

SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE: WINCH, MARXISM, AND *VERSTEHEN* REVISITED

The appeal to *verstehen* is gaining a renewed currency in discussions of the foundations of the social sciences. This is not only true where one would expect it, that is, among ethnomethodologists and the Continental Tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology (Gadamer and Ricoeur), but it is also beginning to have its day in more analytic circles. Such tough-minded and rigorous theorists as Anthony Giddens and Hilary Putnam have both recently stressed the importance of such an appeal.¹

Such an appeal is not now defended as an alternative source of evidence for sociological hypotheses. However much it may help us in coming to form or interpret hypotheses, it does not provide the materials for testing hypotheses. There we require empirical evidence.² (Indeed the very phrase 'empirical evidence' is probably pleonastic.) Rather the appeal to *verstehen* is an appeal to what must be presupposed to have an understanding of human interaction. Many have come to believe that *verstehen* is essential for gaining an understanding of the institutions of society, of how we relate and of how we can come to understand people in a culture very different from our own. In fine, a reflexive understanding of the way *verstehen* works is necessary for an understanding of how we make sense and indeed sometimes fail to make sense together.

Such talk nonetheless requires considerable elucidation and demythologization or at least a clear statement. Yet, on such crucial theoretical issues, the ethnomethodologists are elusive and, while the vast tomes of the hermeneutical phenomenologists contain much that is interesting and worthy of close study, there is not in the work of these Continental theorists any great penchant for exact statement. I believe that in trying to come to grips with what is fundamentally important about the appeal of *verstehen*, we should at first, at least,

¹Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (London: Hutchinson & Company, Ltd., 1977), pp. 165-78. See as well, his *New Rules of Sociological Method* (London: Hutchinson & Company, Ltd., 1976). Putnam's treatment of *verstehen* is in his *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 67-68, 73-75.

²Ernest Nagel, "On the Method of *Verstehen* as the Sole Method of Philosophy," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 50 (1953).

turn to some work of a generally Wittgensteinian inspiration. There, in the work of Charles Taylor and most extensively in the work of Peter Winch, we have the most forceful statements of such an approach.³ In the last decade, Winch has been much discussed. Some of this discussion has been perceptive, but all too frequently he has just been rather patronizingly misunderstood and dismissed as a Wittgensteinian obscurantist.

Because of the importance of the appeal to *verstehen* and because of the perceptiveness and clarity with which he in effect elucidates the role of such a conception and makes plain its centrality, I want to return here to the work of Peter Winch. I shall attempt to state, clearly and sympathetically, a very central point of his that seems to me unassailable and then (a) to defend it from some understandable misunderstandings and (b) to try to show its force. In the course of doing this, I shall attempt to show that such a Wittgensteinian approach functions, not as a rival to, but as a complement of, a Marxian analysis of the foundations of social science. Their claims and interests are, of course, very different, but their claims do not cut against each other but importantly reinforce each other in such a way that they can quite naturally be combined into a more adequate picture of the nature of sociological knowledge and the rationale of the social sciences. That, at least, shall be the burden of my argument.

Winch, I should remark as a final preliminary, does not utilize the term '*verstehen*' or any English equivalents, but the concept, as we shall see, is central to his account, with its stress on the primacy of the participant's unreflective understanding for any subsequent more reflective and theoretically developed and systematized understanding of society. I shall proceed by first setting Winch's distinctive utilization of the concept of *verstehen* in the overall context of his theory, starting from his placement of tradition and rules and his distinctive utilization of a context dependent conception of rationality and an Wittgensteinian conception of forms of life.

³Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (September, 1971) and his "Neutrality in Political Science," *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, third series, edited by Peter Laslett and W. G. Runciman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967). See also, my "Social Science and American Foreign Policy," *Philosophy, Morality and International Affairs*, edited by Virginia Held, et. al. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1958) and Peter Winch, *Ethics and Action*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1972).

II

Peter Winch has well stressed that a "human society cannot be adequately described without use being made of the notion of a developing tradition."⁴ An indispensable object of social studies is behavior which is either directly or indirectly rule-governed, involving the witting or unwitting utilization of norms. This sets it apart from the object of study of the natural scientists. To understand society, it is necessary to know how various elements in our social life evolve, get ramified, and develop. We cannot, as Lucien Goldmann also stresses, gain an understanding of society without developing a historical consciousness.

Understanding a tradition involves the notion of rule-following and rule-following involves the conception of doing something correctly or incorrectly, getting something right or getting something wrong. For rule-following to be possible, a certain way of responding must be appropriate to the situation and a certain way of responding inappropriate. Norms, conceptions of rationality and reasonability, are built in to our very conception of action, for actions, unlike mere movements, are directly or indirectly rule-governed. They have a rationale—though sometimes only a crazy rationale—and they cannot be understood without understanding the distinctive norms of rationality, which are integral elements of human actions such that without them, they would not be actions. The "conception of human society in general cannot be grasped except in terms of the concept of rule-following" and that, in turn, requires an understanding of what, in various domains, constitutes a rational response or a reasonable way of doing things. So both rule-following and rationality are central elements in the study of society.⁵

Winch agrees with Michael Oakeshott in (a) rejecting a rationalistic conception of rationality "according to which standards of reasonable behaviour exist absolutely and are brought in, as it were, from outside to regulate our conduct" and (b) in stressing, and re-

⁴Peter Winch, "Social Science," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VII (March, 1956), p. 33. This is a succinct, clearly-argued preliminary to his *The Idea of a Social Science*. Winch's central ideas are forcefully articulated in this early article. In his "Language, Belief and Relativism," *Contemporary British Philosophy*, fourth series, edited by H. D. Lewis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976), Winch defends himself against the charge that his account has paradoxical and unacceptable relativistic implications.

⁵Peter Winch, "Social Science," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VII (March, 1956), p. 25.

garding as essential to elucidate, “the connection between the idea of reasonable conduct and the modes of social life.”⁶ Rationality, in short, is put on the agenda of social theory. There is no explaining or understanding actions or social intuitions without an appeal to it. Consider Lina Wertmuller’s film, *Swept Away*. We see Gennarino, a proletarian and an Italian Communist, marooned on an island with Raffaella, a wealthy and indeed, bitchy, spoiled bourgeoisie. Stripped of the trappings of civilization and culture, their class conflict becomes open and intense. Gennarino resorts to a raw machismo where he expresses his masculinity by beating and humiliating a woman, and Raffaella is quickly transformed into a subservient female who loves being domineered and finds, for the first time in her life, full sexual pleasure under such conditions. How we regard and explain such behavior is not independent of our conceptions of what human nature and human rationality are like. Some might take this behavior to be showing what human masculinity and human femininity really are like, i.e., that women are passive and deep down wish to be dominated and that men are domineering—apes at heart needing very deeply to control and subdue females. I think, on the contrary, that such behavior shows very little about ‘raw human nature’—once the restraints of civilization are taken away—but shows both Gennarino and Raffaella unconsciously role-playing, even on their island, and uttering the platitudes and acting out the fantasies of people from very distinct classes in a distinctive, late capitalist society. I am not trying to defend my reading here—much more background would be needed for that—but I simply wish to illustrate how an understanding and explaining of a stretch of human behavior will and indeed must be affected by the conceptions of rationality of the social theorist explaining or interpreting the behavior. There is no neutral ground on which the theorist can stand without his needing to make judgments about the rationality or irrationality of the behavior he studies.

Suppose I am asked to explain what Zande witchcraft practices or Jewish dietary practices really are all about or really signify. My explanation of them, indeed my understanding of them, will unavoidably and necessarily be deeply affected by what I myself consider to be rational or irrational behavior and beliefs. If I think the beliefs in question are irrational, it is appropriate for me to look for a causal explanation of what brings them about and to try to uncover

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

the psychological needs they satisfy. If, however, I believe they are rational, I will try to account for them quite differently. I will then try to show the evidence for the beliefs and the reasoning that went into them and the rationale of the action. I will not typically be interested in the causal conditions that brought about the belief or led to the action. What type of explanation or interpretation is appropriate for human action or for the way certain institutions or practices work depends on our assessments of their rationality. A Marxist sociologist or Freudian will give a rather different account of the life and times of Luther and Zwingli than will an orthodox Christian sociologist.

While stressing the necessity of utilizing conceptions of rationality in social description, interpretation, and explanation, Winch also stresses, following Oakeshott, the contextual, form-of-life-dependent nature of the canons of rationality. What they are, Winch contends, is not independent of certain determinate domains of discourse or modes of social life: religion, morality, law, natural science, Azande magical conceptions, and the like. We do not have a system of norms of rationality which exists independently of these modes of social life as norms whose criteria can be specified without reference to a given domain of discourse or which can be used to assess these different domains such that we could sensibly claim that law or science or even religion is irrational.

Oakeshott, Winch argues, in rightly rejecting rationalistic conceptions of rationality, too readily construes rational conduct merely as habitual conduct and "misconceives and underestimates the importance of *rule-following*, in human affairs."⁷ A person's behavior may be rule-governed without his being aware of it or even without his or anyone else on occasion being able to formulate the rules or rule to be followed. There is a very considerable number of activities which "are based very largely on the unreflective acquisition of skills in practice" but which nonetheless can be and should be described as rule-following and which presuppose distinctive conceptions of rationality. They are not like conditioned reflexes; they are not like 'blind habits'; they are actions which have a *rationale* and the agents doing them characteristically understand the *point* of their acting in this way rather than in some other way.

Human actions are a principal constituent of social activity and social activity is activity such that the concepts used to describe such activity must be possessed by those engaged in these activities. *In that*

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 22.

way, they cannot do them without knowing what they are doing. To say that someone is engaging in the activity in question is to say of him that he is in possession of such concepts. As you cannot play bridge without being able to use words such as 'revoke' and 'trump' or their non-English equivalents, so "you cannot pay bills without understanding the use of arithmetical symbols . . ." ⁸ Social understanding involves a participant's understanding of norms of behavior and institutional practices which are prior to and independent of the social scientist's distinctive rules and practices.

Winch rejects a certain very common view of rationality and the social scientist's conception of his relation to his subject matter well exemplified in the work of Vilfredo Pareto. In effect, skipping over the vital distinction between that which is nonlogical and that which is illogical, Pareto distinguishes between *logical conduct*, which on his account defines rational behavior, and *nonlogical conduct*, "comprising all behaviour which in one way or another does not measure up to the specifications of logical conduct." Logical conduct "is conduct directed towards the achievement of a definite purpose, and making use of means the efficacy of which has been established by 'logico-experimental reasoning' (i.e., roughly, the methods of natural science) . . ." ⁹ For Pareto to be rational is to engage in logical conduct and to eschew nonlogical conduct. This is what Habermas and Goldmann would characterize as a plain and unadorned form of scientism. While Winch does not talk in that manner, he would surely agree. The criteria of natural scientific thinking, as Winch puts it, is treated by Pareto "as if they were something absolute and in a completely special position vis-à-vis the concepts used in other forms of social activity."¹⁰ But concepts such as those utilized in ordinary social interaction and in artistic, moral, political, and religious contexts, do not fit into the pattern of 'logico-experimental reasoning' and they cannot be made to so fit without an emasculating sea-change. Yet they are none the worse for that. Rather, these concepts, as well as the scientific concepts themselves, can only be understood in terms of the distinctive activities in the context in which they are applied; and these activities in turn "can only be understood in terms of concepts appropriate to them."¹¹ Moreover, given this scientific

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

account of Pareto's, too much behavior, and too heterogeneous a collection of activities, is counted as *nonlogical* and thus as irrational. Dropping the application of such scientific and specialized norms of rationality, such conduct could more appropriately be understood in terms of the diverse rationale of those activities and their related concepts. In general—though not, of course, in some particular circumstances—the employment of these norms seems straightforwardly appropriate in their distinctive contexts. The burden of proof is on someone with a position like Pareto's to establish that there must be something subjective and ideological about them.

A related central conception of Pareto's similarly distorts our understanding of social reality and the human sciences. Pareto attaches great importance to a distinction he draws between *residues* and *derivations*. *Residues* are certain constant or nearly constant elements in human societies which are, according to Pareto, explanatorily central. *Derivations*, by contrast, are not so constant and do not cut across diverse places and times. According to Pareto, they, like ideologies, are a kind of pseudotheoretical window dressing for the genuine reality involved, namely the residue. Derivations purport to explain why certain things were done or are being done. But in reality they are pseudoexplanations, making quite groundless rationalizations of the activity in question, so as to provide it with a rationale—a rationale which is in reality a rationalization for a pointless activity which is not performed for any reason at all but which in reality results from (is caused by) certain fundamental human sentiments. What the social scientist should do is to ignore the derivations, expressive of nonlogical conduct, for they are functioning as ideological rationalizations from the subjective standpoint of the agents who are involved in the social activity in question. What, according to Pareto, the social scientist should do to attain a genuinely scientific understanding of the social behavior he is studying is to uncover the *residues*. With such an 'uncovering' he will have come to have an understanding of the real nature and causes of the behavior he is studying.

Against the above conceptions, Winch in effect argues that such conceptions utilize a *scientistic* model of rationality and reality, taking as real only what can be characterized in natural science terms and as rational only what can be understood in accordance with Pareto's conception of *logical conduct*. But this is an arbitrary and stultifying representation of reality, for it takes concepts at home in one kind of context and used for definite but limited purposes in those contexts

(namely, those purposes which give point to activities such as physics, chemistry, biology, and the like), and insists on using them in contexts in which they are not at home and in which they have no application. Moreover, with Pareto's use—albeit unwittingly metaphorical—of the language of mechanics in describing social events, one sees, as Winch puts it, “a hankering after a purely physical description of social actions.”¹² But that is an impossibility, for human actions are not merely bodily movements—though they are that as well—but are movements done deliberately and with at least some sort of rationale and done against a background of norms in accordance with which they can be done rightly or wrongly, correctly or incorrectly. Compare, on the one hand, slipping on a banana peel or breathing with, on the other, skating or doing one's sums. The latter pair, as different as they are, are rule-governed in the way the former are not and there is a correct way of doing them. Human action and the concept of societal behavior “cannot be grasped except in terms of the concept of rule-following and rule-governed behaviour . . . ”¹³

If there is to be any social science at all, which actually gives us an understanding of social life, we must come to understand that, in the various domains of discourse and in the various things that humans do, there are distinctive forms of activity or forms of life, and it is in accordance with those forms, and with an understanding of their rationale (point), that human actions are understood and a society is understood. It is those forms of activity which are the underlying structural determinates of what it is reasonable, rational, or even intelligible to do. Without a participant's grasp or a participant-like grasp of how they work, there is no understanding of social life. (It is here, without using the traditional vocabulary, where the concept of *verstehen* is employed by Peter Winch.) And there are no form-of-life-independent canons of rationality in accordance with which we can assess these forms of life. Belief in such context-independent canons of rationality is a myth. It is not such general canons of rationality which determine which forms of life or what form of activity is rational or irrational, but it is the forms of life and the diverse forms of activity themselves which determine what is rational or irrational. There is no set of abstract general principles of rationality which will give us an Archimedian point in accordance

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 25.

with which we can access the various practices and forms of life of the human animal.¹⁴

III

Winch's conception of social science appears at least to conflict sharply with a Marxian conception of what social science should be. This will come clearly to the fore if we examine G. A. Cohen's important essay "Karl Marx and the Withering Away of Social Science."¹⁵ Marx, in speaking of the political economists and social observers of his day, remarks that they stay too close to the surface appearance of things and do not probe beyond appearances to the real forces that move society. The participant's knowledge that Winch stresses as essential for an understanding of society would surely appear at least to be of this nature. Winch seems at least to have forgotten Marx's dictum that "if there were no difference between essence and appearance, there would be no need for science."¹⁶

There are philosophers influenced by Winch who would respond, "Indeed in the social studies there is no need for 'a science' and indeed—certain parts of economics apart—no possibility of a science that goes beyond careful participant's observation or participant-like observation, description, and interpretation." However, Winch does not claim that himself. Moreover, given that we do not take this road and given that we do maintain this appearance/reality distinction, do we not have to go significantly beyond anything simply embedded in our participant's knowledge of society to do social science? (In this very question danger lurks for has it been established yet that there is some nonideological way of drawing this very distinction? It is very difficult here to distinguish just where, if at all, an ideological claim is

¹⁴Steven Lukes and Martin Hollis have argued powerfully against Winch and for such abstract principles in their articles in Bryon R. Wilson, editor, *Rationality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970). I have responded by arguing, essentially in defense of Winch, that even though there are certain abstract principles of rationality, they are not sufficiently determinate to provide us with an Archimedean point to make such assessments of forms of life or social practices. See my "Rationality and Relativism," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 4 (December, 1974), my "Rationality and Universality," *The Monist*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July, 1975) and my "The Embeddedness of Conceptual Relativism," *Dialogos*, Vol. XI, No. 29-30 (November, 1977).

¹⁵G. A. Cohen, "Karl Marx and the Withering Away of Social Science," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1 (Winter, 1972), pp. 182-203.

¹⁶Quoted by G. A. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

being made.)

Marx, as Cohen remarks, conceived his *Capital* "as an attempt to lay bare the reality underlying and controlling the appearance of capitalist relations of production."¹⁷ His theories, as he was well aware, are abstruse, going well beyond a participant's knowledge. But this is unavoidably so for science, for, as Marx remarks, "science would be superfluous if the manifest form and the essence of things directly coincided."¹⁸ Science, from the vantage point of everyday experience, is invariably paradoxical; but it is this everyday experience which catches only the delusive appearance of things.

Here we have something which manifestly and directly conflicts with the beliefs of Winch and other Wittgensteinian-oriented social theorists. Marx argues, we must not stick with the ordinary concepts of price and profit, perfectly familiar to every businessman, if our aim is to achieve an understanding of the nature of capitalism.

To understand what Marx is driving at, consider the following analogy. The sun seems to be moving across the sky but, since Galileo, science teaches us that experience here is mistaken: it is a mere appearance which science corrects. The same thing is true of air. We experience it as elemental while science reveals it being composed of distinct substances. Can similar things be said about society and human actions? Consider Marx's very central claim that only the expenditure of labor can create economic value in proportion to the amount of labor expended. From this claim, two counterintuitive, contracommonsensical implications follow which would not be held by the plain man in the society in which the economic concepts being talked about are extant. The propositions in question are (a) the workers fail to receive the whole value of what they produce and thus are not paid for all the labor they have performed, (b) profit flows from capital investment only if it is investment in labor power. These claims are counterintuitive. They are not beliefs any reasonable man would hold who only had a participant's grasp of the concepts involved. Unless there is some patent fraud or breakdown, is a worker not paid for every unit of time he contracts for and completes? How can it be that he is not paid for all his labor? That runs against what we can plainly observe, namely that he contracts to work so-and-so many hours at such-and-such a wage and that he in fact works so-and-so many hours at such-and-such a wage and that he indeed

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

receives that wage. But the theory of surplus value shows, if correct, that our common sense grasp of social reality here is mistaken. The reality the theory enables us to see is that the worker is only being compensated for part of his time; the unremunerated part is appropriated as profit. We must not, in doing science, save appearances here; it appears to be the case that the worker is rewarded for all his labor, the profit accruing to the capitalist appears to have a source other than in the worker's labor. The participant's way of viewing things, utilizing the notion of *verstehen*, makes this appear to be plainly and obviously the case. It is Marx's contention that operating from a commonsensical, but very ideological point of view, profit will appear to flow from the capitalist's thrift and cleverness in reinvesting his money or in the power of the machines he owns. The person caught up in the ideologies supporting bourgeois social relations will not draw the critical and crucial distinction, between *profit-creation* and *profit-allocation*.¹⁹ The profit which is *created* depends altogether on the amount of capital invested in labor-power. The amount of profit that is returned to or comes back to an enterprise in a competitive economy is directly proportional to the *total* capital—investment in labor power, raw materials, machines, modernization, and the like—which is laid out for production. Labor-intensive industries have the highest rate of profit-creation, but a more equalizing flow of profit-appropriation goes out into the other industries. The capitalist is interested most directly in profit-allocation—on the volume of his return—so he will ignore or treat as inessential these facts about profit-creation. The appearances will answer to his interests and he will not plunge below the surface and come to understand how profit is created.

Pulling together this discussion, Cohen remarks:

The notion that the worker's labor is fully rewarded or that every unit of capital invested by his employer participates in the creation of profit—these are not a result of misperceiving the shape of capitalist arrangements. They record surface features of capitalist society. But anyone who thinks the fundamental lineaments of that society are present on its surface and open to observation fails to apprehend its nature.²⁰

However, Marx's distance from Winch and Wittgenstein may not be so great as it would at first appear. But, to bring out more fully what is involved in their very different stresses, we should first bring out other ways in which their picture of what social science should be

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 184.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 185.

up to is very different indeed. Marx argues that there is a genuine distinction to be drawn between appearance and reality “when and only when the explanation of a state of affairs renders unacceptable the description that it is natural to give of it if one lacks the explanation.”²¹ Certain social theorists, who are also reformers or revolutionaries, have longed for and indeed sometimes thought to characterize and even establish “a social order which eliminates the gulf between essence and appearance in which things are as they appear to be.”²² It is hoped, and often expected, by some of these theorist-activists, that socialism, eventually establishing a classless society, will satisfy that desire. But the ideology, deeply embedded in the participant’s view of things, obscures and mystifies our understanding of social reality, for, if we were correctly to understand what was happening to us, this would, in class-divided societies, have a destabilizing effect. If, to take an example, workers in capitalist societies were to come to learn that they were not paid for all their labor—that they were being exploited—and that there was nothing in their circumstances which necessitated that this should continue to be so, they would begin the move toward social revolution. If they were, that is, apprised of a correct social theory, they would become social revolutionaries.²³ The mirage generated by the wage form is a key element in capitalist ideology and an element that would—so it might be claimed—enter into the description of social reality of a Wittgensteinian social theorist such as Winch. So utilizing *verstehen* with an appeal to the centrality of a participant’s understanding can lead to a confusion of an ideological picture of social reality with a scientific picture of that reality.

Given Marx’s conception that science is only necessary when there is a gulf between appearance and reality—when things appear as they appear because reality is being misunderstood—and that they would not appear as they do if reality were in fact different than it is, we should readily come to recognize, as a corollary to that, that “science may study a social formation only if it is held together by mechanisms that disguise its basic anatomy.”²⁴ Social science will have no role to play where the true content of social interaction and the correct nature of social conditions and social relations are not hid-

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

den. If the rationale and import of economic activity becomes publicly manifest to the vast majority of human beings, there is no longer the need—given the above assumptions—for a science of economics.²⁵ Where this is generally true of all social relations, social science becomes superfluous. Yet in all societies, there plainly seems to be a need for some further explanation and interpretation of social phenomena.²⁶ Even after the achievement of a unity of theory and practice in a rational world, there is, *contra* Marx, Cohen argues, still a need for a further understanding of society.²⁷ Marx wanted what might aptly be called, a *subversive* social science capable of revealing to us our major illusions about our condition. It would in addition be a tool in the overcoming of illusion, though he realized revolutionary activity was required as well. For while social science can have an emancipatory thrust, it is the activity of the working class and not social science which will liberate us. However Marx, Cohen argues, was mistaken in thinking that all scientific activity reveals a gulf between appearance and reality. Sometimes science “expands pre-scientific information without prejudicing it, and sometimes confirms it without expanding it. The claim that the work of socialist economics does not embarrass pre-theoretical belief simply does not entail that it is not science.”²⁸ Science can teach us that water consists of two highly inflammable gases, but this does not subvert or cause us to reverse our belief that we can put out fires with water. There is no gulf here between appearance and reality. There are similar pretheoretical beliefs of a social sort such as the belief that Blacks in South Africa are paid less than Whites for the same work and the belief that most factory workers are paid by the hour. These beliefs are quite compatible with the highly ramified theoretical claim that labor power alone creates profit. What should be said is that while scientific explanation always uncovers a reality unrepresented in appearance, it only sometimes discredits appearances. When it does discredit appearances it is subversive, when it does not, it is neutral. In social science, as elsewhere, we can have both neutral and subversive science. Central social processes require theoretical explanation. That very attempt will very often lead to a subversive science, but it sometimes will lead to neutral science.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-96.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

IV

Cohen's reading and slight revision of Marx seems to me to be persuasive. Our participant's knowledge is often not sufficient to give us a correct understanding of what is going on in our society and to stick with our ordinary understanding of things does often lead us into ideological mystification. We do not need to be committed to a Pareto-like conception of residues to recognize that both he and Marx had insight into the way our ordinary understanding of social processes is subject to ideological distortion. However, an acceptance of this seems to me perfectly compatible with what I take to be Winch's more basic, because more logically primitive, conception of what understanding society comes to. Winch, as we have seen, stresses that a participant's understanding or a participant-like understanding of the society in which he lives or the society he studies underlies all other understanding of that society and (*pace* Pareto) cannot be bypassed or dispensed with. But Winch also stresses that with it as 'a ground floor' the more technical and specialized understanding of the various social sciences can be in place and indeed, for certain purposes, quite essential.²⁹

Implicitly probing the 'ground floor' metaphor, can it ever replace a participant's understanding? The correct answer, it seems to me, and the answer I believe that Winch would give, is that sometimes for some specific claims it should be replaced and indeed often is replaced, but that massively there can be no complete rejection or bypassing of such a participant's understanding and a turning to categories and conceptions which do not presuppose them so that we could start *de novo* without such a participant's understanding. We repair the leaky ship while afloat, sometimes utilizing quite drastic methods. But this analogy breaks down in one crucial respect. There is, in understanding society, nothing comparable to abandoning ship such that we could just abandon our participant's understanding—*verstehen*—altogether and come to understand what is going on without reference to it. In catching ideological distortions and mystifications—in recognizing appearances as mere appearances—we need to rely not only on our theoretical conceptions but also on a massive background of quite ordinary understanding without reference to which our iconoclastic interpretations, further-

²⁹Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, pp. 89-90. This passage is almost always overlooked in commentaries on Winch.

ing a subversive scientific understanding, could not even be intelligibly formulated let alone be understood and confirmed or disconfirmed.

To show the force of the above claims and arguments, we very much need to work with an example. There is a convenient one in Cohen's own text which will illustrate my point and is important in its own right. Cohen explicates Marx's argument that under feudalism, one has a *Gesellschaft* masquerading as a *Gemeinschaft*. (A *Gesellschaft* is a type of social relation in which relations between people are that of impersonal and contractual associations grounded on mutual benefit [utility]. A *Gemeinschaft* is a type of social relationship between people which is that of a *community* in which, on analogy with kinship, the relations flow from personal status and involve nonutilitarian social bonds.)

Capitalist societies are plainly *Gesellschaft*-type societies. In capitalist relations, a man is a means to another man; people, in such impersonal associations, contract to make use of one another, as when we hire a cab, a lawyer, or a guide. In such a society, human relations are, broadly speaking, utilitarian relations. Feudal society, by contrast, was thought by its participants, and many others as well, to be a quite different type society. It was thought to be a genuine *Gemeinschaft* in which social relations were relationships of personal status. This Marx takes to be appearance, surface phenomena only; yet this ideology of *Gemeinschaft* in feudalism was a saving lie essential for the maintenance of that sort of social order. It is indeed true that the bond between lord and serf does not come from a freely-entered contract. It is conceived as a set of personal relations. The lord provides protection for his manorial dependents; he is, where it is necessary, committed to fight for them. Centrally his role is to protect them. In turn, the serf in filial homage labors for his lord. He sees it as his filial duty to provide for the household of his paternal protector. There is, according to the ideology, a mutual concern for the welfare of each other. There is not a purely disinterested concern *just* to gain protection or *just* to gain provision; there is instead the quasi-paternal, quasifamilial relation of fatherly protector and filial dependent. (Note the language of Russian novels of the nineteenth century where the last remnants of serfdom remained.) Men are not, according to the ideology of *Gemeinschaft*, merely the means to each others ends but are bound by noneconomic ties of loyalty and tradition in which the position of everyone, great and small, is respected by his fellows.

Marx argues that this *Gemeinschaft* is a sham. And here, as

much as in a capitalist society, one in reality has a *Gesellschaft* rooted in economic need. Both feudalism and capitalism were in reality exploitative societies with a *surplus product* being extracted from the worker's labor power. The community was not the intimate one portrayed in the ideology—modeling the macrocosm on the microcosm of a colleague bringing back a catch of fish to another colleague while that colleague watches after the other colleague's dog. The ideology apart, the actual relation between lord and serf was utilitarian in basis, however much the parties to it might have been unaware of that fact. Given the state of the productive forces and the technology of the Middle Ages, the manorial scheme was the most efficient scheme for provisioning human beings. Serf and lord were in reality tied together by economic necessity. This, not tradition and loyalty, provided the actual rationale for such a society; *Gemeinschaft* was the saving lie to keep them together in a plainly exploitative situation. It required the myth of quasifamilial relations.

What I want now to show is that if we reflect on the above example, it will show clearly and forcefully the correctness of the Winchian claim concerning the primacy and the indispensability of a participant's understanding of society, i.e., of *verstehen*. It will help us see how such an understanding is presupposed by any scientific or for that matter any 'philosophical' understanding of society. To understand that there is sham in the above situation is to understand what it is a sham of and that requires the background of a participant's understanding of the social relations in question. But an acceptance of this thesis is perfectly compatible with also accepting the Marxian claim about the strategic importance of subversive social science. To even be able to either affirm or deny the claim that the *Gemeinschaft* of the Feudal period was a sham, we need, as I have just remarked, first to understand in a more primitive less problematic way what it was a sham of. To understand that claim about sham and about how it was a necessary ideological mystification, we must be able to understand plain statements such as the claim that in the feudal period the bond does not come from a freely-entered contract and that in turn requires an understanding of such concepts as lord, serf, and contract. To understand these is to come to have a participant's or a participant-like understanding of such concepts with their built-in conceptions of rationality and propriety. *Verstehen* is here essential. And one does not have any understanding of the concept of lord and serf at all unless one understands that they are supposed to stand, vis-à-vis, each other, in certain relations. To argue about whether the

putative *Gemeinschaft-relations* are indeed genuine or a sham, presupposes a more primitive and less tendentious, but morally and socially speaking much less interesting, understanding of concepts such as loyalty, homage, filial duty, family, protection, supply, having one's own plot, being a serf, being a lord, labor, manor, fief, and the like. We need to have an understanding of them including, of course, a knowledge of their functioning in their distinctive contexts. Our understanding here must be like the most ground floor knowledge an ethnographer seeks to gain of the tribe he studies. For an ethnographer to understand what is going on in a tribe whose mores he is studying and trying to describe in an ethnographic monograph, he needs a participant-like understanding of that society. He must come to understand the rules, implicit and explicit, operative in that society and he must grasp how they are applied and come to understand the norms of rationality operative in that society. He must come to have something approximating an insider's understanding of those forms of life. We need this kind of understanding of our own society or another to have any understanding of it at all. And all social scientists, not just anthropologists, must presuppose this kind of ordinary understanding in any of their specialists's inquiries. They need, that is, the kind of ordinary understanding—or in the case of the anthropologist something approximating that—that a representative member of the tribe would come to have in being socialized in such a tribe. The having of such an understanding is presupposed in the more sophisticated understanding of social science. It can challenge a part of it—perhaps any part of it—but it must massively presuppose it in carrying out such a challenge.

There would be no being taken in by a sham or being mystified by the ideology of *Gemeinschaft* without this comparatively non-problematic participant's understanding. Only certain things can even count as appearances such that a more adequate understanding would subvert those appearances. For the pretense that the lord stood in a paternal relation to his serfs to even succeed, certain forms of address, distinctive behavior and attitudes would have actually to obtain. Without that there could not even be the appearances.

Social science, going beyond the everyday participant's understanding, can, and in many instances should, be a subversive science directed to exposing appearances and exhibiting the conditions that require ideological entanglement in those appearances. But, for this to be possible, there must be a background of understanding of society which is quite different. We need this everyday understanding to have

any understanding at all and we will typically come to have, as well, a reasonable amount of tolerably neutral social science which explicates, interprets, and explains the pretheoretical beliefs of our everyday participant's understanding of society.³⁰ A specialized understanding of certain things in our society can replace bits of our understanding of society with a more adequate understanding. We can come, for example, to know that their lord protects them out of self-interest and not out of a quasifamilial loyalty rooted in tradition. A specialized understanding of a key element in a society can come in a way to replace or modify our everyday understanding. But for this to be possible, it must be the case that a very considerable amount of a society's self-understanding remains in place.

However, it is also important to see—and this is perhaps something that Winch and Wittgensteinians generally miss—that a crucial self-image that a society might have of itself might be mistaken. Our above example shows how this can be so. A typical medieval man with his participant's knowledge of his society would see it as a *Gemeinschaft*, as a genuine community. Seeing that society, as Marx sees it, as a sham community, undermines the key self-image of that society. It destroys its self-image of itself. But for that to be able to happen, it also must remain the case that many pretheoretical beliefs in the participant's conception of his views must remain in place. Still, we can see, with our above example, how a society's self-understanding still could be subverted, and indeed rightly subverted, breaking the chains of ideology.

V

There is a further difficulty to untangle. (Perhaps, since it is so difficult to state properly, it might be better viewed as a perplexity to dispel.) I can perhaps best begin to express what is involved by juxtaposing two quotations, one from Cohen and the other from Winch.

In attempting to give an elucidation of the unity of theory and practice, Cohen remarks:

Theory aims at the production of thoughts which accord with reality.

Practice aims at the production of realities which accord with thought.

Therefore, common to theory and practice is an aspiration to establish

³⁰I advisedly use the qualifier here, for I do not want to claim that any interesting stretches of this interpretive sociology are utterly neutral. For some of the rationale here, Charles Taylor's articles cited in footnote 3 and my own article cited there, are useful.

congruity between thought and reality.³¹

By theorizing or by action or by both, we attempt to "arrange a correspondence between thought and reality . . ." ³² Thought, in optimum conditions, can maintain a correspondence with reality.³³ Cohen treats, and seems at least to regard, these as tolerably unproblematic notions. He assumes, as something obvious, that we have some reasonable understanding of what we are talking about when we speak of correspondence here.³⁴ Feuerbach and Marx fought against the discord between thought and reality and sought to "destroy illusion and initiate a harmony between reality and thought."³⁵

It is precisely such talk of the correspondence of thought to reality that Winch finds problematic and, in a pejorative sense of the term, 'metaphysical'. This is clear enough in his remarks about the social anthropologist, Evans-Pritchard. Winch contends that Evans-Pritchard is "wrong, and crucially wrong, in attempting to characterize the scientific in terms of that which is 'in accord with objective reality.'" ³⁶ This talk, Winch argues, is intellectually mystifying metaphysical talk, for we do not have any general and extralinguistic conception of reality such that we would know what it would mean to claim, or what it would be like for it to be true or false, that scientific notions correspond to such a reality while nonscientific notions do not. Evans-Pritchard's talk of the criteria, applied in scientific experimentation as constituting a true link between our scientific conceptions and an independent reality, reflect an unexplained metaphorical use of such phrases as 'true link' and 'independent reality'. We know what it means to say that there is a true link between the mercury poisoning of the fish and the dumping of a certain substance into the river, and we know what it means to say Harry's fancies about his having cancer correspond to no genuine reality; but when we say that religious ideas or Zande conceptions of witchcraft make no true link with an independent reality while scientific ones do, it is thoroughly unclear, Winch argues, what, if anything intelligible is being maintained.

³¹G. A. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 198.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 186.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 199.

³⁶Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society," *Rationality*, edited by Bryan R. Wilson, p. 80. In this context, for such conceptions in a nutshell, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, pp. 79-81.

Winch's central reason for believing this to be so, shows itself in the following oft quoted Wittgensteinian claim—the claim I want to juxtapose to my previous extended quotation from Cohen. Winch remarks:

Reality is not what gives language sense. What is real and what is unreal shows itself in the sense that language has. Further, both the distinction between the real and the unreal and the concept of agreement with reality themselves belong to our language.³⁷

Indeed, Winch continues, we cannot conceive of a language without a conception of reality, as we can conceive of a language without a conception of wetness. But, be that as it may, we could not in fact “distinguish The real from the unreal without understanding the way the distinction operates in the language.”³⁸ Evans-Pritchard, like Pareto, and like Cohen (at least apparently), is trying to operate with a conception of reality that is independent of language. That is to say, there is with such a putative conception of reality, something against which the use of terms and indeed a whole domain of discourse or even a whole language could be appraised. But that is not possible. We can only understand the appearance/reality distinction in the context of the diverse and contrasting uses they have in particular contexts, e.g., these flowers are real and those artificial, that affection is real and that just put on. But when we say that science corresponds with reality but religion does not, we do not, Winch claims, have any even tolerably clear sense of what we are saying.

But why should such allegedly problematical talk of the correspondence of thought and reality pass so easily the critical eyes of philosophers and anthropologists if it is really so problematic? Perhaps, as philosophers often do, we are manufacturing a problem. In the contexts and ways in which Evans-Pritchard and Cohen employ such locutions, I believe we do have something which is genuinely problematic. I think it so readily passes as unproblematic because of a misleading picture which frequently dominates us when we think of such matters. In such contexts, we usually call to mind ‘“the-cat-is-on-the-mat”-if-and-only-if-the-cat-is-on-the-mat-model’; that is to say, we think we understand such talk because what comes to mind is something there before us such as what might be expressed

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82. See, as well, his response to Jarvie. Peter Winch “Comment,” *Explanation in the Behavioural Sciences*, edited by Robert Borger and Frank Cioffi (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 249-59.

by the sentence (to switch the example) 'The cup is on the desk' or 'The cup is white' when the cup is sitting on the desk there before us. And we think that by ostension — by just looking and seeing — we can see that 'cup' denotes something there before us, that 'desk' similarly denotes and that, while 'white' is something more complicated, we can, by various ostensive techniques, come to see what 'white' stands for.

Wittgenstein has brilliantly shown what is mistaken and oversimplified by even this picture. But, all the same, we feel somewhat confident in speaking of a correspondence between thought and reality here. But for the typical and interesting claims that come up in the social sciences, we seem, at least, to be quite at sea about what talk about correspondence or lack of correspondence and related notions would come to. We unreflectively employ that picture but when we reflect on it, we can see that it does not apply. We can very well come to believe, if we reflect, that we cannot make anything of the claim that there is an independent reality which gives such talk sense by showing how it corresponds to that 'independent reality'. We can, as I do, think Gellener's accusation of idealism here is just so much arm-waving and still remain thoroughly baffled by talk of correspondence here.

To see how the-cat-is-on-the-mat-model works badly in some contexts, we should return to Marx's central claim, discussed by Cohen, that only the expenditure of labor can create economic value and his corollary claims that (a) workers fail to receive the whole value of what they produce, (b) they are not paid for all the labor they perform, and (c) that profit flows from capitalist investment only if it is investment in labor-power. These claims are paradoxical and seem to be in conflict with what we observe. We see people being paid for all their labor. They freely contract to do such-and-such — usually to work so-and-so many hours at such-and-such at wage scale — and they typically get paid for that as they contracted. Sometimes there is cheating but that is not the typical situation. Yet the Marxian claim is that once the theory of surplus value is properly understood and we clearly draw the distinction between profit-allocation and profit-creation, the situation will be seen differently. Observations made while utilizing the plain participant's way of speaking and viewing the matter will be seen to be capturing appearances only.

Compare the following utterance-pairs.

- A. 'The cup is on the desk.'
'The cup is white.'

- B. 'Labor alone can create economic value.'
'Workers do not receive the whole value of what they produce.'

We know how to establish the truth or falsity of the statements in the A group, but about the B group, we are rather at sea. There is even a temptation to believe that they are somehow quasidefinitonal or alternatively, that perhaps they are value judgments, where value judgments are somehow thought to contrast with factual judgments and perhaps to be problematic. As still another alternative, if the utterance-pair in B is construed as a pair of factual judgments, they, unlike the utterances in the A pair, do not appear to be judgments we know in any straightforward way how to confirm or deny. If we accept certain theories and a certain mode of conceptualization—a certain conceptual framework—it is rather obvious how we can confirm them or deny them and why the statement that workers get paid for each hour they work would not deny them. Yet, not all economists, let alone all observers of and in our economic life, would characterize the situation as they are characterized in those propositions and in the talk which would naturally surround them. But, on these other accounts, they are not readily confirmable. We do not know what it would be like to get a pretheoretical account here so that we could describe the data in such a way that we would have a neutral specification of the data. The reason we are interested in a neutral specification of the data is that only with such a specification would it be possible to be able to make evidential appeals which could actually function in such a way in Marxian and neo-Keynesian accounts, or for that matter, in any general, theoretically ramified account. We want to be able to break out of those systems and appeal to something independent and common to all of them or at least many of them which could be of use in testing them. However, it is not at all clear that we can do that. If we adopt one vocabulary and framework, we then can easily enough confirm or deny certain statements but if we adopt another vocabulary and conceptual framework, then it becomes easy enough to confirm or deny other statements—statements which on the first framework remain strangely perplexing and not clearly confirmable. We do not have—or so it would appear—any neutral vocabulary in accordance with which we, independently of the contending theories, could confirm or deny to any reasonable degree at all the rival accounts. We do not seem to have anything like sufficient relevant theory-independent data.

Cohen, in setting out Marx's account, quite deliberately relies

“upon an unrefined distinction between observation and theory.”³⁹ He allows, for the sake of the discussion, the “concept of theory-free observation report, which moreover, counts as an observation report no matter what its context of utterance is,” to go unchallenged, while recognizing full well that it is challengeable.⁴⁰ What may very well be the case is that experience and the elements entering into a social description may always or at least almost always be shaped by a theoretical perspective.⁴¹ A Freudian will quite happily in his observation reports speak of unconscious thoughts and unconscious wishes and a Marxist will speak of principal contradictions in society or of class struggle. People with different, rather less theoretically ramified perspectives, will not couch their social descriptions and observation reports in those terms at all. They will regard such talk as theoretical talk, utilizing what seems to them to be highly complex, inadequate and ideologically suspect, theoretical constructs. Such considerations also reveal that the theory/observation distinction is not a sharp one, will shift with the theoretical perspective of the observer and is in part at least relative to the context of inquiry.

Winch would not be happy with such talk about ‘a theoretical perspective’ but it seems to me that a recognition of the force of the above claims would reinforce his overall arguments about the way we draw distinctions about what is real and what is unreal and concerning how we are to take talk about social reality. For him social reality is not something which is given neatly in observation statements which succeed in referring to what is independently identifiable simply by observation. Rather there are distinct language-games and constitutive practices which, like what Cohen calls a theoretical perspective, shape our experience and set how it is we experience our world. What is real and what is unreal is determined by our language and its distinctive categorial shape. That is to say, the culturally distinctive categories of our participant’s discourse function very much like a theoretical perspective in determining what it is we shall observe and how we shall comprehend what it is we observe. What is real and unreal shows itself in the sense language has; there is no reality there, graspable and intelligible, independently of language, which gives

³⁹G. A. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹I have argued, in a way I now feel ambivalent about, that there are some exceptions. See my “Social Science and American Foreign Policy,” *Philosophy, Morality and International Affairs*, edited by Virginia Held, *et. al.*, pp. 286-319.

our language the sense it has. In that sense talk of correspondence is quite without sense.

We can and should, as Cohen does, speak of thought being in accordance with reality or failing to be in accord with reality; we can even speak of a correspondence of thought and reality, but we must, there, be very careful how this is to be understood. If it is a kind of general motto to cover many distinctive occurrences, such as the need to say that reports on alcoholism in the Northern Territories corresponds with the facts, that poverty is linked with lack of education, that our *petit bourgeois* class perspective distorts our understanding of the relation between workers and capitalists, then such talk is quite in order. But generally—that is considering whole activities and clusters of activity such as a religion, capitalism, science, art or morality—it is not clear that anything intelligible is being said in claiming that they (say even religion or capitalism) correspond to reality or fail to correspond to reality. I do not at all want to give to understand that nothing can or should be made of such talk. I only want to make it evident how problematic and epistemically suspect such talk is. Before such grandiose claims can be sensibly made a rather considerable amount of clarification and self-conscious reflection should be done.

VI

Finally, there is a further and rather different cluster of considerations which should be examined. The thrust of them will be to establish that working in accordance with an account such as Winch's does not preclude the utilization of more theoretical conceptions, including conceptions such as those stressed by Marxist social theorists. I shall also argue that the kinds of conception that Winch stresses as being essential for an understanding of social relations are also essential for an understanding of these more theoretical conceptions.

It has been thought (by MacIntyre among others) that there is no room on Winch's account of the social sciences for conceptions such as ideology and false consciousness and that this is a very grave defect.⁴² I agree that it is a grave defect to exclude such conceptions and I further recognize that Winch does not utilize such conceptions,

⁴²Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Idea of a Social Science," *Rationality*, edited by Bryan R. Wilson, p. 118. See also, Thomas McCarthy, "The Problem of Rationality in Social Anthropology," *Philosophy and Social Theory*, *Stony Brook Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. I (1974), pp. 1-36.

but I see no good reason why someone convinced by his general approach could not accommodate them in his account. Indeed, I think he should, for they are conceptions of considerable moment in social science and in the understanding of ourselves. However, it also should be recognized that we need participant's talk, the appeal to *verstehen*, to give sense to those notions. Or, at least, that is the point I shall argue. I shall further argue that in showing how a notion is ideological and how false consciousness obtains, one needs to appeal to conceptions which presuppose a participant's understanding of the discourse.

Consider a patent bit of ideology. Suppose we were told in 1975 that New York City's troubles are symptomatic—though in an extreme form—of the troubles in the advanced industrial societies. We have overexpanded our social services and the nonproductive sectors to such an extent that our productive system can no longer accommodate them. So now is the time, if we are to keep our system stable, for sober second thoughts and a little prudent belt-tightening. We must pull together and keep the social contract. To do this, sacrifices will be required of us all.

If either a worker or a capitalist accepts this argument as even a justifiable simplification, he is being taken in by an ideology, though a capitalist could, and indeed some do, give currency to such propaganda in a self-conscious effort to reinforce the capitalist order. But such a claim is patently a bit of capitalist apologetics which would hardly survive scrutiny on an impartial account of what is the case. But in not accepting it—in spotting it as a bit of ideology—concepts and modes of reasoning and criteria of rationality embedded in our participant's talk about our social relations and our society are naturally utilized and quite unavoidable.

It is also true that in reflecting about such a case, rational, informed people would apprise the situation rather differently than it is appraised in that bit of capitalist apologetic. They would see the situation as an attempt on the part of the capitalist class to effect, in what is most likely only a minor capitalist crisis, some redistribution of wealth in favor of the capitalist class. (I do not say this is the only thing it does, but generally it is a redistributive device aimed at stabilization of the system.) Welfare state gains for workers are being in part reversed to place more money in the private sector or at the disposal of that sector. This money will in turn be used by that sector to increase its power and wealth and enhance its control over society. It will provide more capital for expansion into certain favorably placed

underdeveloped countries, some money for redistribution to those countries in order to pacify their masses, and it will provide capital for research into future possibilities of expansion and control. The Seven Sisters, for example, realize how oil and natural gas will not be with us forever and they need, in order to protect themselves, to develop new technologies so that they will continue to maintain their hegemony over energy and hence their positions of power and control in society. Current welfare provisions stand in the way of most effectively maximizing those policies; moreover, it is not from the capitalist point of view a wise policy to continue to develop unnecessarily the skills and rising expectations of those sectors of society who might in the future, with rising expectations and skills and an enhanced knowledge, prove a challenge to that order. Where cut-backs can be effected without too much conflict — as it seems possible to do now in North America — it is prudent planning on the part of the capitalist class to make them. It is a rational move on their part to get back some of the advantages won by the working class and to pacify, through some redistribution of wealth, a rising working class in underdeveloped countries.

The above characterization did, of course, use terms which are, to a degree, theoretical: which go beyond a thoroughly detheorized employment of participant's talk. Yet, many of these terms are passing into our common language or are citified cousins of terms long employed in our common language. But 'capitalist class', 'capitalist crisis', 'welfare state', 'private sector', 'ruling class', 'underdeveloped countries', 'maximizing,' 'rising expectations,' 'capitalist order,' 'working class' are all moderately theoretical. But none of them are very distant from our participant's language and they could hardly be understood without such a knowledge. Indeed, (a) because we understand such plain notions as being poor and as having to work for a living in uncertain conditions over which we have very little control and (b) because we know what it is like to hope for a better future, it is the case that we understand conceptions such as 'rising expectations' and 'working class'. But, more importantly still, for the above critique of capitalist ideology even to appear plausible, there needs to be a perfectly ordinary understanding of how working people are badly treated, an awareness of what an enhanced understanding of what is happening around them would be likely to have on their attitudes and expectations, an understanding of how wealth is linked with power and control, and finally an understanding of how it is plausible that the wealthy would feel concerned — because they

perceive themselves as threatened—about how an informed but deprived group would feel and act. We need our ordinary participant's understanding of human motives and rationales to understand what is going on here.

I am not trying to argue for the adequacy of the above critique of a bit of capitalist apologetics, but to use it as a sample to make the point, by the use of that sample, that both the specimen bit of capitalist apologetics and its critique require the kind of participant's understanding that Winch stresses is essential as a base for an understanding of social issues. I have further been concerned (a) to show how Winch's account can accommodate ideological critique and conceptions such as that of false consciousness and (b) to show that these very notions themselves cannot be understood if we do not have a participant's knowledge of the ordinary unscheduled rules and norms governing our ordinary human interactions.

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