Clammer's synthesis would put the social sciences back three
hundred years, successively eliminating the work of Montesquieu,
Marx, Freud, Durkheim, Levi-Strauss...Perhaps this work is the
product of an overactive imagination prone to metaphysics? In
which case this interesting view should be justified at greater
length. What, for example, does Clammer think about the following
passage from Durkheim (quoted in Winch: 23) as an example of a
view which conflicts with his own:

> "I consider extremely fruitful the idea that social
> life should be explained not by the notions of those
> who participate in it, but by more profound causes
> which are unperceived by consciousness...."?

Jairus Banaji.

### Bibliography

Clammer 1970    Journal of the Anthropological Society
Society of Oxford. Vol. 1. No 1.

Kuhn 1968    The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

Winch 1958    The Idea of A Social Science and its
Relation to Philosophy

## Winch and the Social Determination of Truth

The issues I want to raise here can be regarded as a
direct follow on from some that have been raised in previous
issues. Basically the issue at stake is how do we understand
an alien belief system. This I want to suggest comes very
close to the question of how do we understand another language
at all.

The way I shall approach this question is through
some purely formal considerations relating to the possibility
of alternative logics. My main task will be to reject what
might be called a Winchian approach to some of these issues.

A wide range of writers has been attracted to the
idea that truth and logic are culture or context dependent.[1]
Sociologists of knowledge such as Mannhein, and Durkheim and
Mauss agree that the genesis of a proposition is not under all
circumstances irrelevant to its truth. For Mannhein the task
for the sociologist of knowledge is to analyse the "perspectives"
associated with different social positions, the "orientations"
towards certain meanings and values which inhere in a given
social position where an individual "outlook" and "attitude"
is conditioned by the collective purposes of the group and to
study the concrete reasons for the different perspectives which
the same situation presents to the different positions in it.
His interest is in situations where social structures come to
express themselves in the structures of assertions, and in what
sense the former concretely determine the latter.(Mannhein:1936).

In <u>Primitive Classification</u> Durkhein and Mauss argue
that originally there is a casual, genetic relation between the
categories in different languages (such as space, time, quantity)
and logical relations (such as deductive validity) and that
society's social relations. "Thus logical heirarchy (i.e. of
exclusion and inclusion) is only another aspect of social
heirarchy." Again logical relations between things are based
on the social relations of men. "Logical relations," they
argue, "are thus, in a sense, domestic relations." (Durkhein
and Mauss: 1969).

This view is also shared by some philosophically-
minded social anthropologists and philosophers interested in
the social sciences. Levy-Bruhl suggests that "primitive thought
violates our most deeply rooted mental habits."(Levy-Bruhl:1922:
48). It is prelogical in that it is "indifferent most of
the time to contradiction" and committed to a view of casuality
"of a type other than that familiar to us." (ibid:85)
Winch argues to a conclusion very similar to that of Durkhein
and Mauss at the same time attempting to give his argument a
general philosophical justification. For Winch, "our idea of
what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the
language that we use." (Winch: 1958:15). Similarly "criteria
of logic .... arise out of and are only intelligible in the
context of ways of living or modes of social life"(ibid;100)
to the extent that "logical relations between propositions
themselves depend on social relations between men."(ibid:126).
For Winch, standards of rationality between societies do not
always coincide. Indeed rationality itself in the end comes
down to "conformity to norms". (Winch:1964:318).

Whorf has also claimed that what counts as true and/or
what counts as valid reasoning is relative to particular groups.
"When anyone, as a natural logician, is talking about reason,
logic and the laws of correct thinking, he is apt to be
marching in step with purely grammatical facts that have some-
what a background character in his own language or family of
languages but one by no means universal in all languages and
in no sense a common substratum of reason." (Whorf:1956:211).
For Whorf, then, logic and ontology literally recapitulate
philology.

Also philosophers of science such as Kuhn (if Lukes
is to be believed here) have been tempted by this view. For
Kuhn, when scientific paradigms change, in an important sense,
worlds change too. After Lavoisier discovered oxygen not only
was the world seen differently, but it was different. Accord-
ingly, Kuhn suggests, there is a need to revise the traditional
epistemological viewpoint of Western philosophy that changes
in scientific paradigms carry us closer and closer to the
truth. (Kuhn:1964:125).

Similarly logicians have spelt out in some detail
what alternative logical systems might look like in purely
abstract terms. Intuitionists' objections to the traditional
propositional calculus have led to the development of a
propositional calculus that neither contains the law of excluded
middle nor admits of its subsequent insertion. And in logics
based on quantum mechanics the distributive law breaks down.

In the article <u>Are there Alternative Logics?</u>
(Waismann: 1968), Waissmann suggests ways in which it is
possible to construct languages to which our familiar
Aristotelian two-valued logic does not apply, that is, a
language in which a proposition is not always true or false.
In fact, Waismann argues the possibility of multi-valued logics,
which involve relinquishing what might be regarded as
intuitively obvious logical axioms such as excluded middle,

non-contradiction and so on is already implicit in ordinary
language. Ordinary English, e.g. he suggests is a loose
conglomeration in which fragments of different logical systems
are discernable. A logic, he suggests, is always an
idealisation of the conditions we meet in a given language, just
as mathematical geometry (e.g. a Euclidean geometry of three-
dimensional space) is a refinement of the rough date obtained
by measuring solids. And as the existence of non-Euclidean
geometries demonstrates, just as observations obtained in this
way can in principle be built into various geometries, so the
conditions we find in a given language allow of an idealisation
in more than one direction. In other words the process that
leads to a different logic is not uniquely determined by actual
usage.

I now want to consider specifically Winch's position.
His arguments have been rehearsed sufficiently in earlier
editions of this journal to make repitition here unnecessary.
Let me start by assuming Winch is arguing for an extreme form
of logical relativism.

Consider the different ways in which a belief or set
of beliefs could be said to be prima facie irrational. (A belief
for convenience can be characterised as a proposition accepted
as true).

    Beliefs are said to be irrational
a)   if they are inconsistent or self-contradictory
b)   if they are partially or wholly false
c)   if they are nonsensical
d)   if they are situationally specific or ad hoc, ie not
universalised because bound to particular occasions
e)   if the ways in which they come to be held or the
    manner in which they are held are seen as deficient
    in some respect. For example (i) the beliefs may be
    based on irrelevant considerations (ii) insufficent
    evidence (iii) they may be held uncritically or
    unreflectively.[2]

Now I think, with Lukes, one can give good a priori
reasons for regarding some criteria of truth and validity (or
more generally criteria of rationality - and by criteria of
rationality I mean rules specifying what would count as a
reason for believing something (or acting) ) as universal, as
relevantly applicable to all beliefs in any context while
others are context-dependent, that is are to be discovered by
investigating the context, and are only relevantly applicable
to beliefs in that context. And I shall argue (with Lukes
against Winch) that all beliefs can and must be evaluated by
both context-dependent and context-independent criteria.

In any set of beliefs in society S one can ask two
different types of question:
1)   What for S are the criteria of rationality in
    general
2)   What are the appropriate criteria to apply to a
    given class of beliefs in S.[3]

1) Now as Lukes has rightly put it, insofar as Winch
seems to be saying that the answer to the first question is
culture-dependent, he must be wrong, or at least we could
never know if he were right; indeed we could not conceive what
it would be for him to be right. (Lukes:1967:260).

For in the first place the existence of a common
reality is a necessary precondition of our coming to understand
S's language at all. This does not mean that I and members of
S are going to agree on all the facts. As Whorf put it
"language dissects nature in different ways". "What must be the
case is that S must have our distinction between truth and
falisty if we are to understand its language, for if per

impossible it did not, we would be unable to agree about what
counts as the successful identification of public (spatio-
temporally located) objects." Similarly if S is to engage in
successful prediction it must presuppose a given reality of
events which are predictable." Both primitive and modern men
predict in roughly the same ways; also they can learn each
other's languages. Thus they each assume an independent
reality which they share."

This argument, and I have been following Lukes'
statement of it here, is put fairly rapidly. The main points
can be made clearer in the following way. In The Limits of
Irrationality Hollis spells out this argument as follows;
attributing what have been called universal criteria of
rationality to S is not a matter of empirical discovery, but
is presupposed by the very process of coming to understand
S's language.

To understand utterances in S's language Hollis
suggests the translator must relate them to another and to the
world. "To translate them into English he needs to relate
some of them to the world, since in relating an utterance to
others he does not learn what it means unless he already knows
what the others mean. Ultimately he needs a class of
utterances whose situations of use he can specify. Now these
can be specified either as he himself sees them or as his
informant sees them. But this seems to suggest the specif-
ications might be different." But if this could be possible
he couldn't begin at all. "For his only access to native
perceptions and specifications is by translating what they say
about what they perceive. He would therefore have to translate
before discovering what they perceive and to know what they
perceive before translating. There would therefore be no
way into the circle. The class of utterances which form the
bridgehead of his advance must be one for which his
specification and his informant's coincide."(Hollis:1967:266).

That is there are two critical assumptions which are
made in the very act of coming to understand S's language viz
1) that the informant perceives more or less what he perceives
and 2) that they will say more or less the same about it.
That these are assumptions is demonstrated in the following
way.

Suppose the translator gets his bridgehead by
pinning down the native counterpart to the English sentence
'Yes, this is a brown cow'. There are no counterparts to
pin down unless the native perceives brown cows and asserts
that he does. For since these are the conditions for truth-
fully asserting the above in English they are also the
conditions for truthfully asserting the above in S. Now this,
as Hollis suggests, is banal enough. But it is not a
hypothesis that anthropologists share certain percepts and
concepts,hypothesis which later success in translating confirms.
For this hypothesis would be irrefutable. In order to
question the perceptual and conceptual basis of the bridge-
head, the translator would have to ask his informant what he
perceived when confronted with a brown cow and whether his
utterance was to be construed as an assertion. Also he would
have to understand his answer. But he can neither ask nor
understand unless he has a bridgehead. Consequently he cannot
refute the hypothesis by establishing a rival one. At most he
can draw a blank and fail to produce a translation at all.
But even this would not justify the translator in attributing
idiosyncratic linguistic or perceptual processes to members
of S. It would only serve to suggest they had no language at
all.

Nor is the hypotheses confirmed with success. The translator has discovered (roughly) what native sentence to pair with the original; but he has not discovered that the natives perceive a brown cow when they utter the sentence. For if that were in doubt so would the pairing be. And, as has been argued already, if both are in doubt, there is no way into the circle. Similarly, although it is an empirical matter to discover how the informant signals the difference between assertion and denial, 'yes' and 'no', 'true' and 'false', and by implication our notion of verification, it is not a hypothesis that they have such distinctions. "For to check such an hypothesis the translator would have to establish the meanings of utterances in the bridgehead independently of whether they were used to correct what was taken to be true. But this cannot be done as their translation depends on what linguistic function they are taken to perform. Consequently the only alternative to finding an overlap in concepts and percepts is to find nothing at all." (ibid:266).

If this is right then the assertion comprising the bridgehead will have to be coherent and indeed true. Again it looks as if notions of coherence and truth in S need not coincide with the translator's. But if this is taken as a hypothesis another vicious circle is generated. "For the only way to find terms (in S) for relations among utterances is to translate the utterances and then to interpret the linking terms so that the utterances are linked coherently. Equally the only way to find the native sign of assent is to translate the utterances and then to interpret whatever sign accompanies most of the true ones as assertion. But this makes it impossible for alternative concepts of coherence and truth to show up. If these concepts were in doubt, the translator would have to know what they were, before he could translate the utterances which they linked, and would have to translate the utterances in order to find how they were linked. Again there would be no way into the circle." (ibid:267).

I should add here that although these arguments seem to me to be valid I think Hollis's account of the notion of 'bridgehead' is rather misleading. Clearly one doesn't decide that 'Yes, this is a brown cow'is true by fiat, so to speak, and then go on using that as a point of leverage into the language. Any translation of a native utterance is always hypothetical and open to confirmation or revision. Rather it is the specification of the situation in which the translator elicits the native sentence and which has to be common to translator and informant if translation is to get going at all that is not open to conjecture and refutation or confirmation.

My argument so far then has been that in order to attribute a language to S at all they must possess our concept of verification, negation and affirmation as applied to assertions about a common reality.

It may be objected that there is nothing here that Winch would in fact deny. Well even if this is the case it is certainly not clear from what Winch himself says.

Now Quine (Quine:1969) has taken this argument about the inevitable grafting of the translator's logic onto the language of the informant a step further (and although it is not strictly speaking relevant to my argument here I think he raises some central questions for translation theory).

Quine's argument can be outlined simply as follows. Picture the anthropologist in the proverbial jungle situation starting from scratch when learning a native language (the presence or absence of an interpreter makes no difference to the philosophical point). Suppose a rabbit runs by and the

native utters 'Gavagai'. The anthropologist duly notes down
'Rabbit' in his notebook, subject of course to further confirm-
ation. But although this is the necessary starting point of any
process of translation (and by implication, any understanding
of the linguistic utterances of a person using even the same
language). It is also the starting point for problems in
translation theory, at least for the anthropologist, sensitive
to the possibility of fundamental differences between conceptual
systems of the Whorfian kind.

Quine illustrates this in the following way. Stimulus
synonymy of the sentences 'Gavagai' and 'Rabbit' (stimulus
synonymy means the stimulus conditions that prompt the two
sentences gavagai and rabbit are the same) does not even
guarantee that 'gavagai' and 'rabbit' are coexstensive terms
( i.e. terms true of the same things.) The informant's sentence
'Gavagai' could refer to rabbits, or mere stages, or brief
temporal segments of rabbits. In either event the stimulus
situations that prompt assent to 'Gavagai' would be the same
as for 'Rabbit'. Again stimulus meaning would register no
difference when Gavagai is taken as a singular term naming
a recurring universal or a general term. The same problems
Quine argues arise for our articles and pronouns, our singular
and plural, our copula and our identity predicate. The
important point is that over any range of given stimulus
conditions, the informant 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.

For this reason, Quine suggests, translation (or
understanding) suffers from a very radical kind of indeter-
minacy. By this he means simply that conceptual schemes can
vary radically but undetected by the translator. In its
simplest sense this can be put by saying two men (i.e.
translator and informant) and also two speakers of the same
language) could be alike in all their dispositions to verbal
behaviour under all possible sensory stimulations and yet the
meanings or ideas expressed in their identically triggered
and identically sounded utterances could diverge radically
for the two men in a wide range of cases.

Now although it looks as if Quine is running an
extreme Winchian relativism here the emphasis is I think
quite different and in fact distinctly un-Winchian.

Consider truth functions such as negation, logical
conjunction and alternation. By reference to assent and
dissent Quine argues we can state semantic criteria for truth
functioning, i.e. criteria for determining whether a given
native idiom is to be construed as expressing the truth
function in question. For example the semantic criterion
for negation is that it turns any short sentence to which
one will assent into a sentence from which one will dissent
and vice versa. Quine's point is that when we find that a
native construction fulfils one or another of the semantic
criteria we can ask no more towards an understanding of it.
And as Quine points out, this ill accords with a doctrine of
prelogical mentality. To take the extreme case suppose the
informant asserts as true a sentence in the form 'p and not
p'. Now this claim is absurd under our semantic criteria.
And, not to be dogmatic, Quine asks what criteria might one prefer.
"Wanton translation can make natives sound as queer as one
pleases. Better translation imposes our logic upon them and
would beg the question of prelogicality if there were one to
beg".

And as Quine points out, Malinowski spared the
Trobrianders the imputation of prelogicality by so varying his

translations of terms, from occurrence to occurrence, so to
sidestep contradiction. Leach protested but provided no clear
solution for the issue. And as quine remarks, it is understand-
able that the alternative of blaming the translation of con-
junctions, cupulas or other logical particles is nowhere
considered, for any considerable complexity on the part of the
English correlates of such words would of course present the
working translator with forbidding practical difficulties.

The maxim underlying Quine's logical and methodological
charity then is that one's interlocutor's silliness is less
likely than bad translation. For translation theory, as Quine
puts it, "banal sentences are the breath of life".

Behind all this is Quine's main point that all
translation proceeds only by means of a number of analytic
hypotheses which extend the limits of translation beyond where
independent evidence can exist.

Such analytic hypotheses of the translator, for
example, involve segmenting heard utterances into conveniently
short recurrent parts thus enabling the translator to compile
a list of words. Various of these he hypothetically equates
to English words and phrases in such a way so as to conform
to the presupposition that for example observation sentences
can be translated or that truth functions can be translated.

In other words it is "only by the outright projection
of prior linguistic habits that the anthropologist can find
(e.g.) general terms in the native language at all, or having
found them match them with his own."

The method of analytic hypotheses as Quine puts it
"is a way of catapulting oneself into the jungle language
by the momentum of the home language. It is a way of grafting
exotic shoots on to the old familiar bush until only the
exotic meets the eye." From the point of view of a theory of
translational meaning however the most notable thing about
analytical hypotheses is that they exceed anything implicit
in the natives' disposition to speech behaviour.

It is worth mentioning here that Quine's principle
of charity is interpreted by Gellner in Concepts and Society
(Emmet and MacIntyre:1970) as being not an indispensable
methodological requirement but as evidence of a moral desire
on the part of the anthropologist to be "tolerant, understand-
ing and liberal, to refrain from an uncomprehending and
presumptious superiority in one's attitudes to other (notably
'primitive') societies."

This leads me to my second objection to Winch. This
is that S's language must have operable logical rules and not
all of these can be purely a matter of convention. Winch
states that 'logical relations between propositions...
depend on social relations between men.' But if this implies
that the concept of negation and the laws of non-contradiction
and identity need not operate in S's language then it must be
mistaken for if the members of S do not possess even these how
could we ever understand their thought, their inference and
arguments? (This follows from Quine). Winch half sees this, as
Lukes rightly suggests, when he writes that the possibilities
of our grasping forms of rationality different from ours in an
alien culture are limited by certain formal requirements
centring round the demand for consistency. But these formal
requirements tell us nothing about what is to count as
consistency, just as the rules of the propositional calculus
limit, but do not themselves determine what are to be values
of P,Q, etc.

But as Lukes points out, this is merely a misleading way of saying that it is the content of propositions, not the logical relations between them that is dependent on social relations between men. (1967:262).

It follows that if S has a language it must minimally possess criteria of truth (as correspondence to reality) and logic which we share with it and which simply are criteria of rationality, in that they constitute the formal conditions for the possibility of understanding utterances by members of S.

So far I have been concerned with fairly formal objections to the most extreme interpretations of Winch's pluralistic social solipsism.

Now I do not want to deny that members of S might not, against a background of universal criteria of truth and logic, adhere to beliefs which systematically violate these criteria. This in fact seems to be typical of the ethnographic situation. What I do want to argue however is that these context-dependent criteria are in Lukes' phrase 'parasitic' on non-context-dependent criteria. That is where there are second order beliefs about what counts as true and valid, those beliefs can only be rendered fully intelligible as operating against a background of such criteria.

Consider the following example from Gellner's Saints of the Atlas (Gellner:1970).

According to Gellner the concept of 'baraka' possessed by Moroccan Berbers which means variously 'enough', 'blessedness' and 'plenitude' and is believed to be manifested amongst other things in prosperity and in the power to cause prosperity in others by supernatural means has the interesting character of violating three of the most advertised categorical distinctions favoured by contemporary linguistic philosophers.

1)   It is an evaluative term, but it is used as though it were a descriptive one; possessors of baraka are thought of as possessing an objective characteristic which is empirically discoverable
2)   In as far as it is treated as an objective characteristic of people manifest in their conduct it could only be a dispositional one - but it is treated as though it were the name of some 'stuff' (e.g. it can be transmitted between persons by means of spitting into the mouth),
3)   its attribution is really a case of a performative use of language - people become possessors of baraka by being treated as though they were possessors of it - but it is also treated as though its possession were a matter wholly independent of the volition of those who attribute it. This is essential to the working of the Berber political life. Two comments can be made here:

1)   Concepts which like the concept of 'baraka' consistently ride roughshod over the performative and descriptive use of language would only be socially (and indeed logically) possible against a background of social behaviour where the logic of performatives was not confused systematically with the logic of description. Social behaviour such as making promises or economic contracts would be inconceivable unless in general the social implications of performatives were clearly seen and adhered to.

Now all this raises the general question of what understanding in this sort of situation will consist in. To say with Winch that use is meaning is justification simply seems unhelpful. What is added in the way of comprehension

by saying that as far as Berber political concepts go the
Berbers always live, as it were, in a conceptual dimension of
their own in which our categorical boundaries do not apply? But
as Gellner rightly suggests, we can sometimes only make sense
of the beliefs in question by seeing how the manipulation of
concepts and the violation of categorical boundaries helps it
work. It is precisely the logical inconsistency of 'baraka'
which enables it to be applied according to social need and to
endow what is social need with the appearance of external,
given and indeed authoritative reality.

My third objection, then, is the one Lukes makes
although in a slightly different context. He points out that
it is only by assuming non-context dependent criteria of
rationality that one can "raise questions about the social role
of ideology and false consciousness."(Lukes:1970). And he
quotes the Soviet historian Joravsky as saying that the only
way to prove which beliefs have performed what functions in
the social process is to study the beliefs and social processes
from the vantage point of genuine knowledge. Consider the
belief, Joravsky suggests, that was mandatory in Soviet Russia
during the thirties: that land belongs to the people and there-
fore collective farmers hold their land rent free. This
presents a specific verifiable statement as a logical
consequence of a vague but stirring principle. But the
historian of Soviet ideology in his effort to discern the social
functions of various types of thought should begin his
analysis with the observation that rent has existed in the
Soviet Union, whether or not Soviet leaders have been aware of
it. Similarly we can add that the student of Berber political
ideology should begin with the observation that 'baraka' is
an ideological construct of Berber political imagination.
Gellner makes roughly the same point when he suggests that
Winch's extreme form of logical charity blinds one to at least
one socially significant phenomenon viz the social role of
absurdity.

Winch however does have something to say on this point,
in criticising Weber's account of sociological understanding.
As Winch interprets it this consists on the one hand of
'interpretive understanding' of the meaning of a piece of
behaviour which is basically a psychological technique, a
case of imaginatively putting oneself in the other fellow's
position, and on the other hand providing a casual
explanation of what brought the behaviour about. Casual
explanation for Weber involves formulating statistical laws
based on observing what happens, thus enabling the observer
to predict what the agent will do on a future occasion. Now
Winch disagrees with the latter part of this when he suggests
'understanding' a piece of behaviour or utterances is quite
different from formulating statistical laws about the likely
occurrence of those same words in the future. "A man who
understands Chinese is not a man who has a firm grasp of the
statistical probabilities for the occurrence of the various
words in the Chinese language (Winch:1958:15). Understanding
rather consists in "grasping the 'point' or 'meaning' of what
is being done or said." (ibid:115).

But although Winch gives no further examples of what
he means here I think one can fairly easily provide one. To
understand why a Nuer holds his fighting spear in his right
hand is not to be able to predict that on certain occasions
in the future he will hold it in his right hand, but is rather,
as Evans-Pritchard does in his chapter on spear symbolism,
to spell out the symbolic significance of the right hand for
the Nuer, how it stands for masculinity, virtue, the
patriline and so on. And as Winch rightly suggests, the notion
of meaning here should be carefully distinguished from that

of function (although of course this does nothing to refute Gellner's or Joravsky's point).

My fourth objection can now be put in this way: Winch's rather amorphous notion of a form of life provides no means of deciding what is relevant to understanding a belief system. Does understanding a belief system consist only in elucidating what the informants normally say a set of beliefs mean? I can illustrate very simply what I mean with the following example: In Twins,Birds and Vegetables (Firth:1966) Firth found sufficient evidence in extraneous, unverbalised bits of Nuer behaviour, both in and outside Evans-Pritchard's particular volume, to cast considerable doubt on what Evans-Pritchard and Levi-Strauss interpreted the twins = birds formula to mean. So, how, even in a minimal sense, are we to construe what the equation signifies <u>for the Nuer</u>? It is worth adding here that <u>Nuer Religion</u> is the one work of Evans-Pritchard's that Winch recommends for accurately applying a Winchian methodology. My point here is that there is in fact no such methodology in Winch.

My fifth objection concerns a second kind of issue that can only be raised by assuming non-context-dependent criteria of rationality, i.e., why certain beliefs continue to be believed or cease to be held. For it is only by means of the application of rational standards of truth or validity that the mechanisms and secondary elaborations that protect inconsistent or unverified beliefs against predictive failure and falsification can be identified; this would apply both to the working of Azande magic and, according to Kuhn, the practice of 'normal science'.

This point relates generally to the question of social change. It seems that if, as Winch argues, that truth and validity as applied to belief systems is entirely internal to them why do people abandon religion or magical beliefs or scientific paradigms in the face of intolerable anomalies which as Lukes points out clearly cannot be internal to the paradigms. This applies not only to the rejection of a set of beliefs by rational criticism but where, as Durkheim observes, conflicts arise not between a society's notion of the ideal and the rationally discernable real but between two different (possibly equally irrational) ideals – such as when a cargo cult replaces the missionary's Victorian Christianity. Winch either seems to be offering a view of society as a perfectly integrated system in the old extreme functionalist sense or else must be regarded as having nothing to say on this at all.

(The next point I take straight from Lukes' <u>The Social Determination of Truth.</u>)

Only by assuming the existence of non-context-dependent criteria of rationality can one raise questions about the discrepancy between, say, the conscious model of a tribe's marriage system and its actual structure. The issue here is not just one of the differences between an unverbalised and a verbalised structure (e.g. the Iatmul work with several principles for determining the preferred spouse, although as Francis Korn has suggested not all of these will be given equal verbal emphasis) but where the stated rules conflict with actual practice. I take an example from Lukes. Marx's description of the 18th century ideas of society as being composed of abstracted and isolated 'natural' individuals as 'insipid illusions' presupposed the verifiability of the further claim that it is in the 18th century, the very period in which the view of the isolated individual became prevalent, that the interrelations of society have historically reached their highest state of development.

My seventh objection concerns the 'reason' versus 'cause' controversy which is clearly central to Winch's thesis. My only point here is that this seems to be a rather sterile explanatory opposition at least in the way Winch puts it.

Levi-Strauss's structural analysis of totenism or say Needham's analysis of left-hand/right-hand symbolism demonstrate clearly a method of conceptualising social relations by using natural concepts possessing the requisite logical powers in terms of opposition and assimilation. This is done by showing how some part of nature is used as a model for certain social relations and groupings. The model is not a purely abstract one but a concrete one which is employed both as a logical matrix and as concrete analogy.

Now Bell, (Bell:1967) who has made the same point, rightly suggests something is gained in understanding by the revelation of the structural analogies in symbolic systems. Yet such understanding is not assimilated either to casual explanation or explanation in terms of reasons. Rather it is based on structural and hence formal analogies between empirically discernable realities and a system of concepts employed to communicate about some of these realities. It is this notion of structural analogy that needs to be introduced into Winch's discussions of sociological explanation. For example diachronic change at the level of demography, such as that involved in Riviere's discussion of the uneven distribution and rate of acceptance of different types of instruments for hunting among some South American Indians can be understood in terms of the preservation of formal relationships in a conceptual system although they now become relations between different contents. But the structural analysis of diachronic change hardly seems to fit with sociological understanding as Winch represents it, for Winch's philosophical argument based on what constitutes meaningful action operates at a level far higher than that of the sociologist. The sort of explanation which Winch expresses as the central core of sociological explanation misses the point of structural explanation and also, incidentally, seems to commit him to a radical conservatism, in sociological explanation as Bell rightly observes. I am now in a position to answer the second of two questions I raised earlier,viz, what are the appropriate criteria to apply to a given class of beliefs within a society. For any or all of a class of beliefs there are already 1) context-dependent criteria of rationality which specify for example which beliefs may acceptably go together; 2) there are also contextually provided criteria of truth - it is these which make 'twins are birds' true for the Nuer; 3) there are obviously contextually provided criteria of meaning. These last two points seem to me to sum up all that Winch is really at in his 1964 article.

It is one thing to say (and this is something with which I wouldn't argue) that in order to discover what for example the physicist means by 'neutrine' and 'mass' in the assertion 'neutrines lack mass' we have to see how these notions operate within the language of physics, which includes observing the physicists criteria for identifying and re-identifying abstract entities such as neutrines and the conditions under which he applies or does not apply the term 'mass'. But it is another thing to suppose that it follows from this that there is no way of evaluating the truth of claims that occur within such a system or evaluating the truth of the theory itself. In fact the history of science shows there are a fairly clear set of criteria for evaluating rival theories and hence the truth of claims which arise within a theory. There are such considerations as the elegance of a theory, its simplicity, predictive success and ontological economy. Certainly the notion of 'truth' here is not a

simple matter of correspondence to an empirically dis-
coverable fact; but we do have good a priori and practical
reasons for preferring a germ theory of disease to witchcraft
explanations. And this holds even if all truth is, as Winch
suggests, ultimately theory-dependent. 5) There are also
contextually-provided criteria which specify the best way to
arrive at and hold beliefs. 6) In general there are context-
ually provided criteria which specify what counts as a good
reason for holding a belief.[4]

     Sometimes context-independent criteria of ration-
ality will not take the analysis of religious beliefs very
far in the form of relations between beliefs that are to be
explicated in terms of "provides a reason for" as Fuller for
example shows. But this does not as Winch seems to imagine
mean they are dispensible. Both would seem to be necessary
for the understanding of a belief system, the explanation of
why they are held, how they operate and what their social
consequences are.

<div align="right">Ross Bowden.</div>

## Notes.

1. I am borrowing substantially from Stephen Lukes' summaries
  of some of these positions that occur in On The Social
  Determination of Truth.

2. I am following fairly closely Lukes' statement of this in
  Some Problems about Rationality, p. 259.

3. In following Lukes' statement here I don't want to give
  the impression that I agree with everything in his two
  articles. In On the Social Determination of Truth, there
  seem to be eight separate arguments, or more accurately
  four arguments and four crucial "sorts of questions" that
  can only be raised for the sociology of belief if the four
  arguments are valid. Only one of these arguments (the
  two parts of which I reproduce here as my first two
  objections) seems to be valid and the possibility of
  raising only these (although I only mention two) of the
  crucial questions seems to follow given the validity of
  Lukes' central argument.

4. Lukes summarises these points in Some Problems about
  Rationality, p. 263.

## Bibliography.

Durkheim, E. & Mauss,M. Primitive Classification, Cohen & West,
                                             1969
Firth,R. Twins, Birds, and Vegetables. JRAI, 1966.

Gellner,E. 'Concepts and Society' in Emmet & MacIntyre (eds).
     1970, Social Theory and Philosophical Analysis,1970.

Hollis, M. The Limits of Irrationality. British Journal of
     Sociology, 1967.

Kuhn, T.S. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.Chicago,1964.

Levy-Bruhl,L. La Mentalité Primitive. Alcan, Paris, 1922.

Lukes, S. Some Problems about Rationality. European Journal of
     Sociology, 1967.
       On the Social Determination of Truth.(unpublished)