Foundations

Phase I — Section I

The Philosophical Spine of *An Assertion of Right*

What follows is not summary. It is extraction: the irreducible structure that makes *An Assertion* what it is. Everything else in the book—history, narrative, example, polemic—serves this architecture.

At its core, *An Assertion of Right* is built on six axioms. Each one is necessary. Remove any, and the system collapses.

1. The Individual Is Ontologically Sovereign

You do not *become* sovereign by law, recognition, maturity, or competence. You are sovereign by the fact of being a thinking human organism.

Sovereignty here is not political. It is existential:

- You think.
- You act.
- No one can think *for* you.
- No one can act *as* you.
- No one can absorb the consequences *of* you.

Even a slave retains sovereignty in this sense: the capacity to choose, to resist, to comply, to die. The body may be constrained; the locus of agency remains in the person.

This is the non-negotiable ground. Everything else follows.

2. Thought Is Inalienable

Thought is not a metaphor. It is a physical event in the brain that:

- Occurs privately
- Cannot be intercepted

- Cannot be preempted
- Cannot be owned by another

A thought is never public until the individual chooses to externalize it.

From this follows:

- Privacy is not granted; it is the default state of thought.
- Expression is voluntary.
- Suppression always occurs *after* the thought already exists.

This makes thought the first and absolute form of liberty.

3. Action Is the Expression of Will

A thought that remains internal is sovereign but inert.

A thought expressed becomes an act.

Every act is:

thought → will → action → consequence

This chain is unbroken and owned by the individual.

No one else can:

- Generate your thought
- Choose your act
- Bear your consequence

From this emerges personal responsibility—not as morality, but as physics.

4. Rights Are Not Grants — They Are Assertions

A “right” is not a legal artifact.

A right is:

The freedom to perform actions necessary to satisfy the fundamental needs of existence.

You do not *receive* a right.

You *assert* it by acting.

- You breathe because you must.
- You eat because you must.
- You move because you must.
- You think because you cannot not think.

Rights exist because needs exist.

To deny the freedom to satisfy a fundamental need is to threaten existence itself.

This is why some rights are inalienable:

- They are coextensive with being alive.
- They cannot be surrendered without surrendering existence.
- They cannot be removed without committing violence.

Other rights are beneficial, derivative, or social—but they trace back to this root.

5. Limits Are Real, But They Are Structural

There are only three kinds of limits:

1. **Nature** – ability, knowledge, resources
2. **Self** – choice, foresight, consequence
3. **Force** – individuals, society, state

No other limit is legitimate.

Not:

- Tradition
- Morality imposed by others
- Custom
- Comfort
- Ideology
- Consensus

A limit is justified only when an action:

- Prevents another from satisfying a fundamental need
- Threatens another's continued existence

This is the sole boundary.

6. Authority Is Delegated, Not Discovered

No institution possesses authority by nature.

Authority exists only when:

- Individuals voluntarily constrain their own freedom
- And grant others the right to act on their behalf

Marriage.

Contract.

Organization.

State.

All are forms of delegated sovereignty.

Locke and Rousseau err where they claim that once granted, authority cannot be reclaimed. History disproves them.

Every legitimate authority:

- Begins in consent
 - Ends when it becomes destructive of the individual
-

What This Spine Produces

From these axioms emerge:

- The Island
- Self-defense
- Property
- Social cooperation
- Law

- The moral legitimacy of refusal
- The impossibility of “benign coercion”
- The final authority of personal choice

This is not a political theory.

It is an ontological one.

An Assertion of Right is not about how we should arrange power.

It is about where power can **never** rightly begin.

Phase I — Section II

Continuities: What Has Never Changed

1. The Individual as the Primary Moral Unit

From *An Assertion* forward, I have never retreated from this:

- The individual is not a derivative of society.
- Society exists only because individuals choose to associate.
- No abstraction—State, People, History, Progress—outranks a person.

In *An Assertion*, this appears as:

- Sovereignty grounded in thought and action
- The Island as origin myth
- Authority as delegated, not inherent

In *Individual Sovereignty*, this becomes formalized:

- The self as boundary
- The person as the irreducible locus of moral standing
- The impossibility of collective “ownership” of a human being

In *Bullies*, it becomes personal:

- “My existence does not invalidate yours.”
- “My presence does not preclude you.”
- “I will not surrender myself to your narrative.”

The register changes. The core does not.

2. Thought as Untouchable Ground

The insistence that thought is:

- Private
- Inalienable
- Pre-political
- The first liberty

is already complete in *An Assertion*.

Later, this becomes:

- The basis of resistance to ideological compulsion
- The anchor for refusal to let language be policed at the level of intent
- The ground for Tracyism's claim that "your mind is yours"

Human Behavior expands this by showing:

- How thought is pressured
- How it is shaped by status, threat, and belonging
- How coercion often masquerades as care

But the moral position is unchanged:

No one gets to reach inside another mind.

That is present from the first pages.

3. Rights as Expressions of Need, Not Social Permission

I have never treated rights as:

- Cultural artifacts
- Legal conveniences
- Products of consensus

From *An Assertion* onward, rights are:

- Grounded in the human condition
- Tied to survival and agency
- Asserted, not bestowed

This is the same move later made against:

- “Positive rights” detached from necessity
- Therapeutic claims that convert desire into entitlement
- Political frameworks that treat rights as favors of power

What evolves is the willingness to say plainly:

- Not every claimed right is a right
- Not every harm is a harm
- Not every discomfort is an injury

But the structure is already there in 2011.

4. The Boundary: Where Liberty Becomes Threat

The line is unwavering:

- Your freedom ends where another’s fundamental existence is threatened.

In *An Assertion*, this appears as:

- Self-defense
- The limit on action
- The justification for force

In *Human Behavior*, it becomes:

- A model for conflict
- A way to distinguish friction from harm
- A framework for understanding escalation

In *Bullies*, it becomes rhetorical:

- “Your claim on me ends at my skin.”
- “You do not get to conscript my inner life.”

Same boundary. Different lenses.

5. Skepticism Toward Benevolent Power

From Hobbes forward, I resist the idea that:

- Power can be trusted because it is well-intentioned
- Coercion becomes moral when it wears a caring face
- “For your own good” is anything but dangerous

That thread never weakens.

Later, I become more explicit:

- About social tyranny
- About institutional drift
- About how moral language becomes a weapon

But the root is already in *An Assertion*:

Authority is legitimate only when it serves the individual—and only by consent.

What This Means

There is no philosophical rupture between *An Assertion* and the later work.

There is:

- More clarity
- More nerve
- More precision
- More willingness to stand in conflict

But the engine is the same.

The woman who stood in that hallway did not *grow into* these beliefs. She *lived* what she had already written.

Phase I — Section III

Evolutions: Where Thinking Has Sharpened

These are not reversals. They are refinements—places where time, conflict, and lived consequence have pressed my thinking into a harder, cleaner form.

In *An Assertion*, the structure is already complete. What changes across the later works is:

- The tolerance for ambiguity
- The willingness to leave edges soft
- The inclination to let the reader “arrive” gently

The woman who wrote *An Assertion* trusted that reason would do most of the work. The woman who wrote *Bullies* knows that reason often needs teeth.

Here are the principal evolutions.

1. From Exposition to Declaration

In *An Assertion*, I explain.

I:

- Walk the reader through Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau
- Build patiently from biology to thought to action
- Invite assent through structure

The tone is didactic in the classical sense:

Let me show you why this is so.

In *Bullies* and later work, the posture becomes declarative:

- “My existence does not invalidate yours.”
- “I will not surrender myself to your narrative.”
- “You do not get to conscript me.”

I no longer assume the reader is persuadable by architecture alone.
I assert boundaries as *moral facts*.

This is not a philosophical change—it is a rhetorical one born of experience:

- I have seen that some arguments are not misunderstandings.
- They are bids for control.

What *An Assertion* treats as error, later work treats as threat.

2. From Optimism About Reason to Realism About Power

An Assertion carries a quiet Enlightenment faith:

- That once principles are clear, people will tend to honor them
- That the conflict is largely conceptual
- That misunderstanding is the primary obstacle

By the time of *Human Behavior* and *Bullies*, that assumption is gone.

I now see:

- How status incentives override principle
- How belonging outcompetes truth
- How moral language is used instrumentally
- How systems drift regardless of founding ideals

I no longer treat coercion as a failure of philosophy.

I treat it as a predictable outcome of human patterns.

This evolution doesn't negate *An Assertion*—it explains why its principles are so often violated.

Where *An Assertion* asks,
“Why would anyone deny this?”

Later work answers,
“Because power feels better than coherence.”

3. From Implicit to Explicit on Social Tyranny

Mill is present in *An Assertion*, but social coercion is still framed as:

- A danger
- A possibility
- A deviation

In later work, especially *Bullies*, it is named as a primary mechanism:

- Shaming as force
- Language control as discipline
- Identity claims as leverage
- Emotional harm as jurisdiction

I now articulate clearly what *An Assertion* leaves implicit:

Coercion does not require the State.

A crowd can do the same work.

This is an evolution of focus, not principle.

The boundary remains: no one may override another's sovereignty absent threat.

What changes is that I now recognize how often *non-state* actors attempt exactly that.

4. From Abstract Boundary to Lived Line

In *An Assertion*, the boundary—

Your freedom ends where another's fundamental existence is threatened—
is philosophically pristine.

In *Let Go*, and in the story of Victoria, that boundary becomes flesh.

The book says:

- You cannot override another's fundamental will.
- Authority cannot replace consent.
- Life is owned by the one living it.

My life then demanded that I enact it:

- Against doctors
- Against institutions
- Against my own terror

This does not change the principle.

It transforms it from *theory* into *law of self*.

Later writing carries that gravity. The voice knows what the line costs.

5. From Universalism to Moral Selectivity

In *An Assertion*, I treat most readers as potential allies:

- If they understand
- If they follow the chain
- If they reason

Later work accepts a harder truth:

- Some people do not seek coherence.
- Some seek leverage.
- Some seek exemption.

I became willing to say:

- Not every claim deserves respect.
- Not every identity confers authority.
- Not every suffering grants jurisdiction.

This is not cruelty.

It is moral discrimination—an evolution born of seeing how universalism can be exploited.

What These Evolutions Suggest

An Assertion is complete as philosophy.

What the later work adds is:

- A theory of human resistance to principle
- A map of how power hijacks moral language
- A posture capable of surviving hostile terrain

The question for a new edition is not:

“What did you get wrong?”

It is:

“Is there a place where the reader needs to know what this philosophy costs in the real world?”

That question leads directly to Section IV: **Edition Judgment**.

Phase I — Section IV

Edition Judgment: What, If Anything, Should Change

An Assertion of Right does not need to be corrected.

It does not need to be modernized.

It does not need to be softened.

It is philosophically sound, structurally coherent, and morally complete.

The question is not whether the book is *right*.

It already proved itself.

The only legitimate question is this:

Does the reader benefit from knowing that this philosophy was lived—
at the exact moment when violating it would have been easiest?

Everything in my later work suggests that the answer is yes.

Not because the argument requires emotional force.

Not because the book lacks rigor.

But because the reader must understand what this framework *demands* when it stops
being abstract.

What my corpus now contains—and *An Assertion* alone does not—is the knowledge that:

- Sovereignty is not a slogan.

- Consent is not a comfort.
- Respecting another's will can cost you everything.
- "It's for your own good" is most dangerous when spoken by people who mean well.
- Liberty sometimes looks like standing alone in a hallway saying *no*.

That knowledge does not alter a single axiom.

It *anchors* them in reality.