THE CONCEPT OF RATIONALITY

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

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts.

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October 1979

CONTENTS

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.

CHAPTER ONE: THE WITTGENSTEINIAN ORIGINS OF WINCH'S POSITION.

1. Introduction.

In putting forward his account of the nature of the social sciences,[1] and 'understanding' generally, Peter Winch raises serious problems concerning translation between the languages of different cultural groups. In this thesis, I wish to show that an important line of criticism of Winch's views, based on the assumption that we could never have grounds for believing that other societies operate with criteria of truth, rationality and logic different from those current in our own culture, is not tenable, but also to argue that the sort of position espoused by Winch, which entails that we adopt a relativistic stance on these criteria, is not acceptable either. In short, I wish to argue that the possibility of discovering a society operating according to criteria of logic, truth and rationality different from those which we accept,

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1 I shall be concerned with the doctrines he enunciates in:
The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy (London:Routledge & Kegan Paul,1958), (hereafter, ISS); 'Understanding a Primitive Society' (hereafter UPS) in Wilson,B.R.(ed.) Rationality, pp. 78-111,(Oxford:Basil Blackwell,1970);'Language Belief and Relativism'(hereafter LBR) in Lewis H.(ed.) Contemporary British Philosophy, Series 4, pp. 322-337,(London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976)

if indeed this is a unique set, has not been ruled out by the a priori arguments put forward,[1] but that admitting this does not entail that any such criteria are equally as acceptable as any others.

Winch's views issue in controversy at the point where he makes pronouncements concerning the meaning, truth and rationality of statements of beliefs, in particular when he denies the possibility of criticizing beliefs current in cultures other than our own. These pronouncements are based on doctrines of meaning which Winch attributes to Ludwig Wittgenstein,[2] and which crucially involve the notion of 'a form of life'. In order to appreciate Winch's account of such notions as 'meaning','intelligibility' etc. it is necessary to grasp the notion of 'a form of life' which Winch sees as underlying them. Since, as Winch acknowledges,[3] this notion is taken over from Wittgenstein's writings, I shall begin my discussion of Winch's theories with a brief account of their alleged origins.

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1. e.g. by Steven Lukes & Martin Hollis in several articles referred to below.

2 In particular the views propounded in Wittgenstein L. Philosophical Investigations, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953),(Hereafter, PI) and Wittgenstein L. On Certainty (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969).

3 e.g. ISS p. 40.

2. Wittgensteinian Origins.

Winch's account of explanation in the social sciences constitutes an elaboration of views implicit in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, whose approach he commends as follows:

> 'the philosophical elucidation of human intelligence and the notions associated with this, requires that these notions be placed in the context of the relations between men in society. In so far as there has been a general revolution in philosophy in recent years, perhaps it lies in the emphasis on that fact and in the profound working out of its consequences, which we find in Wittgenstein's work. "What has to be accepted, the given, is - so one could say - forms of life."[1] [1]

It becomes clear that Winch sees the notion of a 'form of life' as important not just to the social sciences but to epistemology in general. E.g. he says:

> 'Whereas the philosophies of science, of art, of history etc., will have the task of elucidating the peculiar natures of those forms of life called 'science', 'art' etc., epistemology will try to elucidate what is involved in the notion of a form of life as such'[2]

In ISS, while his particular task is to show the way in which the elucidation of the notion of a

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1 ISS p. 40 (Quoting from PI, xi p. 226[e])

2 ISS p. 41

form of life is important in order to gain a proper understanding of the nature of social phenomena,[1] he is also drawing attention to the way in which it is required for gaining an understanding of the conceptual apparatus in terms of which we view the world in general.

I shall argue that Winch's notion of a 'form of life' differs significantly from Wittgenstein's; despite his reliance on Wittgenstein's work, e.g. in ISS ch. 2. Hence, if Wittgenstein is to be appealed to in support of Winch's position, then, I argue, the appeal fails, since features of Wittgensteinian forms of life (such as their existence as discrete entities, and their 'givenness') are not necessarily features of their Winchian counterparts, even if dubious grounds can be given for ascribing these properties to the Wittgensteinian originals.

Wittgenstein uses the phrase 'form of life' several times in the Philosophical Investigations, but an unambiguous definition is not forthcoming. The most interesting of these uses is in §241:

> ' "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life'

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1 See e.g. ISS p. 43.

Immediately after this passage comes:

> 'If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements.'

What Wittgenstein seems to be saying, is that underlying any assertion about what is or is not the case, is some general agreement about the way in which language is to be used. If I assert: 'That pillarbox is red', then I am expressing an opinion; but I would not be able to express an opinion on this particular matter unless there were some intersubjective agreement on how colour discriminations were made. It is this intersubjective agreement in judgements which makes possible the very existence of the 'language game we call the use of "names of colour" '[1]. He says later:

> "There is in general complete agreement in the judgements of colours made by those who have been diagnosed normal. This characterizes the concept of a judgement of colour"[2]

Wittgenstein says in On Certainty p. 10:

> 'The limits of empiricism are not assumptions unguaranteed or intuitively known to be correct: they are waysin which we make comparisons and in which we act.'[3]

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1 PI p. 226e

2 PI p. 227e

3 Also in On Certainty (§204) he says: 'It is our acting which lies at the bottom of the language game.'

It is these ways of making comparisons and acting which he is speaking of as 'forms of life'. They are not so much presuppositions (this implies an arbitrary commitment) but rather one's unreflective ways of acting or making judgements.

This interpretation of 'form of life' is compatible with what Wittgenstein says in §9 of PI: 'to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life' but sits ill with what he says on p. 174 of PI: 'Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life'.

At first sight it appears that he is referring to language itself as the 'form of life', or perhaps even to 'hope'. J.F.M. Hunter[1] interprets Wittgenstein as referring to 'either the use of language or mastery of the use of language', but it is mastery in a special sense: 'He reacts <u>that</u> way, using <u>those</u> words, not because he recognizes that his situation is an appropriate case for the use of those words, satisfying all the criteria, but as it were blindly, and because this use of words has been built into him, and has become part of the way

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1 J.F.M. Hunter, '"Forms of Life" in Wittgenstein's <u>Philosophical Investigations</u>' <u>American Philosophical Quarterly</u> Vol. 5, 1968 p. 240.

he functions. (It is a form of life)'[1] I must confess myself puzzled by the passage on hoping. Hunter's reading of it is plausible, if extending my account a little, and it is also compatible with another feature of forms of life, their nature as 'given': 'What has to be accepted, the given, is - so one could say - forms of life'.[2] In what sense are they 'given'? They are 'given' in the sense that it is not possible to ask for further justification. There is nothing beyond the agreement in judgements in virtue of which it comes about. Wittgenstein makes a parallel point about language games. We can only say 'this language game is played','Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a "proto-phenomenon" '.[3]

When Wittgenstein says that 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life'[4] he implies that for each language game there is a corresponding form of life. Language games are bound up with non-linguistic activities in such a way that it is impossible to speak of language independently of the use to which it is put. It is not obvious whether he means that there is a one-to-one correlation of games to forms of life or whether more than

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1 ibid. p. 243
2 PI p. 226
3 PI p. 167e
4 PI §19

one game can depend on a single form of life. If the former were the case, it would follow that if there were boundaries between language games, there would be boundaries between forms of life. The importance of this point will become clear later when the possibility of drawing precise boundaries round forms of life is shown to be crucial for sustaining Winch's views on rationality, truth and logic.

Gerald Downing[1] makes the point that Wittgenstein prefers to talk of differences between games rather than of 'different games', which he takes as supporting the interpretation that language games are not separated by clear boundaries, 'only by other games that they differently resemble.'[2] One can think of examples, like 'ordering', 'requesting', 'suggesting', where one activity appears to shade into the next. Downing suggests that the use of the term 'game' by Wittgenstein is an indication that language games, like standard games are not strictly bounded and that they constitute an overlapping maze rather than a set of discrete entities.

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1 'Games, Families, The Public, and Religion'. p. 40; Philosophy Vol. 47, 1972 pp. 38-54.

2 ibid. p. 40

On the other hand, it appears to make sense to say that the boundaries between the two forms of life which correspond to the language games of 'promising' and 'ordering'[1] are such as to prohibit any particular utterance being part of both games. It is clearly the case that to regard an act of promising as an act of ordering would be to misinterpret it; indeed it is difficult to see how any sense could be made of such an interpretation. So there is some justification for the claim that seeing an utterance as belonging to one language game rather than another, or seeing an activity as belonging to a particular form of life rather than another is essential to identifying it as having the meaning it has, or identifying it as the action it is. Whether this entails that we should apply different criteria of truth, rationality or logic to utterances, according to the form of life from which they emanate, is another issue.

Wittgenstein explicitly denies[2] that the possibility of transforming a question into a sentence of the form 'I want to know whether ...' brings the language games of questioning and asserting closer together. I take it that in drawing

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1 Wittgenstein gives a sample list of language games in PI §23.

2 PI p. 12e

attention to this feature of language games he wishes to emphasize that it is not the information content of the sentences which is the important feature for determining which language game an utterance belongs to, but rather what kind of performative role it fulfils. If the criteria for distinguishing language games are to be found in the performative rather than informative areas of language, then it is far from clear that using a different language game necessitates using a different conceptual apparatus. The significance of this point will become clear when I come to consider Winch's views on the possibility of understanding 'beliefs' which belong to forms of life alien to us. Indeed it would appear from the Wittgensteinian example (of the question converted to an assertion) that learning to play a new language game, may sometimes involve only minimal additions to our conceptual apparatus. Hence, even if each language game is related to a unique set of non-linguistic activities, it doesn't follow that the conceptual apparatus which goes along with a form of life is unique to that form of life. We would expect that in many cases, asserting and questioning being a typical example, such overlap would be almost complete.

The list which Wittgenstein gives of language games in PI[1] includes such activities as: giving orders, and obeying them, describing the appearance of an object, reporting an event, forming and testing a hypothesis, making and telling a joke, asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. If each of these is associated with a particular form of life, then the sort of entity which Wittgenstein viewed as a form of life was far from being a large scale system of activities involving a vast network of inter-related beliefs and practices. In comparison with the sort of entity which Winch subsumes under the rubric 'form of life' these categories of action are relatively small scale affairs, and, apart from praying (and perhaps cursing), do not seem to be limited to any particular group of people within the community, or correlated with any one set of beliefs.

Furthermore, Wittgensteinian forms of life are not necessarily fixed. They are not immune from becoming obsolete or being forgotten; at least this is true of language games[1] and presumably holds true of the forms of life upon which they are dependent. New ones may be invented,[2] or come into existence, and they may change with time.[3]

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1 PI §23
2 PI §23
3 On Certainty §256

So far I have attempted to show that Wittgenstein's notion of form of life is that of a relatively small scale category of human behaviour, an unreflective way of acting or making judgements, in virtue of which opinions may be formed and upon which the use of language is dependent. Forms of life are, in a sense, given, since, according to Wittgenstein, there is nowhere further than them that we can look for justification of them (although in this, as I point out below, there is room for disagreement, even in the example given by Wittgenstein). They are also fairly universal sorts of activity, in the sense that for the most part they are found across linguistic and societal boundaries.[1]

3. Winch's Forms of Life.

Winch claims Wittgenstein as the originator of the views he expresses about forms of life. However, there are considerable differences between Wittgenstein's account, which I have outlined briefly above, and that of Winch. I shall attempt to point out where these differences lie, and thereby show that Winch is not entitled to appeal to its

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1 See on this point Patrick Sherry 'Truth and the Religious Language Game' Philosophy Vol. 47, 1972 pp. 18-37

Wittgensteinian origins in defence of his position, whatever kudos may flow from that source. I turn now to an examination of Winch's position, as it is found in ISS. In order to do so, I shall first give a brief account of Winch's doctrine of meaning, in which his principle concern is to account for the way in which we arrive at agreement in the use of language. In order to agree in the use of words, according to Winch, we must have some kind of consensus about what things in the world are relevantly 'the same'. However, what is relevantly 'the same' can only be decided by the application of a rule. I now turn to a discussion of Winch's notions of 'sameness', and rules and the way in which they are related to the central notion of 'a form of life'.

Before we can be said to understand the meaning of a word, and hence grasp a concept, we must know under what conditions it applies, i.e. what sets of circumstances, activities, objects etc. are relevantly 'the same'. But according to Winch 'It is only in terms of a given rule that we can attach a specific sense to the words "the same"'.[1] 'Sameness' is thus not something given in the world, it is imposed by a rule.

Following a rule requires not merely being able to copy what has been done, i.e. reproduce

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1 ISS p. 27.

identical behaviour, but to understand what counts as going on in the same way; to apply the rule to novel sets of circumstances. To decide whether an individual is following a rule, it is necessary to subject him to social tests. It is not up to any individual, for example, to continue a sequence in any random fashion he chooses and claim that he is following some private rule. To put it another way, the individual could be said to be following a rule only if:

> 'it makes sense to suppose that somebody else could in principle discover the rule'[1]

This is not to say that in order to be said to be following a rule one must be able to formulate it:

> 'the test of whether a man's actions are the application of a rule is not whether he can formulate it but whether it makes sense to distinguish between a right and wrong way of doing things in connection with what he does'[2]

So following a rule can't be a private matter. It requires agreement between members of a society as to what counts as 'following on as a matter of course', as standard ways of continuing sequences, using words etc. Hence meaning is dependent on social agreement, and this applies, in Winch's view,

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1 ISS p. 30
2 ISS p. 58

as much to the meaningfulness of behaviour as it does to words or sentences.

But, in order to arrive at such agreement and thereby understand the beliefs and practices of a society, it is necessary to share its common assumptions and expectations, or as Winch puts it, to share the 'forms of life' of that society.

He offers as examples of forms of life art, science and religion.[1] These are quite different sorts of entity from the ones canvassed by Wittgenstein, such as giving orders, reporting, describing etc.[2] I would claim, as does P. Sherry,[3] that religion is not a form of life in the Wittgensteinian sense, but rather includes various forms of life such as praying, hoping etc.. The same is true of science and art.

Winch nevertheless treats his forms of life in the same way as their Wittgensteinian counterparts, as 'the given, what has to be accepted.' This may be a defensible position when speaking of forms of life of the Wittgensteinian variety.

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1 ISS p. 41

2 PI §23

3 'Is Religion a Form of Life?' American Philosophical Quarterly Vol. 9 No 2 April 1972.

(What sort of justification could one give for hoping?) Not for hoping that a particular thing will happen, but for hoping. But not even all the Wittgensteinian entities are obviously immune from the requirement of justification. Certainly one can question the justification of the form of life and language game which constitutes praying, from within or without the religious tradition, and even such a universal human institution as promising invites debate as to its worth from various ethical positions.

It might of course be argued that as soon as one begins to question a form of life of the Wittgensteinian variety, in the sense of asking whether it has a justification, one has ceased to engage in that activity in the unreflective manner required for it to count as a genuine form of life. 'Givenness" then becomes a defining characteristic of a form of life, rather than following from any other of its features. Abandoning any form of life which one sees as meaningfully challenged is then quite consistent with the Wittgensteinian position. Any meaningful challenge, of course, would have to be grounded in other forms of life, they being the only end points of justification. That Winch has to argue for the 'givenness' of his forms of life, seems to indicate that

the sort of entity to which he applies the title 'form of life' is a rather different sort of entity to that described by Wittgenstein. Winch is saying something like: 'This is a form of life, therefore it is given and you may not criticize it,' rather than, as would appear to be the case in the Wittgensteinian counterpart: 'There is no way of asking meaningfully for further justification of this practice. Therefore it is 'given', i.e. it is a form of life.'

Winch's forms of life are rather larger cultural entities than Wittgenstein's. They are bodies of activities united by common purposes and aims,[1] with their own conceptions of reality,[2] and criteria of rationality.

> 'Generally, both ends sought and the means employed in human life, so far from generating forms of social activity, depend for their very being on those forms' [3]

Corresponding to each form of life in Winch's sense is a 'universe of discourse',[4] which is based upon it, the language gaining its sense, as in the Wittgensteinian counterpart, from the activities

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1 ISS pp. 40-2, p. 55
2 UPS p. 82
3 ISS p. 55
4 UPS p. 83

to which it is related. As with the relation of Wittgensteinian language games to forms of life, the boundaries between forms of life impose boundaries between universes of discourse. In order to understand the beliefs of any group, it is necessary to understand the mode of discourse[1] in which the beliefs are expressed. Moreover, since actions are identifiable as the actions they are only if one has access to the concepts of the agent, any attempt at explaining his actions must presuppose access to his conceptual scheme. He is not only claiming that to count as an action, a piece of human behaviour must be the result of some intention of the agent, he is also denying that there is any account possible of what the agent does other than in terms of the concepts available to him. 'Understanding concepts and understanding forms of activity are not, then, two different things, but understanding the one is understanding the other'[2]. So one can understand what an activity <u>is</u> only by understanding how the agents perceive it, and because their concepts themselves determine how the agents behave, one can explain what they do only in terms of those concepts.

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1 ISS p. 110

2 'Mr. Louch's Idea of a Social Science' <u>Inquiry</u> Vol 7 no 2 1964 p. 203.

Any acceptable account of the beliefs and practices of another society requires that we get inside their belief system in this way and we can do this only if we share the activities or forms of life with which their beliefs are bound up. There are, according to Winch, no perspectives outside of forms of life or universes of discourse from which one can appraise forms of life.[1] The regularities observed by the social scientist are not mere explanatory constructs imposed from outside, they are internal to his subject matter.

'An event's character as an act of obedience is intrinsic to it in a way which is not true of an event's character as a clap of thunder.'[2] He thus distinguishes between natural and social events. We can have no knowledge of natural events which is unmediated by concepts, but they exist independently of any conception human beings have of them. Social events, on the other hand, exist only because human beings conceive of them in the way they do.

Winch's position involves a great many assumptions about the nature of social science. While I disagree with him on many points in this area, I don't intend to go into that particular

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1 See e.g. his argument against Popper ISS p. 127.
2 ISS p. 125

discussion here. My principal concern is with the consequences of his view for the possibility of translation between the languages of radically different cultures.

Wittgenstein's 'forms of life' are not bound up, except incidentally, with any particular system of beliefs. But as I have pointed out above, there are some of them, such as praying, which are found only among people with a particular set of beliefs. On the other hand, using the names of colours is found in every human society of which I am aware. This does not entail that all societies make the same divisions in the colour spectrum, only that the practice of discriminating between things according to their colour is widespread.

Winch's forms of life, however, seem necessarily bound up with particular systems of beliefs,[1] and the consequence of this is that only if two groups share large slabs of their beliefs do they share forms of life. This has drastic consequences for understanding other cultures. According to Winch, one can translate between languages only if the language groups have forms of life in

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1 The sense in which 'belief' is to be taken is a matter which is explicitly taken up by Winch in LBR. I shall comment upon his discussion of this matter in the next section.

common, so it would appear to be impossible to arrive, by translation, at an understanding of any beliefs and practices which differed markedly from our own.

'Forms of life' in the Winchian sense are thus a very different sort of entity from their Wittgensteinian counterparts. While, from the examples Wittgenstein gives, his precise definition of 'a form of life' is open to some interpretation, he does not appear to have been speaking of the rather large scale cultural entities like science and religion which Winch describes as 'forms of life'. Hence, any properties of the Wittgensteinian original will not necessarily be possessed by their Winchian counterparts. In particular, even if there were grounds for regarding Wittgensteinian forms of life as universally entitled to their status as 'given'; that their Winchian derivatives should be so regarded in no way follows. The consequence of allowing Wittgensteinian forms of life this status is that we are unable to question particular small categories of action. The consequence of awarding it to Winchian forms of life appears to be to deny the possibility of questioning quite large, and, in some cases, far from generally accepted, categories of belief. Winch,

however, has pointed in LBR to an equivocation on the word 'belief' which makes this consequence appear rather less extreme than it does at first glance. I have dealt in detail with this point in Ch.2 & 3 below. Nevertheless, it follows from the divergence between Winch's and Wittgenstein's accounts of forms of life that whatever grounds there are for treating Winch's forms of life as 'what has to be accepted' must be provided by him.

CHAPTER TWO: DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN FORMS OF LIFE.

1. Criticism, Forms of Life and Boundaries

I have so far been interpreting Winch as being committed to the view that forms of life have clear and distinct boundaries differentiating them one from the other, such that the meaningfulness of any utterance or other piece of behaviour is determined by criteria which are unique to that form of life to which it belongs, there being no criteria of intelligibility, logic, rationality or truth which are either held in common between forms of life or which are outside any.

He is quite explicit in his rejection of the view that 'the rationality of human behaviour comes to it from without' and is dependent upon 'intellectual functions which operate according to laws of their own and are, in principle, quite independent of the particular forms of activity to which they may nevertheless be applied.'[1] and in his endorsement of the view that there are no universal criteria of intelligibility. E.g. he says: 'the notion of intelligibility is systematically

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1 ISS p. 54

ambiguous ... its sense varies systematically according to the particular context in which it is being used.'[1]

If criteria of truth, logic, rationality and intelligibility are all relative to the context in which the relevant linguistic or other behaviour occurs, it is clearly of great importance to be able to distinguish between these contexts (i.e. between forms of life) so as to know which criteria are relevantly applicable. Moreover, it would appear to follow that anyone not sharing a particular form of life would find it impossible to understand what went on within it, since he would ipsofacto be excluded from grasping the criteria of intelligibility which obtained within it. However, not everything Winch writes on this matter is thoroughly unambiguous. E.g. he says 'though there is no room for a direct application in our lives of what we may learn when we study Zande magical practices, this does not mean that we shall find no points of contact at all with elements familiar to us in our own cultural tradition.'[2] There is certainly some tension between this and what he says a couple of pages later in the same article: 'Not only do we have no use, in the lives

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1 ISS p. 18
2 LBR p. 328

we lead, for notions like witchcraft and oracles, but more strongly, those lives seem to exclude the possibility of any such use'.[1] In the first quotation he appears to acknowledge the possibility of making sense of at least parts of Azande beliefs in our terms. In the second quotation he appears to be assuming that our culture excludes us from fully understanding the most fundamental Zande witchcraft beliefs.

2. Two forms of Understanding

In order to overcome this tension he makes a distinction between two forms of understanding;[2] we understand mathematics, which has many applications in our own culture, in a different way from that in which we understand Zande witchcraft practices, which, according to Winch, have no application in our culture. Different 'criteria of understanding'[3] apply to ways of thinking which have applications in our lives from those which do not. He emphasizes that this is a difference of kind rather than of degree; it is not just a matter of being more familiar with one set of practises or way of thinking.

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1 LBR p. 330
2 LBR p. 328
3 LBR p. 328

The consequence of adopting this position is that he is able to allow that anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard do understand the thought and practice which they are studying, while at the same time retaining for himself the possibility of criticizing them for applying criteria of truth, rationality and logic which are appropriate only to beliefs and practices understood in the other sense. The only difference which he makes clear between these two forms of understanding is that one involves the possibility of applying one's knowledge and the other does not. If that is the decisive difference between them, then it is hardly an illuminating one. The point in dispute is whether we can understand the linguistic items, or make sense of behaviour within cultures which are alien to us, using the terms and concepts available to us from our own linguistic and cultural tradition, without hopelessly distorting the former or classifying them in grossly inappropriate ways.

Winch's distinction between forms of understanding doesn't answer this question, since he offers no account of the form which understanding the alien tradition takes. The overwhelming impression to be gained from his account of meaning in ISS is that utterances and behaviour gain significance only as part of a form of life. It would appear to follow

that we can understand only those utterances or items of behaviour which belong to, or are associated with, forms of life in which we are involved. But here[1] he is admitting the possibility of at least some form of understanding of the language or behaviour from forms of life which we do not share. There would seem to be only two plausible avenues for explaining how we arrive at such understanding:

1) Directly, because the items are shared by more than one form of life into one of which we are initiated or

2) By some kind of translation of the meaningful elements between forms of life.

3. Translation between forms of life

If there is a form of understanding which comes about by some kind of translation between forms of life (and this appears to be the only plausible alternative Winch has to actually sharing them) then a) Winch gives no account of what it might be like and b) if it exists he has not shown how it is essentially different from the form of understanding which one gains as a participant in a form of life. It is difficult to see that any such reason could be offered, since whatever 'translation' between forms of life consisted in would seem bound to be

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1 LBR p. 328

something like pairing of the linguistic or behavioural item significant in one form of life with an item significant in another, i.e. making the utterance or behaviour 'understandable' within some familiar form of life. Thus the other form of understanding, which Winch alleges is different in kind, would appear not to be such after all.

Of course, Winch may wish to dispute that anything like translation is involved in arriving at this kind of understanding. That this would be his approach might be inferred from his discussion of the possibility of translating mathematical statements into the language of a group who have no knowledge of mathematics. I take up his discussion of this matter in detail in the section headed 'Translation' below. In that case I think it behoves him to provide some alternative account which is also compatible with the rest of his views on forms of life.

4. Sharing of elements between forms of life

Winch's position on the possibility of making sense of ways of thinking or behaviour across boundaries of forms of life is of some importance. If there are clearly defined boundaries between forms of life, and corresponding limits to intelligibility,

then some argument might be made out for the position that beliefs held true in one form of life are not criticisable according to the standards of another. But if the boundaries overlap to greater or lesser degree, then it is not at all obvious that standards applicable to the one are not applicable to the other. (Or even that there is any point in attempting to distinguish between them.)

He says that we may find 'points of contact' or 'elements familiar to us' in Zande beliefs and practices. If he means by this that there are meaningful elements in common between their and our forms of life, then at one stroke he denies himself the possibility of defending the uncriticizability of alien forms of life by any argument turning on a holistic view of meaning.[1] If he were to adopt a holistic account of meaning then he could account for two alleged forms of life having elements in common only by supposing they were part of some larger whole, hence not really different forms of life at all. Thus any criteria of rationality, truth etc. which governed one would govern the other, both being part of the same larger whole. The alternative is to deny the holistic account of meaning and defend the inapplicability of whatever criteria of rationality etc. are in question from some other base.

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1 It is arguable that this is the most plausible way of interpreting Winch. See e.g. ISS pp. 39 & 55.

One possible version of Winch's thesis is the following.

1) What is intelligible is limited by the boundaries of forms of life.
2) We may criticize only what is intelligible.
3) No elements of alien forms of life are intelligible to us.

Therefore we may not criticize elements of alien forms of life.

If the passage I have quoted on p. 23 about points of contact between forms of life is open to the interpretation that forms of life may have elements in common, then Winch has abandoned premise 3) which is an essential step in the justification of the conclusion.

Even if he does not admit this as a plausible interpretation, this particular passage seems to be inconsistent with other of his tenets. If there are elements in alien forms of life which are familiar to us, how is it that we perceive them to be so? According to Winch, the notion of 'sameness' only makes sense within a form of life, so how can he now admit that there are criteria for determining sameness across boundaries of forms of life? The admission that there are entails the total breakdown of the view that forms of life are each separate

systems, governed by their own standards of truth, logic and rationality.

5. Denying the possibility of genuine understanding

If we accept Winch's account of the way in which linguistic and behavioural items gain significance, then it follows that understanding Zande practices involves being part of a group who are initiated into the same form of life, sharing non-linguistic activities and agreeing in the rules which determine the significance of any linguistic or behavioural item. However, conceding this much of his theory does not on its own entail that one cannot, as he claims,[1] carry on such a form of life in contemporary England. That some, or even the vast majority, of the population do not comprehend what one is doing is not grounds for saying that it is incompatible with 'the life it is open to anyone to lead' or else any minority part of the culture would thereby lose significance.

He says that 'there is no place for any "application" of Zande magical beliefs and practices'[2] in the life one may lead in contemporary England. Therefore it follows, according to Winch,

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1 LBR p. 327
2 LBR p. 327

that the interest of any anthropologist in studying such beliefs and practices is other than to apply them in his daily life. But how is it possible to decide whether some set of beliefs or practices has an application in our culture?

What is it about 'the life which it is open to anyone to lead in contemporary England' that prohibits one from properly applying Zande beliefs and practices? It seems to be the fact that there is no well entrenched manner of being initiated into them. In this it contrasts with e.g. mathematics, for learning which our culture provides a 'well-established and well-understood route.'[1] But if it is just a matter of there being a 'route' by which one arrives at the particular item of knowledge, a set of educational institutions, why can't we set up institutions to teach Zande witchcraft beliefs and practices? If this is all that is lacking we can easily provide it. However, if that is what Winch means, then it is hard to see that he could sustain the view that there is a difference in kind, rather than degree, between our understanding of mathematics and our understanding of Zande witchcraft. So it must be the point about there being some way of applying the knowledge which is crucial to the distinction between the two forms of understanding; there must

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1 LBR p. 327

be some way of deciding whether a particular form of life is applicable in a given culture (i.e. whether it is compatible with the traditions, practices, use of language etc. in some society). If forms of life are self contained units, with their own criteria of intelligibility, logic, rationality etc., as I've taken Winch to be saying, then it is difficult to see that the fact that any one of them was current in a society would exclude the possibility of any other existing. Yet this seems to be just what Winch is claiming. If so, then he must think there are interconnections between forms of life, so that what beliefs and practices are applicable within a culture is dependent upon the totality of the traditions and practices already current within it. To adopt such a view would entail that the ultimate unit to be appealed to in deciding questions about intelligibility is the culture as a whole, rather than the entities like art, science, religion etc. which Winch has explicitly claimed fulfil this rôle.

The only alternative ground that I can see available for Winch to adduce for the incompatibility of Zande thought and practices with contemporary English ones is that there is some kind of logical exclusion between the two. His remarks in LBR[1] imply that he finds this line of attack unacceptable, and

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1 LBR p. 330

since to use such a line of attack would entail admitting either that there are logical rules outside forms of life (a view which he has elsewhere explicitly[1] denied), or that one can apply standards of criteria of logic belonging in one form of life to other forms of life (which he has also explicitly denied[2]), I can only conclude that he is precluded from using this line of argument.

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The upshot of all this is that I find Winch's account of 'understanding' hopelessly muddled. His strongest line of thought is that to fully understand a culture one must be initiated into its forms of life; yet in LBR he allows that one can understand without the possibility of applying one's knowledge, i.e. without practising the form of life. Even if we accept that 'true' understanding requires practising the relevant form of life, it doesn't follow by any principle which would appear acceptable to Winch that belonging to any one form of life should exclude one from belonging to any other, and hence understanding it fully, except insofar as this requires a certain minimum number of individuals to provide the social checks he thinks essential.

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1 ISS p. 126
2 ISS p. 126

So I can't see that he has any grounds for saying that criticism of the beliefs of some group, e.g. the Azande, by an anthropologist from a Western scientific background is necessarily based on lack of understanding. In Evans-Pritchard's case, that he participated fully in the practices of the Azande and genuinely understood their beliefs is not open to question. There must therefore be other grounds for attacking his criticism of the rationality of Zande beliefs and practices. The difficulty is to see how there could be any way of reconciling the possibility of understanding what goes on in an alien form of life with the prohibition against applying one's familiar critical standards. The distinction between the two forms of understanding might do this; understanding in the weak sense might be possible across the boundaries of forms of life, without this entailing the applicability of critical standards across those boundaries. However, I think I have shown that this distinction is not capable of being sustained and that the distinction between forms of understanding is merely an ad hoc device for avoiding this issue. Winch is therefore faced with a very real problem if he wishes simultaneously to claim the possibility of understanding what goes on in alien forms of life and condemn the application of our standards to them.

6. Translation

Languages (1) & Languages (2)

The difference between two forms of life is highlighted by the question of translation. Winch draws attention[1] to two ways of distinguishing between languages. Two languages are different in the first sense (are different languages (1)) if they differ merely in vocabulary and syntax. Two languages are different in the second sense (are different languages (2)) if what is said in the first has no possible counterpart in the second, because learning the second language requires not only adding a few new words to the original language (2) but rather involves learning a whole new system of things to be expressed. Examples of different languages (1) are French and English, of different languages (2), the language of science and the language of morals.

I do not endorse Winch's model of meaning, but I see no need for the sake of this thesis to take a stand on any particular model. Insofar as any particular view is relevant, I will discuss it as it arises. For the moment, I shall discuss the topic in his terms, accepting that languages may differ with respect to the concepts or ideas for

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1 LBR pp. 326-7

which they provide labels, or merely with respect to the labels.

To count as a different language (2) requires not just that there be some expressions for which no counterpart can be found in the original but that the ideas which the new language (2) is used to express belong to a quite different framework, and are associated with quite different activities from those expressed in the original.[1]

The general point is that distinguishing between two languages (2) requires being able to distinguish the sorts of activity with which they are associated, and this means having criteria which will distinguish cases where failure of translatability is due merely to the lack of a few concepts in common, from those where it is due to there being a totally different activity going on.

7. Language and conceptual reduction

Translation between two languages (1) may be effected without difficulty, but translation between two different languages (2) is not possible.[2]

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1 Winch makes a parallel point about what would count as a 'new idea', on pp. 121-3 of ISS, where he says: 'A new way of talking sufficiently important to rank as a new idea, implies a new set of social relationships.'

2 LBR p. 327

E.g. mathematics constitutes a discrete language (2), and Winch says: 'one would hardly speak of a translation of mathematics into ... well, what?'

The rhetorical question might well be answered: 'Logic". There is nothing obviously wrong about the programme of reducing mathematics to set theory. That it fails is not something which could be seen at the outset as presupposing a total misunderstanding of the kind of activity mathematics is. If Winch were prepared to admit that the logicist programme was a plausible one, then he would presumably also wish to claim that the concepts employed in it were in fact the same concepts as those which occurred in mathematics. Thus the reduction of mathematics to logic would not provide an example of one system of concepts being made sense of in terms of another, since the two allegedly different systems of concepts were one and the same all along.

But admitting that would mean allowing that what at first sight appeared to be different systems of concepts were not in fact so. Despite apparent boundaries, the ultimate test of whether there are two systems of concepts or one is whether or not a successful reduction takes place. But that of course is question begging, since we can only decide whether a successful reduction has taken place if we already know whether some concept or idea is really ultimately irreducible, i.e. belongs to a

different form of life. On the other hand, if he thinks the logicist programme is not plausible, he does so because he thinks that the concepts involved are ultimately different, and the whole procedure is nonsensical (like trying to reduce 'cat' to 'dog'). Any such example would presumably have to fit one or other of these models, either being question begging or nonsensical, so nothing could count as evidence for the view that one language (2) could be reduced to another.

8. Languages and forms of life.

When we attempt to translate a language, such as that of the Azande, where there are vast differences between what we believe and what they believe, we have to face differences between languages (2) as well as differences between languages (1). While there are large areas where we share kinds of activity with the Azande, and translation is just between languages (1), there are other areas where Zande activity has no counterpart in the Western world, and to translate their corresponding beliefs into terms which we understand would involve translating between two languages (2), (which Winch sees as an impossibility). I take it that the distinction between languages (2) is the same

as that between universes of discourse to which I have referred earlier, and that ultimately the distinction is grounded in the boundaries between the forms of life with which the languages (2) are associated.[1] It is because we lack the forms of life with which the particular Zande language(2) is associated that we find it impossible to make good sense of it in our terms.

Winch's argument relies on our accepting that there is analogy between Zande witchcraft and mathematics. Winch says[2] that someone from a tribe with no knowledge of mathematics could find no way of translating mathematical statements into his own language. If he wishes to understand what is written in mathematics text-books, he will have to learn mathematics. According to Winch, the English anthropologist who wishes to understand Zande witchcraft is in 'a somewhat similar position.'[3]

However, it is not possible simply to graft a 'form of life' such as Zande witchcraft on to our existing culture. E.g. Winch says: 'Not only do we have no use, in the lives we lead, for notions like witchcraft and oracles but, more strongly, these lives seem to exclude the possibility of any such use.'[4] He later on[5] asserts that 'There is certainly

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1 Though Winch doesn't talk of 'forms of life' in the course of LBR.

2 LBR pp. 326-7

3 LBR p. 327

4 LBR p. 330

5 LBR p. 330

conflict between European and Zande modes of thinking and even a sort of mutual exclusion.' He appears to be allowing that there is some kind of field of battle in which Zande and Western modes of thought might be vying for supremacy. But he doesn't allow that it is a proper question to ask who is right, we or the Azande. He thinks that to ask such a question is like asking which is the right game to play, baseball or cricket.[1]

In the first place, it doesn't seem to me that this latter question is a stupid one to ask. There are criteria we might use to answer it which could be seen as objective. E.g. we might evaluate them according to the degree of physical fitness promoted versus the number of injuries, or perhaps according to the intellectual involvement, or spectator interest. While one is well aware that such questions are generally answered according to criteria which might be judged 'internal' to the particular game in that they presuppose a commitment to it, it doesn't necessarily follow that they must. In the second place, I don't think Winch's analogy is an apt one, indealing with an area where altogether different criteria apply.

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1 LBR p. 330

9. Criticism and boundaries

The forms of life we have been considering are unlike games in an important respect. While the rules of a game are decided by initial agreement between the players, it is not the case that all 'rules' of Zande witchcraft and Western science are so decided. Ultimately, a decision on changing the rules of cricket is decided by fiat, but scientists alter their methods according to what appear, to them at least, to be objective criteria. What is at issue in the case of scientific theories is truth and falsity, not right or wrong.[1] Furthermore, 'the disagreement which I have with Winch (as do Trigg, Jarvie etc.) is not one about whether the life which we live in the Western world, which incidentally includes the practice of science, is the right life to live, but whether what Western science discovers, i.e. the theories held true as a result of the practice of it, are true. The point at issue between Winch and his opponents is whether some ways of explaining what goes on in the world are more fruitful, get us closer to reality, than others. The effect of Winch's reply is to deny the possibility of making any comparisons.

Making a judgement about the rightness of

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1 In saying this I am aware that I gloss over enormous issues in the philosophy of science.

Zande versus Western 'modes of thinking' would be forced on us, if I read Winch correctly, if there were some question of our 'mode of thinking' contradicting Zande modes of thinking.[1]

I can make sense of particular statements being held to contradict each other, but I am not sure quite what it would mean for two 'modes of thinking' to contradict each other. Perhaps they might do so if rules of inference held valid in one were ruled invalid in the other, or if statements held true in one were held false in the other. However, since Winch has been at pains to point out the distinction between what belongs to the grammar of a language and what to belief, it seems against the spirit of his position to allow that either of these could be essential parts of modes of thought. What I think he is getting at, is that the aims and purposes of forms of life are internal to them, in the same way as the rules of a game are, and that one cannot, therefore, talk about them (i.e. the aims) contradicting each other, since this would make sense only in some broader context, a context which Winch says does not exist. Zande 'modes of thinking' could thus not be seen as contradicting ours, since they aren't either dealing with the same subject matter, or attempting the same goals.

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1 See LBR p. 330

In spite of his disclaimers, it becomes clear at this point that Winch's position entails the impossibility of any outsider ever contradicting any of the basic beliefs of followers of a different form of life. This is not because commitment to some belief entails the impossibility of understanding its denial; this he explicitly rejects. Rather it is due to the fact that he regards as genuine criticism only that which is couched in the terms of the form of life which is being criticized. Hence, contradicting or criticizing a belief from a position outside of the form of life to which it belongs is an impossibility.

Since there is no 'independently intelligible notion of reality'[1], there is no common language in which we may make criticisms of substantive beliefs of followers of different forms of life. But in order to preclude criticism we must have clear criteria for distinguishing between forms of life, otherwise failure of translation or incoherence in translation (which Winch views as evidence of inappropriate identifications across the boundaries of forms of life) are indistinguishable from cases where failure or incoherence is due to some defect in the original material. It is my contention that Winch has no such criteria.

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1 LBR p. 331

Winch's practice is to construe all incoherence imputed to the translated by the translator as due to one of two causes. The first of these is: 'misleading grammatical analogies'.[1] He says: 'we may well run into incoherencies, but this is so far no argument for the conclusion that their proper application in their native setting has anything incoherent about it.'[2] This insistence on disregarding incoherencies entails that it is impossible to discover that any other language group is ever guilty of irrational behaviour or committed to irrational or incoherent beliefs.

This, however, is only the first point at which Winch sees the investigator as improperly reading confusion back into the language he is trying to translate. He does allow that people have confused, irrational or superstitious beliefs; but these appear only to be conceivable as individual aberrations, since he counsels the investigator to: 'be wary of reading such confusions'[3](i.e. crazy beliefs held by individual language speakers) 'back into the grammar of the mode of thinking he is trying to understand for it is only against the background of that grammar that what is confused can be distinguished from what is not.'[4] Winch's

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1 LBR p. 330
2 LBR p. 330
3 LBR p. 330
4 LBR p. 335

principal motivation appears to be to defend alien modes of thought from the charge of incoherence, from wherever it may spring, to adopt, as Ernest Gellner puts it 'a principle of invariably benevolent interpretation.'[1]

This defence can take one of two forms.

Either: 1) to presuppose that word for word translation has been carried on correctly and that what appears incoherent to us (e.g. is contradictory) is quite acceptable to the people whose language is being translated since they accept a different logic.

Or: 2) to suppose that the people whose language is being translated accept our logic but that there has been some mismatching of terms in the translation, resulting in a logical or semantical confusion.

Whether the first of these options is a possible one I take up in chapters 3 and 4. Gellner's title 'principle of invariably benevolent interpretation' more properly refers to the second. His

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1 'The New Idealism - Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences' in Gellner E. Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), (hereafter N.I.) p. 69.

objection to this principle, and one which I endorse, is that it conflicts with the actual, and it would appear, justifiable practice of social scientists in attributing contradictory beliefs to foreigners (or indeed groups within our own society).[1] Winch's principle would entail that it was impossible ever to discover the existence of 'important social phenomena such as the social use of absurdity, ambiguity etc.'[2] Gellner cites in support of his position a highly plausible example of the use of incoherence for social effect, namely the Roman Catholic doctrine of transsubstantiation. He points out[3] that attempted 'demystification' of this doctrine, by theologians urging that the bread and wine used in the Mass are merely symbols rather than the actual body and blood of Christ, has been resisted not only by the untutored peasantry, but by the Pope himself, whose authority as a spokesman on interpretation in that form of life can hardly be questioned. Since this case involves none of the difficulties associated with cross-cultural examples, the apparent incoherence must surely be regarded as internal to the form of life, rather than as coming about as the result of the imposition of 'misleading grammatical analogies' from outside or the accidental reading back

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1 NI pp. 69-70
2 NI p. 70
3 NI pp. 63-4 and p. 70

into the language of incoherent beliefs held by an individual. The importance of seeing this is that the occurrence of incoherence in translation no longer functions as a sign that we are trespassing into another language (2), but might just as well be seen as the result of using terms in the same language (2) to yield certain social effects.

What does it mean to say that: 'it is only against the background of the grammar that what is confused can be distinguished from what is not.'[1]? Winch might merely be saying that one must be sure of the meanings of terms before one can say what counts as a contradiction. E.g. one must know that 'X is a bachelor' contradicts 'X is married' before one is aware that there is any incoherence in saying 'X is a married bachelor.'[2] However, he may be saying something stronger. Indeed he has been interpreted[3] as arguing for the view that standards of logic are relative to forms of life.

Winch goes into most detail on this problem when considering the way in which the Azande react to an apparent contradiction in their beliefs. It

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1 LBR p. 335

2 Lukes S. 'Some Problems about Rationality' in Wilson B.R. (ed.) Rationality p. 210 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970) (hereafter SPR)

3 E.g. by Lukes and Hollis

has been pointed out by Evans-Pritchard[1] that the Azande are simultaneously committed to these two views: 1) that witchcraft substance is inherited through the male line and 2) not all members of their tribe are witches. It is also the case that all members of the tribe are related through the male line, such that if witchcraft substance is inherited in the way described, if some members of the tribe are witches, then all are.

Winch thinks that Evans-Pritchard's imputation that the Azande are committed to a contradictory belief is not proper. He says that Evans-Pritchard is 'pushing Zande thought where it would not naturally go'.[2] What Evans=Pritchard in fact says on the subject is that: 'Azande do not perceive the contradiction as we perceive it because they have no theoretical interest in the subject, and those situations in which they express their belief in witchcraft do not force the problem upon them.'[3] Nothing Evans-Pritchard says seem to justify Winch's position in relation to Zande beliefs in this matter. Winch thinks that the fact that the Azande take no notice of a contradiction in their beliefs should be grounds, on our part, for

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1 Evans-Pritchard E.E. Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande (Oxford:Clarendon 1937) p. 24 (WO&M)

2 UPS p. 93

3 W, O & M p. 25

treating the alleged contradiction differently from the way in which we would treat an apparent contradiction arising in one of our own 'forms of life'. It would not, in particular, be seen as grounds for assessing their beliefs as irrational. I take it that it is this sort of thing to which he is drawing attention in LBR when he points out to the investigator that it is only against the background of the grammar of the mode of thought that we can tell what counts as confusion. Evans-Pritchard's account stressed two things.

1) that the situations in which they express their belief don't press the problem upon them.
2) They have no theoretical interest in the matter.

Neither of these appears to give any theoretical justification for treating their tolerance of contradictions any differently from the way in which we would treat such a situation in our own society. What appears to be happening is that the Azande are avoiding taking note of this feature of their beliefs, and we may account for this just as plausibly by pointing out their strong psychological grounds for retaining commitment to their

belief system, as by supposing that different logical criteria should apply to them.[1] I do not mean to imply here, that nothing could be evidence that an alien groups were committed to logical standards different from ours, indeed I argue in detail below that this is possible, but I do not think that Winch has shown that this is the case with the Azande, and even if it were, it would not follow that no external criticism of their system was possible, which is what Winch thinks follows. If the method of deciding whether someone is operating according to different logical criteria is simply that they take no notice when contradictions arise, then Winch's thesis would be a trivial one indeed because there would be no way of distinguishing differences in logical systems from abuses of 'our' system.

The case of logic is an instance of a more general problem relating to distinguishing between forms of life. At its crudest it might be argued that any difference in opinion might be accounted for by appealing to a difference in form of life. At the very least, Winch's account of forms of life

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1 This position is discussed in some detail by Barry Maund in 'Rationality of Belief - Inter-cultural Comparisons' in Benn S.I. & Mortimore G.W. (eds.) Rationality and the Social Sciences (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976) pp. 34-57.

makes incomprehensible what might otherwise be seen as some of the most important debates in history, The Victorians need not have bothered about Darwin's theory of evolution, since it does not really contradict any Christian belief. That many of them thought that it did, and that many fundamentalists to this day deny the truth of the theory of evolution shows them, in Winch's eyes, to be massively mistaken about their own beliefs. They see as a relevant challenge to their beliefs something which, according to Winch,has no bearing on them whatsoever. That is very strange indeed; surely they, as the initiates in that form of life should be the authorities on what counts as criticism of it. I echo Ernest Gellner on this point: 'If whole societies believe that what they believed in the past is profoundly absurd, then Winch, who is committed to excluding the possibility of a whole society being wrong in its belief, is caught out, either way: either - the pagans were wrong, or the Christians were (in supposing the pagans to be wrong); either the pre-Reformation Church was wrong, or the Reformers were, in supposing it to be wrong; either those addicted to superstition were wrong; or the rationalists were wrong ... . One way or the other, someone must be wrong.'[1]

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1 NI p. 61

10. Against the Possibility of Distinguishing Between Forms of Life

I see the problem of distinguishing between forms of life as absolutely crucial to Winch's position. Only if he can sustain the position that there are clear boundaries between forms of life can it be in any way justifiable to prohibit the sorts of activities which he thinks illegitimate, such as criticism of beliefs formulated in one language (2) according to criteria formulated in another. Furthermore, only if he can show familiar examples where these clear boundaries exist is it plausible to accept that the kinds of incoherence or irrationality which appear in our versions of alien discourse should be accounted for as resulting from differences in conceptual scheme rather than as reflecting some basic incoherence in the original.

If forms of life were in fact fairly well separated from each other, by, for example, geographical or historical boundaries, and were roughly comparable from the point of view of their cognitive power, then the fact that we had no criteria internal to them for distinguishing between them would be of little practical import. The fact of their discreteness, would, however, provide no

philosophically important grounds for refraining from criticism across the boundaries. Moreover, as Ernest Gellner points out,[1] even in a world such as this, that there should exist a world such as ours, with overlapping and interconnected forms of life, would still be a possibility, and Winch's position, while being acceptable for all practical purposes, would still not be unequivocally justified. The fact that discrete entities could be identified would not of itself entail the impossibility that there might be an overlap between them. Hence the fact of separation provides no grounds for supposing that the separation is due to important philosophical criteria rather than being an accident of geography or history.

Failure to provide criteria for distinguishing between forms of life would entail that all rival systems of distinguishing between forms of life were equally tenable; hence any particular prohibition of criticism of a form of life, by Winch, would be open to challenge. More strongly, if it could be shown that there were no possibility of distinguishing between forms of life, by showing that the rules, or criteria, required to do so could not be formulated, then Winch's entire position would collapse.

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1 NI pp. 65-66

Where Winch offers examples of forms of life,[1] he takes it as understood that we know how to identify what does and what does not belong to any particular one. I don't mean to imply by this that he thinks we are all aware which forms of life we are involved in and are able to circumscribe their boundaries, only that we automatically apply only those rules which are relevant to the particular item of discourse or behaviour in question. That any individual should fail to do this would not, I suppose, be an insuperable problem for Winch's position. He would take it as evidence merely of the failure of that individual to understand fully what he was doing or saying. I take it that this is the essence of his critique of the activities of social scientists in ISS. However, if such failures involved having to make the assumption that large sections, or even the whole, of society were mistaken about where the boundaries lay, it would be an entirely different matter, and constitute a serious threat to his theory.

What then are Winch's criteria for qualifying as a bona fide form of life? While he does not explicitly set them out, it would seem justifiable to include at least: 1) that the entity

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1 e.g. ISS p. 41

be rule governed (in the sense of 'rule' which I have discussed earlier)

2) that it be a well-established part of the fabric of the society in which it occurs.

These two, however, are not sufficient, since he denies status as a form of life to entities which would, clearly satisfy them. For example, he discounts some bodies of activity as having the appropriate status because they are 'parasitic' on other genuine forms of life.[1] This is the case, for example, with black magic as is practised in our society, which is intelligible only if understood as a parody of what goes on in Christianity. The reason why we must accord full status as a form of life to Zande witchcraft on the other hand, is that it is: 'one of the principle foundations of their whole social life', and in this is unlike black magic in our own society which can be understood only as a 'perversion'[2] of Christian practices which play this 'foundational' sort of rôle in our society.

At what point it becomes necessary to reclassify a body of activity as a form of life is

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1 UPS p. 84

2 UPS pp. 83-4

unclear. No doubt Voodoo in Haiti grew up partly as a 'perversion' of Christian practices, but for those who practise it, it is nevertheless one of the principle foundations of their lives.[1] Such criteria are therefore, at the very least, difficult to apply.

Deciding where to draw the boundaries between forms of life is quite crucial if Winch is to use talk about forms of life as the basis of an argument against using criteria appropriate to one sort of activity in criticism of others. However, even if we were to grant the possibility of distinguishing between forms of life, it is not obvious that this alone would be sufficiant to justify the prohibition of criticism. Ernest Gellner points out that in the case of at least one of the entities which Winch explicitly cites as an example of a form of life, criticism of other forms of life is an essential element. This is the case with the Christian religion, in which missionary activities, active attempts at converting people from what are regarded as misguided views, are an essential part.[2] One could not be said to have properly espoused Christianity

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1 Lucy Mair says of Voodoo (in Witchcraft, Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1969, p. 235) that it is simply a folk religion'.

2 NI p. 62

unless one accepted this element of it, that it is the true faith and all other doctrines are to be judged in the light of it. How can Winch simultaneously assert that religion is a form of life and deny the possibility of criticizing other forms of life according to its standards? Furthermore, criticizing one form of life from the point of view of another is a practice which is widely indulged in. It is engaged in by historians, sociologists etc. to name but a few. If science is to count as a form of life in its own right, then why not history or sociology? As John Kekes points out with regard to criticism of one form of life from the point of view of another:

> 'There is nothing to stop one from thinking of this absurd, nonsensical, philistine activity as being a form of life.'[1]

That not just a few, but substantial numbers of the population fail to see their criticism of one form of life from the point of view of another as improper or absurd constitutes some grounds for supposing that Winch is mistaken. His failure to take this into account seems inconsistent with the

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1 'Towards a Theory of Rationality' in Philosophy of the Social Sciences Vol. 3, 1973 p. 279

deference he elsewhere exhibits towards the manner in which social groups perceive of their activities. For instance, he takes the fact that the Zande do not treat a particular belief as a hypothesis as grounds for not so treating it.[1] Historians are given no such privileged status. It is difficult not to view Winch as interpreting cases in such a way as to be favourable to his position, rather than in the light of any general principles.

I daresay Winch would reply to this line of argument that he is perfectly well aware of the fact that anthropologists, historians et. al. engage in such practices. It was, after all, his purpose in ISS to point out precisely what he thought was wrong with their doing it. The point, however, is that Winch has failed to produce any criteria which will show definitevly that the way of life of a historian or sociologist can't be granted the same status as that of a Zande tribesman, as a genuine form of life.

If they were to be granted such status, then it is not obvious why they should not involve, as an essential element, criticism of one form of

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1 UPS p. 88

life from the point of view of another. Making prohibition against criticism of other forms of life a defining characteristic of something being a form of life could not, because of the obvious circularity, solve this problem.

CHAPTER THREE: UNIVERSAL CRITERIA OF TRUTH.

1. Antirelativist arguments.

Various authors have argued that Winch is committed to the view that truth, logic and rationality are all relative to culture or form of life, usually citing in support of their position such passages as the following:

> 'criteria of logic are not a direct gift of God, but arise out of, and are only intelligible in the context of, ways of living or modes of social life'.[1]

One prominent line of criticism of this view is based on what might be called a transcendental argument, which goes roughly thus:

1) Translation is only possible on the assumption of shared, non relative criteria of truth, logic and rationality.

2) Translation occurs.

Therefore there exist shared, non relative criteria of truth, logic and rationality. An argument along

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1 ISS p. 100. This passage occurs in the context of a discussion of logical and illogical actions, as these terms are used by Pareto. This usage is broader than that of formal logical validity, meaning something more like 'rationality'.

these lines is put forward in several places by Steven Lukes,[1] and in a somewhat modified form by Martin Hollis,[2] and Roger Trigg.[3]

Neither Lukes nor Hollis is quite explicit enough about what he takes Winch's position to be, making it difficult to decide whether they have misinterpreted him in the manner to which he draws attention in LBR.[4] Lukes says that he is addressing himself to the question: 'What for society S are the criteria of rationality in general?'[5] and

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1 Versions of Lukes' argument appear in SPR and also in 'On the Social Determination of Truth' (hereafter SDT) in Horton R. and Finnegan R (eds.) Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies. pp. 230-248 (London: Faber and Faber 1973) and 'Relativism: Cognitive and Moral' The Aristotelian Society: Supplementary Volume Vol 48, 1974 pp. 165-189

2 In 'The Limits of Irrationality' (hereafter LI) in Wilson B. (ed.) Rationality pp. 214-220, and in 'Reason and Ritual' (hereafter R&R) ibid. pp. 221-239, 'Witchcraft and Winchcraft' Philosophy of the Social Sciences Vol 2,1972 pp. 89-103, and Models of Man: Philosophical Thoughts on Social Action (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) (Hereafter M of M)

3 Reason and Commitment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) pp. 157-166.

4 Discussed in the previous chapter.

5 SPR p. 208

is opposing Winch in so far as he, Winch, appears to be saying that general criteria of rationality are not universal but culture dependent.[1] It is not clear, however, quite what Lukes takes culture dependence to consist in. I intend to look at the arguments put forward by Lukes and Hollis with the aim of deciding whether they indeed constitute grounds for the conclusion Lukes says he is driving at: to show that Winch is wrong in saying that the answer to the question 'What for society S are the criteria of rationality in general?' is 'culture dependent', or 'at least we could never know if he were right; indeed we cannot even conceive what it could be for him to be right.'[2]

Lukes' aim is confused: he may mean that he is attempting to show that it is logically impossible for any society to have alternative criteria of rationality to those allegedly espoused by us. He may mean that, even if it is a logical possibility, it would be impossible for us to discover that they did. Adopting the latter position would not entail that it was impossible that other societies adopted alternative criteria of ration-

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1 SPR p. 208

2 SPR pp. 208-9

ality, but it would entail that it was impossible for us to have good grounds to believe that they did. The epistemological argument is therefore difficult to distinguish in end result, from the one concerning logical possibility.

2. Lukes on Criteria of Rationality

Lukes maintains that 'some criteria of rationality are universal, i.e. relevantly applicable to all beliefs, in any context ....'[1] He takes 'criterion of rationality to mean 'a rule specifying what would count as a reason for beleaving something (or acting)'[2] and distinguishes

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1 SPR p. 208. He allows that there are context dependent criteria as well (rational (2) criteria) but argues that these are parasitic on the rational (1) criteria. If he is to be consistent on this point, since he allows that rational (2) criteria may violate rational (1) criteria, he must mean that sentences which breach rational (1) criteria are meaningful at a different level from those which conform to them. E.g. he may mean, to borrow Austin's terminology, that they have something like illocutionary force, by virtue of their blatant disregard for the standard conventions.

2 SPR p. 208 (note)

Three sorts of universal, or in this terminology, rational (1) criteria, namely criteria of 'truth (as correspondence to reality), and logic'[1] and a third category which he introduces on pp. 170-171 of RCM and calls 'criteria of rationality', 'specifically, principles specifying what counts as a good reason for believing something.' I shall limit my discussion to the first two of these, since they are more explicitly defended by Lukes. Lukes' argument for universal criteria of truth and logic appears in its most succinct form on pp. 238-9 of S.D.T., and since it contains the seeds of numerous arguments to be considered in this and the following chapter, I shall quote it in full.

> '...in the first place, the existence of a common reality is a necessary precondition of our understanding G's[2] language. Though we need not agree about all 'the facts', the members of G must have our distinction between truth and falsity as applied to a shared reality if we are to understand their language, for if, per impossibile, they did not, we and they would be unable even to agree about the successful identification of public, spatio-temporally located objects. Moreover, any group which engages in successful prediction must presuppose a given reality, since there must be (independent) events to predict. Thus, if we can in principle learn G's language (and they ours) and we know that they engage in successful prediction, then we and they share a common and independent reality.
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> Secondly, G's language must have operable logical rules and not all of these can be pure matters of convention. Winch states that 'logical relations between propositions ... depend on social relations between men.' Does this imply that the concept of negation and the laws of identity and non-contradiction need not operate in G's language? If so, then it must be mistaken, for if the members of G do not possess even these, how could we ever understand their thought, their inferences and their arguments? Could they even be credited with the possibility of inferring, arguing or even thinking? If, for example, they were unable to see

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1 SPR p. 210

2 G is a group of people

> that the truth of p excludes the truth of its denial, how could they ever communicate truths to one another or reason from them to other truths?
>
> I conclude that if G has a language in which it expresses its beliefs, it must, minimally, possess criteria of truth(as correspondence to a common and independent reality) and logic - which are not and cannot be context-dependent.'

The strongest statement of Lukes' conclusion from his argument quoted above occurs in p.171 of R.C.M. where he says

> 'I claim that there are conditions of truth, rules of logic and criteria of rationality which are universal and fundamental. They are universal, in that they exist and are operative within all languages and cultures. They are fundamental in two senses. First they specify the ultimate constraints to which all thought is subject. Thus all societies, with languages expressing beliefs, must apply them in general,
>
> ....
>
> But they are also fundamental in a second sense: namely that it can probably be shown that those concepts of truth, rules of reasoning and criteria of rationality which are at variance with these (...), are in fact parasitic upon them.'

Lukes' aims, as I have already pointed out, are unclear. He is also unclear as to what entities his rational (1) criteria apply to; utterances, sentences, beliefs or even actions. There are obviously many clarifications and amplifications

which might be made of his arguments, but since more meaty versions of the interesting arguments which he introduces can be found elsewhere, I shall use his formulation as a point of departure and endeavour to shed light on the issues he raises via the discussion of other authors.

3. Hollis' Argument.

It is necessary to get clear just what is required for it to be possible that we understand a language. 'Understanding' may mean, 'making sense of in our terms' i.e. translating, but it may also mean simply 'getting to know the meaning of', leaving it open whether or not this is done via translation. We may come directly to understand a novel concept, by learning how it relates to the world.

Martin Hollis reinterprets Lukes' argument,[1] placing emphasis on the idea of 'understanding' as translation. He sees the 'Enquirer' making an investigation of the practices and beliefs of another society as needing to make certain a priori assumptions:

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1 In LI, R&R and M of M.

a) That the natives perceive more or less what he perceives and, b) That they say about it more or less what he would say. a) is justified, in Hollis' opinion, by appealing to the consideration that translating the utterances of the foreigners presupposes the possibility of pairing utterances in the foreign language with English sentences uttered in relevantly similar circumstances.

> 'he (the anthropologist) needs a class of utterances whose situation of use he can specify. These situations of use can apparently be specified either as he himself perceives them or as the natives perceive them and it seems the two specifications might be different. But, if he has to allow for this possibility he cannot begin at all'[1]

This doesn't mean, I take it, that we could never have grounds for believing that their perceptions were different from ours. Failure to discriminate between, say, red and green objects, even where this entailed some adverse outcome, would surely be grounds for assuming they were colourblind, rather than for assuming that in this case , unlike all others, the adverse consequence was acceptable to them. And surely a similar case could be made out for the possibility of discovering that another group were more perceptually acute, or had some range or type of perceptual awareness outside of ours. If, for

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LI p. 214

example, they were able to pick an object, secretly marked by us, from others which we regarded as perceptually indistinguishable, and did this consistently over repeated trials, then surely it would conclude that there was some feature of which they were aware in virtue of which they were able to perform the feat. Such cases, it seems to me, can't be excluded a priori, but this doesn't touch Hollis' general point that we can only describe the conditions of use of the native expressions as we perceive them, although we may be able to add to this description by the use of certain scientific instruments which discriminate more finely than we do, or over a broader range of stimuli. Moreover, even these cases can only be put forward in the context of a general assumption of similarity in perceptions, since we can only isolate the areas where we differ against a background of common assumptions. The tests for identifying them rely on this. If everything varied, there would be no way of pinpointing differences. However, this does not mean that there are any assumptions which are totally unquestionable.

If we begin by making the assumption that the foreigners' perceptual experience is utterly

unlike ours, and interpret all subsequent observations of their behaviour in this light, then obviously we will get nowhere towards translating their perceptual talk (if they have any) into terms which we understand. If we begin with the alternative assumption that they perceive more or less what we do, then, against this background, we can canvass the view that one possible cause of failure of communication is difference in perception. What methods would be relevant to isolating the failure as due to this cause would of course be dependent on the particular case. Where failure of communication was total, it would be impossible to determine whether this was due to difference in perception or some other cause, because of the impossibility of asking the questions relevant to isolating the difference.[1]

The alternative is to suppose that nothing at all could count as evidence of difference in perception, and to assert that would be to advance criteria for translation into an alien language which ruled out possibilities we know to exist within our own culture. Hollis' point, however,

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1 See e.g. Campbell D. 'Distinguishing Differences in Perception from failure of Communication in Cross Cultural Studies', in Northrop F.S.C. and Livingston H.H. (eds.) Cross-cultural Understanding: Epistemology in Anthropology (New York:Harper and Row, 1964)

is that we can make no advance towards uncovering the beliefs of the foreigners unless we begin with some initial assumptions. The only way for the investigator to gain access to the experience of the foreigners is by 'interpreting behaviour and utterance... If he had to get at the phenomena before he could interpret and had to interpret before he could get at the phenomena, there would be no way into the circle.'[1] The method Hollis suggests for breaking into the circle is via a 'bridgehead' which relates utterances in the foreign language to sentences of English. His precise account of the nature of the bridgehead changes from its introduction in LI p. 215 where he says that it is a 'set of utterances' which 'serve to define standard meanings for native terms' to his account in M of M p. 147 where he talks of it as 'definitive interpretations of enough terms[2] to restrict possible renderings of others'.

One can pair foreign terms with English ones only by analysing below the level of sentences, and he gives no account of how this may be done. Moreover, the redefinition in M of M does nothing to dispel the problem of the manner in

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1 M of M p. 147

2 my emphasis

which the terms are extracted from the sentences. His account, at this point, bears close similarities to W.V.O. Quine's account of radical translation,[1] but whereas Quine's translator resorts to analytical hypotheses about the pairing of English and foreign terms, Hollis sees his bridgehead as defining standard meanings for native terms in an uncomplicated and nonarbitrary fashion. The a priori assumptions upon which the bridgehead is based apparently eliminate, in Hollis' eyes, all the problems of the indeterminacy of translation to which Quine has drawn attention. To go into this discussion in detail is beyond the scope of the thesis, requiring, as it does, a detailed discussion of Quine's theory, so I shall leave it at this point [2] and return to issue of the principles upon which Hollis' bridgehead is based.

In LI, he says that 'no successful translation can destroy his bridgehead, since all later translations depend on its being secure'.[3] This unassailability is due to the impossibility of adducing any rival perceptual evidence on which

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1 Quine's account is given e.g. in ch. 2 of Word and Object (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1960) (Hereafter W&O)

2 Further comments on indeterminacy can be found in the next chapter.

3 LI p. 215

to base an alternative identification of sentences (or if we take the M of M formulation, terms). However, he admits later that the bridgehead is revisable, since if a translation based upon it yields an English sentence we would regard as 'outrageous'[1] this is grounds for assigning that utterance another meaning. Whether such an assignment requires revision of the bridgehead utterances or terms of course depends upon how much slop is allowable originally. He does say: 'definitive interpretations of enough terms to limit[3] the meanings of others';[2] the question is how much they limit the meaning of others. If such an assignment doesn't require revision of the bridgehead utterances or terms, then the bridgehead identifications do not limit further identifications in any significant way and hence further identifications do not 'depend' in any significant way on the bridgehead. If they do require revision of the bridgehead, then later translations obviously don't depend on the bridgehead being secure, which is contrary to his explicit claim above. The point at issue is that the two principles which he sees as guiding translation, 1) that the bridgehead not be touched and 2) that we

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1 M of M p. 148

2 See also M of M p. 155

3 My emphasis

reject translations which we would regard as 'outrageous', are not principles which can both be held as ultimates. The question is, which is to be abandoned? In M of M he acknowledges unequivocally that it is the unassailability of the bridgehead which is to be abandoned. He says that the bridgehead has 'something in common with a straightforward hypothesis, in that it can be revised a bit at a time in the light of what comes later.'[1] But he seems to think that allowing such revisions does not damage the bridgehead as such. He makes the rather confusing claim that: 'if the Enquirer starts from x = y and later proposes x = z instead, he must still be guided by having used x = y to establish the meaning of z'[2] I can't see that this follows at all. If I attempt to reach Melbourne from Adelaide by following a set of directions which tell me to go west, and I subsequently discover a map in Perth from which I deduce that I should have travelled east, how is my arrival at my desired destination in any way 'guided by' my original misdirection? There is some parallel with the falsification of scientific theories. The more wildly inaccurate the original identification, the more likely one is

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1 M of M p. 148
2 M of M p. 148

to seek a closer approximation to the correct one. But this doesn't show that the later identification 'depends' on the earlier one in any way. That one seeks another identification is dependent on the fact that one has made the earlier one, but which later identification is made is not determined by the earlier one except in so far as it differs from it, and this seems to me to be a somewhat weaker relation than one of 'dependence'. It is certainly misleading to speak of it as 'guiding' us.

I cannot see that a later revision in any way depends upon the initial identification; what it does depend on is holding constant all, or most of, the other identifications which constitute the bridgehead. (It is only in the light of these that the revision of the questionable identification can sensibly be made.) I take it that Hollis is committed to something like this when he says that: 'radical revision would destroy the balance (of advantage in favour of later revisions)'.[1] But if this is what he means, then he no longer thinks the bridgehead itself is unassailable, for, to extend the metaphor, one could rebuild it plank by plank without any point losing one's foothold.[2] If it is not the

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1 M of M p. 148

2 c.f. W.V.O. Quine's reference to Neurath and the boat analogy W&O p. 3

bridgehead itself which is unassailable, then we must look deeper for the a priori assumptions, to the principles upon which the bridghead depends. These, he says, are those of 'zweckrational action applied to the use of language,'[1] amounting to the assumption that 'when the Enquirer believes P on grounds available to the Other Mind, the Other Mind also believes p'.

I have agreed, more or less, with Hollis on the issue of the possibility of communicating with a group who had a very different set of perceptions from us, but it does not seem to me to follow that perceiving roughly the same things necessarily commits us to saying more or less the same things about them. This is an important issue since it seems to me that what Winch is getting at is not that other cultures have alternative criteria of truth, but that they have alternative conceptual schemes.

How does this assumption entail the conclusion that we can't make sense of different conceptual schemes associated with other forms of life (such as I have suggested Winch is arguing for)? Even if we grant that we couldn't possibly make sense

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1 M of M p. 148

of anyone's language if they had vastly different perceptions from ours, this does not entail the impossibility of a language based upon a conceptual scheme so different from ours that translation between that language and our own was impossible. The fact that their criterion of truth was identical with ours would then be irrelevant, since comparison would not be possible.

It seems to me there are two issues involved here. 1) Whether it makes sense to talk of translating between conceptual schemes, i.e. whether there is some analogue of translation between languages which applies to translation between conceptual schemes.[1] 2) Whether, in the event of the total failure to establish communication with a group of foreigners one would ever have grounds for attributing this to a difference in conceptual schemes rather than to any other causes.

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1 This issue deserves more than the mention which I give to it, but I am unable to give space to it here. It is dealt with, with great clarity, in Jack W. Meiland's article 'Cognitive Relativism: Popper and the Argument from Language', The Philosophical Forum Vol. 4 no. 3 pp. 406-421

4. On Alternative Conceptual Schemes

Why should failure of translation entail the conclusion that the foreigners have no language, rather than provide evidence that they are committed to a different conceptual scheme? The believer in alternative conceptual schemes is being asked to bear the burden of proof, but the sort of proof required appears to be precluded by the terms of the enquiry. To prove that the foreigners are committed to an alternative conceptual scheme, rather than merely talking gibberish, will require that what they say is somehow made intelligible to our speech community. What is intelligible to us is exhausted by what it is possible to say in our language (or so it would seem), so making the foreigners' conceptual scheme intelligible to us would mean translating what they say into terms we understand. So, paradoxically, we could only show that they had a different conceptual scheme if we could make sense of it in terms of our own. But if this were the case, their scheme would not have been shown to be a different one at all, merely a variant of our own. The assumption, of course, is that intelligibility is exhausted by our current range of concepts. However, if we admit the possibility of expanding our conceptual scheme, what is intelligible to us at one time does

not exhaust the realm of the intelligible, and we may find it possible to graft, if not alien schemes, at least some foreign concepts, on to our own without inconsistency. Since, by hypothesis, there are no equivalent concepts, or language in which to refer to them, available to us, learning the appropriate language in which to discuss the alternative scheme is not a matter of translating into equivalent terms, but rather of learning anew as does a child.

To qualify as an entirely new conceptual scheme, however, such new concepts as we acquire would need not only to have no counterpart in our current repertoire, but also be linked to each other and the world in such a way as to have no logical relations with our current concepts. Only thus would total failure of translation be accounted for. Making our understanding of such concepts dependent upon translation into terms we already understand is therefore to beg the question at issue. It seems to me that one cannot dismiss without argument the possibility of discovering another such conceptual scheme. But precluding precisely such discoveries would be a consequence to which we were committed if we were to accept the Lukes-Hollis model of interpretation of alien belief systems.

If we are to make sense of alternative conceptual schemes, we must be able to give some account of languagehood which doesn't tie the notion of language to translatability into our own tongue.[1] One possible avenue is by appealing to the intransitivity of translation. Language A may be translated into language B, and B into C without it being possible to translate A into C.[2] We would thus have groundsfor believing that C was a language despite being unable to translate it into our own. Such intransitivity might be accounted for by appealing to Quine's indeterminacy thesis,[3] which,according, for example, to Stroud, allows that 'genuine novelty can arise after several small changes of the familiar into the still familiar'. How any large scale differences could arise as the result of translation is difficult to see since, according to Quine's requirements, for the final sentence to count as a translation of the original would require that it still elicit the same behavioural responses. Davidson makes the general point,[4]

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1 'On The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme' Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association Vol 47 1973-4 pp. 5-20 (hereafter VICS)

2 See e.g. VICS p. 8

3 E.g. Stroud B. 'Conventionalism and the Indeterminacy of Translation' in Davidson D.L. and Hintikka J. (eds.) in Words and Objections(Dordrecht: Reidel 1969) (hereafter C&I) p. 94 and Harman G. 'Quine on Mind and Existence I' Review of Metaphysics Vol 21 1967

4 VICS p. 8

that in order to know that B was being translated into C, a speaker of A would have to have some knowledge of C, thus contravening the original assumption. Thus intransitivity of translation doesn't advance us far; if the intransitivity is marked, then by hypothesis intelligibility is not advanced.

5. Davidson on Conceptual Schemes.

The important question to be answered is whether we can give any grounds for believing that there could be a conceptual scheme so different from ours that translation between the language of these who use it and our language was impossible. I have argued above, in relation to Winch's doctrine on forms of life, that anything less than the total impossibility of translation will leave open the possibility of criticism by what he would argue are inappropriate criteria which he wants to close off.

Donald Davidson argues that those who wish to maintain the possibility of the existence of alternative conceptual schemes are committed to the view that: 'something is a language, and associated with a conceptual scheme, whether

we can translate it or not, if it stands in a certain relation (predicting, organizing, facing or fitting) to experience (nature, reality, sensory promptings).[1] According to Davidson, no sense can be given to the notion of such a vastly different conceptual scheme. Any alternative conceptual scheme would have to organize experience, reality etc. in such a way that the elements of experience etc. are accounted for, but in a way which cannot be correlated with our ontology. Since, according to Davidson, we can't make sense of organizing a single object, [2] whatever the concepts are taken as organizing must be some plurality, objects in the world perhaps, or experiences; what other candidates might there be? To admit others would be to allow perceptual differences so vast that there would be no possible point of contact. But any conceptual scheme which organized objects like these would have to be very similar to ours.[3]

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1 VICS p. 13, it is unclear from this passage whether it is the language or the conceptual scheme which 'predicts organizes faces' etc., presumably the former.

2 VICS p. 14

3 VICS pp. 13-15

This assertion is questionable. It does not obviously follow that because different conceptual schemes carve up the same perceptual input in different ways there is necessarily a way of correlating them, or more precisely that the languages which reflect such differing conceptual schemes can necessarily be translated into each other. At the very simplest level, one scheme (A) might be vastly more gross than another (B), not enabling fine discriminations between colours, for instance; then, unless there is some compensatory apparatus in B, one would be unable to translate the language associated with B into the language associated with A, although translation in the reverse direction would be quite feasible.

As Winch has pointed out in LBR, knowing how to use a particular concept doesn't necessarily entail any ontological commitment. The question of what is real arises only at the point where assertions are made and statements held true or false. While Winch sees this as entailing the impossibility of comparing conceptual schemes, since concepts as such can't be held up against the world and judged as fitting it more or less correctly than others, Davidson, and I with him, think that the important issue is to determine whether part-

icular theories are more adequate for describing or explaining what goes on in the world than others, in short whether those theories, sentences, or whatever, are true. To count as an alternative theory to one which we hold, would require the theory in question be true, but not translatable. Davidson thinks that to count as an alternative conceptual scheme would require the scheme as a whole to be true but not translatable.[1] To talk in such terms is rather barbarous, for the sort of reasons Winch has advanced in LBR and to which I have again alluded above; the conceptual scheme itself can't be true or false, only those sentences or statements which having a particular scheme enables us to construct. However, barbarism aside, I take Davidson's point that we can make sense of alternatives only at the level of what is held to be true. The question then becomes, how do we distinguish differences in the concepts underlying a particular theory held true from mere difference of opinion within a shared system of concepts?

Having decided that sentences held true provide the basic point of entry into an alien belief system, Davidson attempts to show that acceptance

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1 Davidson VICS p. 15

of this position entails that it is impossible to make sense of a language which embodies a conceptual scheme radically different from that of English speakers. His argument may be outlined as follows.[1]

1) The criterion of a conceptual scheme[2] different from our own is: It must be largely true, but not translatable.

2) Our best intuition as to how the concept of truth is used is contained in Tarski's Convention T[3], (viz. that a satisfactory theory of truth for a language L must entail, for every sentence of L, a theorem of the form 's is true if and only if p' where 's' is replaced by a description of s and 'p' by s itself if L is English, and by a translation of s into English if L is not English).

3) Convention T makes essential use of the notion of translation into a language we know.

Therefore: 'there does not seem to be much hope for a test that a conceptual scheme is radically different from ours if that test depends on the assumption that we can divorce the notion of truth from that of translation.'

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1 The argument appears on pp. 16-17 of VICS.

2 This is an extraordinarily loose way of speaking. I take it he means that the conceptual scheme is contained in a set of true but untranslatable sentences.

3 Alfred Tarski, 'The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages' in Logic, Semantics and Metamathematics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

Whether we accept this conclusion, since I have already pointed out that 1) is at least plausible, depends on whether 2) and 3) are acceptable. 2) is not supported except by the consideration that it 'embodies our best intuition as to how the concept of true is used.'[1] Since the whole point at issue is whether the notion of truth can be divorced from that of translation, blind acceptance of 2) with 3) taken as a gloss on the reading of convention T, is question begging in the extreme. What he says he is attempting[2] is to give an argument to show that making translation into a familiar tongue a criterion of languagehood is justified. In appealing to convention T and interpreting it as he does, he is merely restating the criterion which he was attempting to justify.

The reason why this is important is that in relying on translatability into English as a criterion of truth he is inevitably accepting a conservative view on intelligibility. If we accept that translatability is an essential element in defining truth, we are stuck not only with our current conceptual scheme, but with our current repertoire of concepts.

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1 VICS p. 17

2 VICS pp. 7/8

However, if we can show that it is possible to add to the English language in such a way as to expand the repertoire of concepts which we currently hold, then the translatability requirement might not be so conservative after all.[1] But if we allow this, then translatability is not limited by the current repertoire of concepts after all, so Davidson's thesis is either false or trivially true.

I have further grounds for objecting to Davidson's system of interpretation, since it entails that one could not discover that any group were in large measure mistaken in what they held true.[2] I think with McGinn[3], that the solution probably lies in adopting an alternative theory of reference, such as Kripke's[4] causal theory, but I have not space to go into that issue here.

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1 C.F. Stroud, C&I p. 95

2 This is particularly apparent in 'The Method of Truth in Metaphysics', Midwest Studies in Philosophy Vol 2 pp. 244-254, 1977

3 'Clarity, Interpretation and Belief'. Journal of Philosophy Vol 74 1977 pp. 521-535

4 Outlined in 'Naming and Necessity' in Davidson D. and Harman G. (eds.) Semantics of Natural Languages (New York: Humanities Press, 1972)

Allowing that a few new concepts could be made intelligible is of course a quite different matter from proving that a totally different alternative conceptual scheme is a possibility. None of what I have said gives any positive grounds for supposing that such a thing might exist. However, ruling out a translatability requirement as an a priori ground of languagehood at least makes it arguable that such a thing might exist.

On the other hand, since the conceptual schemes associated with Winchian forms of life are inadequately differentiated from each other (as I have argued in ch. 2), the fact that this particular argument of Davidson's does not conclusively disprove the possibility of their existence is no comfort for Winch.

Davidson's is the best argument I can find against the general possibility of alternative conceptual schemes. Since it is at best question begging, the issue of whether we could have good grounds for believing that a group of foreigners were committed to a different conceptual scheme remains undecided. The issue appears to reduce to one of onus of proof.

CHAPTER 4: UNIVERSAL RULES OF LOGIC.

1. Lukes' Argument for universal criteria

The second paragraph of Lukes' argument on p. 65 above constitutes an argument to the conclusion that the foreigners' language 'must have operable logical rules and not all of these can be matters of convention.' This, put together with Lukes' conclusion on p. 171 of RCM, which I have quoted above, yields a strong thesis about 'rules of logic'. Lukes claims that:

1) languages possess rules of logic
2) such rules are universal, i.e. apply to and are operative in all languages
3) such rules are fundamental i.e. they are non-context dependent.

On p. 209 of SPR he says, of a society S, that its 'language must have operable logical rules', implying that rules of logic are somehow possessed by a language in the same way e.g. as rules of syntax. If he does think this is the case then what he is claiming is not true even of English. There are no rules of the language which one could properly call logical rules, none for example which prohibit the utterance of contradictions. Uttering a contradiction still counts as speaking English. It is not even the case that there is only

one system of logical rules to which all speakers of English adhere; so it is not as if the speaking of English just happens to be coextensive with a commitment to a certain kind of logical system. It is not clear, however, just where Lukes thinks the 'rules of logic' are to be found. At various places on pp. 209-210 of SPR he attributes possession of the 'criteria of logic' to the society whose language is being translated, to the members of that society, and to the language of the society. It clearly makes a difference which is meant. Saying that the society or its members possess the logic is compatible with there being more than one possible logic. If the language itself contains the logic, then it is impossible to speak it correctly and simultaneously subscribe to another logic or speak it correctly and breach the rules of that logic.

The reason why we must assume that the foreigners adhere to a system of logic the same as ours is, according to Lukes, that unless they did 'we could never understand their thought, their inferences and arguments'. The only alternative conclusion 'that (society) S's thought (and language) operate according to quite different criteria and that it is quite literally incomprehensible to us'. At least this is his position on p. 210 of SPR, but he later (p. 212) says of his rational (1) criteria in general, and thus of the logical criteria in particular, that

'any society which possesses what we may justifiably call a language must apply them in general, though particular beliefs, or sets of beliefs, may violate them.' So if society S operates according to a logic different from ours, then either, on Lukes account, we have no grounds for saying they have a language, or, if we admit that, then their language is incomprehensible to us. The conclusion he draws from this is that there are universal and fundamental rules of logic.

It comes as no surprise, given what I have outlined above, that he should find that such rules are universal, since he has disallowed the possibility of discovering any alternative to them. It is not clear whether he thinks our failure to comprehend any other system of logic is due to some fundamental incapacity on the part of human beings in general to understand any other logic, or whether it is a result of our having accepted the system of logic which we do.

It is difficult to see that any kind of argument could justify the former position. What of the latter? Being committed to the belief that some particular system of logic is the correct one does not necessarily preclude being able to comprehend others. We have the evidence of adherents of intuitionistic

logical systems being able to comprehend classical logic. They do not fail to understand what someone asserts when he says that 'pv-p' is universally true; rather they disagree. If Lukes argues that intuitionistic logics do not constitute a genuine variant from standard logic, then I think it is up to him to show what does. If any logical system which differs from ours but is comprehended by us, is declared not to be a genuinely divergent one, then Lukes' doctrine would be an empty one.

Even if it were the case that we could not understand anyone who operated according to a logic different from ours, why should it follow that these criteria of logic constitute'ultimate constraints to which all thought is subject?' The failure of one group of people to comprehend a particular theory, proposition etc. is not normally a good ground for supposing that such a theory, proposition etc. is nonsense. Lukes' only other argument for his position is this: 'If, for example, they were unable to see that the truth of p excludes the truth of its denial, how could they ever communicate truths to one other or reason from them to other truths?'

Certainly the possibility of using language to communicate truths is important, and it is equally

important that one have a system of reasoning, but Lukes has not shown that such ends could not be achieved using a logic which differed from classical logic.

There are logical systems which allow the assertion of sentences of the form (a & -a) but which isolate or contain such contradictions so that the assertion of one sentence of this form does not imply the truth of any sentence whatsoever. This can be done with a very simple relevance requirement such as Belnap's[1]; that there be no sentential theses of the form 'A → B' where 'A' and 'B' fail to share a variable. This is compatible with holding either that a sentence of the form 'a & -a' is true or that it is false. Either way, (and the former option is obviously much more controversial), it does not follow that canvassing contradictions necessarily entails the assertion of any utterance whatsoever.[2] If such systems are feasible, then it does not follow that anyone who asserts the truth of some sentence and its denial is necessarily unable to 'reason from them (truths) to other truths'. I suggest that it is rather

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1 Anderson A.R. and Belnap N.D.(Jr) Entailment: The Logic of Relevance and Necessity, Vol 1 Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

2 The case in favour of such logics is argued extremely persuasively by R. Routley in 'Ultralogic as Universal' Relevance Logic Newsletter 1977

cavalier of Lukes to dismiss any such system tout court. If we can make sense of these systems within our language, why should it not be at least possible that speakers of another language should adopt something like them? And if it is possible, Lukes has given no plausible argument to show that we could not discover that they did.

Lukes' argument is also alleged to prove that adherence to these logical rules is an ultimate constraint on thought. All of his arguments however, are directed at showing that adherence to an alternative logical system bring about a failure of communication. In the absence of an argument to the effect that one can think only what others will understand, this position does not have any justification. This however, is irrelevant to the main issue at hand, which is that of the possibility of discovering that any other language users are committed to a different logical system.

To sum up: Lukes thinks there are only two plausible positions concerning logical rules. Either

1) the foreigners whose language we are attempting to translate are committed to the same system of logic as ours, in which case translation is possible or,

2) they are not, in which case their utterances are totally incomprehensible and we have no ground for attributing language to them at all.

My reply to this has been to attack Lukes' assumptions about logical rules

1) By denying that languages 'possess' logical rules

2) By pointing out that Lukes has only shown that such rules are universal by denying that groups adhering to others possess language

3) By arguing that such logical rules have not been shown to be fundamental if all that this means is that anyone adhering to another logical system could not understand them (a premise which in any case is dubious).

2. The Non-conventional Nature of Rules of Logic

Lukes is adopting a stance opposed to that espoused by Winch in the dictum 'logical relations between propositions depend on social relations between men.'[1] He takes this to mean that concepts concerning logical relationships between propositions such as that of negation are ones which a culture may

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1 ISS p. 126.

or may not possess and takes Winch as supporting the view that rules of valid inference etc. are mere matters of convention, which might have been different had men required them to be so.[1]

While allowing that Winch might plausibly claim that the 'content of propositions' is 'dependent on social relations between men'[2] he denies that the logical relations between them are so dependent. I take it that he means by this that what proposition is being asserted by a particular utterance depends on certain conventions. That some collection of noises 'N' constitutes the assertion of a particular proposition 'p' is obviously a matter of convention in the same way that some other collection of noises 'M' constitutes the denial of 'p'.

Neverthelsss Lukes thinks that it does not follow that the relationships which hold between propositions are determined conventionally. I take it that he is committed to the position that there is a certain relationship, viz. that of negation, which holds between two propositions such as 'p' and 'not p' in virtue purely of their being the particular propositions they are. If this is his position, then I think it is somewhat misleading to contrast the non-conventional nature of the logical relationship with the conventional nature of the content of

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1 SPR p. 209.

2 SPR p. 210.

propositions. What is conventional is the way in which utterances are to be interpreted, and it is just as much a matter of convention what interpretation is to be given to a particular sentential operator in virtue of which it is to be seen e.g. as converting an utterance which asserts a certain proposition into one which asserts its denial. What, I take it, Lukes thinks is not the subject of convention is what follows once it is agreed that a certain sort of logical relationship holds between propositions. E.g. if 'not p' is a proposition which is the negation of 'p' then, if 'p' is true 'not p' is false and vice-versa. In other words, once we have hit on a way of assigning logical relationships, there is no longer a choice about what logical system we are to use. Assigning that sort of meaning to particular parts of a foreigner's speech constitutes assuming he is committed to a particular logical system. Furthermore, if I interpret Lukes correctly, he maintains that there is no possible system of logical rules other than that to which we allegedly conform, viz. classical 2 valued truth functional logic and first order predicate calculus with their traditional rules of inference etc. If this interpretation of him is correct then he is committed to a position like that of Quine in Word & Object.[1]

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1 Quine, W.V.O., Word and Object, (Cambridge Mass. MIT Press, 1960)

where it is argued that noone can assert that a sentence of the form 'p & -p' is true and mean by '.' and '-' what is traditionally meant; he must have changed the subject.

3. Hollis' Arguments on the Possibility of Discovering a Group with a Different Logic

Hollis takes Lukes as running what he sees as the rather implausible line that we discover that other societies use our logic. According to Hollis it makes nonsense of Lukes' view if he is asserting simultaneously that we discover that foreigners have our logic, but we couldn't understand them if they didn't.

In adopting this view Hollis argues that Lukes is implying that it is possible to perform some kind of empirical test to discover whether foreigners have our logic, which leaves it an open possibility that they do not. He is allowing, that is, the possibility of discovering a group who use what might rightly be called a language but do not adhere to the logical system which we adhere to. If this is one of the things which Lukes is claiming, then it is certainly in contradiction with several other of the things he says.

E.g. on p. 210 of SPR, having canvassed the possibility of discovering such a group, he concludes that we must find that a society S has criteria of truth and logic which we share with it and that 'The only alternative conclusion' is to assume that 'S's thought and language operates according to quite different criteria and that it is quite literally incomprehensible to us'. But this, according to Lukes, is a self contradictory position, because he wishes to claim that we can only justifiably say that S has a language at all if it follows our system of logic.[1] Hollis argues that it is not a discovery that foreigners follow our system of logic, but an assumption, and moreover one which we must make in order to translate their language.

Both Lukes and Hollis appear to have no qualms about speaking of our logic as if there were only one possible logic compatible with English usage, but Hollis acknowledges the possibility that'our' logic might stretch as far as admitting intuitionistic logics. However, when he attempts to set out in detail what requirements we must place on a logic which is to be understood in terms of ours, he maintains that one 'requirement' is 'p → p' (presumably that 'p → p' be true)

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1 E.g. see SPR p. 212.

' "p → p", "-(p . $\bar{p}$)" and "(p . (p → q)) → q" '

express more than axioms in a particular system or rules in a particular game. They express rather, 'requirements for something's being a system of logical reasoning at all.

If he means by 'requirement for something's being a system of logical reasoning' that these formulae be axioms or theorems of the system, then it is not all clear that this is the case. E.g. if he means by ' → ' a truth functional sentential connective having the truth table:

		q	
		T	F
p	T	T	F
	F	T	T

for 'p → q' where 'p' and 'q' are sentential variables, then it is not the case that the formula 'p → p' is provable in all logics. The 'intuitionist' calculus of A. Heyting is one system where 'p → p' thus defined is neither an axiom of the system nor provable within it. If ' → ' is not defined as in the Table above, then it is not clear whether any substantial claim is being made. Perhaps Hollis means that 'If p then p' must be a theorem of any proposed logical

system, but if the interpretation of 'if p then p' varies according to which system it belongs, he is no longer making a substantial claim about the content of logical system. It is interesting that in his treatment of this topic in M of M ch. 7, he chooses to use the terminology 'If p then p' rather than 'p → p', which presumably reflects his recognition expressed on p. 150 of that chapter that his criteria entail too strong a limitation on translation

> 'This argument threatens to prove too much. It threatens to prove that there is only one possible system of logic, to the surprise of logicians, who happily use several.'

What then is Hollis claiming? If he takes a narrow definition of 'p → p' then he cannot allow the possibility of even mild deviance from classical logic. Since he explicitly allows intuitionistic logics (e.g. ch. 7 of M of M), then it is not clear at what point he begins to impose restrictions on translation of logical terms from foreign languages into English. In R and R p. 228(note) he acknowledges his indeptedness to W.V.O. Quine for several of the ideas in his paper. I take it his views about alternative logics may be among these, and the topic may be more fruitfully pursued by tackling it at its sources.

4. Quine on Alternative Logics

Quine is committed to the view that there is no alternative, if we wish to translate his language, to construing what a foreigner says as conforming to our logic. E.g. he says (P.L. p.82)

> 'We impute our orthodox logic to him, or impose it on him, by translating his language to suit. We build the logic into our manual of translation. Nor is there cause here for apology. We have to base translation on some kind of evidence, and what better?
>
> The canon 'Save the Obvious' bans any manual of translation that would represent the foreigners as contradicting our logic.... .'

That these views are tenable consistently with his well known theory of the indeterminacy of translation is not at all obvious. This theory (QIT) is stated briefly (W & O p. 72) as the view that rival systems of translation 'can fit the totality of speech behaviour to perfection, and can fit the totality of dispositions to speech behaviour as well, and still specify mutually incompatible translations of countless sentences... .' Why should rival systems of translation not extend to the logical system as well?

Quine takes the linguist as approaching his task by first finding translations for foreign 'observation sentences'. He defines[1] 'observation sentence' as 'an occasion sentence, that is, a sentence whose truth value varies from one occasion of utterance to another. But it is a special sort of occasion sentence, one whose truth value depends wholly on circumstances that are intersubjectively observable on the occasion of the utterance of the sentence.'

Thus the only uncertainty regarding observation sentences is inductive uncertainty. Given that the linguist has decided what to count as the foreigner's signs for assent and dissent, he can proceed to correlate English sentences with foreign sentences having the same stimulus conditions. English and foreign sentences have the same stimulus meaning if the English and foreign sentences evoke the same patterns of assent and dissent under all stimulus conditions.

Once this base is established, the linguist moves on to make what Quine calls analytical hypotheses about the translation of foreign utterances into English, and it is at this stage that indeterminacy

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1 'Philosophical Progress in Language Theory' Metaphilosophy Vol 1 1970 p. 10. (hereafter PPLT).

of translation appears. Foreign observation sentences can be equated in meaning with English ones only at the level of whole sentences, any further segmentation such as the identification of foreign phrases with English ones or foreign words with English ones, according to Quine, exceeding the evidence available. The same holds of the identification of foreign theoretical sentences with English ones. In neither case is there any unique correlation with an English counterpart compatible with all the behavioural evidence.

Whether Quine's theory is tenable, or just what argument would justify his position, is not of interest for my present purpose which is to examine his reasons for exempting the truth functional connectives from the radical indeterminacy which affects the identification of all other parts of speech[1] with the exception of substitutional quantification. He argues in W & O sec. 13 that truth functions such as negation, logical conjunction, and alternation can be directly translated i.e. without the necessity for analytical hypotheses. Although he later modifies this view [2], it is of interest to see whether such a view is tenable, particularly since

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1 PPLT p. 14

2 See PPLT, Roots of Reference (La Salle: Open Court, 1973) (hereafter R of R).

it appears that it is upon some such position that Hollis for example, bases his argument in favour of imputing our logic to foreigners.

Quine has taken his linguist as having identified foreign signs of assent and dissent. These are elicited as responses to various sentences of the foreign language. With reference to these, Quine says, we can state semantic criteria for truth functions, viz.

> 'The semantic criterion of negation is that it turns any short sentence to which one will assent into a sentence from which one will dissent, and vice versa. That of conjunction is that it produces compounds to which.... one is prepared to assent always and only when one is prepared to assent to each component. That of alternation is similar with assent changed twice to dissent.
>
> . . .
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> When we find that a native construction fulfills one or another of these three semantic criteria, we can ask no more toward an understanding of it.'[1]

Truth functional connectives would thus be as determinate under translation as observation sentences.

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1 W & O pp. 57-58.

So it appears that the reason why truth functional connectives can be determinately translated is that, since they operate over whole sentences, rather than within sentences, they yield compounds capable of being assented to or dissented from (unlike operators within sentences, which when removed leave only parts of sentences, incapable of eliciting a verdict).

If we accept Quine's account of the reasons for exempting the truth functions from indeterminacy, does it follow that there is no alternative to construing the foreigners as conforming to our logic? According to Susan Haack[1] Quine is maintaining two theses:

> '(1) It is possible to tell that a certain expression of (the language being translated), L, should be translated by a certain connective, e.g. 'and',
>
> and
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> (2) It is not possible that a correct translation of expressions of L by sentential connectives should be such that sentences translated by (classical) contradictions are assented to by speakers of L, nor that sentences translated by (classical) tautologies are dissented from by speakers of L.'

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1 Deviant Logic (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974) p. 18 (hereafter DL)

and that the move from (1) to (2) is based on the following three dubious assumptions

> 'a) principle of maximizing agreement
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> b) adoption of classical criteria for the truth functions
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> c) adoption of assent & dissent as behavioural coordinates.'[1]

a) supports Quine's second thesis (2) if taken in conjunction with the assumption that the translator accepts classical logic, but of course will not do so if the translator accepts some other logic. This assumption is just the assumption made in b), and which I have earlier quoted Quine in detail as espousing. If one accepts that this pattern of assent and dissent indicates that the foreigners assign truth and falsity correspondingly, then one has assumed they use the same connectives in the same way as classical logic does. This choice of criteria is made plausible according to Haack[2] by Quine's adoption of assent and dissent as behavioural coordinates. If, instead of assent and dissent, one took three possible responses to a proffered sentence, namely assent, dissent and puzzlement then one could state alternative criteria. E.g. for

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1 DL p. 18.
2 DL p. 19.

disjunction, Haack's results can be tabulated thus:[1]

	assent	puzzlement	dissent
assent	assent	assent	assent
puzzlement	assent	puzzlement	puzzlement
dissent	assent	puzzlement	dissent

and for negation, thus:

assent	dissent
puzzlement	puzzlement
dissent	assent

Haack asserts that

> 'On these criteria the possibility that natives might fail to assent to some sentence translatable as 'p or not p' is not at all absurd, and might be evidence that they employ a 3-valued logic. And if these criteria were used Quine's (1) could be true but (2) false'[2]

Does it follow from Haack's 3-response table that (1) could be true and (2) false? Taking

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1 DL p. 19.

2 DL p. 19.

'or' and 'not' to command assent, dissent and puzzlement according to Haack's criteria, the denial of p or not p 'it is not the case that p or not p' does not command assent in any instance. In the case where p is met with the response of puzzlement, the compound -(p v -p) is also met with puzzlement. Thus Haack has not produced an instance of a contradiction being assented to, but rather a case of one failing to be dissented from. So Quine's second thesis (2) has not been shown false, since that would require production of a contradiction which is assented to or a tautology dissented from. Haack's example would only count against a weaker version of (2), namely 'It is not possible that a correct translation of expressions of L by sentential connectives should be such that sentences translated by (classical) contradictions are not dissented from by speakers of L, nor that sentences translated by (classical) tautologies are not assented to by speakers of L.'[1]

If Haack's possible responses to sentences: (assent, dissent and puzzlement) were to be taken as indicating the assignment of 3 corresponding truth values e.g. true, false and neutral, in the way that assent and dissent stand for Quine as

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1 I owe this point to my fellow student Philip Cam, to whom I am also indebted for the direction of the critique of Quine which follows.

indicating the assignment of mutually exclusive and exhaustive 'true' and 'false' values, then Haack's respondent could be seen as adopting a form of logic which deviates from standard classical logic. Adam Morton classifies[1] this sort of deviance as weak deviance. 'Weak deviance consists in adopting a logic according to which some classical theorem is not valid' and 'Strong deviance consists in adopting a logic according to which the negation of some classical theorem is consistent.' If we adopt this terminology, we might summarize the situation thus: adoption of three possible responses in favour of the two which Quine admits would show that it is possible to discover that foreigners operate according to a logical system which exhibits at least weak deviance from classical logic.

Interestingly, Quine canvasses a similar situation in R of R pp. 76-78 where he introduces the notion of a verdict function. Given three possible verdicts on a compound sentence, assent, dissent and abstention, the compound is a verdict function of its components[2] if 'a verdict to the

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1 'Denying the Doctrine and Changing the Subject' Journal of Philosophy Vol 70, 1973 pp. 503-510 (hereafter DD).

2 R ofR p. 77.

compound is determined for each assignment of verdicts to the components.' On this definition, negation with the verdict table:

assent	dissent
abstain	abstain
dissent	assent

is a verdict function, but conjunction and alternation with verdict tables:

	assent	abstain	dissent
assent	assent	abstain	dissent
abstain	abstain	?	dissent
dissent	dissent	dissent	dissent

and:

	assent	abstain	dissent
assent	assent	assent	assent
abstain	assent	?	abstain
dissent	assent	abstain	dissent

respectively are not verdict functions, since there is a gap at the centre of the table in each case.

It is not possible to give a unique verdict for the central position on the verdict table for either conjunction or disjunction, since there are cases for both where our judgements vary according to the relationship which we know to hold between the conjuncts or disjuncts. E.g. Quine gives the example[1] of the case where, lacking information, 'you may not be prepared to dissent from the statement that I was born in Pittsburgh, nor to dissent from the statement that I was born in Detroit, but still you will dissent from the conjunction of the two.' This contrasts, for example, with the conjunction: "I was born in Australia and I was born in October' where, one might abstain on each conjunct and on the conjunction as a whole.

The same sorts of consideration apply in the case of disjunction. There are cases e.g. Quine's 'It is a mouse or it is a chipmunk'[2] where one might abstain on either disjunction but assent to the disjunction as a whole, or alternatively abstain from giving a verdict on the whole. If one were in a position to know that the animal seen was one or the other, then one might assent to the disjunction. If one were uncertain whether the animal were mouse,

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1 PPLT p. 12.

2 R of R p.

chipmunk or squirrel, the verdict on the whole would be abstention. So truth functional conjunction and disjunction are not verdict functions, since the central position on the table can be filled only if one has access to information above and beyond what is provided by knowing the verdict on the particular sentences which are constituents of the whole.

It follows from this that the behaviour of users even of truth functional logic is not such as to enable an observer to infer that they <u>are</u> using such a logic without his also having made assumptions about theories they hold which determine interrelationships between the sentences upon which they give verdicts. If, in short, we allow three possible responses to any given sentence then we no longer need see it as inescapable that the foreigners are using classical logic. Even our own speech community may be seen as operating under some different system and the issue can only be resolved by resort to analytical hypotheses about the meaning of the foreign or English sentential connective.

Quine allows that verdict functions corresponding to disjunction and conjunction, i.e. compounds for which a unique verdict is determined for each assignment of verdicts to their component sentences, can be created by specifying abstention at the

centre of the verdict tables. Such verdict functions are

> 'independent of our parochial 2-valued logic, and independent of other'truth value logic.'[1]

This contrasts with Haack's reaction to the possible list of responses (which I have tabulated above). She says that such an outcome

> 'might be evidence that they (the "natives") employ a 3-valued logic.'[2]

Why should Quine not see this as a plausible interpretation of the behaviour of people who operate according to a verdict functional logic such as he has outlined? Presumably he would reply that abstaining is a refusal to assign a truth value; but this is to beg the question, since he has then interpreted the third type of behavioural response in such a way as to make it incapable of standing for a third truth value. Such a course amounts to stipulating that the speech community adheres to classical logic, rather than giving further ground for believing that what Quine calls abstention or

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1 R of R p. 78.

2 DL p. 19, this position is also adopted by Charles Parsons in 'On Translating Logic' Synthese Vol 27, 1974 pp. 405-411.

Haack puzzlement could not be interpreted as a marker for a third truth value. It is only by such a course that Quine can avoid countenancing the possibility of discovering a group of people who operate according to a deviant logic.

However, even if he does not admit the possibility of discovering a people whose logic can be read off inductively from their behaviour, he concedes that the behaviour even of English speakers is compatible with the assumption that they operate according to an intuitionistic logic. He says:

> 'Some theorists, notably the intuitionists, favour another logic, and there is nothing in the observable circumstances of our utterances that need persuade them to assign meaning to our two-valued scheme.'[1]

Since Quine appears to have conceded that there is no purely observational evidence that we or anyone else are committed to one logic rather than another, then it behoves him to explain why it is we should interpret foreigners as subscribing to classical logic rather than any other. Indeed he needs to give a general account of why translational inconsistencies should be dealt with by revising the

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1 R of R p. 78.

meanings of theoretical terms (perhaps imputing different theories to the foreigners) rather than by concluding that they are committed to alternative logics. The doctrine which Haack ascribes to him and calls 'the principle of maximising agreement'[1] is that we should so interpret what foreigners say as to maximise agreement with our beliefs. I am not sure that this is his principle, but in the absence of some criteria specifying what it is we are to maximise agreement upon, it would be rather an empty one. Should it apply to theories, or to sentences uttered in English and the foreign language? In either case, what would constitute maximising agreement? The principle to which he in fact appeals in P of L (pp. 82-3) is that of the obviousness of logical truths:

> 'This canon - 'Save the obvious' is sufficient to settle, in point of truth value anyway, our translations of some of the sentences in just about every little branch of knowledge or discourse...'

Maximising agreement thus means getting agreement on the important points, rather than on the maximum number of sentences, theories etc. It seems plausible that getting agreement on obvious points would entail getting agreement on more points, but I can't see that any a priori argument could be given for

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1 DL p. 18

such a contention. Since (Quine says) logical truths as a class are all obvious 'actually or potentially', this canon 'bans any manual of translation that would represent the foreigners as contradicting our logic.' This view is at variance with the position he adopts e.g. in the last section of 'Two dogmas of Empiricism'[1] where he speaks of total science as 'a field of force whose boundary conditions are experience.' There being no necessary link between any particular experience and any part of the field, any experience may be accommodated by adjustments to any part of the field. While logical laws occupy a central position in this field and are relatively immune from revision, he does admit that:

> 'Revision even of the logical law of the excluded middle has been proposed as a means of simplifying quantum mechanics; and what difference is there in principle between such a shift and the shift whereby Kepler superseded Ptolemy...'[2]

If he believes this, then there would appear to be no ground for supposing that there might not exist a society which had scientific or other theories vastly different from ours, or even adhered to an alternative logic. Even our own society, at some future date, having made the conceptual revision which Quine suggests

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1 From a Logical Point of View, New York: Harper and Row 1963) p. 92ff. (hereafter LP of V)

2 LP of V p. 43.

for simplifying quantum mechanics, might be such a one. Certainly there would appear to be no necessity that what appears obvious to us should appear so to all societies at all times. Why then should we always follow his canon 'Save the obvious'?

Adam Morton[1] suggests that 'Save the obvious' might be taken in three ways

'(a)[2] If an English sentence is obvious, tranalate it only by a foreign sentence that is assented to. (If obvious in English then assented to in Foreign).

or (b) If a foreign sentence is obvious, translate it only by an English sentence that is assented to (If obvious in Foreign then assented to in English.)

or (c) Do not translate as an obvious falsehood what foreign speakers regard as true (If assented to in Foreign, then not obviously false in English.)'

Morton points out that while (a) & (b) receive explicit textual support from Quine[3], neither

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1 DD p.

2 DD p. 505

3 (a) from p. 83 of Philosophy of Logic (Englewood Cliffs N.J., Prentice Hall, 1970) 'The canon "Save the obvious".... altogether'

(b) from Philosophy of Logic p. 83 'It behoves us, in construing a strange language.... obvious.'

is adequate to outlaw strong deviance from classical logic.[1] (b) is irrelevant, since we are not trying to show that foreigners find obvious a sentence translated as a contradiction, just that they assent to it. (a) will only prohibit strong deviance if it follows that assenting to some given sentence necessarily involves dissenting from its denial. Only if this is the case will it follow that prohibiting dissent in the foreign language from what one translated as obvious truths in English will entail that one may not assent to what translates as a contradiction. As Morton points out,[2] anyone who was in the business of assenting to contradictions would also be very likely to assent both to some sentences and their denials, so requiring that they be interpreted as assenting to tautologies would not necessarily preclude translating them as assenting to denials of them. Nevertheless (a) obviously works against weak deviance.

Strong deviance can only be outlawed by appealing to a principle such as (c) which has no force against weak deviance. So to gain the result which Quine wants, which is to require that we translate the foreigners as conforming in every way to classical logic, will require a principle which is something like the conjunction of Morton's (a) and (c).

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1 DD p. 506.
2 DD p. 507.

As he points out,[1] such a conjunction of principles, taken as a general condition on translation, is a very implausible one. When Quine speaks of logical truths being 'obvious', he means that they are 'unhesitatingly assented to, for whatever reason', and when he speaks of a sentence being 'obvious in particular circumstances' he means 'everyone will assent to it in those circumstances.' Therefore conditions such as Morton's (a) and (c) apply generally even where the vexed problem of logic does not intrude. So it follows that even in areas where we are certain of the attribution of false belief to some group, Quine's methods would show us mistaken. Since almost everyone in our society assents to the proposition that the earth orbits the sun, adhering to (a) would show us wrong to interpret anyone as saying 'the sun orbits the earth'even though, on a homophonic reading of our own language, this was a received truth to our forbears. Moreover, the sorts of methods required to topple that belief were not mere linguistic revisions, but substantial changes in the content of belief.

It is also highly implausible that we should adhere universally to a prohibition such as c). There are, without doubt, sentences which in our society are regarded as obvious falsehoods such as: 'Madness is

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1 DD p. 507.

caused by the phases of the moon,' which were assented to by members of our culture in earlier days. Why should we not equally impute such a belief to foreigners whose languages we translate?

These results follow because of Quine's definition of 'obviousness' in terms of behavioural criteria.[1] He says (P of L p. 82):

> 'When I call '1 + 1 = 2' obvious to a community I mean only that everyone, nearly enough, will unhesitatingly assent to it, for whatever reason' (my emphasis)

Whatever plausibility there is in Quine's position comes from our unwillingness to abandon the truths of classical logic; perhaps an inability to conceive of the alternatives. There is no such conceptual block in the case of the other truths I have mentioned; it is easy to conceive of alternatives in the case of physical theories. However, since Quine's criteria are purely behavioural, and most of the community assent to statements such as 'The earth orbits the sun', such statements are elevated to the same status as logical truths. We are enjoined to translate foreigners as assenting to such statements despite the fact that we can conceive of quite plausible grounds

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1 This point is made by Charles Parsons 'On Translating Logic' Synthese Vol 27, 1974 pp. 405-411.

for not assenting to them ourselves. I daresay that Quine might interpret any such considerations as 'hesitation' but since he also adds that the reason for assent is irrelevant, he appears to have denied himself this avenue of retreat. In any case, if he is still committed to the approach which he adopted in 'Two dogmas of empiricism', any interpretation of 'obviousness' which gave special status to logical truths would be anathema to him. That he should seek to protect classical logic by this device point to a problem in his position to which the solution is by no means obvious. Either he is prepared to abandon classical logic, in which case it is difficult to see why he goes to such lengths (in P of L for example) to defend it; of he is not prepared to give it up, which presumably means he has retreated from the doctrines outlined in 'Two dogmas of Empiricism.'[1]

5. Bradley on the Parsing Argument

Quine has allowed, as I have pointed out above, that there are grades of indeterminacy of translation and that while observation sentences and their negations are fully determinate under translation, the

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1 Charles Parsons (op. cit.) argues that Quine ,given his behaviourist canons of translation is pushed in the direction of accepting an intuitionist logic.

truth functions and substitutional quantification occupy another lower grade of determinacy.[1] Michael Bradley has argued[2] that one argument supporting the thesis of the indeterminacy of translation would, if valid, have the consequence that the determinacy under translation of truth functional operators is even further downgraded, so that they occupy a lower level than Quine now allows.

This argument, which he calls the parsing argument (PA), he extracts from WO p. 53.[3]

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1 'Comment on Donald Davidson' Synthese Vol 27 1974 p. 327.

2 'Quine's Arguments for the Indeterminacy Thesis' Australasian Journal of Philosophy (hereafter QAIT) Vol 54, 1976 pp. 24-49. This argument occurs on pp. 30-34.

3 ...Nothing not distinguished in stimulus meaning itself is to be distinguished by pointing, unless the pointing is accompanied by questions of identity and diversity: 'Is this the same gavagai as that?', 'Do we have here one gavagai or two?'. Such questioning requires of the linguist a command of the native language far beyond anything that we have as yet seen how to account for. We cannot even say what native locutions to count as analogues of terms as we know them, much less equate them with ours term for term, except as we have also decided what native devices to view as doing in their devious ways the work of our own various auxiliaries to objective reference : our articles and pronouns, our singular and plural, our copula, our identity predicate. The whole apparatus is interdependent, and the very notion of term is as provincial to our culture as are those associated devices. The native may achieve the same net effects through linguistic structures so different that any eventual construing of our devices in the native language and vice versa can prove unnatural and largely arbitrary. (Cf. §15.) Yet the net effects, the occasion sentences and not the terms, can match up in point of stimulus meanings as well as ever for all that. Occasion sentences and stimulus meaning are general coin; terms and reference are local to our conceptual scheme.

According to Bradley,

'The argument is" the hypothesis that "gavagai" has a certain extension E (let alone that it means "rabbit") is doubly underdetermined by the behavioural totality; that it is a term at all is underdetermined; supposing that it is construed as a term, that it has extension E rather than some other E' or E" is underdetermined."

The parsing of the alien tongue is underdetermined by the behavioural totality. But translation involves parsing, so translation is underdetermined by the same totality".[1]

If parsing in general is subject to radical indeterminacy, then it follows that whether or not some particular part of the stream of alien noise should be construed as a sentential operator is equally underdetermined. Moreover, this indeterminacy will be of the same degree as that affecting the translation of terms so the distinction in degree of determinacy between truth function and terms is lost.

Furthermore, Bradley has shown that it is inconsistent to allow that negations of observation

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1 QAIT p. 27

sentences are more determinate under translation than other truth functions. If one makes the assumption, which Quine appears committed to,[1] that a sentence has the same grade of determinacy as any truth functional equivalent, then it follows that negations of observation sentences must be as indeterminate under translation as any other truth functions.

Since any polyadic truth functional operation can be defined in terms of conjunction and negation or disjunction and negation, it follows that any truth functional compound of observation sentences must have the same degree of indeterminacy as is occupied by conjunctions and disjunctions of observation sentences. But Sheffer's stroke '/' is definable in terms of conjunction and negation or disjunction and negation, so any compounds formed using it occupy the same grade of indeterminacy as conjunctions and disjunctions. Since negation and identity are definable in terms of '/' it follows that they occupy the same grade of indeterminacy as conjunctions and disjunctions. But this is inconsistent withthe original assumption that observation sentences and their negations occupy a different grade of determinacy

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1 A detailed argument to this effect can be found in QAIT pp. 33/4.

from conjunctions and disjunctions. An argument along the same lines can be given to show that the identity relation is subject to the same degree of indeterminacy. So the result of accepting the parsing argument is that even segmentation of utterances into sentences is the subject of indeterminacy.[1]

If either the argument about verdict functions or Bradley's more comprehensive argument based on PA is successful, then Quine must allow that there are no grounds centring on the determinate translation of truth functional operators upholding the view that we must impute our logic to foreigners. Then his only ground for holding such a view is that the truths of classical logic are obvious. I think Morton has shown, in the argument I have outlined above, that any principle which will achieve the ends Quine seeks will impose absurdly strict conditions on translation. If he therefore abandons this approach, then it is an analytical hypothesis that any given sentential connective is to be equated with a classical truth functional one. But any such identification might be overridden by other considerations. It might be, that in the light of analytical hypotheses about other parts of the foreign language, it is found to be simpler to interpret the foreigners as conforming

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1 See QAIT pp. 30-34.

to a different logic, rather than make any other revision. The decision then becomes a purely pragmatic one, not decided on a priori grounds as Hollis, for example, has argued.

CONCLUSIONS

I believe I have shown that Winch's views on forms of life differ significantly from Wittgenstein's and that what he is most centrally committed to is the view that there are precisely delineated conceptual schemes bound up with certain activities, and that one may make critical judgements only within the boundaries of such schemes. This doctrine founders for two principal reasons:

1) that it is impossible to draw boundaries in the way it requires, and

2) Even if it were possible to distinguish between forms of life or conceptual schemes in the way Winch requires this would not entail the impossibility of criticizing one from the point of view of another. Winch rightly points out that conceptual schemes can't be held up against the world and judged as more or less adequate, but the theories which they enable us to construct certainly can, and criticism is therefore possible using concepts which are not those in terms of which the theory is framed.

Lukes' and Hollis' attempts at showing that no alternative criteria of truth logic and rationality are possible meet with only limited success. If I

am right in interpreting them as wishing to show that there are no plausible grounds for believing that any group of foreigners is using a very different conceptual apparatus, then I think I have shown that their argument, depending as it does on the notion of translation fails to prove this. I think I have shown that their argument aimed at showing that we could not discover that another group were using different criteria of logic from ours fails. That the foreigners use classical logic is a decision we arrive at by a pragmatic judgement on the data available, not a necessary assumption for beginning translation (although a highly plausible one). Furthermore, it may sometimes be plausible, though I suspect extremely rarely indeed, to conclude that some group are committed to the denial of one of the truths of classical logic.

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