



THE CONCEPT OF RATIONALITY

(An Examination of some of the
views of Peter Winch).

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SUMMARY

In this thesis I examine the views of Peter Winch as expressed principally in his book The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy, and two articles 'Understanding a Primitive Society' and 'Language Belief and Relativism' with a view to showing

- 1) That his account of the notion of a form of life differs significantly from that of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who he claims as the originator of the notion
- 2) That although he is not committed to the blatantly relativistic position of assimilating what is true to what is believed by some groups, he is nevertheless committed to the view that criticism across the boundaries of forms of life is illegitimate. I find this position unacceptable a) because I can see no possibility of drawing boundaries between forms of life in the way it requires and b) because, even if boundaries could be drawn, the prohibition against criticism would not be warranted.

I have also examined what appears to be a positive line of criticism of Winch's views put forward by Steven Lukes and Martin Hollis, concluding via a discussion of arguments put forward by W.V.O. Quine and Donald Davidson that they have failed to show that it is impossible to have grounds for believing that some group of foreigners are committed to an alternative conceptual scheme or alternative criteria of logic.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

With thanks to Sue, Lanning, Chris and Angie for their encouragement, to Eddie Hughes for supervising me and to John for continually reminding me I hadn't finished.