Peter Winch on the Tractatus and the unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy

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1. Winch, Malcolm and the unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy

One of Peter Winch's most noteworthy contributions to philosophy lies in his writings on Wittgenstein. In the hope of making clearer what he achieved, I shall look at the evolution of his ideas about the unity of Wittgenstein's thought.

He first expressed these ideas in the Introduction to *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (1969). He wanted, he said, "to combat the widespread view", a view which he took to be "disastrously mistaken", "that we are dealing with two different philosophers: 'the earlier Wittgenstein' and 'the later Wittgenstein'", and so he subtitled his essay "the Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy" (p. 1).[1] Winch believed that the idea of 'two Wittgensteins' reflected and grew from misunderstandings of both the *Tractatus* and the later work. He thought that the causality worked the other way round as well: i.e., that the two-Wittgenstein view *led* to misreadings of all of Wittgenstein's work. So he was trying to break the cycle of misunderstandings by challenging both the two-Wittgenstein view and readings of Wittgenstein's individual works, especially readings of the *Tractatus*. The essay is successful

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1.   Winch, P. "Introduction: the Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy". In *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Peter Winch. London: Routledge, 1969, pp. 1–19.

mainly as a programmatic essay; much that he said then in working out the program was clarified and changed later on.

What indeed happened later was that Winch was immensely stimulated by his discussions with Norman Malcolm, especially during the years Malcolm was Visiting Professor at King's College. Winch had great respect for Malcolm, but was also very critical of Malcolm's understanding of Wittgenstein. He once wrote that he thought Malcolm shied away from the radical nature of Wittgenstein's thinking in the *Tractatus* and in the later writings, in parallel ways.[2] Malcolm was a particularly forthright and steadfast defender of the two-Wittgenstein view; and I think we can find very clearly in Malcolm's writings the complex dynamic I described: the two-Wittgenstein view drawing on certain misconceptions of early and later Wittgenstein, while those misconceptions themselves are encouraged by the idea of Wittgenstein as two philosophers. Winch was aware of that dynamic before he and Malcolm became colleagues, but the contact with Malcolm greatly sharpened his sense of how it worked, and helped him to revise his ideas about what was wrong with the usual readings of the *Tractatus*. As will come out in the rest of this essay, Winch's understanding of Wittgenstein shows also the effect of discussions with another colleague, Rush Rhees.

In 1969, when Winch published that first essay on how Wittgenstein's philosophy hangs together, the orthodox view was not only that there were 'the early Wittgenstein' and 'the later Wittgenstein', but also that the latter had dismantled the philosophical theories of the former, and was utterly distant from the former in method, aims, and concerns. That view of Wittgenstein was taken by almost every commentator, but there were two sorts of exception. First there was Rush Rhees, who had in 1966 laid the groundwork for an understanding of Wittgenstein as *one* philosopher by arguing for the continuity of Wittgenstein's concern with logic, and specifically for the idea of *Philosophical Investigations* as a book on philosophy of logic.[3] Rhees had also rejected the idea of Wittgenstein as having, in his later work,

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2. Winch, personal letter, 1987. See also some related comments on Malcolm in Winch, P. "Critical Notice of Malcolm, *Wittgensteinian Themes*". *Philosophical Investigations* 20 (1997): pp. 51–64; p. 57.

3. Rhees, R. "The Philosophy of Wittgenstein". *Ratio* 8 (1966): pp. 180–93. Reprinted in *Discussions of Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 1970, pp. 37–54.

demolished his earlier system and replaced it by a new one. A representative of a very different kind of exception to the orthodox reading is Erik Stenius, who had argued in 1960 against the existence of deep differences between the picture theory and Wittgenstein's later views.[4] But Stenius's defence of a one-Wittgenstein view rested on misconceptions about both early and later Wittgenstein, and on failure to grasp the character of the differences between them. He attacked the orthodox view on what was in fact a strong point, namely its insistence on the philosophical importance of Wittgenstein's later critique of the *Tractatus*. (Stenius nevertheless deserves recognition for noting that many commentators were simply reading into the *Tractatus* any view that Wittgenstein criticised later.)

Back then to Winch in 1969: Prior to Winch's essay, there had been no sustained attack on the established two-Wittgenstein view that had taken seriously the strength of such a reading, namely its recognition of very significant changes in Wittgenstein's approach, and of deep-going criticisms in the later work of Wittgenstein's earlier views.

Winch located as a primary continuity in Wittgenstein's philosophy his concern with the nature of logic. If Wittgenstein is, in his later philosophy, still centrally concerned with the nature of logic, why (we might ask) does he spend so much of his time dealing with so many apparently quite different problems? Winch takes those discussions to belong to Wittgenstein's *new* conception of how logic itself has to be treated. So the idea is not that Wittgenstein is turning *from* an interest in the nature of logic *to* an interest in quite different sorts of philosophical issue, but rather that the attention to these various topics itself reflects a new idea of how one should approach the philosophy of logic.

Winch puts the point this way: the change here "turns upside down [Wittgenstein's] view in the *Tractatus* that, once the central logical problems had been settled, the dissipation of other philosophical difficulties would in principle have been [achieved] at one blow, so that all that would remain to be done would be a sort of mopping-up operation" (1969, p. 2). Winch sees a radical change in Wittgenstein's understanding of the role of generality in philosophy, of the kind of generality that he had taken to characterise phi-

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4. Stenius, E. *Wittgenstein's* Tractatus. *A Critical Exposition*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1960.

losophy. There is a totally new idea of the significance that attention to particular cases can have, attention to the problems that can surface in them. Wittgenstein's later thought thus involves rejecting the point he had made at *TLP* 3.3421: that the only significance of particular cases in philosophy lies in what they can disclose of what is totally general, as for example the possibility of a certain kind of notation for identity might help us to grasp what all adequate notations have in common, through which they can express what they do. Winch's point then is that this vital transformation in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method can be seen in the right light only so far as we recognise its tie to the questions about the nature of logic which had been central to him all along. Winch mentions (p. 2n) that P.F. Strawson's 1967 bibliography of works on philosophical logic includes only the *Tractatus*, not *Philosophical Investigations* – as if the latter were not concerned with philosophical logic. Things have changed somewhat since 1969: Michael Dummett, Saul Kripke, and others have given currency to the idea that Wittgenstein's later work has important implications for issues in philosophical logic. But these philosophers fit, or attempt to fit, Wittgenstein's ideas into a conception of philosophy which takes for granted the possibility of an entirely general examination of fundamental logical issues, like whether the meaning of words is fixed enough for what we say to have determinate consequences. Within that conception of philosophy there is no room for the idea that Winch was inviting us to take as central in Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* thought.

Here a comparison with Malcolm suggests itself. In one of Winch's last pieces of philosophical writing, he discusses again the relation between Wittgenstein's ideas about logic and his later philosophical methods.[5] Winch believed that Malcolm did recognise the importance in Wittgenstein's later work of attention to particular cases, of not trying to extract from them a theory of what is essential. But, Winch argues, Malcolm's own failure to see how questions about logic are involved in Wittgenstein's later treatment of topics like belief and knowledge suggests that Malcolm didn't fully see how Wittgenstein was addressing the sources of philosophical puzzlement.

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5. Winch, P. "Discussion of Malcolm's Essay". In Malcolm, N. *Wittgenstein: a Religious Point of View*, ed. Peter Winch. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 95–135.

Winch was uncertain how deep his criticisms of Malcolm went, how far Malcolm was unaware of what Winch took to be at issue. I do not want to try to decide the question about Malcolm, but rather to make clear Winch's continuing emphasis on the need to see Wittgenstein's later ideas, including ideas about his own philosophical methods, as tied to his rethinking of questions about logic. The comparison between Malcolm on the one hand and Kripke and Dummett on the other goes like this: Kripke and Dummett are, as it were, hungry for logical implications of what Wittgenstein wrote, but are deeply disinclined to take his methods seriously, and are therefore unable to see how Wittgenstein genuinely does treat problems about logic, while Malcolm is committed to certain characteristic Wittgensteinian methods, including the eschewing of explanatory theory in philosophy, but fails to see the significance of those methods in relation to questions about logic, hence cannot see how the methods are relevant to someone caught up in puzzlement about logic. My suggestion now is that Winch's insight in the 1969 essay is a first expression of a main theme in his work on Wittgenstein, that one cannot grasp what is radical in Wittgenstein's philosophy without seeing how his continuing interest in logic is involved in the two later shifts: the shift in subjects being discussed,[6] and the shift in his methods. Thus it is part of this suggestion that Winch's critical relation to Malcolm is not as distant as it may seem from his critical relation to Dummett and Kripke; for each side misses half of what Winch took to be essential.

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6.   It should be noted that one of Winch's aims in the writings of the last few years of his life concerned a significant non-shift of topic: Winch argued that Wittgenstein's interest in logical questions plays a similar role in his early discussion of 'A believes that p' and in his very late discussions of belief in connection with Moore's paradox. (See especially Winch, P. "The Expression of Belief". Presidential Address. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 70 (1996): pp. 7–23.) He thought that Malcolm's failure to see the logical significance of Moore's paradox, as seen from Wittgenstein's point of view, weakened Malcolm's discussion of Wittgenstein on belief. And he connected this with Malcolm's misreading, as he saw it, of the *Tractatus* discussion of solipsism. (See Winch, 1997.)

2. Opposed understandings of the *Tractatus*

I want to keep the 1969 essay in view, but to see some of its ideas in the light cast by the 1980s dispute between Winch and Malcolm, in which Winch criticises and rejects Malcolm's idea that the *Tractatus* rests a philosophy of language on a metaphysics, as mediated by a philosophy of mind. Malcolm explicitly and repeatedly defended the idea of Wittgenstein as putting forward a kind of traditional metaphysics, tied to an account of meaning in terms of mental processes connecting elements of language with the basic items postulated by the metaphysics; he also sees Wittgenstein as repudiating this metaphysics later.[7] It's also an important part of the dispute that Winch takes the ideas that Malcolm sees in the *Tractatus* not just *not* to be there but to be among the targets of the *Tractatus*.

When we read Winch's 1987 critique of Malcolm,[8] it is pretty clear what Winch is rejecting, namely the whole package of views that Malcolm takes to be part of the supposedly inexpressible content of the *Tractatus*. But we can thereby see how far Winch had come since the 1969 discussion of the unity of Wittgenstein's philosophy; an important part of what he criticises in Malcolm was actually present in his own earlier reading. In working out his response to Malcolm, he was also getting clearer what he took to be the radical character of Wittgenstein's aims in the *Tractatus*.

The issues here are difficult to frame clearly, and this is no accident. The dispute between Winch and Malcolm concerns what the meaning is of *Tractatus* propositions which Wittgenstein himself takes to lack meaning. If we find ourselves in difficulties making clear what is at stake in the dispute between Malcolm and Winch, that actually supports Wittgenstein's claim, for on his view, I take it that we should find that attempts to get the meaning of his propositions clear should collapse. The problems here are evident in Winch's own attempts to express the dispute. He wants to hold that Wittgenstein's "The name means the object" cannot be paraphrased as "A name

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7. Malcolm, N. "The Picture Theory of Memory". In *Memory and Mind*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 120–64; Malcolm, N. *Nothing is Hidden*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

8. Winch, P. "Language, Thought and World in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*". In *Trying to Make Sense*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp. 3–17.

has a relation to something non-linguistic". But what exactly is wrong with the paraphrase? For whatever the use of "The name means the object" is in the *Tractatus*, the sentence "A name has a relation to something which is itself no sign" could have the same or a similar use. So, in order to reject it, Winch must apparently see in it some other meaning, a meaning which he takes to be in some way confused or objectionable. But how can he see it as having to be interpreted in a non-innocent way, if there is no meaning lying in that direction? How can a sentence which *can* be given a philosophically innocent reading (or at any rate could have the same function as the *Tractatus* sentence which it paraphrases) have to be given an incoherent non-innocent one? I am not suggesting that Winch could not have answered that question, but that he does not, and repeatedly explains the view he is rejecting in words which could have an innocent use, while he sees in the words a non-innocent one.

Here then is something which is meant to stand only as a kind of temporary mode of expression for the dispute: Malcolm reads the *Tractatus* as holding that reference is prior to logically permissible use, Winch that use gives us all that is involved in reference. Malcolm sees the *Tractatus* understanding of reference as tied to the metaphysical theory of simple objects, objects which are independent of and prior to language, and which fix what can intelligibly be said. Mental processes are essential to the workings of language on this reading of the *Tractatus*, since it is only through mental processes that linguistic signs come to have a connection with the structure of possibilities which is internal to thought, and which is determined by the objects. Through the mental processes that connect them to the metaphysically fixed structure of possibilities, the perceptible sentences we write or utter express thoughts that such-and-such is the case. This then is the package all of which is rejected by Winch in the 1980s.

In discussing the dispute it will be helpful to have available a distinction which P.M.S. Hacker makes in his defence (1999) of Malcolm against Winch.[9] He agrees with Malcolm, and disagrees with Winch, over whether the *Tractatus* does give an account of meaning which makes it depend on

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9. Hacker, P. "Naming, Thinking, and Meaning in the *Tractatus*". *Philosophical Investigations* 22 (1999): pp. 119–35; p. 128. Reprinted in *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, pp. 170–84.

mental processes, but he believes that there are actually two types of mentalistic readings of the *Tractatus*. One of these readings, which is in fact Malcolm's, holds that a sentence expresses a thought in that a thought, construed as a kind of psychic sentence, one which is intrinsically meaningful, is projected into it. Through the thought's being thought into the perceptible sentence, the elements of the latter get their meaning. The alternative reading described by Hacker is equally mentalistic in the sense of taking mental processes to be essential to a sentence's having sense, but does not depend upon postulating items which are intrinsically representational. It depends instead upon mental acts through which the meaning of elements of language is determined. Winch's arguments are directed specifically against Malcolm's interpretation; he doesn't discuss other sorts of mentalistic readings of the *Tractatus*. Hacker, though he is defending Malcolm's type of reading against Winch, mentions what appears to be a very strong objection to it. Wittgenstein had said (in his 1919 letter to Russell) that psychic constituents of thoughts have the same sort of relation to reality as words. If the meaningfulness of sentences were mediated by intrinsically meaningful thoughts, as on Malcolm's view, the elements of those thoughts would not have the same relation to reality as do words. The letter would appear to rule out any view like Malcolm's.[10]

There are several striking passages in the *Blue Book* in which Wittgenstein criticises exactly the view that Malcolm takes to be Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* view, namely the idea that, although the sentences of a language may be capable of this or that interpretation, the *meaning* is not thus capable of being

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10. In an early version of this paper, presented at a conference in honour of Winch in Swansea in 1999, I discussed Malcolm's response to the problems of his kind of mentalistic reading, and added a parenthetical treatment of Hacker's approach to such problems. There is unfortunately no room here for an adequate treatment of these issues, to which I hope to return on another occasion. Hacker has replied to my original remarks in "Postscript" (Hacker, 2001, pp. 184–90), but it should be noted that he mis-states my views. Speaking of Hacker, I had said that "the two versions of mentalism which he distinguishes are untenable for easily graspable reasons which he himself points out". Hacker turns this into "such mentalism is untenable for easily graspable reasons that Wittgenstein himself points out" (2001, p. 185), not a possible reading of my sentence. The reasons to which I alluded were not dependent on things said by Wittgenstein.

interpreted this or that way, and here one is, Wittgenstein says, taking meaning to be a process accompanying the saying.[11] In his 1969 essay, Winch took these *Blue Book* ideas to be directed against the *Tractatus*. He held then that the *Blue Book* idea of there being a temptation to think in terms of an inner process which makes it possible for us to mean something by our words was the very temptation which had led Wittgenstein to the *Tractatus* account of elementary propositions. But, by the 1980s, Winch had rejected the idea that the *Tractatus* is the target of the passages in the *Blue Book* about the temptation to think in terms of an inner process through which the meaning of the perceptible signs we use gets fixed. The 1987 essay indeed begins with some general methodological points about reading Wittgenstein, about the dangers of reading into the *Tractatus* the ideas about meaning and understanding which are criticised by Wittgenstein in his later writings, and about the dangers of reading into the *Tractatus* ideas which can indeed be found in some of the passages in Wittgenstein's pre-*Tractatus* notes. So this marks a significant change in Winch's own reading of the *Tractatus*. And the *Blue Book* passages are useful in helping us to keep in focus how Winch disagrees with Malcolm in the 1980s, for Malcolm himself appeals to them in spelling out his reading of the *Tractatus* (Malcolm, 1986, pp. 72, 82; Malcolm, 1977, p. 140). He sees Wittgenstein's comments in the *Blue Book* and elsewhere, concerning our idea that signs are in themselves 'dead' and that it is mental processes through which the dead signs are capable of conveying meaning, as criticism of the *Tractatus* conception of thoughts as psychical items which are intrinsically meaningful, and which are thought into perceptible sentences.

Though I think there are limits to what can be shown about Wittgenstein's views in the *Tractatus* by looking at his work in the 1930s, it is worth mentioning that, in his lectures of the 1930s, Wittgenstein ascribed the view which he discusses in the *Blue Book* to W.E. Johnson. This is mentioned by Moore in his account of those lectures ("Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33", 1959, p. 265); Moore apparently had no record of any occasion on which Wittgenstein suggested that the view was also his own earlier view. It seems to me unlikely that if he had ever ascribed the view to himself in

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11. See *The Blue and Brown Books*, 1958, pp. 33–4, 36–7; see also pp. 3–4.

Moore's presence, Moore would have failed to record it; it seems also very unlikely that Wittgenstein had a view in the *Tractatus*, criticised it in lectures in the 1930s, and ascribed it then only to someone else. As an external argument against Malcolm's interpretation, this seems quite telling. It is not, however, an argument against other sorts of mentalistic interpretations of the *Tractatus*.

Malcolm says that the conception he ascribes to Wittgenstein is "perhaps most clearly stated in *Tractatus* 3.11" (1986, p. 73). This is something of an understatement, in that there is nothing else in the *Tractatus* which holders of a mentalistic reading can point to as even apparently an expression of the dependence of the meaningfulness of language on mental processes. This is the passage you have got to make bear the weight, if that is how you want to read the *Tractatus*.[12] And, interestingly, this is a passage which Winch reads one way in 1969, and dramatically differently in 1987. In 1987, his rethinking of his reading of the *Tractatus* is tied closely to his new reading of 3.11. Hacker, in his criticism of Winch, also directs much attention to this passage. Because a great deal hangs on it, I shall turn to the problems of its interpretation.

3. Thinking and projecting

Wittgenstein had introduced the notion of a thought at 3; a thought is a logical picture of facts. At 3.1, the notion of a proposition is introduced: in a proposition a thought gets perceptibly expressed. 3.11 says: "We use the perceptible sign of the proposition … as a projection of a possible situation. The method of projection is the thinking of the proposition's sense."[13]

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12. It is wrong to suggest, as Hacker does in his 2001 (p. 186), that a reading of the *Tractatus* that does not introduce mentalism has as little to support it in the text as does a reading that makes the meaningfulness of language depend on mental processes. The introduction of a layer of theory into the text in the absence of evidence is obviously not symmetrically related to the non-introduction of such theory. And there are, in any case, quite a number of passages which (as Malcolm himself notes) create problems for mentalist readings, e.g., those which prima facie support the idea that a senseful proposition simply is a thought. (See Malcolm, 1977, pp. 136–7; 1986, pp. 66–7; cf. also Summerfield, D. "Thought and Language in the *Tractatus*". In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 17: The Wittgenstein Legacy*, ed. Peter A. French et al. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp. 224–45; pp. 237–8.)

Winch, in his 1987 essay, follows closely a much earlier discussion by Rhees, which he had ignored in his original treatment of the *Tractatus*. Rhees had argued against George Pitcher's mentalistic reading of the *Tractatus*, which was linked, he said, to a wrong understanding of 3.11, easy to slip into from Pears and McGuinness's translation (1961). They had translated the second sentence of 3.11 this way: "The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition", which, Rhees said, makes it look as if thinking, a mental process, explains projection. But, he argued, the method of projection is what explains what it is to think the proposition's sense (1966, p. 182). So, on this reading, the logical notion of projection explains the sense which Wittgenstein is giving to thinking or meaning something by what one says. Read in this latter way, the passage gives no support to the idea that Wittgenstein is committed to mental processes that underlie the meaningful use of sentences. This is then the reading that Winch adopted in 1987, and that he repeated even more emphatically later (1994, pp. 100–101).

What I've said is meant to make clear that a great deal hangs on how you read 3.11, in connection with the dispute whether the *Tractatus* appeals to mental processes as underlying the intelligible use of sentences. But more is at stake than that. For if you see the *Tractatus* as putting forward a theory of meaning as undergirded by mental processes, this itself sets limits on your understanding of the overall aim of the *Tractatus*. The question is what Wittgenstein can be taking himself to have accomplished in making clear the logic of language. Winch's own view, and Rhees's, was that the logic of language is the logic of the language we speak and write, and equally the logic of any representations we use, including any representations we think but do not express. The logic of representation is equally the logic of thinking and speaking, and the logic of spoken language is the logic of thinking, not because there is some separable process of thinking underlying it, but because we think in speaking, in using our language. The various versions of mentalistic readings of the *Tractatus* are not just committed to underlying processes securing the meaningfulness of language, but also to a link

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13. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. C.K. Ogden, 1922. I have slightly modified the translation. Except where otherwise noted, all quotations are from the Ogden translation.

between the logic of language and a structure of possibilities external to it, a link involving mental connections with the objects and their structure of possibilities. No one reading the *Tractatus* can ignore Wittgenstein's belief that logic is not dependent on facts. But it is possible, through the kind of reading that Malcolm gives, to hold that logic is nevertheless dependent, on the *Tractatus* view, on something external to language and prior to thought itself, namely on the internal possibilities of metaphysically given objects, the givenness of which is conceived as a kind of quasi-fact. What is at stake really in the interpretation of 3.11 is how radical the *Tractatus* is in its idea that logic looks after itself, is not founded on or responsible to anything else. In a certain sense, Wittgenstein says, we cannot make mistakes in logic. But if there were metaphysical possibilities to which language were responsible, obviously, or so it seems, we could make mistakes in logic, for we might have a logic which didn't match those possibilities. Or there would have to be some kind of magical connection ensuring the isomorphism between language and the metaphysical possibilities. These are the issues that lurk beneath the question what is going on at *TLP* 3.11.[14]

Rhees, then, in 1966 in his reading of 3.11, and Winch in 1987, link together two issues. These are the issues whether, in 3.11, the thinking of the propositional sense is supposed to explain or be explained by the notion of projection, and the issue whether 3.11 supports the idea that a perceptible sentence is used to mean something in virtue of a mental process, a thinking of a sense. I think that Rhees and Winch get themselves into difficulties through their desire to link the two issues, which leads them both to a strained reading of 3.11.[15] Furthermore, their reading makes it appear as if, if the notion of projection is being explained at 3.11, that virtually estab-

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14. See Malcolm, 1986, p. 12 for a version of the 'magical connection' view. That Malcolm ascribes the view to Wittgenstein is connected with his calling Wittgenstein's view 'astonishing'. For discussion of the problems of mentalist readings, see also Warren Goldfarb, "Objects, Names and Realism in the *Tractatus*". Unpublished.

15. Hacker says that the reading favoured by Rhees and Winch involves a forced reading of the German (Hacker, 1999, p. 128). An independent complaint would be that the reading is explained by each of its proponents in English which is extremely strained. It is decent English to say: the method of doing so-and-so is the doing of such-and-such. It is quite peculiar English to say: what it is to do so-and-so is the method of such-and-such.

lishes the mentalistic reading of 3.11. They thus leave open the kind of response made by Malcolm, that the notion of projection is explicitly mentioned for the first time in 3.11, and that it is therefore natural to read 3.11 as explaining it, not as appealing to it in explaining thinking the sense of the proposition.[16] But the question whether 'method of projection' is itself being explained in 3.11 hardly settles whether it is being explained in terms of mental processes. So, since I want to agree with Malcolm that the Winch-Rhees reading is unnatural, but I also think that Winch and Rhees are right in denying that 3.11 supports a mentalistic reading, I need to ask: is there a natural reading of 3.11 that will help clarify the issues?[17] We can be helped to find such a reading by considering the passage in the *Prototractatus* to which 3.11 corresponds. Interestingly, both Winch and Hacker (arguing against Winch) take the passage in the *Prototractatus* as unambiguously settling the interpretation of 3.11, but they take it in totally opposite ways (Winch, 1994, p. 101; Hacker, 1999, p. 128). But before turning to the *Prototractatus* we need to note in the *Tractatus* the idea of a thought as thinking a situation, the situation which is its sense. It is important that the elements of this way of speaking are in place before Wittgenstein speaks of thinking a sense in 3.11. I turn now to these elements.

Pictures, Wittgenstein tells us, represent possible situations in some space; all pictures represent possible situations in *logical* space. The picture contains the possibility of the situation it represents (based on 2.202 and 2.203,

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16. Malcolm, 1986, p. 73. Winch's discussion of the issues in his 1994 is especially strained in his insistence that we already have an explanation of 'method of projection' by the time we get to 3.11 (pp. 100–101). If one were first to read his 1994, and then to follow that by a reading of the *Tractatus* itself, one would be extremely surprised to find no mention of 'method of projection' prior to 3.11; Winch actually says that the sections preceding 3.11 develop the notion of a picture using the notion of a method of projection which connects a constellation of elements with a possible state of affairs. The method of projection, he says, confers a 'form of representation' on what then becomes the picture. There is, though, no such use of the notion of a method of projection in the sections preceding 3.11. Winch is reading his interpretation of 3.11 into those sections, and using that to support his reading of 3.11.

17. In thinking about this question I have been greatly helped by correspondence with Michael Kremer. For an early account of 3.11 which sees it as not appealing to psychic processes underlying the meaningfulness of our propositions, see also Griffin, J. *Wittgenstein's Logical Atomism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, pp. 117–21.

together with 2.182). A thought is a logical picture of the facts; and every thought contains the possibility of the situation which it thinks (3, with 3.02). Those sections of the *Tractatus*, taken together, give us this parallel: the thought thinks the situation, and contains its possibility, the picture represents the situation and contains its possibility. A thought that thinks a situation is a picture that represents the situation. What a picture or thought represents, namely a possible situation, is its sense. So Wittgenstein's language allows us to speak of a thought as thinking its sense, thinking a situation: this is for it to be a picture in logical space representing the situation. I believe that the idea that a thought thinks a sense, thinks a situation, in that it is a picture representing the situation, is present and important in both the *Tractatus* and the *Prototractatus*.[18]

What then do we have in the *Prototractatus*? On the very first page of the *Prototractatus* manuscript, we have several important statements. Indeed, this page virtually contains the *Tractatus* in a nutshell, the bare bones, including propositions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.[19] On that page, at 2.1 and 2.2, we have two remarks about picturing: that we grasp facts in pictures, and that a picture and what is pictured have in common the logical form of the depicting. We then have:

> *PT* 3. The logical picture of the facts is the thought.
> *PT* 3.1. The perceptible expression of the thought is the propositional sign.
> *PT* 3.2. The propositional sign, with the manner of depicting, is the proposition.
> *PT* 4. The thought is the senseful proposition. [That is, it is the propositional sign, with the manner of depicting.]

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18. In the *Tractatus*, the thought is said to think something, the picture to represent something, and the proposition to say something. Wittgenstein also speaks of us as making pictures and of us as making ourselves understood with propositions, but the impersonal mode of speech has a primary role in giving the logical characterisation of language, thought and picturing, including the characterisation of projection at 3.11. The account I give of 3.11 is meant to take seriously Wittgenstein's use of the impersonal mode, and to bring into prominence the connection between the impersonal talk of 'thinking a sense' at 3.11 and other impersonal modes of description.

19. *Prototractatus*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971, manuscript facsimile between pp. 34 and 35. I have not adhered to the 1971 translation.

Two pages further on, we have the passage which both Winch and Hacker appeal to as settling what *TLP* 3.11 means: Hacker claiming that it means Wittgenstein is appealing to a mental process to explain the method of projection through which a propositional sign expresses a thought, and Winch claiming that the notion of the method of projection explains what it is for us to think a sense. Winch is, I think, wrong in taking it that the notion of the method of projection bears explanatory weight in this passage, that it is not itself being explained; but Hacker is wrong in taking it that, if it is being explained, it is being explained in terms of one's *meaning* a situation. You *mean* a situation, you use a propositional sign so that it represents the situation that you *mean* or *think*, and that explains what it is for the propositional sign to be a projection of the situation (1999, pp. 128–9). Hacker arrives at this interpretation through taking for granted that 'thinking a sense' is a mental proceeding, which is what explains the method of projection.

Look first at *PT* 3.12, where Wittgenstein says that the method of projection is the manner of application of the propositional sign. But what is this manner of application? How is the propositional sign applied? At *PT* 3.13, we have: the application of the propositional sign is the thinking of its sense. Thinking a sense, thinking a situation, is what a thought does in that it is a picture depicting a situation in logical space. A sense, a situation, is thought in that it is depicted. If the propositional sign in application thinks a sense, in its application it is a thought, it is a logical picture, and it has associated with it its mode of depiction. Here we need to go back to the points that Wittgenstein had put on the first page of his manuscript, at *PT* 3.2 and 4: the propositional sign has associated with it a manner of depicting through which it is a proposition, and, as such a senseful proposition, it is a thought. So what comes out of all this is that the method of projection through which a propositional sign is a meaningful proposition is being explained as the mode or manner of depiction through which the propositional sign, in its application, is a picture in logical space, a picture that depicts a situation, that *thinks* the situation, and contains the possibility of that situation.

So the idea then, as I see it, is that we make pictures, using methods of depiction in a space; these pictures, these representations, in that they are in logical space, are thoughts. In that they are thoughts, they think this or that situation; they think this or that sense. In that they are pictures in a space, the possibility of the representing picture in the space has internal to it the

possibility of the represented situation in that space. The logical notion of depiction then explains (in *PT* 3.12 and 3.13) what Wittgenstein means by the application of the propositional sign: it is *used* as a picture, and thereby as a projection. The sort of projection involved in our use of propositions is thus tied to the notion of picturing, which itself is a basically projective notion: to use a perceptible sign as a picture is to use it as a projection of a possible situation. (Winch was thus correct in saying that the notion of projection is present in the *Tractatus* passages which precede 3.11. Nevertheless his account is misleading in suggesting that 3.11 explains thinking a sense in terms of the notion of a method of projection explained earlier. Thinking a sense has already been explained as the kind of containing of the possibility of a situation which belongs to pictures through what they share with what is pictured.)

It is not my purpose here to keep us focused on the interpretation of the *Tractatus*, but rather simply to make clear that Winch's basic claim about the crucial passage, 3.11, namely that it does not introduce an appeal to mental events or processes underlying the meaningful use of sentences, is not dependent on the Rhees-Winch idea that the passage explains *thinking a sense* in terms of the idea of a method of projection. Thinking a sense has been explained in terms of a thought's thinking a situation in that it is a logical picture; thinking a sense is logically-picturing a situation.

Where are we? The importance of 3.11, I said, concerns whether the logic of our language depends on a separable process of thinking underlying it and connecting language with a metaphysical structure of possibilities. What was the matter with this, as Winch understood it, was that it totally obscured Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus*: the aim of showing that we go wrong in seeking any kind of basis for logic. Wittgenstein, as Winch reads him, had wanted to show that our grasp of the distinction between sense and nonsense founders because we seek a basis for logic in structural features of reality, self-evident first principles, or the psychological features of our minds, or whatever. We do not see that logic looks after itself.[20] Winch saw this aim of Wittgenstein's as obscured by the mentalist reading of the *Tracta-*

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20. See Winch, P. "Persuasion". In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 17: The Wittgenstein Legacy*, ed. Peter French et al. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp. 123–37; p. 123.

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tus. Winch got clearer about this aim of Wittgenstein's at the same time as he got clearer about the issue of mentalism in the *Tractatus*, during the period of discussions with Malcolm and to a considerable degree as a result of those discussions.

4. What's in a name?

I have been considering the shift in Winch's reading of the *Tractatus* between 1969 and 1987, but have paid no attention to one feature of it, to which I now turn. I start with the contrast mentioned earlier: for Malcolm, the *Tractatus* takes the reference of names to be prior to use in the sense that it is the referential connection with an object that determines the logical possibilities for the use of the name; for Winch in 1987 there is no such priority. Hidé Ishiguro had given a similar reading of the *Tractatus* in her essay for Winch's 1969 volume, in which she ascribed to Wittgenstein the view that the meaning of a name is not secured, prior to and independently of its use in our sentences, by some method linking it to an object; she was contrasting the *Tractatus* views specifically with those of Russell, for whom naming connects language with reality (1969, passim).[21] Winch's treatment of these issues is brought into sharp focus in the 1987 essay. In his earlier discussion of the unity of the *Tractatus*, he had ascribed a version of a use account to Wittgenstein, but he did not work out how that fitted with his claim that what the objects are determines how they are to be named and how the names are to be used in our language (1969, p. 19). I think that later on he would have said that his remarks in 1969 show that he wasn't then clear about the basic point he came to later, namely that the *Tractatus* rejects all attempts to give logic some foundation.

What then do we have in 1987? Winch insists that names, on the *Tractatus* view, do genuinely refer, but this is not, he says, to be identified with anything other than their functioning in a certain way in a symbolism. That a name stands for such-and-such object just is its having such-and-so logico-syntactic role.[22] Winch says that, although there is a difference between the simple names of the *Tractatus* and ordinary names, the same point applies to

21. Ishiguro, H. "Use and Reference of Names". In *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Peter Winch. London: Routledge, 1969, pp. 20–50.

ordinary names. He takes the point, as applied to ordinary speech, to be illustrated by Wittgenstein's example of "Green is green" (3.323). That the first occurrence of the word 'green' refers to a person and the second to a colour just is for them to be occurrences of symbols with such–and–such logico-syntactic roles (1987, p. 10). But his own example shows that something is wrong with his account. For Winch is arguing that *what* you mean by the names you use is entirely settled by the use of the names, by *how* you use them. This is supposed to apply to the names of ordinary language *and* to the simple names of the *Tractatus*; but it certainly does not seem to apply to ordinary names. For, if I speak to you of Mr. Green, and if you know and know that I know two men called Green, then the logical syntax of my use of the name would, so it seems, not settle whether, in a particular sentence, I had referred to Felix Green rather than to Julien Green. What it makes sense to say about Felix Green is different from what it makes sense to say about the colour green, but it seems that what it makes sense to say about Felix Green is the same as what it makes sense to say about Julien Green. So, if what it makes sense to say about a thing is what the logical syntax of a name settles, we are, it seems, going to need more than logical syntax to make clear what our ordinary names mean, i.e., to make clear that this name in this context means this item rather than some other that might be meant by a name occurring in the way this one does.[23] Now Winch insists that

22. Winch's view is not unambiguously stated. He repeatedly ascribes to Wittgenstein the view that what a name means is determined if its syntax is determined; he treats this as the same as saying that the name's having the meaning it does belongs to its having the 'significant use' that it has. Now in one sense of 'use', it is simply a tautology to say that for a name to mean this or that item is a matter of how it is used: it is used to mean this or that item. But Winch's remarks about the *Tractatus* and the way it connects what a name means with how it is used seem to be intended to go beyond that tautological point. He appears to be ascribing to the *Tractatus* the view that a logical specification of how a word works in a symbolism, the kinds of propositional context in which it can occur, and how those occurrences are connected with inferential patterns in which the propositions containing it can occur, settle what the word is used for. Such a specification does settle the kind of thing the word is used for. But unless there can be no more than one thing of the kind in question, settling the kind of thing the word can be used to mean cannot settle what it is used to mean. What makes me read Winch as I do is his apparent willingness to treat the issue of what a word means as settled if the kind of thing it means is settled, as in his treatment of 3.323 (1987, p. 10).

ordinary names and the simple names of the *Tractatus* behave similarly in respect to the dependence of reference on use. His account of how names work seems to be wrong for ordinary names, and further not an account to which Wittgenstein is committed; it seems Winch's account also does not fit the simple names of the *Tractatus*, for it appears to conflict with passages in which Wittgenstein allows for there to be more than one object of the same logical form, for example 2.0233. This is indeed one of the sections cited by Hacker in his recent critique of Winch. The problem, though, of Winch's reading *and* of Hacker's response is that they both take for granted that, if there can be more than one object with the same logical form, then something like a Russellian view of a mind-forged connection between object and name is necessary in order for our names to have determinate meaning.[24] There is a very fine treatment of this problem by Warren Goldfarb in his unpublished essay "Objects, Names, and Realism in the *Tractatus*". He brings out how we picture the problem here: we think of it in terms of a kind of external perspective: the set of objects here, the names we want to use for them in our language there, how do we get determinate relations between these objects and those names? If we picture the problem this way, then the idea of a mind-forged connection seems to be forced on us. Goldfarb brings out that the kind of response Winch makes, which treats objects as purely formal, as given wholly by their logical possibilities, itself

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23. It may be that the source of the problem here is that Winch thinks that, if there is anything left for us to know of *who* or *what* our words mean, once we are clear about how the words are used, then only some kind of mental act will establish the necessary connections. And he takes it that, when Wittgenstein says that nothing is said about the *Bedeutung* of our words in making clear their logical syntax, that is because nothing further, nothing beyond *how* the words are used, *need* be specified in order for them to have their determinate *Bedeutung*. But we can make clear who or what we are talking about by using words or gestures. Logical syntax does not involve specific mention of *Bedeutung*, not because how words are used includes what they refer to, but because words which are used in the same way may mean this or that distinct item of the relevant logical sort: establishing *which one* is just something different from fixing *how* the signs are used. That this is Wittgenstein's view is clear in his account of what it is to talk nonsense: it is to use a word to which no *Bedeutung* has been assigned. "Socrates is identical" is nonsense because no adjectival meaning has been given to "identical" (5.4733). This supposes that, for the sentence to make sense, we need both a determinate 'how' of the use of "identical" (adjective applicable to persons) and some determinate 'what'; fixing the former doesn't in and of itself fix the latter.

involves a shadow of the very perspective that Hacker invokes. Goldfarb's alternative response to readings like Hacker's allows that we can indeed make sense of the possibility of different objects of the same logical form, but the sense we can make of it is available to us only through language. The *Tractatus* understanding of different objects of the same logical form gives us nothing to which we can suppose a capacity to mean one rather than the other could *attach*, once we try to think away the modes of representation of objects within language. Thus, as Goldfarb sees it, the philosophical picture of possible ambiguity in our names is itself confused; it involves adding to the *Tractatus* conception of simple objects an idea of inherent distinctions between the objects, distinctions which are not differences in form. But Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the idea of our being thus able to distinguish between objects of the same form:

> Either a thing has properties that nothing else has, in which case we can straightaway use a description to distinguish it from the others [sc. other things with the same logical form]; or … there are several things that have the whole set of their properties in common, in which case it is quite impossible to indicate one of them.
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> For if there is nothing to distinguish a thing, I cannot distinguish it, since if I do it would be distinguished after all. (2.02331)[25]

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24. The view which Malcolm ascribes to Wittgenstein is not a simple Russellian view, but shares the basic features of such a view, and I mean to include it in my reference to 'something like a Russellian view'. Malcolm's reading responds, or tries to, to Winch's insistence that the *Tractatus* holds that names have meaning only in propositions. Malcolm tries to combine the contextualist principle expressed by Wittgenstein at 3.3 with what is at its root basically the Russellian idea that you apprehend an object and correlate it with a name (1986, p. 28). The difference from Russell is that the act of correlation is not allowed to occur on its own, but only in one's thinking that such-and-such is so. Nevertheless, the correlation is taken to involve an apprehension of an object such that the nature of the object determines the syntax of any sign that means that object. Having the Russellian correlation occur in the context of thinking that something is so does not avoid the problem to which Winch was trying to direct Malcolm's attention: the correlation still involves essentially a kind of mental contact with it, a mental contact which is not itself propositional but which supposedly underlies our capacity to make propositions about it. In terms of Winch's basic understanding of the *Tractatus*, this kind of supposed contact with objects violates the *Tractatus* commitment to logic as looking after itself, for it gives logic a foundation: it provides a standard to which the logic of our language is responsible.

Hacker is right in seeing an important flaw in Winch's reading, but wrong in taking it to be what he calls a fatal flaw. It would be a fatal flaw, only if both Winch and Hacker were right in taking it that *either* objects are metaphysically prior to names, and acts of mental correlation of some sort connecting names with these objects are postulated by the *Tractatus or* objects are associated with logical forms in such a way that to establish the logical form of a name fully determines what object it means. Following Goldfarb on this, I think we need to drop the idea that those are the two alternatives between which we have to choose.

5. Winch and formalism

I have been trying to show that Winch's reading of the *Tractatus* is illuminating in the importance it gives to the idea of logic not needing any foundation, and is sound in the connections it makes between that idea and the rejection of the Malcolm package, the package of metaphysical foundation tied by mental processes to the intelligible use of the propositions of our language. I have tried to show that the valid points made in criticism of Winch by Hacker do not affect the central issues. Winch saw Wittgenstein early

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25. (Pears–McGuinness translation, slightly modified.) In the version of this paper prepared for the Swansea conference honouring Winch, I included a long parenthetical note on Hacker's views in his 1999, and on the response to such views implicit in Goldfarb's discussion. The issues are ramified and complex, and cannot be gone into here. I had attempted to find some way of reading Hacker which would make his account compatible with Wittgenstein's saying, at 2.02331, that objects of the same form that don't differ in external properties cannot be distinguished. But in his 2001 comments, Hacker says ("Postscript", p. 190) that Wittgenstein doesn't assert anywhere that objects with the same logical form can be distinguished only if they differ in their external properties. His argument rests partly on the analogy between colours and the simple objects of the *Tractatus*. The analogy has its uses, but also its limits; and no use of the analogy can settle whether objects with the same logical form and the same external properties are distinguishable, since if the colour-analogy suggests that they can be distinguished, it runs athwart Wittgenstein's denial at 2.02331 that they can be. What is explicitly said about objects has to fix the limits of the analogy. On 2.02331, see also Kenny, A. *Wittgenstein*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973, p. 73: any pair of simple objects may differ in logical form *or* may share logical form but differ in external properties *or* may share logical form and have corresponding external properties, being in that case indiscernible though numerically distinct.

and late as concerned to enable us to avoid yielding to the temptations to metaphysics; so it is an essential part of his rejection of the two-Wittgenstein view to reject the idea it rests on, of an unspeakable metaphysical theory as central in the *Tractatus*. In the rest of this essay, I shall touch on two problems, two related problems, in his reading of the *Tractatus*.

Winch began his 1992 essay, "Persuasion", by arguing for the importance of the Preface to the *Tractatus*, and Wittgenstein's description there of the aim of the book as drawing from inside language the limits of language and hence of thought. Winch adds that Wittgenstein's point is that we must observe a limit to what can be expressed because everything beyond the limit will be simply nonsense. The *Tractatus* is trying to show, he says, "that the real nature of the distinction between sense and nonsense is obscured by pervasive misunderstandings about the nature of logic" (p. 123). My question concerns the idea that the *Tractatus* aims to clarify the real nature of the distinction between sense and nonsense: the distinction has been obscured and the *Tractatus* will get it straight. But did Wittgenstein think that there was a philosophical task of getting straight the distinction between sense and nonsense? I believe that Winch took the answer to be Yes; and that he was here following Rush Rhees, who had discussed the issue in 1960, in his review of Anscombe's *Introduction to Wittgenstein's* Tractatus.[26] Rhees's interpretation of the *Tractatus* took as central the idea that in logic there is nothing that is arbitrary; and someone's taking some group of signs to be an intelligible proposition cannot therefore be a matter of, say, its seeming to say something to her. Rhees says that that would make it arbitrary. For there genuinely to be intelligible propositions, expressions which genuinely do express some sense, there must be a general rule by which we distinguish sense and nonsense; and the *Tractatus* is an attempt to make clear what that general distinction is (1960, p. 26). This seems to me to throw us back into obscurity. For what the *Tractatus* tells us is that, if a combination of signs is nonsensical, this can only be because we have given no meaning to some or other of those signs (5.4733). Now, presumably Wittgenstein did not think that you need the *Tractatus* to tell you that if there is some sign with no

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26. Rhees, R. "Miss Anscombe on the *Tractatus*". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1960): pp. 21–31. Reprinted in Rhees, 1970*,* pp. 1–15.

meaning in some combination of signs that looks as if it were meant to be a sentence, then the whole combination is not a senseful sentence. In other words, it looks as if, whatever the *Tractatus* may be telling us about what our senseful propositions are, what it is saying about nonsensical ones draws directly on a way of spotting meaninglessness which we had all along. To spot a meaningless sentence by spotting a meaningless word in it is not to apply some general principle discovered for us in the *Tractatus* for spotting meaninglessness. Rhees has another questionable view in this same essay, that I think blocks him from seeing how Wittgenstein thought of sense and nonsense, and I think Winch picked up both ideas. The second questionable view comes up when Rhees argues against Anscombe's reading of the *Tractatus*, according to which any propositional sign can be used to express the opposite sense to the sense we use it to express. Rhees says that, according to the *Tractatus*, a sign "says what it does because it is the sign that it is … And if the sign is the same, then it says the same – true or false" (p. 29). We cannot use that sign to express the opposite sense (pp. 30–31).

It is not immediately clear how Rhees's two ideas hang together, so let me explain. Rhees's idea is that the propositional sign, which is the sign it is in this system, says what it does through the general rule through which the signs in that system have their sense. I have mentioned Wittgenstein's idea that the only way for a combination of signs, a possible proposition, to have no sense is for us not to have assigned a meaning to one or other of the words in it. That view of nonsense takes for granted that a sign can be the sign it is, and have sense or have no sense, and that a combination of signs can be used, depending on what meaning we assign the words, to express this or that different sense. The sign can be the same, and not necessarily have the particular sense it does, and not necessarily have sense. Once Rhees reads into the *Tractatus* the idea that a sign says what it does because it is the sign it is, he cannot have room for the idea that nonsense is nonsense because we have failed to assign some meaning to a sign although we could do so. Instead you get his idea that the combinations of signs that do express propositional sense are all and only those which are picked out through a general rule. Rhees's reading is, I think, impossible in that it conflicts with a good number of explicit statements in the *Tractatus* which make clear that Wittgenstein distinguishes between a sign's being capable of expressing a sense and its actually expressing a sense, and also that we can use proposi-

tional signs so that their sense is reversed (4.5, 4.062–4.0621, 5.473–5.4733). So there is a link between Rhees's ideas: between his idea of the need for a general rule for distinguishing between sense and nonsense and the idea that, if a sign is used to express a sense, it cannot be the case that that sign might have no sense or some other sense. Rhees sees the *Tractatus* as informing us of a general rule picking out all senseful combinations of signs, signs which in being the sign they are, have the sense they do.

Does that sound at all familiar? I think it is in play in Winch's idea that I earlier argued was mistaken, that in the *Tractatus* what a name names is internal to the logical syntax of the name, the idea that reference is given entirely if you know *how* a sign is used. This was, we could say, a formalist interpretation of what reference is on the *Tractatus* view, and I think it is tied to what you could call a formalist account of what it is for a combination of signs to be senseful. Rhees's remark that if the sign is the same it says the same: this takes the formal characteristics of a sign fully to determine, in accordance with a general rule, both whether it has a sense and what the sense is. There is a streak of formalism in Rhees's and Winch's reading of the *Tractatus*. I think it is generated by a good true understanding of the importance in the *Tractatus* of logic not being arbitrary and of logic not having any standard or basis external to itself in some kind of metaphysical given. But Rhees and Winch fear that the idea of our giving meaning to the words of a sentence which could express this or that sense, or the idea of our using a combination of signs to express the reverse of the sense it has, leaves an opening for mentalist readings, and for the idea of a metaphysical given. But, in all honesty, I'd have to say that, if the only reading of the *Tractatus* that allowed for our being able to use combinations of signs to express different senses were the mentalist reading, one would have to accept that the mentalist reading was right. The formalist reading is out-and-out inconsistent with the text. One could even say that the strength of the mentalist reading is that, if one sees only two alternatives, mentalism and formalism, formalism is in even bigger trouble with the texts than is mentalism.

A crucial element in this formalist reading, as we find it in Rhees and Winch, is the idea that the *Tractatus* aims to clarify the nature of the distinction between sense and nonsense, the idea being that it aims to provide a general rule, a general principle for making the distinction. A more accurate conception of the aim of the *Tractatus* in regard to the distinction between

sense and nonsense would, I think, be this: its aim is to lead us to recognise that in doing philosophy our ordinary capacity to descry nonsense has been suspended.[27] Rhees's formalist reading, as expressed in the 1960 review of Anscombe, is close to an even stronger formalist view in notes that he wrote at roughly the same time: namely that the distinction between sense and nonsense is the distinction between signs which are intelligible and signs which cannot say anything, signs to which no reality could correspond.[28] The passage in the notes is valuable in showing the link between the idea of a general rule through which senseful propositions can be recognised as such and the idea that there are sign-combinations that can express no sense. As I said, the formalist interpretation is plainly incompatible with *Tractatus* texts; the expression of it in Rhees's notes has a particularly evident clash with Wittgenstein's idea that there are combinations of signs, possible propositions, that would be propositions if we assigned an appropriate meaning to the words, and with Wittgenstein's idea that what makes a combination of signs meaningless is simply that we have failed to make an assignment of meaning: there are no combinations which cannot be given a sense.

I have ascribed a formalist reading to Winch, seeing it as tied to his idea that the *Tractatus* seeks to provide a general account of the relation between sense and nonsense. In one of the plainest expressions of his formalism, Winch first says that we cannot establish that a sentence is senseless through some kind of comparison with a non-linguistic something-or-other that could serve as a standard of sense, as for example the intrinsic possibilities of objects. His argument continues: "We can make the distinction only by referring to … features of the expressions themselves" (1987, p. 7). But this hardly follows. Winch simply disallows the idea that a combination of signs can be discovered by us to be meaningless, not because there are features of the expressions which make clear its meaninglessness, and not because it does not represent some intrinsic possibility of combination of metaphysically given objects, but because we have not done something, have not

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27. See also Kremer, M. "The Purpose of *Tractarian* Nonsense". *Noûs* 35 (2001): pp. 39–73.

28. Rhees, R. *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, ed. D.Z. Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; p. 55.

made clear what the *Bedeutung* is of one or other of our signs. Winch sees only the two alternatives: sensefulness determined ultimately by the relation to metaphysically given possibilities and sensefulness determined by features of the expressions themselves.[29] But, when Wittgenstein first mentions the general propositional form, he explicitly says that it provides a specification such that every symbol satisfying the specification can express a sense, *einen Sinn ausdrücken kann*, provided meanings for the names are accordingly chosen (4.5). What belongs to the symbols, then, is just the possibility of expressing a sense; whether a particular symbol does express a sense cannot be seen in the symbol itself. The formalist reading rebounds from the idea of sensefulness being dependent on metaphysical possibilities to the idea of it as internal to the expressions themselves. This view is read into the *Tractatus*, despite the wording of 4.5, a central remark.

6. Another problem with Winch's reading

What I have objected to as Winch's formalism is his move from rejecting the Malcolm package (the package that treats the sensefulness of sentences as dependent ultimately on a connection with metaphysical possibilities prior to language and that treats the meaningfulness of names as dependent on mind-forged connections with objects) to the idea that whether a sentence has sense is dependent on internal features of the signs and that what the signs in it mean is a matter of the syntax of those signs. In this section I turn to a problem with Winch's reading that I believe is connected with his formalism. He wrote: "What the opening remarks of the *Tractatus* do is to establish certain fundamental features of the 'logical syntax' of [the terms 'world', 'fact' and 'object'] by exhibiting their use in relation to each other in sentences", and he added that the process is subsequently extended to 'picture', 'thought', 'proposition' and 'name' (1987, p. 8; cf. also 1994, p. 133 n. 11).[30] I don't think this can be right.

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29. Cf. also Rhees, 1998, pp. 55–7. The idea appears to be that, if the distinction between sense and nonsense did not rest on there being combinations of signs that could not express a sense, we should need to investigate the connection between a combination of signs and reality to see whether it did express a sense; we should need to look at reality to find out whether we were talking sense.

What suggests that there is something the matter with Winch's view is that the words 'world', 'fact' and 'object', as they occur in the opening propositions of the *Tractatus*, are not used in those propositions as ordinary-language equivalents of variables, but Wittgenstein holds that the way these words do function in ordinary senseful propositions is essentially as variables. Thus he does actually specify the logical syntax of the word 'object' much later in the *Tractatus*, giving as an example its use in 'There are two objects which …' (4.1272). In a more revealing notation, this would be expressed through the use of quantifiers and variables, and the word 'object' would disappear. If sentences like 'There are two objects which …' exhibit the use of 'object', as Wittgenstein sees it, then his own use of the word 'object' in the propositions of the *Tractatus* does not bring out how the word is used; quite the contrary. *Tractatus* sentences cannot be replaced by sentences in conceptual notation in which the word 'object' is replaced by a variable. So it follows that, whatever exactly the propositions using that word are doing in the *Tractatus*, one thing they are not doing is exhibiting features of the use of the word 'object'. Wittgenstein also has certain general principles about how you make clear the use of some symbol: you do this by providing a variable the values of which are the propositions which contain the symbol. The opening remarks of the *Tractatus* do no such thing. It might be said that what Wittgenstein is doing in *Tractatus* propositions about objects, proposi- tions, etc., is explaining the use of words like 'object' 'proposition' etc., despite his claim that that isn't how it should be done. But that would need some argument, given that the remarks in question use the words allegedly being explained in ways which do not exhibit the central features of their use. I think that Winch's questionable account of what the *Tractatus* remarks are doing is connected with his formalism, and in particular with his under- standing of what it is for a proposition to be nonsensical. The formalist read- ing that Winch shares with Rhees takes nonsensical propositions to be nonsense, not on account of some failure on our part to give the signs

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30. Cf. also Rhees's statement that the *Tractatus* remarks that the name means the object, and that it deputises in propositions for the object, "belong to the grammar of the words 'name' and 'object' and proposition'" (Rhees, R. "'Ontology' and Identity in the *Tractatus*". In *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Peter Winch. London: Routledge, 1969, pp. 51–65; p. 53. Reprinted in Rhees, 1970, pp. 23–36.)

meaning, but on account of the combinations of signs itself. If we presuppose that kind of reading, and we read Wittgenstein's remark that his own propositions are nonsense, we will take them to be nonsense through some formal features. And it is natural then to take it that through their formal features, they are not experiential propositions, but explications of formal characteristics of ordinary propositions.

The formalist kind of reading encourages us not to look into the issue of the clarity of the *Tractatus* remarks. Is there a kind of unclarity in these remarks, that is tied to why they are called nonsense by Wittgenstein? I am not going to develop arguments for this view here, but I think we should take seriously the idea that Wittgenstein is using remarks that have a kind of unclarity in them that we do not at first recognise, and that he intends that this unclarity be recognised.

The idea here would have to be worked out with examples, and that's why I cannot do more than gesture in the direction of what I think is involved.[31] But let us take very briefly the *Tractatus* remark (5.54) that, in the general propositional form, propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations. Wittgenstein discusses an apparent exception as well. But consider 5.54 itself. It quantifies over propositions, so let us look at what it appears to imply. It looks as if it implies, if we take some proposition, say 'My father came from a far-off country', that that occurs in other propositions only as the base of truth-operations. But there are cultures in which sentences are used as names. Suppose a member of such a culture were called 'My father came from a far-off country'. We should hardly want to ascribe to the *Tractatus* the view that that name occurs in other propositions only as a base for operations. It occurs only in contexts suitable for names of persons. So of what do we want to say that *it* occurs only as the base of truth-operations? We do not want to say it of the words, of the sign merely as a sign. We want to say it of a sign used to express a proposition; we want to say it of the symbol. In the case of a proposition like *TLP* 5.54, if

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31. For further discussion of some of the issues here, see Diamond, C. (2004) "Saying and Showing: An Example from Anscombe". In *Post-Analytic* Tractatus, ed. Barry Stocker. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, pp. 151–66, and Diamond, C. (2004) "Criss-cross Philosophy". In *Wittgenstein at Work: Method in the* Philosophical Investigations, ed. Erich Ammereller and Eugen Fischer. London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 201–20.

we were to clarify it, to clarify the symbols we want to talk about, we should at the same time make clear the contexts in which we are quantifying over such symbols, quantifying over propositions. What will emerge is that there are two sorts of context in which we quantify, or attempt to quantify, using the word 'propositions'. One kind of case is exemplified by 'There are no true propositions on p. 154 of Russell's *Portraits from Memory*', which says roughly that whatever it says is so on that page isn't so: if it says on p. 154 that p, then not p, if it says that q then not q, etc. (The analysis of 'it says on p. 154 that p', is also involved in this kind of case). So there are some sentences quantifying over propositions, which can be clarified and connected with our ordinary capacities to use signs expressing propositions. These will be sentences in which the word 'proposition' is working as an ordinary-language substitute for a variable the values of which are propositions, sayings that something is so. There is another kind of attempt to quantify, using the word 'proposition', exemplified by Proposition 5.54 of the *Tractatus*. As we work out what it was we were attempting to talk about there, the items of which we were saying they can only occur in other propositions as the base of truth operations, we discover that they are not being quantified over in 5.54, which does not contain the variable that we can see in 'Whatever it says is so on p. 154 is not so'. There is a kind of incoherence in 5.54 that can be revealed as we work forward from our recognition that, in using 5.54, we do not want to quantify over signs, which we could do, and that, if we what we want is to quantify over symbols which express propositions, we can do that too, but we are not doing it in contexts like 5.54. The attempt to clarify 5.54 reveals a kind of failure on our part to mean anything by the word 'proposition' in it.

As I said, this is a gesture towards an argument, rather than an argument. What it is meant to bring out is two things: there is no easy way to take the propositions of the *Tractatus* to be exhibiting the grammar of words like 'object' or 'proposition' or any of the other big words of the *Tractatus*, and secondly that a formalist approach doesn't invite us to pursue the question whether there is a built-in unclarity reflected in the use of formal terms as if they were proper concept-words. Wittgenstein says that the attempt to do so results in nonsense; my point is that it is not just that there is some general rule that makes these *Tractatus* remarks count as nonsense. There is a real

failure of clarity in them which is tied to our operating with a blur between sign and symbol in them.

I think Winch is right in taking one of the aims of the *Tractatus* to be a kind of grammatical clarification; but the question *how* this clarification is supposed to be achieved is more complex than he allows. Wittgenstein's understanding of clarification is tied tightly to his idea of presenting through a variable the features which propositions may share, and thus to his conception in the *Tractatus* of the generality of a variable. The treatment of generality is one of the most important regions of philosophy in which Wittgenstein's later ideas involved dramatic rethinkings of what he had earlier done. Winch and Rhees are particularly emphatic about this precise point. But their formalism, it seems to me, blocks the full realisation of how this change works.

7. The significance of Winch's philosophical practice

I have argued for the importance of Winch's writings in pioneering a way of looking at Wittgenstein's work. He wanted to make available a true understanding of Wittgenstein's achievement, but such an understanding was blocked, he thought, by the idea of early and later Wittgenstein as two philosophers. In particular he wanted us to see what he called the radical nature of Wittgenstein's thinking, early and late. This recognition of the radical nature of Wittgenstein's thought marks his own philosophical work, on Wittgenstein and on everything else.

I have focused on some of his arguments, concerned with the aims of the *Tractatus*. But those arguments have to be taken together with his own practice. In his practice of philosophy you see him applying his conception of how Wittgenstein's work hangs together. Hence, in a sense, the best argument for his conception of Wittgenstein is not really a direct argument. It is in essays like "*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*" that the power of his reading of Wittgenstein is exhibited.[32] I have in mind specifically the discussion in that essay of Wittgenstein on generality, on where we have to look to see the kind of generality involved in our understanding of human suffering. The

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32. Winch, P. "*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 81 (1981), pp. 1–15. Reprinted in *Trying to Make Sense*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp. 140–53.

essay does not mention Malcolm, but it has very clearly in it Winch's thought about what is inadequate in Malcolm's treatment of Wittgenstein on pain and our responses to it.[33] He took the inadequacy of that treatment to be tied to Malcolm's failure to see how the exploration of logical generality links Wittgenstein's early and later work. My point here is that you cannot evaluate Winch's conception of the unity of Wittgenstein on the basis of his arguments alone: his own way of exploring issues like the concept of a human being is itself equally what you have to look at. For it shows what he took really to be at stake.

I have tried to bring out Winch's extraordinary capacity to go back and rethink and rework what he had done earlier in philosophy. There is a great unity in his own philosophy: in the spirit in which he approached philosophical problems, in the kind of philosophical seriousness that is so particularly clear in the essays I have been discussing.[34]

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33. See Winch's later discussion, in his 1997.

34. I profited greatly from the discussion of an early version of this essay at the conference at the University of Wales, Swansea, in 1999, honouring Peter Winch. I am also grateful for comments and suggestions from Kevin Cahill, James Conant, Michael Kremer and Alois Pichler.