

HOW TO FOLLOW A RULE:  
PRACTICE BASED RULE FOLLOWING IN WITTGENSTEIN

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **HOW TO FOLLOW A RULE: PRACTICE BASED RULE FOLLOWING IN WITTGENSTEIN**

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Rule following is a central concept in the philosophy of Wittgenstein who was one of the pioneers of modern philosophy. Wittgenstein criticizes the traditional concepts of rule, because they were vague, ambiguous, and idealized. He thinks that it is not possible to isolate rules from practice and that a rule takes its meaning in a certain context or in practice.

Wittgenstein's concept of rule following is closely related to a set of concepts: internal relation, understanding, criterion. These concepts explain the intimate relation between rule following and practice. Wittgenstein believes that his theory of rule following does not generate some problems such as paradox of interpretation and regression.

Furthermore, the concept of practice plays a central role in Wittgenstein's view of rule following. He removes metaphysical speculations that are put forward concerning the "essence" of rule following and locates rule following in a form of life, that is in a natural context. With this, he provides an explanation that clarifies misuses of language and establishes a correct relation between theory and practice.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, Rule Following, Practice, Understanding, Interpretation.

## ÖZ

### KURAL NASIL TAKİP EDİLİR: WITTGENSTEIN'DA PRATİK TEMELLİ KURAL TAKİBİ

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Kural takip etme, modern felsefenin öncülerinden biri olan Wittgenstein'in felsefesinde temel bir kavramdır. Wittgenstein geleneksel kural kavramlarını, kapalı, belirsiz ve idealize edilmiş olmaları nedeniyle eleştirir. O kuralları pratikten soyutlamanın mümkün olmadığını, bir kuralın anlamını belli bir bağlamdan ya da pratikten aldığı düşünür.

Wittgenstein'in kural takip etme kavramı bir dizi kavramla yakından ilişkilidir: içsel ilişki, anlama, kriter. Bu kavramlar kural takip etme ve pratik arasındaki yakın ilişkiyi açıklarlar. Wittgenstein kendi kuramının, yorumdan kaynaklanan paradoks ve zincirleme sorunlarını doğurmadığını düşünür.

Ayrıca uygulama kavramı Wittgenstein'in kural takip etme kuramında temel bir rol oynar. Wittgenstein kural takip etmenin "özüne" dair ileri sürülen metafiziksel spekülasyonları ortadan kaldırır ve kuralı, bir yaşam biçimi, yani doğal bir bağlam içine yerleştirir. Bu sayede, o dili yanlış kullanımlardan arındıran, teori ve pratik arasında doğru bir ilişki kuran bir açıklama sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Wittgenstein, Kural Takibi, Uygulama, Anlama, Yorum.

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*To memory of my grandmother*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- TLP* *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 1961).
- PG* *Philosophical Grammar*, edit. By R. Rhees, trans. by A. Kenny (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).
- BB* *The Blue and Brown Books*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1958).
- OC* *On Certainty*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969).
- LFM* *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics Cambridge 1939*, ed. C.Diamond (Chicago, The University of Chicago, 1976).
- RFM* *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, edit by. G.H. von Wright and R.Rhees and G.E.M. Anscombe (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983).
- PI* *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. R.Rhees and G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Blackwell, 1958).
- Z* *Zettel*, edit by G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Berkeley: University of California, 1970).

## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Language is a rule-based system and a proper understanding of language entails a comprehensive investigation of grammatical rules. However, this is not the kind of rules that philosophers have in mind, when they say that language is a rule-governed system. What they have in mind is the philosophical aspects of rules, which are not examined or explained in ordinary grammar books. A native speaker does not need to consult the grammar rules each time she speaks, since she already has an intuitive grasp of them. However, most people, if asked to formulate the rules which they use, would be hard pressed to know what to say. They might perhaps offer examples, but this does not amount to a statement that formulates a rule or explains how to follow a rule. It is suggested that if rules are not properly understood, then they generate confusions concerning logical symbolism, grammar, and the relations between rules and mental functions. This thesis discusses some of these philosophical confusions and Wittgenstein's "dissolution" of them.

Despite the fact that rules are discussed extensively in the history of philosophy, the concept of *rule following* has become prominent mainly because of Wittgenstein's treatment of this topic in *Philosophical Investigations*. Although Wittgenstein does not give an explicit definition of rule, his analysis presupposes a basic grasp of this concept. Wittgenstein believes that philosophy is not concerned with hidden mechanisms, calculi, or foundations and that there is nothing to be discovered or explained in philosophy. (*PI* §126) Wittgenstein discusses the notion of rule or rule following in connection with the concept of language games. He tries to show what rule following involves by investigating how rules are actually used in different language games.

In Chapter 1, I first compare the traditional concept of rule and that of Wittgenstein. Since Wittgenstein's later period is a rejection of traditional Platonist

concept of rule as well as his early theory of language in the *Tractatus*, I explain the main aspects of Platonist theory of language that came under Wittgenstein's criticism. This section is followed by the exposition of concept of rule in the *Tractatus*; and then, I give Wittgenstein's critiques of Platonist and the Tractarian concept of rules.

The traditional Platonist view assumes that facts are independent of human language, thinking, and acting. Facts exist actually and timelessly. They cannot be different from the way they are. Language has an external or transcendent quality, which is similar to that of ideas. Due to this quality, language and its rules (grammar) are independent of human practices. In a similar way, early Wittgenstein proposed a concept of language that was independent of human activities; the rules of language reflect metaphysical necessities that are hidden from view.

In the *Tractatus*, rules were thought to mirror the logical structure of the world. The gap between language and the world is overcome by means of rules. To our surprise, Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* calls the Platonist and the Tractarian concept of language as "mythological." They are mythological, he claims, because they suggest a link between mind and language that does not exist. In his later works and particularly in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein rejects this supposed link and argues that language consists not of abstract rules but a set of activities. In these works, he believes that the problems of language may be explained away, not by establishing certain abstract and necessary rules for grammar, but by investigating linguistic practices.

In Chapter 2, I examine some key terms of rule following, such as interpretation, internal relation, understanding, and criteria, which form a web of concept of rule following. There is a claim that understanding a sign means being able to give an *interpretation*. This makes interpretation a necessary element for understanding a sign. First, I analyze a suggestion that interpretation fills the so-called gap between rule and its application and determines what conforms to the rule. Wittgenstein questions this suggestion in *Philosophical Investigations* and scrutinizes interpretation under two headings: paradox and regression of interpretation. The problem of paradox and regression stem from the idea that grasping a rule always is an interpretation.

Second, I discuss whether the concept of *internal relation* is a solution for the problem of paradox and regression. This term is an important contribution of Wittgenstein to the discussions concerning rule following. According to Wittgenstein, it is a mistake to think that what determines the applications of a rule is something other than the rule itself, since to introduce a third element mediating between a rule and its applications (for instance, an interpretation) would be not only unnecessary but also damaging for the direct internal relation. Once a rule is detached from its applications, an unbridgeable gap between the rule and its application is introduced; and this gap is filled with some mediating elements. Wittgenstein claims that there is an internal unmediated relation between a rule and its application; no intermediary can be interpolated between them. According to him, what makes rule governed behavior different from meaningless reflex is that the former involves the grasping of internal unmediated relation between a rule and its application. Application establishes an internal relation between a rule and its possible uses. Since Wittgenstein assumes that meaning is use, application and internal relation are necessary for the meaning of words and their use.

Third, I emphasize a tendency in philosophy to identify the case of *understanding* with association or correlation of an expression by an entity in mind. An example of such a tendency is the empiricist theory of meaning. According to this theory, a word has a set of ideas associated with that word. Another example is truth conditional semantics. This theory identifies the meaning of a simple expression with the assignment of a semantic value by correlating it with an object under some interpretation. It treats case of understanding as grasping this interpretation. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein claims that the identification of meaning with some kind of entity or some kind of interpretation, and the identification of understanding with a state or a mental process comes to a dead end. It is a mistake, for Wittgenstein, to think of understanding of a rule as something prior to and independent of actual applications, like “a state which is the source of the correct use.” (*PI* §146)

Finally, in Chapter 2, I examine the concept of *criteria*. Wittgenstein’s contribution to this term is significant, for it runs against a very long philosophical tradition. It has been assumed that things have single essences that can be expressed by linguistic formulas. This assumption has been accepted both by the philosophers

who conceive philosophy as discovering the real natures of entities and by the analytic philosophers who aim only at stating precisely the necessary conditions for the application of some linguistic expression. By bringing the concept of criterion into discussion, Wittgenstein does not aim at explaining the natures of things, and criteria cannot be understood to imply logically certain necessary conditions. The rules of our language, according to Wittgenstein, cannot be strict like a calculus.

In Chapter 3, I want to mention the relation between the concept of rule following and practice. I emphasize the concept of practice, since it appears to be a key concept in understanding Wittgenstein's view of rule following. The concept of practice will be studied under four sections. I first explain the background feature of practice and its relation to Wittgensteinian term "form of life." Wittgenstein argues that without background practices, we could draw no distinction between correct and incorrect uses of language. Following rules is an activity that we understand against the background practices. Languages are not fixed or determined by rules in any sense of the term rule. The structure of our practices is so fundamental that we cannot plan to go on without them intact.

This section will be followed by analyzing the relation between the concept of regularity and rule following. Regularity is a background requirement for language use without which there could be no meanings and no rules. A rule is manifested in practice only when humans agree in what they do and in how they assess their actions regularly. One can make sense assuming that words can be repeated meaningfully and this comes through a practice that can supply the standards for correct use. Right regular behavior is the criterion for the mastery of a technique, and we grasp regularity with this technique.

In this section, I will also deal with David Bloor's sociological account of rule following and analyze whether this account is appropriate to Wittgenstein's concept of rule following. Bloor's sociological interpretation construes the concept of rule following something like a form of the traditional accounts of rule. According to Bloor, concepts of "rule" and "practice" are candidates for an adequate social theory. He interprets Wittgenstein's statement of rule following as a blind, automatic and caused act. He sees, in Wittgenstein, a social theory of knowledge and so he wants to see rules as social objects and then requires a third external element to

bridge the gap between rules and their applications. It is an important component of Bloor's interpretation of the rule following that the relation between rules and their applications are implicitly sociological. Bloor claims that a rule requires a social factor in order to decide what the right application is.

In the third section, I will try to answer the question whether rule following is normative or not. Understanding a rule is the ability to apply that rule correctly, to know how to go on. This ability to apply rules includes the ability to explain, justify, or criticize actions. These abilities may be called normative; they form normative characteristics of rule following. Thus, rule following involve more than simply a regularity of behavior; namely, normative concepts cannot be reduced to non-normative dispositions. In order for a rule to be followed, a rule must have multiple applications; and this is one of its essential features. Only if a rule has multiple applications, can it actually possess a normative value, be applied correctly and incorrectly. A language whose rules could not be applied in both ways (e.g. correctly and incorrectly) cannot be normative.

Finally, I will explain that moral responsibility is an essential aspect of rule following, an aspect that is not properly investigated hitherto. It seems that Wittgenstein's rule following implies a moral responsibility. To understand rule following as a practice with moral responsibility may highlight previously ignored features of human beings, knowledge, and action in the world.

In this thesis, I have three major goals mainly: one is to examine the concept of rule following as it is addressed by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Unfortunately this goal has certain difficulties, since there is no agreement among philosophers on how we should read Wittgenstein's treatment of rule following. My other goal in the thesis is to examine whether the later Wittgenstein succeeded in destroying "the mythologized" and abstract theories of the rule. This is important because it grounds Wittgenstein's arguments against a Platonist, idealistic, skeptic, conventionalist and relativist positions regarding the concept of rule following. The final goal is to investigate whether there is a possible normative element derivable from concept of rule following.



## CHAPTER 1

### WITTGENSTEIN'S CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF RULE

It is generally assumed that Wittgenstein developed two different concepts of rules; in his early work *Tractatus*, he puts forward a theory of rule that is abstract, necessary, and determinate. In his later works, he abandons this concept and introduces a new one which is based on practice. It has also been argued that Wittgenstein's concept of rule in the *Tractatus* resembles that of Plato or Platonist tradition.<sup>1</sup> I suggest, in this chapter, that there is in fact a deep and important connection between Plato and early Wittgenstein, and a contrast between Plato and later Wittgenstein.

According to Plato, truths exist independently of our knowledge of them and we came to know these truths through using our intellectual and linguistic abilities. The reality (or ideas in Plato's terminology) is independent of the ways in which humans speak, think, or act. Language plays the role of a bridge that connects the world of ideas and the world in which we as humans live. Thus, language has an external or transcendent quality which is similar to that of ideas. Due to this quality, language and its rules (grammar) are independent of human practices. Hence, linguistic competence is related to the mind's ability to grasp ideas or forms.

Early Wittgenstein suggested a concept of language that was independent of human activities; the rules of language reflect metaphysical necessities and so are hidden from view. In the *Tractatus*, rules were thought to mirror the nature of objects and the logical structure of the world. In early Wittgenstein, there is a presupposition

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<sup>1</sup> Although Platonism is inspired by Plato, Platonism has not been completely concerned with historical details or Plato's writings. Rather it has been seen as a body of timeless truth or as a mental outlook of permanent validity. Platonism includes a doctrine of being in which the Forms, eternal, immutable, simple, perfect, and separate are the ultimate elements of the universe conceived as a metaphysical system. In this thesis, I use some of the dialogues of Plato, but I am more concerned with the Platonic tradition with respect to the concept of rule. For further information about Platonism see, D. A. Rees, "Platonism and the Platonic Tradition", *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol: 5-6, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. and the Free Press, 1967), pp. 333-341.

that rules of mind and order of world have the same structure. A consequence of this presupposition is that there is an interrelation between mind and world. Thus, the gap between language and the world is overcome by means of rules. The *Tractatus* proposes that there is *a priori* order of the world, and language projects this order by means of necessary rules. Wittgenstein envisioned that language contained an ideal order which consists of necessary rules, but this vision implies that ordinary words, names, sentences, and rules have unique metaphysical significance.

Later Wittgenstein calls these Platonist and the Tractarian concept of rules as “mythological.” They are mythological, he thinks, because they suggest a link between mind and language which does not exist. In contrast to these views, in his later works and particularly in *Philosophical Investigations*, he rejects this supposed link and argues that language consists not of abstract rules but a set of activity. He believes that the problem of languages may be explained away by investigating linguistic practices, not by establishing certain abstract and necessary rules for grammar.

Since Wittgenstein’s later period is partly a rejection of Platonist theory of language as well as his early theory of language in the *Tractatus*, I will first explain the aspects of Platonist theory of language which came under the criticism of Wittgenstein. This section will be followed by the Tractarian concept of rule and finally, I will give Wittgenstein’s criticism of these two theories.

### **1.1. The Concept of Rule in Platonism**

Language, for Plato, is inherently related with knowledge. He believes that someone knows something, only when he is able to give an account of what he knows.<sup>2</sup> (*Phaedo*, 76) Since language is one of the ways of giving an account of knowledge (i.e. to explain), it is inherently related to knowledge. In order to refer to the same reality, people need to describe what they experience, and for this they use words as tools. Words thus become instruments or bridges between us and other

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<sup>2</sup> Plato, “Phaedo”, trans. By Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1952), p.230; William J. Prior, ‘Plato and the “Socratic Fallacy”’, *Phronesis XLIII /2*, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, (1998) pp. 97-113.

human beings, but also as a means to knowledge. It is obvious in Platonist view that words have necessary inner connection with what they denote. It follows that if language is necessary for knowledge, then words could be a way to knowledge of reality. Although my main concern is not Plato's theory of name or reference, since I only am concerned with his theory in the context of Wittgenstein's criticism, it is important to give a brief account of what Plato understands from the relationship between names and their referents. In *Cratylus*, Plato investigates names and the nature of the relation between names and things. According to Plato, names signify real natures and are object dependent; names cannot signify unless they refer to something.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the function of a name is to denote its referent and the meaning of a term is exhausted by its referent. We can draw from this that a name is not meaningful unless its bearer exists.<sup>4</sup>

Plato's position is that there is an absolute reality independent of the human beings. Any particular thing on earth is an imperfect reflection of a perfect transcendental reality which we knew before birth.<sup>5</sup> Following Plato, if we accept that there is an independent reality, there are two possibilities for language: Either language reflects reality in the same way a mirror does or it is arbitrary and lacks any intrinsic link with reality. In the former case, language changes as reality changes (of course, this change is not in Ideal World). If language reflects reality directly, then we do not need any other means to understand reality. However, if language turns out to be arbitrary, then it will be not used in grasping reality, and we will need to find other ways of getting to know the real world.

Both positions have implications about language and human existence. If language turns out to mirror reality inevitably, then we have no freedom to use it as we choose. Therefore, we must unavoidably speak in accordance with the truth inherent in the world. On the other hand, if language is arbitrary, we are cut off from reality, but at the same time, we are free. We have freedom to speak or not in accordance with the reality. We can find two main problems in these two positions:

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<sup>3</sup> Christine J. Thomas, "Names, Thoughts and Objects in Plato's *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*" (Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate School of Cornell University, January 1999), p.2.

<sup>4</sup> Raphael Demos, "Symposium: Plato's Theory of Language", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Volume LXI, No.20, (October 29, 1964.), pp.595-610.

<sup>5</sup> Vivien Law, *The History of Linguistics in Europe from Plato to 1600*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.19.

one is that if language is necessary, then how we can explain the falsehood. Because it becomes impossible to speak falsehood, the other is that if the language is arbitrary, then truth is a matter of accident. This is the problem which Plato confined one of his dialogues, *Cratylus*.<sup>6</sup> I will try to explain Plato's position in the following passages.

Plato's dialogue of *Cratylus* opens with a discussion between naturalist and conventionalist theories about the source of language and proceeds to a refutation of a conventionalist (arbitrary) position regarding the correctness of names. Conventionalism claims that there is no "natural" correctness of names, beyond convention. In *Cratylus*, Hermogenes insists that:

I cannot believe that there is any other correctness of a name than compact and agreement. (*Cratylus*, 384)

Moreover, names can be changed at will without changing their truth or falsehood. An individual may give any name for any object. Thus, according to radical conventionalism, the assignment of names for the objects is arbitrary. Existing names may be changed without losing their truth values. There is no need for individuals and public to agree on the correct use of names. It is legitimate for an individual to call large what society calls small.<sup>7</sup> In contrary to conventionalism, Plato's project in the *Cratylus* is to search for a standard of correctness for names which is independent of our conventions and so can be used to evaluate them.<sup>8</sup>

In order to reach a standard for correctness of names, Plato proposed a contrast between the language of mortals and the language of gods. There are also two kinds of tests which the language of mortals needs to pass: internal and external tests. The internal test for the human language is consistency. Since there is no human language which passes this test, in other words, since each human language is marred with inconsistencies, then there is a need for external criteria. According to

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<sup>6</sup>Plato, "Cratylus", trans. By Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1952), pp.85-114; Plato, "Cratylus", *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, Trans. By Benjamin Jowett, ed. by Edith Hamilton, Huntington Cairns, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp.421-474.

<sup>7</sup>Raphael Demos, "Symposium: Plato's Theory of Language", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Volume LXI, No.20, (October 29, 1964), pp. 595-610.

<sup>8</sup>Rachel Barney, "Plato on conventionalism", *Phronesis* XLII /2, Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, (1997), pp.143-162.

Plato, the gods know the true names of things, and their language form the standard of correctness for names. Human language must submit itself to the test of their language in order to find out the correct account of the reality. “No man of sense will put his whole trust in words. We must look to something else in order to find the truth about things.” (*Cratylus*, 438-440)

Human language in itself cannot be taken the ultimate source for the correct use of names. Mere analysis of name or sentences will not take to the truth. In order to avoid self-inconsistency and find their correct use, we need an extra linguistic criterion. This criterion is for Plato is the divine language which shows the reality of things in the ideal world. In other words, there is an exit from language:

We may admit so much that the knowledge of things is not to be derived from names. No; they must be studied and investigated in themselves. (*Cratylus* 439)

Platonism suggests that the ultimate source of meaning cannot be the way people use their words. This source must be completely independent of people. Thus, according to Platonism, the problem of correct usage of words could be solved by maintaining that things are completely independent of linguistic activities.<sup>9</sup>

In short, conventionalism claims that names are arbitrary and man made, however, Plato rejects this position. According to him, there must be a necessary and non-arbitrary relation between names and Forms. An inference is valid, when we think the connections between names and Forms. Similarly, Plato holds that a sentence is true if the arrangement of its parts reflects or corresponds to a connection between Forms.<sup>10</sup> As we saw from his dialogues and especially *Cratylus*, Plato is more concerned to show what names signify than to show how names signify.

As we can understand from above remarks, according to Plato, to grasp a rule of language is to grasp an ideal model, since this grasping provides the necessary and standard use of words. Thus, a word derives its meaning from its connection to extra linguistic, abstract world. In fact, as a constructed abstract world, Plato wants to find an answer for the problem which usage is correct or incorrect in any expression.

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<sup>9</sup> Cludine Verheggen, “Wittgenstein’s *Rule Following* Paradox and the Objectivity of Meaning”, *Philosophical Investigations*, 26:4 (October 2003), pp.285-310.

<sup>10</sup> William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.20.

Because rules are grasped in connection with transcendental world, they are necessary and unchangeable; rules also determine all instances of a word's application. When we conceive an abstract rule, our conception usually seems to be something rather semantically opaque or indeterminate. Consequently, it needs to be interpreted before we can sort out its correct applications from incorrect ones.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in Platonist system, each interpretation again needs to be connected with some extra linguistic entity that provides it with meaning. Thus, grasping a rule is always an interpretation and a connection with ideal world, if we accept Platonism.<sup>12</sup>

If I understand Platonist view correctly, it can be said that the rule determines right and wrong moves, since it is necessary and in this case, it is as if all the steps had already been taken. (PI §219) This is a picture of rules as they are invisible rails which lead to infinity (PI §218); rules which are fixed in abstract or Platonic realm. Therefore, any given application of a rule is constituted independently of a human judge and so language is independent of human beings.

### **1.1.1. Wittgenstein's Critiques of Platonist Concept of Rule**

In contradistinction Plato, Wittgenstein claims that rules are not conceived independently of human linguistic practices and cannot provide standards for correct use. Wittgenstein explicitly refers to Plato in a few places in *Philosophical Investigations* and the section §46 seems to be the most important. At the beginning of this section, Wittgenstein asks the question "What lies behind the idea that names really signify simple?" and then answers quoting a passage from *Theaetetus*, in which he indicates a resemblance among Platonic names, Russell's individuals and his objects in the *Tractatus*. Although Wittgenstein does not elaborate on this resemblance, it is obvious that he does not approve the Platonic concept of names and his objects so far as they resemble to Platonic names. Wittgenstein believes that the relation between the names and their descriptions, i.e. explanations given for them is always an illusion. For Plato, the gap between a name and its description is

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<sup>11</sup> Cludine Verheggen, "Wittgenstein's Rule following Paradox and the Objectivity of Meaning", *Philosophical Investigations*, pp.285-310.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

bridged through an act of interpretation. For Wittgenstein, however, the need for interpretation creates a bigger problem; the problem of *ad infinitum*. While we are trying to glue the description to its name through an interpretation, we would need another interpretation to glue this time the description and the old interpretation. Furthermore, in each application of a name for its object, there is a need for a new interpretation.<sup>13</sup> In the following passages, I want to investigate Wittgenstein's critiques on Platonist idea of rule under three headings: a. Mathematics, b. Meaning and Use, and c. Justification.

### a. Mathematics

Since mathematical objects are names and abstract things that exist in the Ideal World, Plato believes that the mathematician is a discoverer of necessary mathematical essences not inventor of them.<sup>14</sup> Since forms in the Ideal world are the ultimate criteria for the correctness of names, one has to discover metaphysical connection between mind and forms. Wittgenstein, however, holds that "the mathematician is an inventor not a discoverer." (*RFM I* §168)<sup>15</sup> According to Wittgenstein, mathematical objects are part of the language and thus mathematical objects are not to be discovered. He believes that assimilating mathematical terms to names, and thinking that they are names of ideal or abstract objects is fundamental confusions in mathematics.<sup>16</sup> Words and mathematical objects, for him, should be looked as tools and their uses should be clarified in our language games. (*PI* § 10) In this sense, number words are mere tools or instruments for counting and measuring; they do not stand for entities that reside outside the language. For Wittgenstein the question "what are numbers?" is misleading one:

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<sup>13</sup> Carl Ginet, "Wittgenstein's Argument that One cannot Obey a Rule Privately", *Noûs*, Vol.4, No.4, (November, 1970), pp.349-365.

<sup>14</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.20.

<sup>15</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, edit by. G.H. von Wright & R.Rhees & G.E.M. Anscombe, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983), p.99; "The proof does not explore the essence of the two figures, but it does express what I am going to count as belonging to the essence of the figures from now on. I deposit what belongs to the essence among the paradigms of language. The mathematician creates essences" (*RFM I*-32).

<sup>16</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.12.

What is the meaning of the word “five”? - No such thing was in question here, only how the word “five” is used. (*PI* §1)  
What we are looking for is not a definition of the concept of number, but an exposition of the word “number” and of the numerals. (*PG* 321)

According to Wittgenstein by looking for mathematical entities, by insisting on that mathematical propositions are descriptions of these entities, Platonism produces philosophical “mythologies”.<sup>17</sup> The distinction between descriptive propositions and mathematical propositions is important. Failure to draw this distinction is the source of confusions about mathematics.

Due to the distinction between descriptions and mathematical propositions, for Wittgenstein, we are not compelled to follow one rule rather than another. The rule does not force a pupil; if he says ‘1,004’ after “1000”, he is simply not playing our game. What he does is not what we call ‘adding 2’, but another game, since there is no compulsion why we must use the sign ‘Add 2’ in this way. Nevertheless, according to Plato, as we saw above section, given the rule “add 2”, if a pupil proceeds with “1004” after “1000”, he is just wrong. According to Platonism, when someone is given the rule ‘Add 2’ to a series which begins with 1000’, it is impossible him or her to begin and go on as ‘1004, 1008, 1112...’ It is impossible because it is simply wrong. That is simply not the next member in the series. We can conclude that one must have misunderstood the instruction or have made a mistake. That is, in Plato’s system, anyone who puts anything other than ‘1002’ is making a mistake.

Now I want to emphasize this problem a little, since this difference between Plato and later Wittgenstein on mathematical objects will show importance of the concept of rule in Wittgenstein’s system. Platonist view assumes that rules constitute relations among the abstract things and these rules can be expressed as mathematical propositions. In fact, these rules lead us from one proposition to another necessarily, as it happens in a valid inference.

It is here that Wittgenstein raises his objection to the Platonic view: How do we know that “1002” follows “1000” in the series +2? What justifies our judgment

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.10.



that 1002 is the next term in this series? How can an expression settle what is correct and what is incorrect?<sup>18</sup>

In the section 188 of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein says that “you were inclined to use such expressions as: ‘the steps are *really* already taken, even before I take them in writing or orally or in thought.’ And it seemed as if they were in some *unique* way predetermined, anticipated-as only the act of meaning can anticipate reality.” For Wittgenstein, we cannot say that steps are already taken and rules are transcendently determined. I want to show this with an example. Let us imagine that the case of a learner, mentioned above; the student is asked to continue the arithmetical series: “2, 4, 6, 8...” of course, there are infinitely many options. For instance, the learner could go on by writing 10, 12, 14, or 10, 14, 18, and so on. Although she is given finitely many cases, it is expected that she must acquire the ability to continue the series as the mathematician intended. In that case, to go on from any position to the next, one need to know the rule for expanding the series. Wittgenstein reviews a number of models for such knowledge of rules, and rejects each of them as inadequate.<sup>19</sup> I want to mention two of them here for the present purposes, since I will examine this problem under the heading of “understanding” in the following chapter.

First, we might think that learner takes an instruction, which tells her what to do next in the series. Since instruction can only be followed if the learner knows what it means, no instruction is sufficient (numerals are infinite, but the instruction is finite and so the instruction is not sufficient, we cannot give an infinite instruction.) In this case, we can appeal to further instructions. However, this unleashes an infinite regress, and so regress argument appears in the discussion of what determines the correct application of a rule in a numerical series. Alternatively, even if we suppose that she knows what the instruction means, we have no way of explaining or proving her knowledge of the understanding of the rules. Wittgenstein concludes, “we look to the rule for instruction and do something, without appealing to anything else for guidance.” (*PI* §228)

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<sup>18</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, p.82.

<sup>19</sup> “Meaning and Rule following” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge

Second, a learner simply reacts to the presented cases in some way. Either she follows the rule the way the mathematician wants or she does not. Nevertheless, we are unable to say what it is for her to go by the rule as opposed to merely reacting to instances of it. On a future occasion, she may act in a way that is at odds with her previous behavior. In addition, her reactions may be fortuitous: she may be in “accordance” with the rule but not following it; she may coincidentally come across with the answer, without knowing what is required of her by the rule.<sup>20</sup> In fact, these models appear to bridge the gap between a rule and its application. However, for Wittgenstein, there is no gap between these the rule and its application, only an internal relation. Therefore, understanding is not propositionally based; it is an ability and act.

Wittgenstein tries to explain this problem in the sections §§186-198 of *Philosophical Investigations*; he shows that the demand for this kind of Platonic absolute rules is unnecessary. There is not an absolute imperative rule which determine what one should do or infer next in a number series, since inference is not forced by external rules.<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein removes mysteriousness about the concept of understanding by investigating what it is to *follow a rule*. For this reason, I will examine the problem of understanding in detail in Chapter II.

### **b. Meaning and Use**

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein criticizes the Platonist idea of meaning as a mental or abstract entity which is associated with particular signs or words. Instead, he takes the meaning of a word to be its use in a language. However, in equating meaning with use Wittgenstein does not assume that every use can contribute to word’s meaning.

For Wittgenstein, using a word involves speaker’s ability. In this sense, we may claim that, against Platonism, in order to justify “a is *F*,” one need not have definitional knowledge of *F*-ness, but only the ability to apply the term “*F*” to various objects in various situations. In this case, what we know is how to apply “*F*”;

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel C. Wheeler III, “Wittgenstein as Conservative Deconstructor”, *New Literary History*, Vol.19, no.2, Wittgenstein and Literary Theory (Winter,1988), pp.239-258.

and this is linguistic competence. Alternatively, it might mean that in order to be justified in applying the term “*F*” to various things, one must be able to give an account of how “*F*” is used; but this account needs not take the form of an explicit definition or a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for its applications.<sup>22</sup>

As we saw that, in Plato’s system, there is a direct and necessary connection between understanding a word and using it; this connection is mediated by how one feels inclined to use that word. Wittgenstein, of course, dismisses this point as futile and argues against the notion of an internalized mental structure as determining and justifying our linguistic action. He notes that intuition does not help when and how to apply a rule:

But have you a model for this? No. It is just that this expression suggests itself to us. As the result of the crossing of different pictures. You have no model of this superlative fact, but you are seduced into using a super expression. (It might be called a philosophical superlative). (*PI* §§191-192)

How do I know it doesn’t mislead me? For if it can guide me right, it can guide me wrong. (*PI* §213)

It would almost be more correct to say not that an intuition was needed at every stage, but that a new decision was needed at every stage. (*PI* §186)

All the steps are really already taken means: I no longer have any choice. (*PI* §219)

In Platonism, it is suggested that a mental item (intuition or intention) serves to stop the regress of interpretations that are needed to bridge the gap between rule and applications, and it points to the correct application of a word. Wittgenstein, however, rejects the need for intuition or intention to explain the case of understanding. If we suppose that intuition is an item in mind, then we need to know how intuition points to the conditions of application for a word. Intuition leads us to apply the word in one way, but in that case, we are simply reacting in a way that feels right. It seems that we cannot use intuition as our guide for the right information about application of a word.<sup>23</sup>

It must have been intuition that removed this doubt- If intuition is an inner voice- how do I know how I am to obey it? And how do I know that it does not mislead me? For it can guide me right, it can also guide me wrong.

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<sup>22</sup> William J. Prior, ‘Plato and the “Socratic Fallacy”’, *Phronesis XLIII* /2, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, (1998), pp.97-113.

<sup>23</sup> “Meaning and Rule following” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge.

((Intuition an unnecessary shuffle.)) (*PI* §213)

The same thing is valid for intention as well. Intention also cannot bridge the gap between rule and application. Since we must explain how we can have such an intention and how we can tell whether we are conforming to it, it too proves unsatisfactory. Hence the appeal to a mental item, intuition or intention, cannot connect a word to a rule. Mental items disregard the variety of rule following conditions that need to be taken into account in linguistic use.

### **c. Justification**

One main criticism that Wittgenstein directs against Platonic view is concerned with the problem of justification. Wittgenstein rejects the mediation of a mental process between reflection of an image from Ideal World and verbal expression of this image for object in the world; since to accept this process, for him, is to rest justification on a private or inner case. "...if I need a justification for using a word, it must be also be one for someone else." (*PI* §378)

The difficulty for which Wittgenstein calls attention is that Platonism gives us no idea of how we recognize that rules conform to our usage in language. However, such a vague conception of language use makes it unclear how rules could inform our practices, and it is also hard to see how we could conform to rules that we cannot reach with our cognitive abilities. Therefore, we can argue that if rules were external to the mind, there would be no way to discover what they require of us.

Another problem with the Platonist theory is that it requires the rules must determine whether we are right or wrong in each step. If that is the case, however, the justification of each step will depend on a rule. Wittgenstein asks which rule is this, since there may be infinitely many rules compatible with the learner's behavior. What reason do we have to think that there is a fixed rule, which guides the learner in each move? According to Wittgenstein, we do not have to consult a rule to decide when and how we use a word.<sup>24</sup>

For Platonist view, in order to use a name correctly, there needs to be a matching between words and ideas. This view gives the conception of an objective

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

rule for our linguistic judgments. Nevertheless, it seems that there is a problem in this account, since if independent facts were to give words their meanings for any use, there would always be a way to count this as correct or incorrect. Therefore, we can argue that there would be neither correctness nor incorrectness, since independent facts could be interpreted in different ways. Furthermore, there would be no difference between following a rule and one's subjective inclination to use the words. It seems a trouble with Platonism that it locates the rules wholly outside the speaker. All these might open the way to skepticism. To avoid this skepticism, Wittgenstein proposes that we have to give up the idea that grasping a rule is always an interpretation of an independent fact in mind.

Consequently, it is clear that Wittgenstein rejects the Platonist concept of rule, and argues that "any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning." (*PI* §198) Alternative to Platonist view, Wittgenstein proposes a public justification which justifies rules non-transcendentally, and in fact sees no justification beyond rules themselves.<sup>25</sup> It is true that we justify our linguistic actions by appealing to rules, but justification of rules cannot be done by comparing them with transcendental rules. Rules do not correspond to reality, that is, they are not means for reality.

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<sup>25</sup> "... if I need a justification for using a word, it must also be one for someone else." (*PI* §358)

## 1.2. The Concept of Rule in the *Tractatus*

Since a correct understanding of the concept of rule in the *Tractatus* could help us illuminate Wittgenstein's later critiques of it, the subject of this section includes this concept in the *Tractatus*. Although the concept of rule is not given much attention in the *Tractatus* as it was in the *Philosophical Investigations*, I suggest that it plays an essential role in Wittgenstein's early conception of philosophy. Mainly I argue in this section that Wittgenstein's concept of rule derivable from his idea that the sentences of language are in perfect logical order which is fixed, unchangeable. (*Notebooks*, p.63)

In the *Tractatus*, the main question concerning concept of rule is this: How can a proposition show reality? The *Tractatus* answers this question by indicating that a proposition shows reality by containing a logical picture. The core of this idea was elaborated by the picture theory of proposition and by the doctrine of isomorphism between language and reality.<sup>26</sup> That is, the logical grammar of any possible language is structurally similar or isomorphic to the logical structure of the world. According to the *Tractatus*, a picture must have something in common with what it pictures. All pictures must have in common with reality or the same logical form in order to be able to picture reality.

What every picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all- rightly or falsely - is the logical form, that is, the form of reality. (*TLP* 2.18)

In this sense, a proposition is a model of reality or fact; and it is a logical picture of the state of affairs. If this state of affairs were actualized, this would make the proposition true; if not, false. In this sense, it is inconceivable that the proposition depicts an actualized possibility, but at the same time, the proposition is false.

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<sup>26</sup> Wittgenstein uses the term "identical" for the term "isomorphic": "In the picture and the pictured there must be something *identical* in order that the one can be a picture of the other at all." (*TLP* 2.161)- (emphasize is mine)

The world is, for Wittgenstein, the totality of facts (*TLP* 1.1), and a fact can be expressed only in a proposition (i.e., in a language), thus the world also can be expressed in propositions (i.e., each fact can be expressed in a proposition). Thus, it is assumed that there is a strong relation between facts and propositions; or language and world. Therefore, this view entails that what the world is cannot be expressed independently of language. In this case, to express something linguistically in the world, we have to accord with certain linguistic rules, since propositions are standards (*Notebooks*, p. 97) or measures of the world (*Notebooks*, p.41). We can conclude that without the rules of language and logic, nothing would be expressed. Since the world cannot be expressed, for Wittgenstein, independently of language, we can talk about the world only in accordance with the rules which language has. Early Wittgenstein holds that logical analysis shows us the rules of language, Wittgenstein calls such rules "the logic of our language." These rules underlie structure of our language. The *Tractatus* had proceeded on the assumption that all the symbolic devices that can be used to describe the world must be constructed according to the same underlying structure. In a sense, there is only one meaningful language and it is supposed to be able to read off the logical structure of the world.<sup>27</sup>

In the Tractarian system, propositions have sense, but not reference; propositions represent or fail to represent facts and so any proposition can be false, if there is no fact corresponding to it.<sup>28</sup> For example, if it is a fact that Ankara is the capital city of Turkey, then the proposition "Ankara is the capital city of Turkey" represents a fact correctly. However, if the proposition is "Istanbul is the capital city of Turkey", then the proposition has sense but it does not represent a fact. Therefore, propositions have sense, not because they fit facts, but because they share a logical form with reality. This relation cannot itself be represented in language; it is something that is shown not said in the Tractarian system.<sup>29</sup> It can be said that

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<sup>27</sup>Hans Sluga, "Ludwig Wittgenstein: Life and Work: An introduction" *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, ed. by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.16.

<sup>28</sup> Donna M. Summerfield, "Fitting versus tracking: Wittgenstein on representation" *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, ed. by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.119.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

*Tractatus* gives no account of how the connection is set up; it simply presupposes this relation. Nevertheless there is an ambiguity about isomorphism between language and reality, namely, how it can be connected language to reality. In Tractarian system, according to Martin O’Neill, the connection of language to reality was performed in the mind.<sup>30</sup> If we accept this idea, then we can argue that there is a presupposition that rules of mind and rules of world have the same structure; similarly, of course, there is an interrelation between mind and world. Thus, the gap between language and the world is bridged by means of rules. After this outline, we can examine Wittgenstein’s concept of rule, in the *Tractatus*, closer.

Wittgenstein claims that we could show the rules of language by translating from our ordinary language into a new symbolism. This is what Wittgenstein calls “calculation” model of language; it is a procedure of the formal disciplines of logic and logical syntax. Some features of the calculus model of language and its concept of rule may be given as following:<sup>31</sup>

- i. Calculus model of language suggests a system of rules covering all possible cases.
- ii. Rules univocally determine their application.
- iii. For calculus model, understanding of language is derivable from knowledge of definitions and forms.
- iv. It idealizes the syntax of logical form and provides a method of distinguishing sense from nonsense.

What makes this calculation interesting and important is its comprehensiveness of all applications. The rules we formulate are not chosen at will, but arise in a determinate way from reflecting the logical form of reality.<sup>32</sup> Since the rules of calculus are definite, the rules of the Tractarian language are also definite. Accordingly, language can be explained as a system of definite and hidden rules:

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<sup>30</sup> Martin O’Neill, “Explaining ‘The Hardness of the Logical Must’: Wittgenstein on Grammar, Arbitrariness and Logical Necessity”, *Philosophical Investigations*, 24:1 (January 2001), pp.1-29.

<sup>31</sup> P.M.S. Hacker & G.P. Baker, *Wittgenstein, Meaning and Understanding*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p.49.

<sup>32</sup> Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p.144.



Reality must therefore be completely described by the proposition... the proposition constructs a world with the help of a logical scaffolding, and therefore one can actually see in the proposition all the logical features possessed by reality if it is true. (TLP 4.023)

If a notation is fixed, there is in it a rule according to which all the propositions denying  $p$  are constructed, a rule according to which all the propositions asserting  $p$  are constructed, a rule according to which all the propositions asserting  $p$  or  $q$  are constructed, and so on. These rules are equivalent to the symbols and in them their sense is mirrored. (TLP 5.514)

In that case, functions of rules are very important in language, since the rules are necessary for determining a formal system. It may be said these rules are:<sup>33</sup>

- i. what counts as a *symbol*
- ii. which *theorems* of *symbols* are well formed
- iii. which well formed *theorems* serve as *axioms*
- iv. how other well formed *theorems* are to be inferred

It can be concluded from these features that rules, in Tractarian view, can be exactly formulated.<sup>34</sup> Hence, this calculus model of the *Tractatus* does not seem to have the flexibility of ordinary language, namely, we can explain different expressions in different ways. Furthermore, in *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein speaks of avoiding the confusions which are generated by the use of the same sign to signify two different objects (TLP 3.322). These kinds of confusions, Wittgenstein argues, are to be avoided by deployment of rules with “logical syntax”:

In order to avoid such errors we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is to say, a sign-language that is governed by logical syntax. (TLP 3.325)

This logical syntax is seen to be the set of rules for the use of signs. This set of rules lies behind the structure of our daily language and is able to represent the

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<sup>33</sup> Newton Garver, “Rules”, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.7-8, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. And The Free Press, 1967), pp.231-233.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

world. It determines which combinations of signs make sense, and therefore what can meaningfully be said:

Only the proposition has sense; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning. (*TLP* 3.3)

If we know the logical syntax of any given language, then all the propositions of logic are already given. (*TLP* 6.124) Hence there can never be surprises in logic. (*TLP* 6.1251)

Whether a proposition belongs to logic can be calculated by calculating the logical properties of the symbol. And this we do when we prove a logical proposition. For without troubling ourselves about a sense and a meaning, we form the logical propositions out of others by mere *symbolic rules*. (*TLP* 6.126)

Wittgenstein believes that we conceive the rules intuitively; we understand the syntactical rules of language, the same way we understand logical rules of propositional logic. Wittgenstein's discussion of logical syntax in the *Tractatus* is concerned with the syntactical rules, and about these rules Wittgenstein makes the following assertions:

- i. In logical syntax the meaning of a sign ought never to play a role, it ought to presuppose only the descriptions of expressions (*TLP* 3.33).
- ii. The rules of logical syntax must be evident once we know how each individual sign signifies (*TLP* 3.334).
- iii. Definitions are rules for the translation of one language into another. (*TLP* 3.343)
- iv. If we know the logical syntax of any sign language, then all the propositions of logic are already given (*TLP* 6.124).
- v. The rules of logical syntax are not arbitrary, and do not express conventions freely adopted.<sup>35</sup>

We can conclude from these assertions that logical syntax is a mirror image of the world. (*TLP* 6.13) Besides, logical syntax is common to all possible languages. If logical syntax is common to all possible languages, then it is clear that it cannot be arbitrary. Essential structure of languages accords with the rules of logical syntax,

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<sup>35</sup> Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p.139.

and its elements correspond to the elements of reality. Thus according to the *Tractatus*, grammar is not arbitrary.<sup>36</sup> The metaphysical correlation, namely the relation between grammar and an extraneous reality cannot be expressed in the language and this guarantees the non-arbitrary nature of logical syntax.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, above considerations imply that an acceptance of the picture theory is an acceptance of the metaphysics of the *Tractatus*.

Wittgenstein certainly holds that the rules of logical syntax could be correctly formulated, even though they must be regarded as “showing” rather than “saying.”<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, if the principles of logical syntax are necessary, they must be discovered, not stipulated: their correctness ought to show itself; we ought to be able to see that we have found their correct formulation. Wittgenstein says, “what is essential to the world cannot be said about the world; for then it could be otherwise, as any proposition can be negated.”<sup>39</sup> One consequence of his view is that all these rules can only be shown by a well constructed sign language and cannot be explicitly stated. That is, the reason why these rules of language or logic cannot be a matter of discussion.<sup>40</sup>

This theory is also called ‘the Doctrine of Showing’. This is a theory that holds that language is a closed sphere and a single system. This leads to a view of the world as a “limited whole” (*TLP* 6.45) and of language as a closed system the limits of which mean the limits of the world. (*TLP* 5.6) Wittgenstein says, “The limit can, therefore, be drawn only in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense.” (Preface) Accordingly, it is strictly nonsense to speak of the boundaries or of what is beyond of language. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” (*TLP* 7.00) In fact, the doctrine of showing is addressed to attempt to “get behind” language; to discover the logic. However, we cannot put

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<sup>36</sup> Martin O’Neill, “Explaining ‘The Hardness of the Logical Must’: Wittgenstein on Grammar, Arbitrariness and Logical Necessity”, *Philosophical Investigations*, 24:1 (January 2001), pp.1-29.

<sup>37</sup> Martin O’Neill, “Explaining ‘The Hardness of the Logical Must’: Wittgenstein on Grammar, Arbitrariness and Logical Necessity”, p.1-29.

<sup>38</sup> Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*, p.141.

<sup>39</sup> *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-32*, ed. D. Lee (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.34.

<sup>40</sup> David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.50.

ourselves outside of language in order to investigate its logic; so the logic is that which is always “already given.” (*TLP* 5.552, 5.5521)

Wittgenstein accepts, in the *Tractatus*, that there is something unique about language and the essence of language is *an a priori* order of the world. He imagines that language contains an ideal order which must be found in reality, for we think we already see it there. In this sense, ordinary words like sentence, name, word, and picture had come to have a unique metaphysical significance, quite removed from what they ordinarily mean.<sup>41</sup> According to Shwayder, Wittgenstein salvages mysticism with this theory of showing.<sup>42</sup> However, this effort leaves the question open how we can interpret logic and language in relation to the world.

As an answer this question, I suggest that there is *an invisible metaphysical subject* that runs through *Tractatus*; only by assuming such a subject in the Tractarian system, we can interpret logic and language in relation to the world. It is necessary that there should be *a user* of the language outside the empirical world; that user is the metaphysical subject. There must be a statement-maker who may be understood as a presupposition for the explanation of the world, its structure, and its representation in language. So, the metaphysical subject is transported into the transcendental world. From the remarks in the *Tractatus* 5.6-5.641, we can infer that Wittgenstein is clearly employing a transcendental presupposition. At 5.633, he wonders about this problem: “Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye, and nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.” As the eye is a prerequisite for seeing and yet it cannot be discovered in the visual field, neither can a metaphysical subject be caught in language, nor can language be caught without the metaphysical subject.<sup>43</sup> Wittgenstein argued that “[t]he subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world.” (*TLP* 5.632)

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<sup>41</sup> Henry Le Roy Finch, *Wittgenstein- The Early Philosophy*, (New York: Humanities Press, 1971), p.234.

<sup>42</sup> D.S. Shwayder, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Historical and Critical Commentary*, (Bodleian Library Oxford, 1972), vol. I-II.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p.576.

In that metaphysical case, it must be explained how we justify the rules. According to Wittgenstein to fail to conform to the rules of grammar is to say nonsense: “the rules of grammar distinguish sense and nonsense, and if I use the forbidden combinations I talk nonsense.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, if we try to justify a grammatical rule, we use a proposition that states a fact. However, if a proposition determines a grammatical rule to be false, then the proposition would have to place itself outside the grammatical rules and describe a state of affairs where the rules no longer apply. However, there is no such place beyond rules; if we break the rules of language, we do not start to speak a new language, but nonsense.<sup>45</sup> As we saw, the rules of grammar distinguish sense from nonsense and if we use the ungrammatical combinations, we talk nonsense. Thus, an ideal language would be governed by conformity to this logical syntax or set of rules. We compare language to a model with exact meanings and fixed rules and then we suppose that this is the way the world must be.

### **1.2.1. Wittgenstein’s Critique of Tractarian Concept of Rule**

Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, moves from the concept of rules as a formal system to a concept of rules that is based on “background practices.” According to the latter view, the rules of a language are like the rules of a game, and not that of a calculus. The system of language, for Wittgenstein, no longer depends upon logical structure, but upon the web of relations between the language and human actions within a form of life. Wittgenstein’s critique of Tractarian concept of rule may be presented under three headings: a. Calculus Theory b. Picture Theory, and c. Doctrine of Showing

#### **a. Calculus Theory**

Wittgenstein in his later works argues that language is not based on a fixed theory of rules. The usefulness of this approach is called into question in the *Blue*

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<sup>44</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge 1930-32*, p.47.

<sup>45</sup> David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.45-46.

and *Brown Book*, where Wittgenstein warns us about the dangers of treating language as a “calculus”:

...remember that in general we do not use language according to strict rules. It has not been taught us by means of strict rules, either. *We*, in our discussions on the other hand, constantly compare language with a calculus proceeding according to exact rules.

This is very one sided way of looking at language. In practice we very rarely use language as such a calculus. For not only do we not think of the rules of usage of definitions, etc. while using language, but when we are asked to give such rules, in most cases we are not able to do so. We are unable clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we do not know their real definition, but because there is no real ‘definition’ to them. To suppose that there *must* be would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play a game according to strict rules.<sup>46</sup>

Wittgenstein emphasizes that fixed or exact theory of rules plays no role in and explains nothing of the actual use of language. In fact, this theory is far from providing a genuine insight into the language use.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, while the *Tractatus* treats meaning of a sentence as something which is produced by definite rules, there is no indication that there might be different system of rules. Early Wittgenstein treats language as if there is only one system of rules, the logical syntax of language, upon which meanings of sentences are calculated. Later Wittgenstein, on the other hand, remarks that viewing language as a calculus with exact rules is one sided way of looking at language. He believes that one rarely uses language as a calculus and one does not use language following strict rules. What characterizes a language is not a strict system of rules, but a certain set of actions and reactions: “[w]hen we look at such simple forms of language we see activities, actions, which are clear cut and transparent.” (*BB* p.17)

For Wittgenstein, it is inconceivable that in using language, one attends to definitional conditions which could be explicitly formulated. It is equally unlikely that we are making certain choices among many definitions. Certainly, Wittgenstein does not deny the existence of linguistic rules, rules of usage, but he denies the

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<sup>46</sup> Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1958), p.25.

<sup>47</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, December 1998), p.210.

possibility of ever isolating and describing them as a fixed formal system.<sup>48</sup> When we are asked to give the definition of a rule, we are unable to do so, since there is no real and explicitly formulated definition.<sup>49</sup>

As we saw in the previous section, the calculus view of language has a very restricted application, since it can only be applied to linguistic activities involving the explicit use of rules. Although this model of language is restricted, it also suggests a system of rules covering all possible cases. Wittgenstein remarks that this calculus model can be misleading, for it can easily lead to “mystifications”: “we are tempted to imagine this calculus, as it were as a permanent background to every sentence which we say.” (*BB* p.42) Hence, Wittgenstein recognizes a danger in treating our actual language on an analogy with “calculi which have fixed rules.” Furthermore, he believes that theory of fixed rules entails a concept of ideal language: “if you say that our languages only approximate to such calculi you are standing on the very brink of a misunderstanding. For then it may look as if what we were talking about were an ideal language.” (*PI* §81)

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein assumed that language constitutes a formal unity; he also argued that all languages are one in a certain sense regardless of their differences. Although their grammatical constructions vary, there is an underlying logical structure or a formal unity for all them. (*TLP* 4.014) Later Wittgenstein, however, claims that language has no fixed rules which determine meaning for every circumstance, since language consists of distinct sets of usages: “We see that what we call ‘sentence’ and ‘language’ has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another.” (*PI* §108) However, this does not mean that rules of language are indeterminate when they are considered as background practices; we use them “in the same way as other people do.” (*LFM* p.183) Wittgenstein argues that logical rules rest on the agreement underlying our practices and this agreement is not a mere consensus of opinions, but a consensus of actions, a consensus of doing the same thing, reacting in the same way. (*LFM* pp.183-184)

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<sup>48</sup> Cecil H. Brown, *Wittgensteinian Linguistics*, (Netherlands: Mouton & Co. N.V., Publishers, 1974), p.18.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

Later Wittgenstein gives a special importance to the issue of *agreement* concerning the concept of rule following. He says that what appears to be necessary about the concept of rule is rather a matter of agreement; that is, we agree to follow a certain way and refuse any other way. According to him, it is easy to see that the premises on which a proof is based are a matter of agreement. Nevertheless, we are less inclined to concede that the conclusion is a matter of agreement. It can be claimed that the conclusion of a proof does not compel us; if one accepts the premises but denies the conclusion, is she not being unreasonable then? This is a mistaken question for Wittgenstein. Since for him it is not a question of being reasonable or unreasonable, it is a question of agreeing or not agreeing with the practice of deriving a conclusion from a set of premises. (*RFM* I §34-35) Hence, language is no longer accepted as isolated from the world, on the contrary it is interwoven with the world. Wittgenstein holds that that rules cannot determine their own application; they presuppose the existence of regular practice.

### **b. Picture Theory**

In contrast to the Tractarian view, later Wittgenstein accepts that the meaning of an expression was not to be understood as an object (*PG* §22), since the meaning of a word is the use of a word in grammar. (*PG* §23) In other words, the explanation of meaning is now seen as internal to language, rather than as reference to state of affairs. Thus, Wittgenstein's new conception of grammar is a separation from the logical syntax and the fixed rules of the *Tractatus*. Later Wittgenstein rejects the idea that our sentences are meant to mirror the logical structure of the world. He no longer holds that language serves a single function, namely, the function of depicting reality.<sup>50</sup> Although in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein wrote: "A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it" (*TLP* 4.01), later he argued that language might serve very different needs. The crucial point for him is that language is primarily a "system of communication" rather than one of representation. (*BB* p.81) In addition, this recognition of different functions of language means the rejection of his earlier

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<sup>50</sup> Hans Sluga, "Whose house is that? Wittgenstein on the self", *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, edit. by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.320-353.



picture theory. He calls now picture theory “one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment.”<sup>51</sup> The mistake, in the picture theory, was that “we are looking for the use of a sign, but we look for it as though it were an object co-existing with the sign.” (*BB* p.5)

As mentioned earlier, the core aspect of the picture theory is that language represents reality. In other words, the central function of language is to express facts. When a proposition has sense and is true, it must show how things are. Therefore, to understand a proposition means to know what is the case if the proposition is true. (*TLP* 4.024) The proposition pictures a fact, the structure of which is represented by a possible state of affairs. A proposition, therefore, is a model of reality and a logical picture of a state of affairs which would make the proposition true if this state of affairs were actualized.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, there are some problems in this account. Firstly, if a fact makes a proposition true, then how do we understand a proposition when there is no corresponding fact? Unless we accept “negative facts” and inflate our ontology, the picture theory excludes the understanding of propositions for which there are no facts to be represented by them. The true proposition is certified by the existence of a corresponding fact; but then what makes the false proposition false? The gap between the ideal proposition and the ideal world seems as unbridgeable as that between a sentence and the world.<sup>53</sup> At this point Wittgenstein suggests the conception of logical form provides a solution. “What every picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all is the logical form, that is, the form of reality.” (*TLP* 2.18) That is, language, thought and the world are bound together by identity of logical form. A propositional sign to depict is required two things. One is that something must correspond to its elements. There must be a correlation between these elements of the situation. The other is that it must be determined what relationships between the propositional elements. If both are in place, then the elements of the picture are related to each other in a determinate way. To depict falsely is to depict a non existing combination of existing elements.

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<sup>51</sup> “We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it.” (*BB*, p.1)

<sup>52</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.86.

<sup>53</sup> Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p.78.

Secondly, when we understand a proposition, we know what must be the case if it is true. However, this seems paradoxical, since it leads to the problem of how we understand the rules of logical syntax which construct of a proposition. Since a proposition belongs to a propositional system, it must conform to the rules of its system. In that case, the statement, which tries to express those rules, would not describe a state of affairs. Therefore, we can say it would be senseless. Therefore understanding a rule does not mean to grasp its sense. Moreover, thirdly, since the sense of a picture is shown not said or asserted; this seems mysterious: How can a proposition show reality? There are different methods of representation, different ways of projecting things into pictures, and different methods of reading pictures. “If we keep in mind the possibility of a picture, which, though correct, has no similarity with its object, the interpolation of a shadow between the sentence and reality loses all point.” (*BB* p. 37) Fourthly, as mentioned, a picture depicts a state of affairs; however, no picture can depict the “form of depiction” or the “form of representation” that enables the vehicle of that picture. In order for a picture to depict its own “form of representation” it would need to place itself outside its form of representation, namely, it would need to use some other form representation. Nevertheless, this is impossible.<sup>54</sup> Fifthly, the tautologies are in no case false, since they lack the essential feature of sense, and so are senseless. Nevertheless, although tautologies are senseless, they are not nonsense. (*TLP* 4.4611) Underlying this account of tautology is Wittgenstein’s insistence that nothing in logic is accidental, (*TLP* 2.012) since logic, which consists of all tautologies, reflects the world. (*TLP* 6.12) However, there is a question about this consideration what fact or reality does the tautology ‘ $p \vee \sim p$ ’ correspond to? What would it be for ‘ $p \vee \sim p$ ’ to be false, namely, not to correspond to how things are? If to understand an empirical proposition is to understand its negation, how we understand  $5^2=25$  as understanding its negation? Therefore, to say that necessary falsehood is required as a counterpart to each necessary truth is problematic.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*, p.87.

<sup>55</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.277.

Baker and Hacker claim that the other problem about picture theory of language is the problem of external justification. We think that “white is lighter than black” is true, because the nature of white and of black is as such. Again we think that “the interior angles of a triangle add up to 180°” is made true by the nature of the triangle. These views are natural, but mistaken. In each, the grammar of our language is seen as being determined by the extra grammatical natures of the colors or of the geometrical shapes. Grammar is arbitrary in the sense that it cannot be justified with reference to anything exterior to it. At the same time, however, grammar is not arbitrary insofar as it is not a matter of personal choice. There is no thing as falsifying a grammatical proposition. Rules of grammar are not liable to refutation by matters of fact. Grammar is antecedent to the truth and falsity of empirical judgments, just as a method of measurement is antecedent to the correctness of statements of length and hence also to agreement in the results of measurement.<sup>56</sup> (*RFM* 96)

### **c. Doctrine of Showing**

Wittgenstein conceived that logic had been put into the form which revealed its true shape as the key to philosophical truth. His central view is that the conditions of language are transcendent. (*TLP* 6.13) Thus, they are not the product of our activity. For they are conditions of sense; and all our activity presupposes those conditions.<sup>57</sup> Wittgenstein believes that logic is not a subject talked about within language. To know logic, he claims, is to understand what is involved in talking about anything. The formulas of logic are symbolical tools; they are signposts guiding us along the paths of significant discourse. Truths that cannot be stated, according to Wittgenstein, may be listed as following way:<sup>58</sup>

- 1- One cannot say what the meaning of a symbol is. It is impossible to assert the identity of meaning of two expressions. (*TLP* 6.2322) One cannot say

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.260.

<sup>57</sup> Howard Mounce, “The logical System of the *Tractatus*”, Wittgenstein A Critical Reader, edit: Hans Johann Glock, (Blackwell, 2001), pp.47-58

<sup>58</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, “Was He Trying to Whistle it?” *The New Wittgenstein*, edit: Alice Arary and Rupert Read, (Routledge, 2000), pp.353-388.

- what the sense of a proposition is; but a proposition shows its sense. (*TLP* 4.022)
- 2- One cannot say that one proposition follows from another, or that one proposition contradicts another. (*TLP* 1.201) A tautology shows the internal relations between its constituent propositions.
  - 3- One cannot say that a thing belongs to a given category, e.g. that red is a color. For the ontological category of a thing is given by its logical form. Apparent categorical or formal concepts, such as space, time, color, or fact, object, relation, number, or propositions, name, function are in effect variable names, not real names.
  - 4- One cannot limit what can be thought in language by saying what cannot be thought. For in order to say it one would have to be able to think what is not thinkable (Preface)
  - 5- Propositions show the logical form of reality. (*TLP* 4.12)
  - 6- Internal properties and relations of things make themselves manifest in the propositions that represent the relevant states of affairs and are concerned with the relevant objects. (*TLP* 4.122) Similarly, one cannot say that a proposition is a tautology. Every tautology itself shows that it is a tautology.
  - 7- The limits of the world are also the limits of logical possibility. Therefore, we cannot say in logic that the world contains such and such possibilities but not such and such other possibilities. (*TLP* 5.5561, 5.61)
  - 8- The fundamental principles of natural science, such as the laws of causality, of least action, of continuity, etc. are not descriptions of nature, but forms of description. It cannot be said that there are laws of nature. (*TLP* 6.36)
  - 9- Cartesian soul-substance as it conceived in the psychology cannot be said, but it is shown by the logical form of proposition. (*TLP* 5.542- 5.5421)
  - 10- It is impossible for there to be proposition of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher. Ethics is transcendental. Ethics and aesthetics are one and same. (*TLP* 6.42-6.423)

From these passages, showing (e.g., some kind of metaphysics) looks as if it is a description of the essential structure of the world. As seen, there are varieties of things that cannot be said. Furthermore, the Doctrine of Showing implies that in a sense one cannot say what the meaning of a sentence is. For example, if the sentence is “x is larger than y”, one can explain what “x”, “y” and “larger” means, but there is no further explanation what “x is larger than y” means. That is, we can say what mean elements of this sentence are, but we cannot say what the sentence means is. The sentence only shows its meaning.<sup>59</sup> Wittgenstein asserts that we have thoughts on these showing matters only when we view the world as a limited whole; and this is called the mystical. (*TLP* 6.45)

The other mystical thing in the *Tractatus* is the metaphysical subject. Logic provides the form for all intelligible propositions in *Tractatus*, but in order to do it is assumed that something must exist, i.e., the metaphysical subject. Content is added to logical form by language-user, the locating of genuine propositions in logical space, but usage entails the subject. Hence, “language” becomes “my language”. Experience is limited by the limits of my language, the only language that I understand.<sup>60</sup> I argue that this must be the metaphysical subject as a transcendental presupposition in the Tractarian system. (*TLP* 5.6-5.641)

In the *Tractatus*, what the metaphysical subject is not very clear. Wittgenstein says: “The subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world.” (*TLP* 5.632) According to *Tractatus*, the body and self are different; the body is an object of the world, part of the empirical realm; and the self is disembodied. Wittgenstein asks: “Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye, and nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.” (*TLP* 5.633) As the eye is a prerequisite for seeing and yet it cannot be discovered in the visual field, neither can metaphysical subject (“I”) be caught in language, nor can language be caught without the metaphysical subject.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Norman Malcolm, “Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann”, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.7-8, (New York: Macmillian Publishing Co., Inc. and The Free Press, 1967), pp.327-340.

<sup>60</sup> Peter A. French, “Wittgenstein’s Limits of the World”, *Ludwig Wittgenstein Critical Assessments*, edit by. Stuart Shanker, vol. I, (Routledge, 2000), pp.185-206.

<sup>61</sup> D.S. Shwayder, *Wittgenstein’s Tractatus: A Historical and Critical Commentary*, vol. II, p.576.

Wittgenstein says at 5.641 that this self is not the self with which psychology deals but the metaphysical subject. According to Dan Neshier, the metaphysical subject is a presupposition of an individual mind.<sup>62</sup> I suggest that metaphysical subject may be understood as a presupposition for the explanation of the world, its structure and its representation in language. Hence, the metaphysical subject is transported into the transcendental world.

Rules of language are important for Wittgenstein's earlier views, so one might have hoped for an explanation of how rules are expressed, how symbols occur within them, how rules fit into his general views about language. Nevertheless, we get only the small pieces of information as to what his views are on rules. So another mystery in the *Tractatus* is supplanted by not giving a complete analysis of any rule in language.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned, in the *Tractatus*, many of the rules of logical syntax are hidden from view; they are not explained in any practices of teaching, correcting, criticizing.<sup>64</sup>

As mentioned, Wittgenstein holds that all rules can only be shown, not be explicitly stated or asserted. Nevertheless, how do the rules manifest themselves to us? Here we draw a blank, and there is no information about this case of showing. One critique of this theory comes from Wittgenstein himself in his later period; he says that what philosophers call the essence of a language should not be thought of as a hidden metaphysical reality, but only as the use of a word in the language game. Thus, on the contrary, to his earlier thinking, he rejects beliefs that there can be hidden rules awaiting discovery; and that rules can be an answer to metaphysical extra linguistic reality. Since this beliefs cause mythological concept of the rules (*PI* §1), it is replaced by a conception of grammar as autonomous from external justification. As Wittgenstein's puts it, in his later works, "the connection between language and reality is made by definitions of words, and these belong to grammar, so that language remains self contained and autonomous." (*PG* §55) In this sense,

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<sup>62</sup> Dan Neshier, Remarks on Language and Science in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*", *Wittgenstein, The Vienna Circle and Critical Rationalism*, ed by. Hal Berghel and Adolf Hübner, (Vienna, 1979), pp. 87-92.

<sup>63</sup> Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, p.17.

<sup>64</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, p.35.

grammar is arbitrary; nevertheless, this arbitrariness is concerning only the autonomy of rules from justification with reference to metaphysical extra linguistic reality.

Wittgenstein thinks that as if a reality corresponds to true necessary propositions; and also suggests that our logic is correct because it corresponds to the rules of logic; so it may be followed from that if there is a different thinking, it is wrong. According to *Tractatus*, inferences are correct when they correspond to what really follows, otherwise we should come into conflict with the truth. Our rules of inference are responsible to the truth values of the relevant propositions; and so we construct meta-logical validations of our logic. Accordingly, it may be also thought of a proposition is the discovery of an existing truth.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, *Tractatus* imagines a world of structural possibility as the essential core of language and the world. This imagined world of fixed forms is conceived as hidden within the ordinary world of things and situations in the same way that propositions and truth functions is hidden within ordinary language.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, later Wittgenstein shows us that mystery is generated by a confused philosophical dogma which expects a certain kind of metaphysical justification for the cogency of logical necessity.<sup>67</sup>

Wittgenstein's solution to the 'mystery' posed by undermining the source of the philosophical dogma. That is, necessary propositions are only grammatical. Moreover, it cannot be accepted that the grammar is metaphysical features of the world, as in the *Tractatus*. (*TLP* 5.471- 5.4711) Accordingly, grammar is not amenable to any form of external justification. That is, rules of grammar cannot be true or false, since the rules of grammar are antecedent to truth or falsity. Grammatical rules describe only the framework within which ascriptions of truth or falsity can meaningfully and coherently be made. (*PI* §499) Hence, it is a mistake to think that we need a metaphysical justification of the status of necessity for the grammatical rules. (*BB* 55)

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.274.

<sup>66</sup> Henry Le Roy Finch, *Wittgenstein-the Early Philosophy*, (New York: Humanities Press, 1971), p.247.

<sup>67</sup> *PI* §101: "...the idea now absorbs us, that the ideal 'must' be found in reality. Meanwhile, we do not see yet how it occurs there, nor do we understand the nature of this 'must'. We think it must be in reality, for we think we already see it there."

## CHAPTER 2

### RULE FOLLOWING AND RELEVANT CONCEPTS: INTERPRETATION, INTERNAL RELATION, UNDERSTANDING, AND CRITERIA

How does a rule determine a correct application? In the previous chapter, we have seen that Wittgenstein undermines the Platonist view that rules are abstract entities and that they determine applications independently of human practices. He also rejects his previous Tractarian view of rule as logical mechanisms that determine applications mechanically. Instead, Wittgenstein proposes in the *Philosophical Investigations* that what conforms or conflicts with a rule is “determined” by what he calls ‘obeying a rule’ or ‘going against it’ in practice. (*PI* §201) The correct question is then: how is application of rule possible? In this section, I will try to find an answer to this question. Since there seems to be a gap between a rule and its application, I will first deal with the problem what does fill this gap; I will also question whether the assumed gap between a rule and its application really exist. With this aim, first, I analyze a suggestion that ‘interpretation’ fills the gap between rule and application and also determines what conforms to the rule. Wittgenstein questions this suggestion in *Philosophical Investigations* and examines interpretation under two problematic cases: paradox and regression of interpretation.<sup>68</sup> Then, Wittgenstein introduces a concept to avoid these problems: internal relation. Second, I deal with Wittgenstein’s concept of internal relation; and explain whether this concept provides a solution for problems of interpretation.

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<sup>68</sup> Erich Ammereller, “Wittgenstein on Intentionality”, *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, ed. Hans-Johann Glock (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp.59-93.



## 2.1. Rule Following and the Problems of Interpretation

It has been claimed that understanding a sign means being able to give an interpretation, this makes interpretation necessary element for understanding a sign. It is true that we sometimes need to interpret signs. For instance, when we come across with words which we have never heard or seen before, we might need to interpret them in their context. Nevertheless, normally do we have to interpret the words we encounter in ordinary language? Can a sentence be understood without an interpretation? For example, when we hear the question “What time is it?” do we respond to it through interpreting it, or without any interpretation?

This is one of the questions Wittgenstein deals in *Philosophical Investigations*, i.e., whether an interpretation is necessary to bridge the gap between the rule and its application. He, first, questions whether there is only one interpretation for a word or rule. He thinks that there is no such a gap between rule and its application. Before investigating the problems of interpretation, it is necessary to explain the concept of rule, at least shortly, since in order to understand the problem of rule’s interpretation better we need to know what Wittgenstein means by a concept of rule. Let us take Wittgenstein’s example:

*B* moves according to rules which *A* gives to him. The rules are:

a	→
b	←
c	↑
d	↓

Figure 1- Rules

*A* gives an order made up of the letters in the table: *aacaddd*. *B* looks up the arrow corresponding to each letter of the order, and moves:

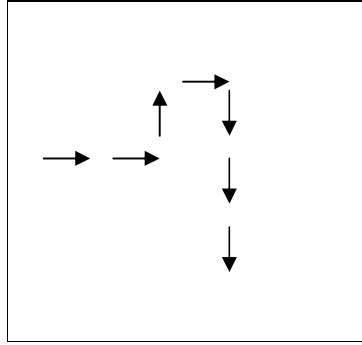


Figure 2- Application of Rules

Wittgenstein says that this table represents a rule or expresses it (*BB* pp. 95-96), and it may be used in different ways. It is conceivable that having become familiar with this table *B* may be able to follow this rule without any further reference to the table; or he may be thought to apply this rule without the table.<sup>69</sup> Here, Wittgenstein wants to make an analogy between the rules of a game and the rules of language.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, a rule in a game, like a rule in a language, covers many different and related things:

Our language game has various possibilities; there is a variety of cases in which we should say that a sign in the game was the name of a square of such and such a color...If we call such a table the expression of a rule of the language game, it can be said that what we call a rule of a language game may have very different roles in the game...

The rule may be an aid in teaching the game. The learner is told it and given practice in applying it. Or it is an instrument of the game itself. Or a rule is employed neither in the teaching nor in the game itself; nor is it set down in a list of rules. One learns the game by watching how others play. But we say that it is played according to such and such rules because an observer can read these rules off from the practice of the game- like a natural law governing the play. (*PI* §§53-54)

<sup>69</sup> Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), p.172.

<sup>70</sup> Wittgenstein, *PI* §71. Wittgenstein gives some characteristics of this analogy between games and language:

- i. Like a game, language has constitutive rules.
- ii. The meaning of a word is not an object it stands for, but is determined by the rules governing its operation. (*PG* 59) We learn the meaning of words by learning how to use them, just as we learn how to play chess.
- iii. A proposition is a move or an operation in the game of language; it would be meaningless without its system. (*PI* §§23-199) As in the case of chess, what moves are possible depends on the situation on the board.

Wittgenstein points that what we call a rule has different roles in language games. He also argues that we do not play a game in one form, like we do not use language according to strict rules. (*BB* p.25) He compares language rules to natural laws in the above quotation. For instance, the rules of chess may be formulated from how chess players proceed, in the same way the law of motion may be formulated from a planet's movements. However, there is a difference between the rules of a game and natural laws. Whereas the rules of a game may be violated and changed, events proceed in accordance with natural laws.<sup>71</sup> Like the rules of a game, the rules of language, i.e., the application of words (also of proper names) are not bounded by rules all the time; rather many possibilities are left open.<sup>72</sup> For example, according to Wittgenstein, one can use a proper name like 'Moses' without having a fixed description to substitute for it in all possible cases:

The name "Moses" can be defined by means of various descriptions. For example, as "the man who led the Israelites through the wilderness", the man who as a child was taken out of the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter" and so on... But when I make a statement about Moses- am I always ready to say: By "Moses" I understand the man who did what the Bible relates of Moses, or at any rate a good deal of it... Has the name "Moses" got a fixed and unequivocal use for me in all possible cases? (*PI* §79)

Wittgenstein's point is that we do not take the meaning of 'Moses' to be fixed by a fixed interpretation. Rather, for him, one may mention various interpretations at different times. Similarly, one can argue that a rule may govern various occasions. Wittgenstein sees a rule not as a strictly defined algorithm; instead he compares it to a 'sign post' that guides in many ways. The rule is there in the same way as the signpost stands at the side of the road. Neither the rule nor its interpretation says or does anything by itself. (*PI* §85) Grammatical rules do not force us to speak in a particular way any more than signposts force us to go in the pointed direction.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, there is not a single interpretation that is necessary in every application.

Then, how do we apply a rule without interpretation? According to Wittgenstein, although human beings give primitive reactions to rules or signposts

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<sup>71</sup>Andrew Lugg, *Wittgenstein's Investigations 1-133 a Guide and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 99.

<sup>72</sup>Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), p.170.

<sup>73</sup>Lugg, *Wittgenstein's Investigations*, p.144.

(*PI* p.218), this primitive reaction or application is not an interpretation. (*PI* §§2-7) Namely, to walk in the direction indicated by a signpost is not to give a fixed interpretation of the rule; or an answer to question “What time is it?” is not an interpretation, rather it is an act. The search for an explanation for how words signify is unnecessary. Instead, we must pay attention to the various ways in which words are used. (*PI* §§11-13) Therefore, Wittgenstein believes that while using language we apply rules primitively, that is, without interpreting them. Since there are various possibilities for the application of a rule, so are there various interpretations of that rule. In addition, it can be argued that one can make interpretation of a rule for the use of a word. This, however, is only one *possible* interpretation; and it only points to some language game. Then this particular rule does not determine whole usage of that word.

For example, let us look at the rule of +2: “Write down the series of numbers formed by adding two, beginning with 0”. What if one writes “...894, 896, 898, 100,” but follows with 1004 after 1000. This action may be interpreted in two ways. Neither the expression of the rule, nor its past applications explicitly exclude writing 1004 as wrong. We may assume that a person who continues the series “0, 2, 4, 6 ...” by writing “1004, 1008...” instead of “1002, 1004...” has acted in accordance with some interpretation of the rule. For example, he may have acted in accordance with an interpretation of the order to add 2 to up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, and 6 up to 3000... (*PI* §185) Indeed, whatever he writes can be brought in accordance with some interpretation of the rule. That is, anything he writes can be made out to accord with the rule. Reversely, it can also be made out to conflict with the rule, on a different interpretation. (*PI* §201) Therefore, an interpretation does not make an application correct or incorrect.<sup>74</sup> This is called by Wittgenstein “the *paradox*” of interpretation.

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<sup>74</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and Rules: Language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein* (Ph.D. dissertation, Austin: University of Texas, 1999), pp.8-9

### 2.1.1 The Problem of Paradox

The paradox, in Wittgenstein's words, is phrased in the following way: "no course of action could be determined by a rule because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule...if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here." (*PI* §201) That is, there are multiple interpretations for any action; the action can be characterized both in a way that accords with a given rule or conflicts with it. According to Wittgenstein, this constitutes the source of the paradox: even if the application of a rule is correct, the action could be made out to conflict with it. Thus, the paradox stems from the idea that grasping a rule always is an interpretation. In the same paragraph, Wittgenstein claims that the paradox is based on a misunderstanding, i.e., thinking that there is no way of grasping a rule without an interpretation:

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another one standing behind it. What this shews is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation. (*PI* §201)

If it is possible to understand a rule without an interpretation, does it mean that there is the case that we grasp rule without interpretation? No, it rather means that not every expression can be understood in a certain way, since no interpretation guarantees what this certain meaning really is. Wittgenstein insists that "any interpretation hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meanings." (*PI* §198) That is, he assumes that, one may accord with the rule on some interpretation, since any interpretation may accord with a rule. For him, the idea that an interpretation is necessary to bridge the gap between the rule and its application is a misconception.

Since nothing really renders an interpretation preferable to another, we cannot make a distinction between correct and incorrect application. The reason is that:

interpretation is an inner process, and we have no criterion to justify this inner process. Since interpretation as an inner process may lead us to apply a word in a certain way, we simply react in a way that feels right. It seems that we cannot use interpretation as our guide for the right application of a word. Wittgenstein rejects the idea that in order to understand a rule, the process of interpretation is necessary, since to accept this process, for him, is to rest justification on a private or inner case. He insists that "...if I need a justification for using a word, it must be also be one for someone else." (*PI* §378) If we accept a single interpretation of a rule for all its applications, according to Wittgenstein, this leads to the problem of solipsism. This single interpretation would be private and thus not public. Rules for Wittgenstein are nothing but public. An idea of a private rule is meaningless. Hence, what the paradox shows is that interpretations are insufficient to determine correctness of applications; or rather interpretations by themselves do not say anything how a sign have to be used.<sup>75</sup>

It is always possible to have different interpretations of a rule, and in addition, there are different ways of acting on any interpretation. We do not first interpret rules, and then act. We follow rules as we act, because we have a practice of following rules. So, do we simply pursue, according to Wittgenstein, from rule directly to action?

Wittgenstein's answer is no; there must be a primitive way of following a rule rather than by means of interpretation. This is why he says "I obey the rule *blindly*" (*PI* §219) Does this, however, mean that the concept of rule following leads to a kind of determinism in which one cannot chose what to do? Again no; one follows the rule blindly and this "blindness" means that there is no need for an interpretation. That is, one knows exactly what to do. Since a rule "always tells us the same, and we do what it tells us" (*PI* §223), one needs not deliberation to follow a rule.<sup>76</sup> We look to the rule and do something without appealing anything. (*PI* §228) Wittgenstein emphasizes that the concept of rule following requires regularity of actions but this does not happen independently of human practice. Following a rule blindly also

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<sup>75</sup> Erich Ammereller, "Wittgenstein on Intentionality", *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, ed. Hans-Johann Glock (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp.59-93.

<sup>76</sup> G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Scepticism, Rules and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984), p.84.

implies that a person cannot follow a rule only once in her life. Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the idea that there can be a single occasion of using or following a rule:

“Is what we call “obeying a rule” something that it would be possible for only one man to do, and to do only once in his life? ...It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which someone obeyed a rule.” (*PI* §199)

If that was possible, there would no distinction between the case in which one *thinks* one obeys a rule and the case in which he *actually* obeys it. (*PI* §202) Therefore, a key term for Wittgenstein, concerning the rule following is to act *blindly* or *regularly*. To do so, we just act without interpretation. Since interpretation cannot determine all uses of a rule, there would be no criterion of correctness whether one’s act is compatible with the rule.<sup>77</sup> Thus, following a rule is not mediated by any interpretation, otherwise it leads to paradox. In order to avoid the paradox, Wittgenstein removes the need for an interpretation between a rule and its application.

Does removing interpretation between a rule and its application leads to skepticism? In other words, is Wittgenstein skeptic concerning rule following?<sup>78</sup> The answer is no for the following reasons:

First, Wittgenstein does not reject that rules guide an action, but he rejects that all instances of following a rule must involve interpretations. Since a rule can be interpreted in countless ways, interpretation can be conceived as prescribing any course of action whatsoever. Second, Wittgenstein’s critique of interpretation is an attack on interpretation as an inner process. He denies that following a rule involves an inner process of interpretation. Third, Wittgenstein draws attention to the distinction between what ‘seems right’ and ‘what is right’ in a use of language. Without this distinction, there can be no criterion for meaning. He claims that if we do not give up interpretation as mediating thing between rule and its application, then “whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we cannot talk about ‘right’.” (*PI* §258) Thus to avoid the problems which

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<sup>77</sup> Erich Ammereller, “Wittgenstein on Intentionality”, pp.59-93.

<sup>78</sup> This is the conclusion of Saul Kripke in his reading of Wittgenstein’s remarks at §201. See the end of this section.

interpretation creates, we should give up a mediation between rule and its application. Therefore, Wittgenstein is not skeptic; rather he wants to dissolve the problems of interpretation.

### 2.1.2 The Problem of Regression

Interpretation causes another problem, namely problem of regression. Regression of interpretation appears in two contexts in *Philosophical Investigations*: first, in the discussion of what determines the correct use of a word, i.e., “cube” (*PI* §§139-142); second, in the discussion of what determines the correct application of a rule, i.e., in a numerical series. (*PI* §§186-198) In both places, Wittgenstein asks whether there is a unique interpretation (or a “picture”) for the application of a rule. Let us follow Wittgenstein’s example:

When someone says the word “cube” to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole *use* of the word come before my mind, when I understand it in this way? ... The picture of the cube did indeed *suggest* a certain use to us, but it was possible for me to use it differently...Is there such a thing as a picture, or something like a picture, that forces a particular application on us; so that my mistake lay in confusing one picture with another? What is essential is to see that the same thing can come before our minds when we hear the word and the application still be different. Has it *same* meaning both times? I think we shall say not.” (*PI* §§139-140)

Wittgenstein draws attention to the idea that when we understand the word “cube”, a picture in our mind forces us to apply the word in a certain way. In that regard, a picture of a cube is thought to be the meaning of the word “cube”, and it is assumed that there is only one interpretation (picture or image) of it. Wittgenstein questions these assumptions and says that there is a temptation to link the picture that comes before the mind to the understanding of the word “cube” and to its application. By examining the details of “cube” example, first, Wittgenstein shows that the picture or interpretation may come before our minds, but its application might be different. In this case, does the picture lead us from one interpretation to another to fix the correct application of a rule? Wittgenstein says “yes” and however adds that this leads to regression of interpretation. How does this happen?



Let us assume that the meaning of a word is understood with a picture or with its interpretation before the mind. It is true that we may express this picture or interpretation, but how do we know that this interpretation corresponds to the meaning of that word. Does this expression also not have “a meaning” which requires a further interpretation? If so, this expression will require another interpretation. That is, if an interpretation or a rule needs to be supplemented with another interpretation, then the interpretation of the rule needs a further interpretation and so on. So, the appeal to interpretations causes an infinite regress. Thus, one may never know whether the interpretation of a rule is correct or not.

On the other hand, since pictures can be interpreted in different ways, again interpretations do not determine correctness of applications.<sup>79</sup> Hence, we may conclude that an interpretation cannot force a particular application<sup>80</sup> and that interpretation of a rule cannot fix its applications.<sup>81</sup> Thus, rules do not need to be interpreted for their application, since, as we saw, this would lead to infinite regress. Regression of interpretation is generated, mainly, by the assumption that interpretation of rule occurs to mind in an isolated and context free form regardless of its various uses. However, Wittgenstein argues that if interpretation of a rule can come before the mind and be grasped as an isolated entity, then it is subject to multiple interpretations. It follows that if a rule requires interpretation, then for the same reason our interpretation requires further interpretation, and so on.<sup>82</sup>

The appeal to rules and interpretation must stop somewhere. When this happens, the rules cease to be instructions; instead they would be just actions and obeyed regularities. How can the regression of interpretation be stopped? It may be suggested that if an interpretation is ‘self-interpreting’, namely it does not need another interpretation in order to be understood, and then the regress vanishes. Wittgenstein considers some candidates for this case; for instance, an intuition, a formula, and a machine:

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<sup>79</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices* (Ph.D. dissertation, Illinois: Northwestern University, December 1998), p.281.

<sup>80</sup> Marie McGinn, *Routledge Philosophy Guide Book to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.85.

<sup>81</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.159.

<sup>82</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a social conception of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.160.

“What you are saying, then, comes to this: a new insight- *intuition*- is needed at every step to carry out the order ‘+n’ correctly”...It would almost be more correct to say, not that an intuition was needed at every stage, but that a new decision was needed at every stage. (*PI* §186)

“But are the steps then not determined by the algebraic *formula*?”- The question contains a mistake...We can contrast different kinds of formula, and the different kinds of use (different kinds of training) appropriate to them. (*PI* §189)

If we know the *machine*, everything else, that is its movement, seems to be already completely determined...But we do not say this kind of thing when we are concerned with predicting the actual behavior of a machine... (*PI* §193) We mind about the kind of expressions we use concerning these things; we do not understand them, however, but misinterpret them. When we do philosophy we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it (*PI* §194) (emphasis added)

It may be said that to know something by intuition, is to know it “immediately which others only know after long experience or calculation.” (*LFM* 30) For example, someone knows the answer to a mathematical problem by intuition, if he can arrive at the solution without calculating.<sup>83</sup> But does this really explain how we know by intuition? As shown in the previous quotations, Wittgenstein believes that none of these examples for a ‘self-interpretation’ is successful, and so the problem of the regression stands, since there is nothing in the mind that shows what rule she is following.<sup>84</sup>

The conclusion concerning the regression of interpretation, for Wittgenstein, is that “adopt whatever model or scheme you may, it will have a bottom level, and there will be no such thing as an interpretation of that.” (*BB* p.34) He thinks, as it was in paradox of interpretation, “blind obedience” is a remedy for regression; that is, simply acting by a guiding rule. (*PI* §219) It provides a ground that is not an interpretation.<sup>85</sup> Therefore the way to solve (or dissolve) the problem of interpretation is to recognize that “there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation”, but which is exhibited in what Wittgenstein calls ‘obeying the rule’

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<sup>83</sup> Andrew Lewis, “Wittgenstein and Rule-Scepticism”, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 152, pp. 280-304.

<sup>84</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a social conception of Mind*, p.161.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184.

and ‘going against it’ in actual cases.” (*PI* §201) Wittgenstein claims that there is no gap, which is filled with interpretation, between rule and application.

## 2.2 Internal Relation between Rule and Application

In the previous section, we have seen that interpretations cannot give us guidance concerning how to follow a rule, nor do they determine the meaning of a rule. Furthermore, the interpretation leads to the paradox and regression problems. How can we avoid from these problems? Wittgenstein has two suggestions: first, the concept of rule following should be based on practice; and second, there is an internal relation between the rule and application. Since the first suggestion will be examined in the third Chapter, I will focus on the second suggestion.

The concept of rule following, for Wittgenstein, is exhibited in what we do, in how we use words; to apply a rule is exhibited in the actual cases of rule following behavior. We grasp a rule when we apply it correctly, and we fail to understand it, when we apply it incorrectly. Thus, the criterion of correct application of a rule is to follow it, not an intermediary thing between the rule and its applications.<sup>86</sup> If there is no third thing between a rule and its application, then there must be an internal, unmediated relation between them; namely, there is no an intermediary third thing between them.<sup>87</sup> According to Wittgenstein, to introduce a third thing (e.g., an interpretation) mediating between a rule and its applications would be break up this internal relation; and if a rule is detached from its applications, a gap is inserted between the rule and its application (*PR* §164), and this will lead us again to the problems, of paradox and regression.

Wittgenstein had already used the concepts of internal and external relations in the *Tractatus*. According to the *Tractatus*, the truth of a proposition lies in its relation to the world. Whether a proposition is true or not depends on what happens in the world. This relation is called external because it establishes a connection between propositions and facts. Baker and Hacker mention three qualifications which

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<sup>86</sup> Robert L. Arrington, “Following a Rule”, *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, ed. Hans-Johann Glock, (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp.119-137.

<sup>87</sup> There is nothing “that interposes itself between the expression  $x/x^2$ , and its application to numbers, like the mortar between bricks.” (WWK p.155)

an external relation has: first, grasping a rule can be separated from its application; second, the external relation is described by deductive explanation; and third, an individual's behavior is an inductive evidence for her understanding a rule.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to external relation, Wittgenstein also introduces the concept of internal relation in the *Tractatus*. The internal relation of an object is what determines its different possibilities with other objects.<sup>89</sup> Internal relations are such that they cannot fail to obtain, since they are essential to their objects. (*TLP* 4.122)

An internal property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object does not possess it. (This blue color and that stand in the internal relation of brighter and darker eo ipso. It is unthinkable that these two objects should not stand in this relation.) (*TLP* 4.123)

This passage may be understood as following: the relation between two entities is internal, if and only if, it is inconceivable that the entities do not stand in that relation. For instance, if an object is red, it is internally related to all green objects, since both red and green are colors but they are different colors. Similarly, propositions internally relate to other propositions and also to what they picture.<sup>90</sup> It is the business of formal logic to display these relations. For example, if “it is raining and she gets wet” is true, then “either it is raining or she gets wet” is also true. However, although internal relations can be displayed in formal logic, they cannot be meaningfully expressed by a proposition. They only show themselves when they are analyzed.<sup>91</sup>

Is there any difference between the early and later periods of Wittgenstein concerning internal relation? Yes, there is a difference: in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's central view is that the conditions of language are transcendent (*TLP* 6.13), in other words, they are not related to human activity; in the later period, Wittgenstein relates the concept of language strongly to human practice. It can be concluded that rules are prior to human activity in the Tractarian system that stand in contrast to later thought of Wittgenstein. Moreover, in addition to internal relation,

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<sup>88</sup> G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Scepticism, Rules and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984), pp.100-103.

<sup>89</sup> Hans Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.189.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.302.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189.

the *Tractatus* requires an external relation between language and world. However, the concept of internal relation for later Wittgenstein wholly belongs to the grammatical realm. Another difference is that although there are internal and external relations between propositions and world in the *Tractatus*, we have no idea whether rules have internal relation with their application; however, this kind of internal relation between rules and application is very important for the later Wittgenstein's rule following considerations.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein mentions internal relation within the context of rule following. According to later Wittgenstein, there are no abstract rules that are devoid of application; that is, a rule and its applications are inseparable elements and they are internally related. This means that a rule and its application cannot be treated as two independent entities.<sup>92</sup> Since application and rule are internally dependent, it is a mistake to think that what determines the application of a rule is something other than the rule itself. Indeed, Wittgenstein wants to undermine the view that the gap between a rule and its application is filled with some inner or mental process; e.g. interpretation.

As I have already mentioned, in addition to internal relation, external relation is also assumed in the *Tractatus*. External relations make it possible to treat rules as empirical generalizations for behavior. If that is the case, then why is there a need for internal relation in addition to external relation? The problem is to treat what is grammatical as if empirical by externalizing it. For Wittgenstein, the internal relation between a rule and its application belongs to the realm of language, not to the empirical world. Wittgenstein insists that problems can only arise if we ignore the way concepts are governed by grammatical rules, and treat them as referring to the empirical world. (*PI* §182) Indeed, Wittgenstein's arguments seek to reject the idea that relations between words and objects can be fixed only by pointing at them in empirical world. Once we investigate the concept of internal relation grammatically, we find application or practice of the rule as a fundamental thing; and so, we do not need an intermediating thing between rule and its application: as Wittgenstein says

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<sup>92</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a Social Conception of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.165.

“nothing stands between the rule and my action.” (*RFM* VII-60) Therefore, for him “internal relations are the product of grammar.”<sup>93</sup>

According to Wittgenstein, the items of a language system are not discovered in the empirical world, but in grammar. As mentioned, the internal relation between a rule and its application belongs to the realm of grammatical possibilities. This realm of grammar is not a realm of abstract entities as it is in the Platonist system, but the realm of language. Therefore, a rule does not transcend its application. We may say that a rule does not act at distance. That is, there are no external constraints that determine the application of a rule. For example we can talk about “necessity” in language, but this is only a grammatical necessity. That is, if an inference is “correct”, it is correct within its language system. Therefore, we can deduce from this view that language systems are internally determined, but externally free. Does this mean that internal relation is arbitrary and there is no criterion to justify it? No; internal relations are not arbitrary; they are always binding: “Grammatical rules are arbitrary, but their application is not.” (*Lectures 1930-32*, p.58) If relation between rule and application were arbitrary, we would not succeed in laying down a rule. In that case, there would be no rules, and everything would be possible.

If there are no external relations, then, again do we have freedom to do what we want? For Wittgenstein, since there is an internal relation between a rule and its application, we are not free to do what we want. We cannot follow the rule as we like it. This internal relation is neither causal nor a matter of interpretation, but is a matter of agreement between the rule and our action. This view, however, presupposes two things: first, words influence people directly in a non-causal way without an intermediary thing; and second, people have natural capacities to use language by training. Let us refer again to Wittgenstein’s metaphor of signpost; he believes that following a rule is like following a signpost. (*PI* §85) How do we know how to follow the arrow sign? Signposts do not force on us to go one way rather than another. They do not guide a person in a certain way, unless the person is trained as to how to read signposts. We are trained concerning what counts as following a rule.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp.165-166.

Therefore, rules do not force on us to do certain things, but by training we know what we have to do in order to follow a rule.

So far, what appears is that the key concept concerning internal relation is again practice. The internal relation is established by a practice of language. Language users gain linguistic competence by going through a training process in practice of language. An act requires an environment in which it is practiced. Thus, language is dependent on certain practices of human beings. It is dependent on language speakers who use words in regular ways to communicate with other language users, and it is dependent on the capacity to be trained in regular exercises and examples.<sup>94</sup> Priority is thus given to actual practice; there can be a rule following if there is a technique of usage.<sup>95</sup> Thus internal relations become derivative by practices; what we call internal is what is taken as a matter of course in our practices. (*RFM I* §85) We are trained to react to the expression of a rule in one way. We learn to follow rules of swimming as we learn to swim actually in a swimming pool. Hence to understand a sentence involves the mastery of a technique, not a grasp of a mediating mental proposition. No interpretation is necessary to bind a rule to its application; indeed none is possible until the rule has a certain use, that is, until it is employed as a standard of correctness. For only then is there anything to interpret.<sup>96</sup>

Can we conclude from the concept of internal relation that it is a relation between language and inner process? Certainly not; for Wittgenstein, the internal relation does not relate language use to an inner or mental process, but rather to the ability to go on rule following. There is an internal relation between a given rule and its application and this also irrelevant how the members of a community follow that rule. Is this a kind of skepticism? Rule skepticism suggests that we could not know what rules require of us, but we know what rules we are asked to follow. It asks whether we understand the rule we are told to follow; do we know what steps it requires of me? The internal relation between a rule and its application refutes the

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<sup>94</sup> Aydan Turanlı, *The Change in Rule-Governed Practices in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara: METU, September 1994), p.31.

<sup>95</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.221.

<sup>96</sup> G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.100.

claim of rule skepticism, since it rejects the possibility of separating a rule from knowledge of how to apply it.

We may suggest that if Wittgenstein's claim is that rules are understood by grasping a technique of application, then it may be questioned that we may never know what rule we are following. It seems that Wittgenstein has no criterion to distinguish which rules we are following. Indeed, an answer to such a problem is trivial; Wittgenstein does not separate the knowledge of rule from the knowledge of applying it, but this question presupposes such a separation.<sup>97</sup> For Wittgenstein, there is an internal relation between language and use, and if there are no internal relations, then there would be no concept of rule following. Therefore, there is no problem of skepticism here.

Kripke takes Wittgenstein's remarks on problem of interpretation to establish a skeptical conclusion. According to him, first, there is no criterion how we distinguish correct from incorrect actions. Second, the justification of understanding, and rule-governed behavior is ambiguous; we can only justify a rule with a community consensus.<sup>98</sup> So, for Kripke, rule following consists in doing as community does: "Ultimately we reach a level where we act without any reason in terms of which we can justify our action. We act unhesitatingly but blindly."<sup>99</sup> In that regard, according to Kripke, what justifies rule following actions is determined by the community checks. Since meaning is determined by appealing to community, Kripke assumes that Wittgenstein agrees with the skeptic that there is neither an 'internal' nor an 'external' fact which guarantees my meaning.<sup>100</sup>

Kripke's view involves important points; he asserts that, for Wittgenstein, meaning and rule following have a correlation with a community.<sup>101</sup> According to this view, meaning is possible because we are living in a society and the community determines the correctness of an application. Does Wittgenstein really accept community standards as 'correct'? Can we say that Wittgenstein believes in that

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<sup>97</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and rules: language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein*, p.185.

<sup>98</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a Social Conception of Mind*, p.162.

<sup>99</sup> Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, (USA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p.87.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69

<sup>101</sup> Aydan Turanlı, *The Change in Rule-Governed Practices in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*, p.112.



there is homogeneity in the application of a concept in a community? If we take community as a standard, then we should accept that disagreements would arise in the community. If that is the case, then we have to accept that each culture is enclosed within its standards of correctness. Consequently, meaning becomes completely culture-dependent.<sup>102</sup> Is this the relativist account which Wittgenstein adheres?

If we consider communities as bedrock, since all of them will be enclosed within their rules, this would cause a problem of communications: how different communities can understand each other. As Wittgenstein points out, “The common behavior of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.” (*PI* §206) Nevertheless, if I understand Wittgenstein’s views correctly, the basis of rules does not depend upon our verbal agreement on the nature of things; on the contrary, it depends on human practice, because this is common to all mankind. So, we can understand each other regardless of our cultural differences. If this is true, then meanings arise from our acting in the world. Grammatical rules and their applications are merged in a melting pot or rather they emerge together in a social context.

We can conclude that Kripke’s account is mistaken, because rule-application cannot be justified by appealing to the community. We cannot say that ‘this is blue’ is correct by appealing to a community, but by only consulting to the examples of ‘blue’ in a linguistic community. What is important here is that the agreement of the color with the sample determines the usage of this concept. Of course, there is an agreement in community, but this agreement belongs to the framework. So whether  $2 \times 2 = 4$  depends not on some abstract, extra-human rule of addition, but on what we accept.<sup>103</sup>

In fact, Wittgenstein’s critique of problems of interpretation shows the inconsistency that makes the skeptical problem possible.<sup>104</sup> Wittgenstein’s answer to the problems of interpretation is not a skeptical one, but an appeal to the practice of rules. Through the practice, rules are imposed upon the people by the process of

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.116.

<sup>103</sup> Aydan Turanlı, *The Change in Rule-Governed Practices in Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy*, p.164.

<sup>104</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a social conception of Mind*, p.164.

training.<sup>105</sup> This is not a skeptical claim or skeptical solution, or rejection of meaning. Wittgenstein is not concerned with what determines meaning. Instead, Wittgenstein claims that the idea of rule following based upon interpretation or upon a mental proposition leads the paradox and regression of interpretation. Moreover, Wittgenstein does not offer a skeptical solution to the problems of interpretation, because Wittgenstein does not accept the skeptic's claims. In the *Notebooks* and *On Certainty* Wittgenstein wrote:

Skepticism is not irrefutable, but obvious nonsense if it tries to doubt where no question can be asked. For doubt can only exist where question exists; a question can only exist where an answer exists, and this can only exist where something can be said. (*Notebooks*, p. 44)

If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty. (*OC* §115)

If Wittgenstein's claims are not skeptical, then how does he "dissolve" problems of interpretation? Let me summarize Wittgenstein's thoughts. As I have mentioned above, Wittgenstein shows that the paradox rests on a misunderstanding. This misunderstanding assumes that understanding a rule is determined only by an interpretation. If it can be questioned that there is a gap between a rule and its application, why can we not question whether there is a gap between an interpretation and its application? What makes an interpretation correct? As Wittgenstein's argument shows that interpretations by themselves do not determine how a rule is applied.<sup>106</sup> Wittgenstein proposes instead that one way out of the paradox is to recognize that following a rule is exhibited in a human practice. Namely, if it is accepted that following a rule is a general human practice, there is only one possibility to avoid of paradox. (*PI* §199) To emphasize the role of human practice concerning the rule following is "not a matter of having before one's mind some interpreting expression or formula."<sup>107</sup> If we accept Wittgenstein's view, we should stop thinking of following a rule as entailing an interpretation, and this

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.185.

<sup>106</sup> Erich Ammereller, "Wittgenstein on Intentionality", *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, pp.59-93.

<sup>107</sup> Barry Stroud, *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.67-68.

provides us a way to avoid the paradox.<sup>108</sup> The other way out of this paradox is to state that there is no gap between rule and application; there is, however, an internal relation between them. If we accept there is no gap between them, in a similar way, we can avoid another problem, the problem of regression of interpretation.

### 2.3 Rule Following and Understanding

According to empiricist theory of meaning, language is acquired through experience and 'understanding' is identified with a mental state. Understanding a word means having an idea and an image in the mind. This is because mind has mechanisms that permit language acquisition and a word has ideas associated with it in the mind.<sup>109</sup> Truth conditional semantics indicates that the meaning of a proposition is derived from elementary propositions that are formed according to logical syntax. The meaning is a relation between an expression and object which is attained through interpretation. So, understanding is possible when we grasp the rules and their interpretations that represent structure of reality.

Wittgenstein's concept of rule in his early period is mostly based on the theory of language which is summarized in the previous paragraph. In his later period, however, Wittgenstein wanted to get away from the idea that rules picture reality. He criticized philosophers who thought that this was the nature and function of language. According to him, these philosophers misunderstand the nature of language and the relationship between language and reality. For him, language is not a representational system in which each word refers to a thing in the world. There are also no underlying rules that we grasp when we understand the meaning of a word. Wittgenstein insists that one should not look at language in an idealistic way. Meanings of words are not mental images or states of mind that people interpret. Wittgenstein states these views as following:

It seems that there are certain definite mental processes bound up with the working of language, processes through which alone language can function. I mean the

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<sup>108</sup>Claudine Verheggen, "Wittgenstein's Rule Following Paradox and the Objectivity of Meaning", *Philosophical Investigations*, 26:4 (October 2003), pp.285-310.

<sup>109</sup> Cecil H. Brown, *Wittgensteinian Linguistics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p.29.

processes of understanding and meaning. The signs of our language seem dead without these mental processes... We are tempted to think that the action of language consists of two parts; an inorganic part, the handling of signs and an organic part, which we may call understanding these signs, meaning them, interpreting them, thinking. These latter activities seem to take place in a queer kind of medium, the mind; and the mechanism of the mind, the nature of which, it seems, we do not quite understand, can bring about effects which no material mechanism could. (*BB* p.3)

There are some beliefs which, according to Wittgenstein, must be clarified. One such belief is that “understanding a rule” is different than “knowing how to do.” The source of the problem is to assume that rules have two separate aspects: expression and application. When this assumption is accepted, then a gap appears between understanding a rule and knowing how to apply it. Wittgenstein claims that it is not possible to understand a rule but not know how to apply it, since if one does not know how to apply a rule, one does not understand what it really means. For him, it is possible to apply a rule without really knowing the full expression of that rule.<sup>110</sup> Thus understanding, according to Wittgenstein, does not entail knowing its full expression.<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, Wittgenstein rejects the idea that understanding is identified with an entity, a mental state, or an inner process.<sup>112</sup> It has been claimed that understanding a rule as a mental state provides all the correct uses of a rule. However, how do we know that this mental state of understanding exists? Do we have an idea of what this state consists of or how does this mental process develop? More importantly, if it is accepted that understanding a rule is a mental state, how can understanding a rule cover an infinite series of applications in the mind? For example, if understanding “add two” is accepted as a mental state, how can it cover all of its infinite applications in the mind? Unless understanding is displayed in practice, we cannot say whether a person really understands the rule or not.<sup>113</sup> Hence understanding, according to Wittgenstein, is not a mental state. Mental states are hidden phenomena and Wittgenstein thinks that it is none of philosophy’s business to

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<sup>110</sup> Wes Sharrock & Graham Button, “Do the Right Thing! Rule Finitism, Rule Skepticism and Rule Following”, *Human Studies*, 22, (1999), p.193-210.

<sup>111</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.288.

<sup>112</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and Rules: Language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein* (Ph.D. dissertation, Austin: The University of Texas, 1999), pp.94-95.

<sup>113</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a social conception of Mind*, p.171.

be concerned with what is hidden, “since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. What is hidden is of no interest to us.” (*PI* §126)

If it is asked: 'How do sentences manage to represent?' - the answer might be: 'Don't you know? You certainly see it, when you use them'. For nothing is concealed... For nothing is hidden. (*PI* §435) If there has to be anything “behind the utterance of the formula” it is *particular circumstances*, which justify me in saying I can go on when the formula occurs to me...In the sense in which there are processes (including mental processes) which are characteristic of understanding, understanding is not a mental process. (*PI* §154)

Even if it is assumed that understanding a rule is a mental state, this still does not guarantee that it may constitute a criterion for the correct application of that rule. Since in this case, this mental state is merely conceived as a formula in one's mind.<sup>114</sup> Wittgenstein is concerned with apparent qualities rather than qualities which are hidden behind appearances.

What is the concept of understanding for Wittgenstein? Rather than going over this question in a direct way, we may attempt to give an answer to it in the context of rule and application: i. What is involved in understanding a rule? ii. How do we know when we follow a rule what actions it requires? iii. What does it mean for a rule to require an action?<sup>115</sup>

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, the concept of understanding and rule following are discussed as related terms. The concept of understanding is used to establish a thesis about the rule following. The concept of understanding and rule following have been explained as the exercise of an *ability* rather than a mental process, since learning to follow a rule, for Wittgenstein, is not only learning its expression, but also learning what that rule requires. Or more correctly, there is a privileged role for the application of a rule over its expression. Accordingly, understanding can be identified with the ability to apply rules, that is, understanding a rule is to be able to apply that rule. For example, if I understand the expression “I see a rose”, then I must be able to apply it to my each experience of seeing a rose.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.290.

<sup>115</sup> Robert L. Arrington, “Following a Rule”, *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, edit. by Hans-Johann Glock, (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp.119-137.

<sup>116</sup> Laurence E. Nemirow, “Understanding Rules”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.92, No.1 (Jan., 1995), pp.28-43.

In order to understand why Wittgenstein considers understanding more like ability rather than a mental state or mental process, let us look at his phrase "knowing how to go on." If one knows how to go on, it means that she has an understanding about how to put into practice a rule. Wittgenstein says: "try not to think of understanding as a 'mental process' at all. For, that is the expression which confuses you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say, 'Now I know how to go on'..." (PI §154) Understanding, thus, is not related to ideas in the mind; but, "it is the circumstances under which he had such an experience that justify him in saying... that he understands, that he knows how to go on." (PI §155) Wittgenstein's position is that to understand a rule is to know how to use it; it is an ability that is manifest in how a person follows a rule.

Wittgenstein claims that understanding means being able to use words in a various situations. For example, if someone who understands the word 'pain', she is able to apply it to different sensations, e.g., to the feeling when her leg is broken, or when her finger is burnt, etc. Thus, the *grammar* of the word "understands" is closely related to such terms: 'can', 'is able to', 'to know'. (PI §150) In other words, understanding a rule means knowing how to use it or being able to apply it. We may conclude then that the grammar of 'understanding' is similar to the grammar of 'ability.'

However, it may be objected that ability is attributed to a person after observing her actions for a long time, and in different circumstances. Understanding, on the other hand, may seem to be a sudden experience. We may say 'Now I know' – and similarly 'Now I can do it!' and 'Now I understand!' "...so this capacity, this understanding, is something that makes its appearance in a moment." (PI §151) Can it be claimed that understanding is not ability, but a sudden mental state?<sup>117</sup>

Let us explore the 'processes' of understanding with Wittgenstein's example. Wittgenstein draws attention to what takes place in the mind when one says that 'I understand the series of numbers now!' For example, a pupil observes a teacher writing out numbers: 1, 5, 11, 19, 29...; and then, she is asked to continue the series. When a formula 'occurs to her', or when she does some mental calculations, she may

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<sup>117</sup> Robert L. Arrington, "Following a Rule", *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, edit. by Hans-Johann Glock, USA: Blackwell Publishers, (2001), pp. 119-137.

*suddenly* say, ‘Now I know how to continue the series’. (*PI* §§152-5) Wittgenstein does not deny that these experiences occur, but, for him, they do not constitute a criterion for understanding. For Wittgenstein, criterion of understanding is a demonstration of an ability to continue series. Understanding cannot be a mechanism which gives meanings to rules; rather understanding is a technique of rule’s application, so Wittgenstein focuses on applicational properties of rule following. This technique is nothing more than the person’s ability to apply the rule correctly.<sup>118</sup>

In Wittgenstein’s view, to learn using language is no different from to learn mathematics. For example, in learning to square numbers, various examples are provided:  $1 \times 1 = 1$ ,  $2 \times 2 = 4$ . Through practice and attention to these examples, we become competent in making this calculation. We come to act as if we are following the rule  $y \times y = y^2$ . Similarly, through examples and practice a person becomes linguistically competent. She learns to use language in an ordinary way. Eventually she becomes competent in using language and she no longer has to look at rule to use the language.<sup>119</sup> We learn to follow the rule in all cases by coming understand the rule in its full generality, through working on the exemplary cases. The rule does not tell what to do in each step. That is, the rule does not tell what to do in each step by telling “do this in step one”, “do this in step two”... Rather, it says what to do each case by telling what to do in any case or what to do in all cases.<sup>120</sup>

The possibility of error in following any mathematical series leads Wittgenstein to ask what kind of explanation is needed to get the pupil to proceed correctly:

Now we get the pupil to continue a series (say +2) beyond 1000- and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012.

We say to him: “Look what you’ve done!”- He doesn’t understand. We say: “You were meant to add *two*: look how you began the series!”- He answers: “Yes, isn’t it right? I thought that was how I was meant to do it.”- Or suppose he pointed to the series and said: “But I went on in the same way.”- It would now be no use to say: “But can’t you see...? - and repeat the old examples and explanations.- In such a case we might say, perhaps: It comes natural to this person to understand our order

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<sup>118</sup> Barry Stroud, *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.82.

<sup>119</sup> Cecil H. Brown, *Wittgensteinian Linguistics*, p.28.

<sup>120</sup> Wes Sharrock & Graham Button, “Do the Right Thing! Rule Finitism, Rule Skepticism and Rule Following”, pp.193-210.

with our explanations as *we* should understand the order: “Add 2 up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, 6 up to 3000 and so on.” (*PI* §185)

Wittgenstein points out the variety of possible explanations that would guarantee that the pupil continues the series correctly. However, no single explanation is a panacea for all kind of errors. It might be said that we explain what we want the student to do by giving the rule, for example ‘+2’. We try to get her to understand the meaning of this rule by means of alternative expression of the rule, e. g. ‘add two’, or examples of the rule’s application, e. g. 4, 6, 8, 10. Is there any guarantee that she would apply the rule correctly? For example, suppose that a teacher teaches how to extend a number sequence to a pupil. The series goes ‘2, 4, 6, 8 ...’ and after pupil continued ‘...10, 12, 14...’ she passes “500”, she extends the sequence differently ‘...500, 504, 508...’ If it is said to her “you did not understand, you did not grasp the rules”, she might say “I thought the rules were: add 2 until you get to 500, then add 4, until . . .” What can be said in this case? We can give the following explanation: “she did not understand how to continue the series”, or “she does not possess the required ability for doing so.”

Wittgenstein suggests that understanding a rule, for example ‘+2’, is an ability. (*PG* §10-12) To know the  $2 + 2 = 4$  is to have the ability to say it correctly. This ability is not only by saying the  $2 + 2 = 4$  correctly, but doing so repeatedly, even under different conditions. Thus for Wittgenstein, “the grammar of the word ‘knows’ is evidently related to that of ‘can’, ‘is able to’. But also closely related to that of ‘understands’ (‘Mastery’ of a technique).” (*PI* §150) The grammar of ‘understanding’, then, is similar to the grammar of words that indicate ability. Wittgenstein links the concept of ability to the concept of technique and practice. Rule following requires mastery of a technique. (*PI* §199) A technique is a way of doing things. Understanding a language means mastery of a technique, i.e., mastery of a language usage, because it involves using linguistic expressions in accordance with the grammatical rules. One has not understood a rule unless one has achieved mastery of the technique of using it. Understanding requires the mastery of a technique that is the skilled use of a common procedure.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.291.



In a similar way, the concept of practice refers to a regular and standard way of doing things. However, a technique is not the exactly same as practice. Counting, calculating, measuring, inferring are examples of techniques. To engage in these activities is to exemplify mastery of these techniques, that is, to display the ability to use and follow the various rules that define them. However, mastery of a technique is manifest in practice.<sup>122</sup> Practice is a repeated procedure, namely, it is not something that happens just once. Thus, “it is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which someone obeyed a rule.” (*PI* §199) A practice must be a procedure that could be taught to another person. Training provides the relation between a rule and required steps in following it. Understanding a rule is the ability to apply that rule correctly, or as Wittgenstein says, “to know how to go on.”<sup>123</sup>

How do we acquire the ability to follow a rule? Wittgenstein’s answer is that “the teaching of language is not explanation, but training.” (*PI* §5) For example, the definition of a word depends on linguistic ability acquired through training. There is no way of understanding how a person acquires a skill except through training.<sup>124</sup> The techniques of use that are mastered in acquiring a skill are not a set of instructions; that is, rules are no instructions, but regularities. The linguistic ability is not provided by explanations of rules, but by training. The concept of training introduces practical aspect of rule following. It avoids positing an isolated state of mind, formula or interpretation; and so, the concept of training develops a dynamic rather than static view of rule following.<sup>125</sup> In other words, for Wittgenstein, a person comes to master a technique for applications of rules by training. Therefore, the connection between a rule and application is to be explicated in terms of training.<sup>126</sup>

These views concerning understanding may seem to have a skeptical tinge in them. It seems as if there is a problem of indetermination about rules and of their conclusions. Some commentators, like Kripke, even argued that there is some kind of a gap to be bridged between understanding of rule and its application in particular cases. According to them, Wittgenstein demonstrates that rules need some outside

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<sup>122</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.161.

<sup>123</sup> Robert L. Arrington, “Following a Rule,” *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, pp. 119-137.

<sup>124</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a social conception of Mind*, p.181.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p.168.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p.179.

help and only in this way rules can be more than just regularities. They claims that Wittgenstein offers a skeptical solution with regard to rule following.<sup>127</sup>

For example, Kripke says that Wittgenstein's arguments are skeptical solution to the problem of skepticism. The solution that Kripke proposes involves recognizing the "wider community" of rule followers.<sup>128</sup> Michael Dummett also thinks that in Wittgenstein's system while applying the rules in a proof, we are "free to choose;" it is up to us to accept or reject them.<sup>129</sup> According to Dummett, any application of rule is undetermined; and nothing in our minds forces us to accept something as the correct application of a rule. In order to respond these claims of skepticism, let us focus on Wittgenstein's views on "understanding" and "training" in order to find whether there is a skeptical solution in his theory.

Can we imagine the rules of multiplication not always giving one and the same answer? For example,  $5 \times 8 = 75$  (not equaling 40); we can do it, but does it make sense to say such a thing? As far as I understand Wittgenstein's views, we have to take certain steps in following a rule; that is, multiplication requires certain set of applications. If we take other steps and apply the rule differently, then what we do will not count as following this rule, but another rule.<sup>130</sup> By training, one follows a rule without hesitation. Following a rule is not a matter of choosing among interpretations of the rule. We are guided by a rule when what the rule tells us to do. So, regular steps have become standards as the correct application of the rule. We are trained to engage in practice, we are taught a technique; and as a result we follow the rule in a fashion, without hesitation or doubt and without necessarily engaging in any interpretation of it.<sup>131</sup> These views, I believe, is incompatible with a skeptical interpretation of Wittgenstein's account of rule following. Wittgenstein says:

When someone whom I am afraid of orders me to continue the series, I act quickly, with perfect certainty, and the lack of reasons does not trouble me. (*PI* §212)

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<sup>127</sup> Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: an Elementary Exposition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p.68.

<sup>128</sup> Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: an Elementary Exposition*, p.89

<sup>129</sup> Michael Dummett, Dummett, Michael, "Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics", in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXVIII (1959), pp. 324-348.

<sup>130</sup> Robert L. Arrington, "Following a Rule", *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, edit. by Hans-Johann Glock, (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 119-137.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

I know how I have to go” means: I am in no doubt how I have to go. “How can one follow a rule?” that is what I should like to ask. But how does it come about that I want to ask that, when after all I find no difficulty in following a rule. Here we obviously misunderstand the facts that lie before our eyes. (*RFM* VI 38)

Wittgenstein says that a child, only after learning how to use the color words, can ask the name of a color (*OC* §548). Without having the uses of a concept, he cannot ask the name of that concept. That is, doubt comes after learning. He says that doubt presupposes the possibility of certainty. Doubting is directed to truth of a sentence and it is possible only in a language game. (*OC* §24) Thus, to accept the understanding of a rule as ability has some advantages of avoiding skeptical confusions. It is clear that if understanding the rules for multiplication needs the ability to add numbers, then there is no gap between having understanding and multiplication, as the commentators claim. That is, this advantage of the identification of understanding a rule with the ability to apply it allows for dissolution of what is called the paradox of rule following (see the previous section).<sup>132</sup> For Wittgenstein, understanding a rule is not an interpretation of it. Rather, understanding is exhibited in the rule following. What Wittgenstein claims is that the ability to follow a rule could not be an inner process or mental state, but it is practice.

In Wittgenstein’s system, skeptical problems concerning rule following disappear when we think that the meanings of words consist in how they are used. When we learn a language we learn what kinds of things to call “pain” or “blue”, and in what circumstances we use these words to relate things. For example, we use “pain” in the context of a physical or psychological problem. We do not use it to refer to “pen”. They are particular ways of using a word. Wittgenstein calls these “learned ways of going on rules”. For Wittgenstein, following a rule is like following a signpost (*PI* §85). Signposts do not make us go one way rather than another. They do not guide a person in a one certain way unless the person is conditioned as such. We are trained in what counts as following a particular rule. For example, according to Wittgenstein there is no point in asking “does this table exist?”, since it can be

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<sup>132</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and rules: language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein*, p.4.

seen and felt; it is trivial to ask if it exists. But skeptics might ask: how can you prove it? Wittgenstein would say “proving” does not belong to this context. In everyday life, we do not question that the table exists and in ordinary life we do not have to go beyond everyday language. Wittgenstein thus clarifies the concepts of rule and understanding, bringing them to practical life; that is, bringing concepts back to the “rough ground” of actual life.

Language game may also be used to back up the claim that Wittgenstein’s solution for the rule following is a skeptical one. In *Philosophical Investigations*, language games refer to ways of going on with certain activities, such as, asking, thanking. (*PI* §23) These activities are not correlated with different people in society. Wittgenstein refers to the concept of “form of life”. Form of life are contexts for language games, they make them comprehensible. They are bound up in language: “the speaking of language is part of an activity or form of life”. (*PI* §23) Does the concept of “form of life” give support to the skeptical or relativistic interpretations of Wittgenstein’s concept of rule following? The form of life suggests that it cannot be assumed that “everybody means the same thing, since everybody has the same concepts, or beliefs, or judgments.” However, this concept also suggests that life has many forms, and we can at least potentially share in them. This saves us from relativism. Indeed, concepts of language games and forms of life do not seem to lead to “community view” as a skeptical solution.

It is also possible that these commentators come to a skeptical conclusion with regard to Wittgenstein’s theory of rule following due to the concept of “practice.” Practice establishes relations between word and things. In practice, we have to be trained to acquire linguistic ability. Practice is in no way independent of the human’s environment. In that regard, language is not autonomous; rather it is dependent on speakers who use language in regular ways, and it is dependent on the ability to be trained and to train others in regular activities.<sup>133</sup> The ability for acquiring linguistic competence by following rules in a specific practice permits learning of language. This ability, for Wittgenstein, is part of our “natural history”:

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<sup>133</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.276.

Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing. (*PI* §25)

Training with practice is the way in which we come to follow rules. In being trained, the individual has come to master a technique, and say “now I do so react to it.” (*PI* §199) The understanding a rule is a matter of being trained in a technique; and the technique of application lies in the human practice, e.g. background.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, concept of rule following has another aspect: there is no autonomous realm of rules distinct of human practices.

Practices depend on a context which makes up the background. Within the background, it is possible to give a description of an action as a case of rule following. The background involves skills, habits, and customs. This term emphasizes both the social and natural context of rule following, and it characterizes Wittgenstein’s later conception of language as a practice.<sup>135</sup> The background, required for the rule governed use of language, cannot be reduced to a ‘calculus’ of symbolic rules. That is, the background is not a system of signs defined by rules, but it is a practice of grammatical space.<sup>136</sup> That is, the background and its relation to reality is the totality of human practices and human agreement. Wittgenstein speaks of human agreement as not an agreement in opinions, but an agreement in “form of life”. Thus, Wittgenstein links the concept of ability to regular, standard ways of doing things: ‘To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are customs (uses, institutions).’ (*PI* §199) Customs, too, are standard ways of doing things, not just regularities of behavior but regularities that have a normative force.

The notions of correct and incorrect, or right and wrong play an essential role in normative activities. Correcting one’s actions with reference to a rule, explaining or justifying one’s own actions with reference to a rule, teaching another are examples of normative activities. These activities involve certain techniques and practices. Furthermore, the exercise of these techniques and practices requires the

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<sup>134</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a social conception of Mind*, p.178.

<sup>135</sup> David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.103.

<sup>136</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.217.

possession of various abilities.<sup>137</sup> When we say that someone is following a rule, we acknowledge that the person possesses some of the normative abilities characteristic of that rule. These normative attitudes of language users are essential of what Wittgenstein calls the background of rule following practices. (*PI* §217) Practice of rule following requires from its users that they act as blindly and refuse other ways. (*PI* §219) So, we become rule followers by involving in rule following practices, and we acquire the normative attitudes of practice. This is the ground of the normativity of rule following. Therefore, Wittgenstein's concept of rule following has another aspect: the ability to apply the rules includes the normative abilities such as explaining, justifying, or criticizing. Thus concept of rule following involve more than simply a regularity of behavior.

Consequently, to think that the application of a rule is wholly undetermined would be a mistake. One does not grasp the rule unless at least some of normative conditions are applied: to justify, explain, criticize, correct. In this sense our behavior is determined; not because it is forced, but because it must be in harmony with conditions that are constitutive of rule following. Thus the accounts of Kripke and Dummett ignore what Wittgenstein considers to be essential to the rule following, that is, the normative and complex circumstances, characteristics of rule following. Whatever role the community may have in Wittgenstein's account, it is not reducible to skepticism. The practice of the community provides us with language, but the community itself cannot determine the standards of correctness that are relevant to language. The community is not "above" the framework of concepts and rules, but is rather constituted by these concepts and rules. The community is not a special kind of metaphysical entity that can determine the meaning of rules.

In sum, following a rule is not just matter of doing what accords with the rule; one must also do it because the rule requires it. The rule must be one's reason for acting. This means that following a rule involves understanding the rule and grasping what it requires. Following a rule is distinct from merely acting in accordance with it. One can act in accordance with a rule, doing what the rule requires without

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<sup>137</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and rules: language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein*, p.4.

understanding it.<sup>138</sup> Rule skepticism is a threat to possibility of correct and meaningful speech. Wittgenstein shows that such philosophical theories arise from conceptual confusions. To demonstrate this requires elucidating the concept of following a rule.<sup>139</sup>

## 2.4 Rule Following and Criterion

One key term concerning the concept of rule following in the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein is “criterion.” Although he uses this term in a somewhat different, technical way, its meaning may ultimately be derived from everyday usage. He discusses this concept within the framework of the following topics:

- 1- descriptive language
- 2- meaningless assertions
- 3- nature of philosophical questions
- 4- private sensations

Because of the inherent connection between the concept of criterion and rule following, it may be argued that it is not possible to fully understand the concept of rule following without grasping the special senses in which later Wittgenstein uses the term “criterion.” I begin by listing some features concerning the term of criterion:

1. The term ‘criterion’ is a *relational* one in the sense that a criterion is always a criterion for something. A criterion is a relation between things, sentences, statements, concepts, etc. Wittgenstein uses the term criterion in a variety of ways indicating that criterion is a criterion for an expression, for the use of an expression, for a state of affairs, for a class of objects or for certain characteristic, etc. (*BB* p. 25, 104, 138) For example, Wittgenstein speaks of criterion in the following manner: A criterion for,

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<sup>138</sup> Robert L. Arrington, “Following a Rule”, *Wittgenstein: A Critical Reader*, pp. 119-137.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

- (1) “He has angina”
- (2) saying “He has angina,”
- (3) it being the case that he has angina,
- (4) his having angina,
- (5) angina.

According to Wittgenstein, these examples are similar ways of saying the same thing. We cannot find a single formulation which would apply to all these ways of speaking; or we cannot find a criterion for a linguistic expression which “fits” its object. An object, here, does not mean a physical object, but whatever the expression refers to, is applied to, or is about. The verb “fits” means applying to in a special way. An expression fits an object when it is linguistically, rather than factually, applied correctly to that object.<sup>140</sup> Wittgenstein says that criteria are specified by giving an answer to the question “*How do you know that so and so is the case?*” The answer consists in giving a criterion for saying that so and so is the case. (*BB* p.24) Various meanings and different cases of criteria may be illustrated in the following table:

A criterion for:

a thing	is	a phenomenon.
toothache	is	one’s holding cheek.
blindness	is	a certain kind behavior.
raining	is	certain sensations of wet and cold.
angina / this man has got angina	is	he has such and such bacillus in his blood.
his being in pain	is	he cried after falling down.
understanding            an algebraic formula	is	the application.

Figure 3- Criteria

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<sup>140</sup> Carl Wellman, “Wittgenstein’s Conception of a Criterion”, *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds*, ed. Harold Morick (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1967), p.156.



2. Criterion requires the uses of *descriptive* language and it is always a criterion for a linguistic expression. It is no accident that Wittgenstein developed his concept of a criterion in connection with descriptive language. We may even say that a criterion is a “defining element” for a phenomenon and thus, it is conclusive.<sup>141</sup> For example, suppose that I am given a descriptive expression and asked to find an object which fits it. I am, perhaps, told to go to the market and buy a lemon. But how can I recognize a lemon when I find one? I go to the store, look over the various objects which I find there, and then pick up a lemon. But how could I know that the object which I picked up is a lemon? Wittgenstein’s way of going about finding a lemon is by observing certain characteristics a lemon exhibits: it is greenish-yellow, waxy, round, smallish, and so on. That one identifies an object by these observable characteristics is an instance of what Wittgenstein calls “criterion.”<sup>142</sup>

However, one may object that these descriptive characteristics cannot be the ‘real’ criteria. There must be more things to recognize an object than just noticing its one or more characteristics. How does one know that he has recognized these characteristics correctly? Moreover, how can one be sure that what seems to her is a lemon not an apple? A possible answer is that one must have some criterion in her mind, perhaps an image or concept, which she compares with what she observes in the object. Wittgenstein believes that an image or mental picture will not solve this problem, because one may need another mental picture to know that this mental picture is suitable with the observed characteristics of the object. More importantly, how can one know that one have called to mind the right mental picture?

According to Wittgenstein, no mental picture, whether image or concept, could serve as our ultimate criterion of whether a descriptive expression “fits” an object.<sup>143</sup> If we do not relate the word to the observable characteristics in the object through some mediating mental picture, how is, then, the word is related to the object? The answer, according to Wittgenstein, is not by some “mysterious” relation between the word and its object, but by all the particular connections consist in the

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<sup>141</sup> Anthony Kenny, “Criterion”, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (New York: Macmillian Publishing, 1967), vol: 1-2, pp. 258-261.

<sup>142</sup> Carl Wellman, “Wittgenstein’s Conception of a Criterion,” pp.154-169.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

actual usage of the word in the language. For example, when one first learned the use of the word “lemon,” she came to know certain characteristics such as color, texture, shape, and size of lemons. When one calls an orange a “lemon,” we remind her that the object is not greenish-yellow, sour or pointed. We use the word lemon in everyday activities, i.e., buying lemons, using it in the kitchen etc., the word continues to be used in situations involving greenish-yellow, waxy, round, smallish, objects. All of these various connections make up the meaning relation between word and object.

3. A criterion must be distinguished from a necessary condition, though that has not always been Wittgenstein’s position. For example, when Wittgenstein first introduces the concept criterion in *Blue and Brown Book*, he suggests that a criterion logically implies what it is a criterion for:

If medical science calls angina an inflammation caused by a particular bacillus, and we ask in a particular case ‘why do you say this man has got angina?’ then answer ‘I have found the bacillus so-and-so in his blood’ gives us the criterion of angina...to say ‘A man has angina if this bacillus is found in him’ is a tautology or it is a loose way of stating the definition of “angina”. (*BB* p.25)

This passage, according to Hacker, is misleading since it suggests that a criterion is a necessary condition. This definition of criterion as necessary condition is clearly at odds with the one at work in the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein uses the term not as a logical but a linguistic concept.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, Wittgenstein’s use of the term ‘criterion’ in the later sections of the *Blue Book* contradicts first explanation which is quoted above. In these sections Wittgenstein makes a distinction between a subjective experience and an objective expression; for example, ‘I see my hand move’ is a subjective experience while “My hand moves” is an objective one. Although the former may be true, i.e., I have the subjective experience, the latter may or may not be true, i.e., in the case of misconception. Thus, Wittgenstein says:

Now if say ‘I see my hand move’, this at first sight seems to presuppose that I agree with the proposition ‘my hand moves’. But if I regard the proposition ‘I see my hand

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<sup>144</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 289.

move' as one of the evidences for the proposition "my hand moves", the truth of the latter is, of course, not presupposed in the truth of the former. One might therefore suggest the expression "it looks as though my hand were moving" instead of "I see my hand moving" but this expression, although it indicates that my hand may appear to be moving without really moving, might still suggest that after all there must be a hand in order that it should appear to be moving, whereas we could easily imagine cases in which the proposition describing the visual evidence is true and at the same time other evidences make say that I have no hand (*BB* pp.51-2)

Although we usually take our subjective experience as a criterion for objective expression, it is possible that 'I see my hand move' ( $p$ ) is true, but 'my hand moves' ( $q$ ) is false. In other words, it is possible that the criterion for " $p$ " is satisfied yet " $p$ " is false. This possibility is a feature of our 'inner states'.<sup>145</sup> What a person says is a criterion for what image he has (*PI* §377), but he may be lying; certain sensations of wet and cold, such-and-such impressions are criteria that it is raining, but sense impressions can deceive us. (*PI* §354) These cases imply that the relation of criterion is distinct from logical entailment. We may show the difference between the relation of criterion and logical entailment in the following way. For example, concept of 'mother' in traditional logic *necessarily* entails the concepts of 'child' and 'father.'

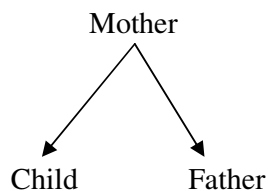


Figure 4- Traditional Criterion

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<sup>145</sup> "Notes for Lectures," p. 286; P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p.302.

Wittgenstein's sense of criterion: Concept of 'father' is a sufficient condition for the concept of 'mother'; there is another possibility: concept of 'clone'.

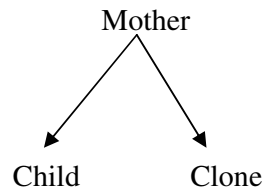


Figure 5- Wittgenstein's Criterion

There is a difference between a criterion and a symptom for a disease for Wittgenstein. Although both criterion and symptom are used in justifying a case, criterion is an observable feature that is directly connected to an expression while a symptom is a feature that is indirectly connected to the expression:

If medical science calls angina an inflammation caused by a particular bacillus, and we ask in a particular case "why do you say this man has got angina?" then the answer "I have found the bacillus so and so in his blood" gives us the criterion, or what we may call the defining criterion of angina. If on the other hand the answer was, "His throat is inflamed", this might give us a symptom of angina. I call "symptom" a phenomenon of which experience has taught us that it coincided, in some way or other, with the phenomenon which is our defining criterion. (BB p.25)

To justify one's use of a description by giving criteria is to appeal to a practice; to justify one's use of a description by giving symptoms, on the other hand, is to appeal to an empirical generalization. The practice is learned by being trained in the use of word; the empirical generalization is learned by observation and experimentation. Symptoms can function in truth-value context, whereas criteria function in the application of concepts.<sup>146</sup>

4. Criteria may be "ambiguous"; that is, different criteria may apply to the same case at different times, or same criterion applies to the different cases, for example: the criterion 'cold' is applied to bodily experience and same criterion 'cold'

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<sup>146</sup> Petra von Morstein, "Concepts and Forms of Life", *Wittgenstein, The Vienna Circle and Critical Rationalism*, ed. by Hal Berghel and Adolf Hübner (Vienna: Hölder, 1979), pp.152-156.

is applied to express thermometric readings. Criterion differs from a symptom in that that the latter is decisive, while the former is not. The evidential value of symptoms is taught by experience, while the evidential value of criteria is “founded on a definition.”<sup>147</sup> Criterion for something is dependent upon some circumstances. The behavioral criterion is valid only in certain circumstances. The point is made explicitly in *Zettel*:

Pain-behavior and the behavior of sorrow-these can only be described along with their external occasions (If a child’s mother leaves it alone it may cry because it is sad; if it falls down, from pain) behavior and kind of occasion belong together. (*Z* §492)

5. There may be more than one criterion for each case. In justifying the use of an expression by criteria it is possible to give more than one criteria. Whether or not a word correctly applies may depend upon various criteria which may be present or absent. These various criteria may even conflict with one another. Which criteria are relevant to the use of a term in one case depends on its uses.

However, it may be argued that there must be one criterion for each occasion;<sup>148</sup> and if the criterion for an occasion is present, the occasion is also present; and if that criterion is absent, the occasion is also absent. In that case, there is no possibility of any other criterion which shows the occasion is present. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein claims that there may be more than one criterion for the same occasion. For example, we “use the word ‘to read’ for a family of cases. And in different circumstances we apply different criteria for a person’s reading.” (*PI* §164) Furthermore, Wittgenstein speaks of various criteria for even personal identity. (*PI* §404)

6. Criterion has neither deductive and nor inductive grounds. Deductive grounds, whenever these grounds are present, entail the use of certain expressions; and they constitute the meaning of that expression. An inductive ground for something is like that it might be inferred from a person cry that she is in pain.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Anthony Kenny, “Criterion”, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pp.258-261.

<sup>148</sup> Rogers Albritton, On Wittgenstein’s Use of the Term “Criterion”, *Ludwig Wittgenstein Critical Assessment*, ed. by Stuart Sahnker (London: Routledge, 2000), vol. II, pp.183-193

<sup>149</sup> A.C. Grayling, *Wittgenstein*, (Oxford, 1996), pp.88-89.

However, Wittgenstein's concept of criteria is neither inductive nor deductive. According to him, the criterion for ascribing 'pain' to a person is given not by the experiential accounts but by grammatical use of that word or "the grammar of pain," if we may use such an expression. Criterion based on grammar is learned by observing, experiencing and learning how to use the word 'pain'. There are various differences between a realist concept of criterion and a grammatical concept of criterion. According to Hacker, the main lines of disagreement between the two help us understand better the concept of criterion.

7. Criterion *justifies* the usage. To specify the rules for the use of a word is to specify the criteria justifying the application of that word. That is, criterion 'determines' the meaning of the words and sentences by the usage. If one does not know the criteria for the use of an expression, then she does not understand its meaning. A term has no meaning until it is connected with the characteristics of the objects which it applies to. A term is, then, used to refer to the characteristics of objects and these characteristics serve as criteria for the use of term. Thus criterion for the use of an expression is central to its meaning, and it is mentioned in any definition of that expression. In other words, one can justify his application of an expression by means of criteria. Since the word "lemon" is used to refer to the objects which have certain characteristics, presence of these characteristics in something else justifies the application of "lemon" to it as well. The relationship between criterion and usage may be shown schematically in the following way:

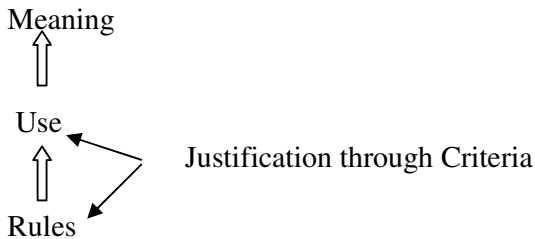


Figure 6- Justification

It seems that in Wittgenstein's later philosophy rules settle the use of words; and criterion justifies use; and use in turn settles the meaning of terms. Criteria are based on linguistic practice. By practice, it is aimed that the chain of infinite interpretations be ended. Thus, the concept of criterion plays a central role in Wittgenstein's account of rule following.

There are some objections raised against Wittgenstein's concept of criterion. One of them is that Wittgenstein's use of the term criterion is vague. He does not explain clearly whether the application of an expression presupposes its criteria and rules<sup>150</sup>. Second objection is that although Wittgenstein's later period avoids general theories, concept of criterion seems to have the nature of a general theory. In addition, it seems that Wittgenstein generalizes this concept to the point that everything that we know has a criterion. Third objection is that Wittgenstein is wrong to think that psychological concepts are reducible to behavioral ones.<sup>151</sup> The main problem emerges in the context of self-consciousness.<sup>152</sup> That is, there is no criterion for personal experience. Expressions of first person personal experience lack sense. A fourth objection directed against Wittgenstein's concept of criterion is that while the meaning of the terms "criterion" and "symptom" are distinct, their references are not clearly distinguished. According to this objection, there is no point in trying to discover which characteristics are criteria for certain expressions.

It is true that for Wittgenstein, there is not a single criterion for the use of an expression. In fact, Wittgenstein's concept of criterion is in harmony with his claim that grounds come to an end in action. That is, if the sense of a sentence is given by criteria which include behavior, then justification comes to an end in that behavior.

It is possible to see Wittgenstein's concept of criterion not as a theoretical term but as a grammatical investigation. If we treat concept of criterion as a theoretical term, then above objections have certain validity. Wittgenstein believes

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<sup>150</sup> J.T.Price, *Language and Being in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (Paris: Mouton), pp. 24-31.

<sup>151</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p 305.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*

that language connects with the practice; it is not isolated from practice.<sup>153</sup> Thus, to understand the concept of criterion independently of practice would not be acceptable to Wittgenstein and the objections would miss the point.

The concept of criterion provides a solution to the problem of skepticism. We can say that for the skeptic “a belief is guilty until proved innocent,” but for Wittgenstein, a belief based on a criterion is “innocent until proved guilty.” Wittgenstein draws attention to this point in *On Certainty*:

The idealist’s question would be something like: ‘What right has I not to doubt the existence of my hands?’ (And to that the answer can’t be: I know that they exist.) But someone who asks such a question is overlooking the fact that a doubt about existence only works in a language game. Hence, that we should first have to ask: What would such a doubt be like? And don’t understand this straight off (*OC* §24)

According to Wittgenstein, doubt presupposes the possibility of certainty. Doubting is directed to truth of a sentence. This entails that for doubting to be meaningful, what is doubted must have sense. So, grounds come to an end in action, and we must speak, act, and live without a ground or evidence.<sup>154</sup>

In sum, Wittgenstein’s concept of criterion does not logically imply certain necessary conditions. It gives grounds for linguistic usage. And these grounds are temporary and changeable. This implies that the rules of our language are not and cannot be strict.

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<sup>153</sup> Marie McGinn, “Criteria”, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, (London: Routledge).

<sup>154</sup> Norman Malcolm, “The Groundlessness of Belief”, *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*, p.97.



## CHAPTER 3

### PRACTICE AND RULE FOLLOWING

The main criticism of Wittgenstein concerning the concept of rule is that mental processes cannot determine or explain our linguistic practices. (*PI* §§139-41) For him, grasping a rule consist of not a mental representation but a practical ability. Wittgenstein emphasizes this aspect of rule saying that rule following is an activity; it is not “circumscribed by rules” everywhere. This points to two important aspect of rule following. First, rules cannot provide fixed meanings for all their applications. Second, it is not necessary to have expression of rules in order to apply rules; rule following takes place within a practice.<sup>155</sup> Hence, one cannot explain how to apply a concept by simply listing its rules. (*Z* §440)

As Searle says, “speaking language is engaging in a highly complex rule governed form of behavior. To learn and master a language is (*inter alia*) to learn and to have mastered these rules.”<sup>156</sup> However, according to Wittgenstein, it is not sufficient to form a set of rules in order to explain the act of speaking, since speaking requires *an ability* to follow the rules, and it is not sum total of the rules themselves. Thus, Wittgenstein’s concept of rule differs essentially from the common one that a rule determines all its instances (as it was in Platonic and Tractarian views of rule). Since symbols cannot determine our rule governed uses of language, they need the support of the reactions of their users.<sup>157</sup> That is, rules may be considered as practices in interaction between individuals.

Relevantly, the concept of practice appears in the context of understanding and criterion. Wittgenstein asserts that understanding a rule is not an inner mental

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<sup>155</sup> Jeffery David Smith, *Cognitivism and Relativism: A Study of Wittgensteinian and Discourse Theories of Morality* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnessota, June 2000), pp. 223-224.

<sup>156</sup> John R.Searle, *Speech Acts: an Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.12.

<sup>157</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illionis, December 1998), p.217.

process. For him, understanding a rule is a function of the proper use of terms, which is essentially knowledge of how to apply terms within practice. However, understanding a rule does not only mean knowing how other people define and use it; rather, the correct use of a rule is guided by practice where we have the ability to use the rule.<sup>158</sup> Rule following must always be a public phenomenon to meet the requirement of criterion. Accordingly, mental states of a person cannot provide criteria for correct rule following, and then rule following cannot be hidden.<sup>159</sup> In Wittgenstein system, criteria are required for the practice of rules; namely, rule following is the practice of the technique of using terms in public.

We have already examined various features of rule following in the previous chapters. In this chapter, I emphasize the concept of practice, since it appears to be a key concept to understand Wittgenstein's view of rule following. In following pages, the concept of practice will be studied under four sections. I will first explain the background feature of practice and its relation to Wittgensteinian term "form of life." This section will be followed by the requirement of regularity for rule following. In this section, I will also deal with David Bloor's sociological account of rule following and analyze whether this account is appropriate to Wittgenstein's concept of rule following. Third section will try to answer the question whether rule following is normative or not. Finally, I will explain that moral responsibility is an essential aspect of rule following, an aspect that is not properly investigated hitherto.

### **3.1. Practice and Rule Following**

It is essential to understand that rule following is a mastery of techniques. A rule does not be followed until the particular technique is acquired. (*PI* §§198-199) Besides, rule following also includes justifying, accepting or criticism of the rule. If someone cannot apply, describe, explain, justify, or criticize a rule correctly, then she does not follow the rule. It is only when she fulfills criterion for the ability to apply a

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<sup>158</sup> Jeffery David Smith, *Cognitivism and Relativism: A Study of Wittgensteinian and Discourse Theories of Morality*, p.41.

<sup>159</sup> Ronald Scott Smith, *Whose Virtues? Which Language A Critique of MacIntyre's and Hauerwas's "Wittgensteinian" Virtue Moral*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Faculty of the Graduate School University of Southern California, 2000), p.325.

rule, she may be said to follow that rule. In fact, it is nonsensical cases that one understands the rule but does not know how to apply it; or one knows how to apply the rule, but cannot say what she is doing. Namely, there is a strict internal relation between rule and its application, and to constitute a gap between them leads a nonsensical result. For instances, we can find a separation of rule and its application in ostensive definition. Wittgenstein explains this by following paragraph:

Now one can ostensively define a proper name, the name of a colour, the name of a material, a numeral, the name of a point of the compass and so on. The definition of the number two, "That is called 'two' "--pointing to two nuts-is perfectly exact. --But how can two be defined like that? The person one gives the definition to doesn't know what one wants to call "two"; he will suppose that "two" is the name given to this group of nuts! He may suppose this; but perhaps he does not. He might make the opposite mistake; when I want to assign a name to this group of nuts, he might understand it as a numeral. And he might equally well take the name of a person, of which I give an ostensive definition, as that of a colour, of a race, or even of a point of the compass. That is to say: an ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in every case. (*PI* §28)

We can show an ostensive definition in the following way,

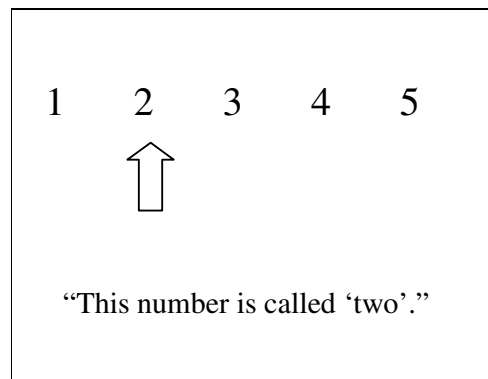


Figure 7- Ostensive Definition 1

This is an example of ostensive definition. However, does it solve the problem of how we might apply '2'? Concerning ostensive definition, Wittgenstein claims that in every case the object which is being pointed to be ambiguous. Let us think of the following diagram:

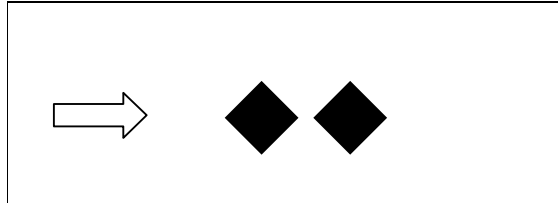


Figure 8- Ostensive Definition 2

It may be thought there is an ambiguity about where this arrow is pointing. Is it pointing to both of them, or one? Or, is it pointing to the side of one? The other example of Wittgenstein gives for ambiguity in *Blue and Brown Book* (p. 140):

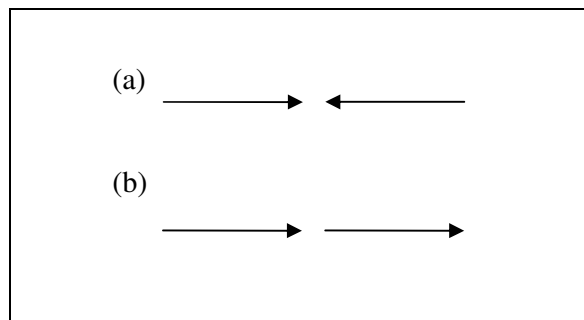


Figure 9- Ostensive Definition 3

He asks which one of these (a or b) points to the same way? According to Wittgenstein, there are several problems with ostensive definitions. The main one is that ostensive definitions can be variously interpreted, and they cannot explain abilities which are necessary for understanding a rule. Therefore, to think that only by an ostensive definition we can apply a rule correctly is not acceptable to Wittgenstein. Since rule following abilities can only be explained by the application of rules in practice, (*PI* §29) the crucial concept of practice appears again. He says that it “is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind

of seeing on our part; *it is our acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.” (OC §204) (italics are mine)

It is misguided that Wittgenstein uses the concept of practice as a kind of theoretical explanation, or as any kind of explanation. In fact, he does not use it as a name for a social, hidden, private, causal object. Rather, he uses it as a means to “bring explanations to an end.”<sup>160</sup> Wittgenstein believes that the concept of rule following as a practice is highly complex, because there is no one way to follow a rule and there is also a possibility to make a mistake. For instances, take a mathematical rule, like “add 2,” and the sequence 2, 4, 6, 8... . We assume that one understands the rule when she can continue with the sequence ...10, 12, and so on. However, the concept of rule following is not that simple. There may be more than one way to continue the series; i.e., there may be a possibility of mistake. It should be added that there is a complex network of concepts to appreciate how following a rule is related to practices, to actions, and to justification or criticism. We suggest that this network of rule following includes the concepts: 1. background practices and forms of life, 2. regularity, 3. normativity, and 4. moral responsibility.

### 3.1.1. Background Practices and Forms of Life

If we say that rule following is a practice because language is not fixed or determined by rules, then we need a background on which practices based. Rules are meaningful only within a common framework of experiences in the world.<sup>161</sup> This implies that the concept of rule following entails background practices.<sup>162</sup> Rule following abilities are acquired and exercised within these background practices. These practices include various applications and shared reactions of rule followers, that is, abilities, habits, and customs. This feature of background practices emphasize social, natural, and individual aspects of rule following.<sup>163</sup> It may be argued that

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<sup>160</sup> Nigel Pleasants, *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.64.

<sup>161</sup> Jeffery David Smith, *Cognitivism and Relativism: A Study of Wittgensteinian and Discourse Theories of Morality*, p.37-38.

<sup>162</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.155.

<sup>163</sup> David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.103.

without a background of practices, we could draw no distinction between the correct and incorrect uses of language.<sup>164</sup> There must be background in which practices are followed or broken; then, background is required as a precondition for language.<sup>165</sup>

The background that is required for the use of language cannot be assimilated to symbolic rules, since it includes a context of concepts that are necessary to follow a rule. In addition, since rule following cannot be reduced to simple entities that are independent of another, rule following needs a context, and it is only through this context that it is possible to give an explicit description of an action.<sup>166</sup> The background provides a ground for rule following action by situating it within a context. Thus, an expression or rule gets its meaning within context.<sup>167</sup> Then, there are different aspects in following a rule and these aspects are irreducible to merely acting in accord with that rule. Wittgenstein says that there are certain circumstances of actions that entitle to say that one has followed the rule:

Try not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’ at all. \_\_ For that is the expression which confuses you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say, “Now I know how to go on,” when, that is, the formula has accured to me? (*PI* §154)

It is only with a complex background that acting in accord with a rule counts as following the rule.<sup>168</sup> Wittgenstein goes on to link practice with another basic concept of “form of life”: “... the term ‘language game’ is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.” (*PI* §23) In turn, form of life is constituted by background practices.<sup>169</sup> Form of life is so fundamental that it is necessary to be involved with it in order to be able to follow a rule. It may be claimed that all these concepts, namely, practice, background, form of life leads to conventionalism. Conventionalism claims that there

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<sup>164</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.214.

<sup>165</sup> Barry Stroud, *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.86.

<sup>166</sup> Steven Shaviro, “From Language to ‘Forms of Life’: Theory and Practice in Wittgenstein”, *Social Text*, No. 13/14 (Winter- Spring, 1986), pp.216-236.

<sup>167</sup> Akin Erguden, “Doing Things with Metaphor: The Ru(o)le of Metaphor in the Formation of Grammar of the Public Sphere in Turkey”, (unpublished paper), p.8.

<sup>168</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, p.159.

<sup>169</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a social conception of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.180.

must be an agreement about what is true or false concerning a rule. However, Wittgenstein says:

“so are you saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?”- It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language the use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life. (*PI* §241)

In that regard, to suggest that a form of life is no more than a convention is to disregard the role that it plays.<sup>170</sup> According to Wittgenstein, language “is not something fixed, given once and for all, but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten.” (*PI* §23) Therefore, forms of life cannot be conceived in the terms of agreement by convention.<sup>171</sup> Baker and Hacker accept that a sort of agreement exists in rule following activity, but they reject that this communal agreement causally determines meanings; rather this agreement is the “framework condition” for the existence of language games.<sup>172</sup> The concept of form of life does not point to some mysterious realm of biological, natural, or historical facts, but to cultural features of human history.<sup>173</sup>

The term ‘form of life’ has a connection with the concept ‘natural history.’ Wittgenstein claims that natural history consists not only of natural behavior like walking, drinking, playing and eating, etc., but also of behaviors concerning shared judgments which are the result of our common practices, such as commanding, questioning, requesting, etc. They are part of our form of life, and they originate from practice, from relations among people or between people and objects. Hence, ‘natural’ should not be understood as concerning biological structure of individuals; it is related to cultural history of individuals as well. Then, not only natural behaviors, but also cultural practices are parts of natural history. Therefore, the concept of ‘natural history’ includes two things: natural form of life and cultural

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<sup>170</sup> Jeffery David Smith, *Cognitivism and Relativism: A Study of Wittgensteinian and Discourse Theories of Morality*, p.42.

<sup>171</sup> Steven Shaviro, “From Language to ‘Forms of Life’: Theory and Practice in Wittgenstein”, *Social Text*, No. 13/14 Winter- Spring, 1986, 216-236.

<sup>172</sup> G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Scepticism, Rules and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984), p.45.

<sup>173</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and rules: language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein*, (Ph.D.dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1999), p.165.

form of life. There is no gap between both; on the contrary, one completes the other.<sup>174</sup>

Wittgenstein does not suggest that the connection between the ability to follow a rule and to participate in practice is an empirical relationship. Rules are not related to practice due to an observable relation between actions and the following a rule. Therefore, rule following cannot be explained only by reference to the rule follower or the particular occasion of following that rule. In addition to the rule follower and the act of rule following, the “complicated surrounding” of what human beings are doing or practice are to be taken into account in order to reach a full explanation.

Background practices also provide a foundation that would not perpetuate the need for justification. However, this does not mean that justifications cannot be given; it rather means “justifications come to an end and I have reached bedrock.” (*PI* §217) Problem of justification can only arise against a background that is taken for granted. Since grammar is shaped by background, it is accepted as “given.” What is given in this case is the form of life shared by all. This implies that rule following involves social and cultural variety. However, this does not necessarily require that there are no standards. Indeed, all these social and cultural differences are rooted in human practice.<sup>175</sup> Wittgenstein’s notion of form of life means that language is not arbitrary, for him “to use a word without a justification does not mean to use it without right.” (*PI* §289) That is, through being acculturated into the form of life, one is able to speak without needing for justification for what to do:<sup>176</sup>

If I have exhausted the justification, I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say “This is simply what I do.” (*PI* §217)  
Following according to the rule is fundamental to our language game. It characterizes what we call description. (*RFM* 330)

Is not the absence of reasons for justification any kind of skepticism?  
Wittgenstein believes that using signs rationally, critically is not ultimately based on

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<sup>174</sup> Aydan Turanlı, *The Change in Rule-Governed Practices in Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara: METU, September 1994), p.35.

<sup>175</sup> John A. Hughes, “Wittgenstein and Social Science: Some Matters of Interpretation,” *Sociological Review*, Vol. 25 Issue 4, (Nov 77) pp.721-741.

<sup>176</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a Social Conception of Mind*, p.181.



giving of reasons:<sup>177</sup> “he must go on like this without a reason. Not, however, because he cannot yet grasp the reason but because—in this system—there is no reason. (The chain of reasons comes to an end)” (Z §301) For example, there is an agreement on accepting certain length as a standard meter. According to Wittgenstein, why we have agreed on this particular length is out of question. There is no answer to the question ‘why.’ When reasons are investigated, we reach an ultimate point where we say, “this is simply what we do.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, only in the realm of language can we have justifications.

In sum, we agree with each other in actions and in the concepts of language, insofar as we have a common background. This agreement in behavior and responses cannot be explained by reference to the rules of a particular practice because, in fact, it is the agreement in actions that enables us to follow the same rules.<sup>179</sup> Rules can be followed insofar as they are assimilated to the techniques of application available in actual practices.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, to be connected with the background practices and form of life, rule following suggests three crucial elements: First, practice requires a common environment in which actions are performed. Second, it requires that humans share certain reactions that are indispensable for learning the practice. Third, the agreement in action is based on the learned actions. That is, rule following is based on shared techniques or structured ways of doing things. All these must be present to obtain an action. One does not participate in a form of life simply by being born with certain features, but also by choosing to agree on certain form of life. Sharing a form of life involves sharing certain reactions and learned procedures, as well as an appropriate environment in which these reactions and procedures can be exercised.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> James Tully, “Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy: Understanding Practices of Critical Reflection,” *Political Theory*, Vol.17, No.2 (May, 1989), pp.172-204.

<sup>178</sup> Aydan Turanlı, *The Change in Rule-Governed Practices in Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy*, p.32.

<sup>179</sup> Laura Kathleen Roberts, *Situated Objectivity: Moral Judgment, Critique and Justification after Wittgenstein*, p.12-13.

<sup>180</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.294.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.243-244.

### 3.1.2. Regularity and Sociological Interpretation of Rule Following

To understand a rule is not to define it, rather it is the ability to apply practically the rules, and to be able to use them regularly. If someone has the ability to do *Y*, it only makes sense that person in general is able to do *Y*. The connection between having the ability to do *Y* and being able to do *Y* is a grammatical one. In other words, if a person masters a certain concept, she should have the ability to apply this concept to different situations in regularity. If one masters the concept “door,” she knows how to apply it in any new situation, for example, when she says “this is a door” to something, she knows how to apply this word to an object regularly. Then, a person follows a rule by mastering a concept regularly that ‘determines’ what is correct or incorrect in any of its application.<sup>182</sup>

Regularity is a background requirement for language use, since without it there could be no meanings, and no rules. A rule manifested in a practice only when humans agree in what they do and in how they assess their actions regularly. One can make sense only assuming that words can be repeated meaningfully and this comes through a practice that can supply the standards for correct use. Right regular behavior is the criterion for the acquisition of mastery of technique, and we grasp regularity with this technique. (*RFM* p.303) Therefore, manifestation of a rule in practice needs regularity in actions. However, does this mean that to introduce new rules is not possible? No, Wittgenstein thinks that introducing new rules is possible: “As things are I can, for example, invent a game that is never played by anyone.” (*PI* §204)

Wittgenstein emphasizes that correct applications of rules require regularity, and says that the application of a rule is not regularity unless the rule is always applied correctly to new situations.<sup>183</sup> For example, in order to call something ‘calculating’ it has regular applications. Needless to say where there is no regularity, there is no ‘calculating.’ That is, there must be regularity that enables us to predict

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<sup>182</sup> Michael Esfeld, “What are Social Practices?”, *Indaga.Revista internacional de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas* 1 (2003), pp. 19–43,

[http://ds.unil.ch/philo/Pages/epistemologie/bio\\_cv\\_esfeld/pdf/2003\\_pdf/Indaga03.pdf](http://ds.unil.ch/philo/Pages/epistemologie/bio_cv_esfeld/pdf/2003_pdf/Indaga03.pdf).

<sup>183</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.290.

the calculation of a person. This also explains why Wittgenstein rejects private language. Private language is impossible according to Wittgenstein, not because individuals may not perfectly remember expressions of rules, but because private language is structured in a way that there are no rules which speakers have to recall in applications correctly. Then, in order to talk about rule following, more than one application of that rule is necessary:

Is what we call “obeying a rule” something that it would be possible for only one man to do, and to do only once in his life?... It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which someone obeyed a rule. (*PI* §199)

In order to describe a term, one must describe regularity, not something that happens only once. (*PI* §335) Since private rule following can be interpreted independently of the process of use, it cannot lead to language. Wittgenstein argues that expressions of rules do not precede the practice of regularity, but are part of it. Therefore, using language consists of our regular responses to rules, and the regularity established by the actions of the society in refusing to allow or encourage alternative responses. (*PI* §164)

However, does an established regularity in a community guarantee the correctness of application? One answer is no, since ‘applying the rule correctly’ does not mean ‘doing what most people do.’ The rule is our standard of correctness. However, nothing is a standard unless it is used in certain way. There is no rule unless there is a practice of ‘obeying’ or ‘going against it’. The other answer is yes, since community consensus decides the meanings of linguistic terms. This view is called ‘sociological account of rule’ or ‘community view’. In following paragraphs, we examine this idea in short.

Bloor interprets rule as a social object, and finds a social theory in Wittgenstein’s concept of rule following. Bloor’s interpretation of the rule following leads him to think that the relation between rules and their applicants should be sociological. Bloor says:

The argument so far may be summarised like this: in following a rule we move automatically from case to case, guided by our instinctive (but socially educated=sense of ‘sameness’. Such a sense does not itself suffice to create a standard of right and wrong. It is necessary to introduce a sociological element into the account to

explain normativity. Normative standards come from the consensus generated by a number of interacting rule followers, and it is maintained by collectively monitoring, controlling and sanctioning their individual tendencies. Consensus makes norms objective, that is, a source of external and impersonal constraint on the individual. It gives substance to the distinction between rule followers thinking they have got it right, and their having really got it right.<sup>184</sup>

According to Bloor, concepts of rule and practice have status for an adequate social theory. Rules are social objects actively applied by individuals. For this reason, individual's actions are subject to a community consensus which constitutes necessary order for meaning. Bloor claims that since a rule cannot determine only by itself which application is right, then, rule requires as a third thing a social 'institution' that decides what the right application is in any case:

What is an institution? It is a collective pattern of self-referring activity...The 'right' continuation, say, of a number series (which also defines what is meant by the rule) is that continuation which is collectively called 'right'. This is not a matter of counting up votes, but refers to a stable pattern of interaction. I call this continuation right because others call it right, but I am correct in calling it right on this basis because their calling it right makes it right.<sup>185</sup>

He assumes that institution is a mediation of rule in the objectivity of the social group. Then, institution appears as an external element to bridge the gap between a rule and its application. Hence, Bloor's view limits agreement into consensus of interpretation, breaking apart the internal relation between rules and their application.

According to Bloor, as the rule followers, we share certain dispositions. These dispositions, social conventions, and interests must determine the application of rules, since individual rule followers seems have no independent standard to apply correctly the rules. Only an appeal to the community can give rules the conditions for correct application. This view leads Bloor to interpret Wittgenstein's statement "to obey rule blindly" as an automatic and caused behavior; and to conclude human beings must obey rules blindly:

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<sup>184</sup> David Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.17.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

The process has a causal, psychological terminus, not a logical terminus... Thus: 'When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly*' (PI: 219).<sup>186</sup>

What obvious, inevitable and a matter of course is what we do blindly. Blind obedience to a rule expresses seeing how matters must be. One proceeds in the way in which one has been trained to respond. This training resides in forces such as socialization, drill, disposition, and habit.<sup>187</sup> Interpreting rule following as "obeying a rule blindly," Bloor claims that following a rule is an 'institution.' To accept, as Bloor does, that a rule is an institution, and that to obey a rule is to participate in an institution leads an account of rules in need of an external control. Then, he searches for the causes of human action, that is, something external such as socialization, and instruction, since he assumes that rules are the things to find and analyze as if they are socially causal substance. Therefore, Bloor holds Wittgenstein to be offering an account of rule following which reaches determined meanings in the conventions of the community. In other words, for this account, practices of the rules accord with the community's conventional standards for the application of the rules. Wittgenstein seems to encourage such an approach when he writes:

Then can whatever I do be brought into accord with the rule?- Let me ask this: what has the expression of a rule -say a sign-post -got to do with my actions? What sort of connexion is there here? -Well perhaps this one: I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it.

However, he follows these remarks:

But that is only to give a causal connexion; to tell how it has come about that we now go by the sign-post, not what this going-by-the-sign really consists in. On the contrary; I have further indicated that a person goes by the sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom. (PI §198)

Do these paragraphs imply that there is no justification? Or, is there any implication in these paragraphs concerning community view? Bloor thinks there is, and claims that attempts at giving a justification for how a rule is to be correctly applied are futile, and any justification is open to an interpretation by which it

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>187</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a Social Conception of Mind*, p.177.

justifies a different rule.<sup>188</sup> In contrast to Bloor, Wittgenstein does not claim that there is no justification in applying a rule. Rather he claims that our justifications soon give out:

“How am I able to obey a rule?”- if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do. If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: “This is simply what I do.”(*PI* §217)

That is, rules have already been justified, and no further justification is needed.<sup>189</sup> The basic difference between Bloor’s argument and Wittgenstein’s view is that while Wittgenstein thinks that there is no gap between a rule and a correct course of action, Bloor ignores that not only a rule is connected internally to an action, but also that there is no rule until there is a technique of applying it.

Bloor develops a community idea of rule following. This view implies the community is a collection of individual rule followers who can be correct in their application of a rule. What gives substance to rules are social dispositions or the actual behavior of a community as opposed to the dispositions or the actual behavior of an individual considered in isolation.<sup>190</sup> Community view is that present behaviors of the members of a community determine the correctness of the application of rules.

Contrary to Bloor, the community, for Wittgenstein, is not somehow transcendental framework of rules. That is, it is not that an entity creates and determines meanings of rules; but it is rather constituted by these rules. Wittgenstein claims that rule following is a practice or a customary way of acting, but we need not to think of this practice as necessarily sociological account of rule, like Bloor.

It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which someone obeyed a rule. It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood; and so on.- to obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions). (*PI* §199)

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<sup>188</sup> David Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, pp.18-19.

<sup>189</sup> G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, p.209.

<sup>190</sup> David Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, pp.91-111.

While institution may refer to social practice, Wittgenstein's point is not that language is necessarily social but rather that language is a practice. It is true that Wittgenstein assumes that there must be an agreement between a rule and its applications, since agreement is a "precondition" of techniques.<sup>191</sup> It is also true that Wittgenstein emphasizes on the importance of training, exercises within groups of people. Furthermore, not only some remarks of Wittgenstein stress the social nature of a language, but also, for him, the possibility of language rests on agreement in definitions and judgments. However, do these views necessarily lead to the conclusion that the regular behavior of the community is an external measure?

One difficulty in community view is that if we take the regular behavior of the majority to be the criterion in application of rules, then strict internal relation between rule and its application would cancel.<sup>192</sup> Other difficulty with this view is that there cannot be a correct application of rules if there are no applications at the level of a community. For example blue is what most people call blue whether or not someone has actually used the predicate blue in the past or not. Contrary to these claims, Baker and Hacker suggest that if one satisfies the criteria for a rule, applying it, or asking questions, then she plays this language game correctly. If she satisfies no criteria, then she does not apply the techniques. In this case, both physical isolation and comparison of one's behavior with the community is irrelevant to the correct or incorrect application of rule.<sup>193</sup>

Wittgenstein's point is that social structure may provide the context within which objects can be used as representations.<sup>194</sup> Ability of following a rule can be exercised within a context, namely in the practice of people. There are two main reasons for the requirement of context as a place of rule following. First, the context should not be an autonomous system of signs defined by rules, since practice in which context takes place composes of actual actions. Second, the context is not a static grammatical space. It has temporal or historical dimension, like changing practices.<sup>195</sup> Rules get their meaning only in a certain practice and without context

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<sup>191</sup> G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, p.229.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176.

<sup>194</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a Social Conception of Mind*, p.175.

<sup>195</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.217.

rules have no meaning. Meaning is situated in a given context, but not determined by it. Then, context also characterizes type of rule; namely, whether it is definitional, or analytical, or chart and table, or explanation, or ostensive definition.<sup>196</sup> Context is a concrete situation, a practice or group practices, in which a meaning might be invoked.<sup>197</sup> Hence, rules are no external to the situations in which they are used. However, does it mean that society determines rules and their applications ultimately? Wittgenstein might reply this question by saying no.

In sum, regularity of community is necessary for following a rule. Otherwise, there would be no such thing as correct or incorrect application, or, successful or unsuccessful rule following.<sup>198</sup> Nevertheless, regularity of community is not sufficient alone. In understanding Wittgenstein, one needs to appreciate the balance between the sociological and the individualist aspects of his views on rule following. Whatever role the community has in Wittgenstein's account, it is not reductionist as it is in Bloor's account. The practice of the community provides us with language, but the community itself cannot determine the standards of correctness. Rules are related internally to their applications, they are not related externally to community.

### 3.1.3. Normativity

The normativity in rule following context is what makes an application in a new situation correct or incorrect. The question calls for a guarantee of the correctness or incorrectness of an application.<sup>199</sup> A rule has various applications as an essential feature of language, since if its rules could not be applied in different ways, then it cannot be suitable for normative evaluation. That is, rule can possess a normative value, be applied correctly or incorrectly, only if it has various applications. A rule should be normative to evaluate the use of concepts. That is, practical regularities have to be accompanied by expression of acceptance, or

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<sup>196</sup> Hans Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.152.

<sup>197</sup> Steven Shaviro, "From Language to 'Forms of Life': Theory and Practice in Wittgenstein", *Social Text*, No.13/14 (Winter- Spring, 1986), pp.216-236.

<sup>198</sup> Barry Stroud, *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, p.83.

<sup>199</sup> Alberto Voltolini, "Why the Computational Account of Rule Following cannot Rule out the Grammatical Account," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 9:1, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp.82-104.



rejection, or criticism, since mere regularity in practice is not sufficient for the manifestation of a rule.<sup>200</sup> Wittgenstein's account of normativity is not reduced to mere regularities, since for him the normative attitudes are an essential component of the rule following practices.

Baker and Hacker characterize the rule governed normative practices under five items as follows: first, there is an *instructional* aspect of rules. We cite rule-formulations, like "Cross the street at the traffic lights if they are green," "This is a King; it moves thus," etc. In the process of teaching, however, it is not necessary and in fact not possible to formulate all the rules which are included in the activity. Second, there is the *definitional* aspect for rules: rules define our actions. Third, there is also an *explanatory* aspect. Teleological explanations of actions are given by citing rules e.g., "Why did you stop?" "I stopped because the lights were red." Fourth, there is a *justificational* aspect; we use a rule in order to justify our action, e.g., "I crossed the street because the lights were green." Fifth, there is an evaluative aspect. The dimensions of evaluation vary according to the activity, for example, legal or illegal, grammatical or ungrammatical, sense or nonsense.<sup>201</sup>

The notions of correctness and incorrectness play an essential role in the concept of normativity. Rules involve certain complex practices that govern meaning, use, and role of various concepts. They not only report phenomena, but also embody a way of acting within the world. Furthermore, the exercise of these practices requires the possession of various normativity abilities.<sup>202</sup> They are teaching, explaining rules, or to criticize, to justify, and to characterize actions by reference to them (*PI* §§197-202) If rules do not function in guiding an action, in justifying and explaining, in teaching and correcting, in evaluating and criticizing, they are not rules in any case. Then, when someone is following a rule, not merely acting in accord with it, she possesses also normative abilities that characterize that rule. In that sense, rule following is an ability to use the rule in normative activities.

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<sup>200</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.295.

<sup>201</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985, pp. 45-47.

<sup>202</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and Rules: Language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein*, p.4.

For Wittgenstein, acting in an appropriate way is a question of which actions can be recognized as a right and justified response. The determining what judgments are justified is tied to a complicated network of life expectations, since we become rule followers by acquiring the normative abilities in a form of life. This is the ground of the normativity of our actions. Rule following, then, for Wittgenstein, is immanent aspect of practices, not a transcendental condition. Rule following depends on background practices in which there are normative activities and agreements in action. In addition, ability of following a rule is a state that is controlled by normative activities and exemplified in the form of life. The origin of normativity, then, lies in the agreement of form of life that creates standards.<sup>203</sup> This relation between normativity of rule following and form of life implies that private language has no normativity. If meanings are determined by one person, then there is no intelligible way to understand rightness or wrongness of an action. (*PI* §202) Unless a rule has various applications, it cannot actually possess a normative value—be applied correctly or incorrectly. A rule that could be applied only once, as it is in private language, could not be applied correctly or incorrectly. Since normativity requires some standard that provide rightness or wrongness of any application, a language whose rules are applied only once is not a genuine language.

Wittgenstein wishes to move the discussion toward the ground of grammar that establishes the possibilities for practices. In this account, the rules are realized or manifest in practice and grammar, and are not held as external objects for determining sense. Rather the relation between a rule and its application is internal, and its instantiation is in practice. We can have no external standard for the justification of grammar. Rather, grammatical rules are standards for the correctness of using an expression:

Grammar describes the use of words in a language. So it has somewhat the same relation to the language as a description of a game, the rules of a game, have to the game. (*PG* §23)

It is a considerable principle of Wittgenstein's philosophy that there is no such thing as justifying grammar by reference to reality, namely grammar is not

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<sup>203</sup> Meredith Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a Social Conception of Mind*, p.177.

appropriate to any external justification. It is clear that the rules of grammar cannot be true or false by reference to reality, since the rules of grammar are antecedent to truth or falsity. They describe the framework within which ascriptions of truth or falsity can meaningfully be made. Namely, since any rule cannot meaningfully articulate without grammar, grammar is to be seen as a framework of rules. This point is also emphasized by Akin Ergüden:

By the concept “grammar”, I understand not some fixed, a priori system of rules (a la Chomsky), but a process of creation, formation, and construction, in a piecemeal way, of innumerable social facts, values and truths. These truths, facts and values are created, made, get differentiated, sorted, arranged and even ordered through innumerable (rational or irrational) decisions people make. Here, there is no fixed, a priori blueprint or a translation manual, against which we can measure whether a fact is a real fact, a value is a real value, or a truth is a real truth. What we have here rather, is a “framework” and a “background” against which we identify a fact as fact, a value as value, a truth as truth, etc.<sup>204</sup>

Grammar draws attention to the fact that speaking a language is to engage in a rule governed activity. The space of grammars may be limited to the space of rule-governed behavior. Grammatical rules are standards for the correct use of an expression which determine its meaning: to give the meaning of a word is to specify its grammar. (*OC* §§61-62) ‘Correct’ here does not necessarily mean ‘true’, since one may use a term in accordance with rules without saying something true. The ‘truth’ of a grammatical proposition consists not in stating how things are, but in accurately expressing a rule, that is, grammar governs but do not determine.<sup>205</sup> However, this does not mean Wittgenstein abandon the idea that language is rule governed, rather he clarified it, comparing language no longer to a calculus but to a game.

as long as we remain in the province of the true-false games a change in the grammar can only lead us from one game to another, and never from something true to something false. On the other hand if we go outside the province of these games, we don’t any longer call it “language” and “grammar” and once again we do not come into contradiction with reality. (*PG* §68)

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<sup>204</sup> Akin Ergüden, “Doing Things with Metaphor: The Ru(ole) of Metaphor in the Formation of Grammar of the Public Sphere in Turkey”, (unpublished paper), p.11

<sup>205</sup> Martin O’Neill, “Explaining ‘The Hardness of the Logical Must’: Wittgenstein on Grammar, Arbitrariness and Logical Necessity”, *Philosophical Investigations*, 24:1 (January 2001), pp.1-29.

Thus, Wittgenstein saw the job of philosophy as investigation of the grammatical rules:

We are interested in language as procedure according to explicit rules, because philosophical problems are misunderstandings which must be removed by clarification of the rules according to which we are inclined to use words. (*PG* §32)

The grammar of a language is the overall system of grammatical rules. (*PI* §496) Grammar is a resource in which language speakers can make new connections. Nevertheless, this is not a random process; new connections imply old ones. Grammatical rules are practical, they must be repeatable, and not something only doing once, since, in Wittgenstein's view, a language is normative insofar as its rules can be both correctly and incorrectly applied in a form of life.<sup>206</sup>

Rule following has two dimensions: on the one hand, there is the form of life, which provides a background for rule following, and on the other hand, there is the individual. Individual is free to give a new meaning to concepts or rules; however, this does not mean she has no responsibility to apply a rule correctly. Both dimensions are important with respect to rule following. Therefore, Wittgenstein's view of rule following advocates a position neither of pure subjectivity nor of pure objectivity. By rejecting private language, Wittgenstein avoids pure subjectivity. On the other hand, since objectivity in rule following is located in a grammatical context of concepts, rule following does not promise exact objectivity. That is, it may be said there is a balance concerning subjectivity and objectivity in Wittgensteinian account of rule following. Moreover, for Wittgenstein even though there is no necessary rule that forces people to act in a way, we still do have right application. In this respect, Wittgensteinian concept of rule following contains a sort of moral responsibility to do the right application. As known, rule following exhibited in various occasions as acting rightly. This is what Wittgenstein means by practice or "praxis" as he uses the term. Practice or praxis is used in the sense that doing right thing in any action, not just in theory:

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<sup>206</sup> Hans Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.151.

Nun, es war vorausgesetzt, dass der Gebrauch der Zeichen im Spiel anders, und zwar durch Hinweisen auf Paradigmen, gelehrt würde. Wohl; aber was heisst es nun, zu sagen, in der *Praxis der Sprache* entssprachen den Zeichen gewisse Elemente? (PU §51)

Wo ist die Verbindung gemacht zwischen dem Sinn der Worte "Spielen wir eine Partie Schach!" und allen Regeln des Spiels?- Nun, im Regelverzeichnis des Spiels, im Schachunterricht, in der taglichen *Praxis* des Spielens. (PU §197)<sup>207</sup>

Well, it was presupposed that the use of the signs in the language game would be thought in a different way, in particular by pointing to paradigms. Very well; but what does it mean to say that in the *technique of using the language* certain elements correspond to the signs? (PI §51)

Where is the connection effected between the sense of the expression "Let's play a game of chess" and all the rules of the game?- Well, in the list of rules of the game, in the teaching of it, in the day-to-day *practice* of playing.(PI §197)

Both paragraphs emphasize praxis, i.e., to act accordingly, that instantiates an established technique. Since to follow the rule presupposes the ability to apply the rule in a normative context, it is nonsense to say that an animal or a machine follows a rule.<sup>208</sup> A person can follow a given rule, unlike an animal or a machine; she can act in a way that is sufficiently complex, normative, and regular. Because of these features, she may be said that she understands or follows a rule.<sup>209</sup>

In sum, Wittgenstein developed a theory of practice that does not reduce the normative to the empirical or psychological. On this account, what grounds the normativity of a practice is a agreement in action. The source of normativity does not spring from a set of symbolic rules belonging to an autonomous domain, independent of actual uses; it is rather immersed in practices or praxis.

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<sup>207</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, The German Text, with a Revised English, (Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

<sup>208</sup> G.P. Baker, P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985, p.159.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p.160.

### 3.1.4 Moral Responsibility and Rule Following

When we suggest that praxis is the fundamental phenomenon for the concept of rule following, it seems we may set up a relation between rule following and responsibility in a moral sense. Here, I do not claim that Wittgenstein forms a moral theory. It is fair to say that Wittgenstein is not constructing a theory of moral judgment. Or, I do not need to constitute a third thing to bridge the so-called gap between rule and its application. Here, I first want to emphasize the conceptual interdependence of rule following, practice, and responsibility.<sup>210</sup> Second, I want to look for a possibility whether there is an implication of moral responsibility of individual in Wittgensteinian concept of rule following as it stands in opposition to the Platonist and Tractarian concepts of rule which opens for ethics due to their normative character. It is reasonable to suppose that there is a moral aspect in every step of rule following, since the concept of rule following implies both that there is a freedom of actions and that there is a need for the concept of rightness in the application of rule. In this final section, I would look into the question whether rule following may be perceived from a moral responsibility point of view.

In one of his remarks on rule following Wittgenstein says that replying to the question “What is it to follow a rule?” “... it would be more correct to say not that an intuition was needed at every stage but that a new decision was needed at every stage.” (*PI* §186) This quotation stresses the concept of “decision” that implies that there is a relation between normativity of rule following and responsibility of individual. When we see the concept of rule following from this point of view, we may deduce that Wittgenstein’s thoughts have some implications for the moral domain.

As it has been indicated above, it must be possible to talk about the application of a rule as correct or incorrect, since the concept of following a rule would have no meaning unless normative values like correct or incorrect is assumed.

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<sup>210</sup> Ronald Scott Smith, *Whose Virtues? Which Language A Critique of MacIntyre’s and Hauerwas’s “Wittgensteinian” Virtue Ethics* (Ph.D. dissertation, California: Faculty of the Graduate Scholl University of Southern, 2000), pp.xii-xiv.

The fact that rule following activities are not always determined by rules, and they rely on practices for their meaning, and they can be performed correctly or incorrectly, etc., all these suggest that there are some aspects of Wittgenstein's concept rule following that need to be studied further from an moral point of view. In that regard, rule following is a special sort of activity; it may involve decisions that do not appeal to a rule as a formulated set of instructions. Moreover, when making decisions in new cases, the lack of precision involved in rule following suggests that a type of flexibility is needed to resolve problems. The lack of precision in rule following may resolve problematic applications of a rule.<sup>211</sup> Thus, we need moral responsibility to reach to a correct application.

Another implication concerning moral responsibility takes place in the difference between being in accordance with a rule and following a rule; or action in accordance to a rule and action governed by a rule in Wittgensteinian system.<sup>212</sup> When one follows a rule, she always accords to it; on the other hand, when one accords to a rule, she may or may not follow it. This difference between following a rule and merely according to that rule has implications concerning moral responsibility of individual.

One can follow a rule only if she has the freedom of not following it. Thus, only free individuals can follow rules and only they can fulfill epistemically normative activities such criticism, justification, and so on. That is, rule following is manifest in the manner in which individual uses rules, refers to rules in acting, justifies, evaluates, and corrects what others do.<sup>213</sup> This means that only individuals, who are free and capable of acting, can follow rules and give reasons for their actions, because the other things, for example machines, cannot give reasons. (*PI* §193) We can generalize that people as oppose to machines can both accord and follow rules; machines on the other hand can only accord to rules. Therefore, the only way we can meaningfully speak of rule following is reserved to human beings, because following a rule is praxis and only human beings can have praxis. In addition, only human beings can pursue which beliefs, decisions, and actions are

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<sup>211</sup> Jeffery David Smith, *Cognitivism and Relativism: A Study of Wittgensteinian and Discourse Theories of Morality*, p.225.

<sup>212</sup> G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, p.155.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

required to follow a rule. This internal connection between rule following and “praxis” has an important implication for moral responsibility.

Then, what does it mean to conceive of rule following as a moral responsibility? We learn to engage in complex practices through teaching, practice, and respond creatively to new situations and make mistakes, and learn from them. We learn to be good and to do well; we come to a form of life that values these activities and supports us in fulfilling them. Practices provide a framework of social expectations that establish norms to determine what judgments and actions are appropriate. Even if we are entirely free acting, we could not have been capable of required praxis without interacting with others. In this sense, moral responsibility develops with practices in a form of life. These practices identify actions and events that correspond to certain concepts. Hence, they enable individuals to act and judge with responsibility. Then, moral responsibility is also a normative enterprise for the concept of rule following. It is normative because it is concerned with how we ought to follow a rule and be in a relation to one another. It also aims to evaluate, appraise, and prescribe people’s attitudes, or actions.<sup>214</sup>

When moral responsibility is viewed as an important component of the concept of rule following, deeper dimensions of the rule following are revealed. One of them is that each act, even the most simple, has the feature of teaching. It can be questioned how the teaching affect the development of one’s own character and identity. In that regard, there is a need for moral responsibility to teach right act. Similarly, in teaching we should consider the influence of our act upon others who might observe or become aware of it. Another dimension is connected with human existence. For without rules there can be neither society nor culture.<sup>215</sup> It cannot be imagined that a society in which there were no recognizable rules, judgments, justifications and criticisms, even if these rules may take a wide variety of forms. A further dimension is also the self-conception that allows the maintenance of one’s

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<sup>214</sup> Ken O’Day, “Normativity and Interpersonal Reasons,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Volume 1, Issue 1, (1998), pp. 61 – 87.

<sup>215</sup> Jack Sidnell, An Ethnographic Consideration of Rule-Following, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute Incorporating Man*, **9** (3), (2003), pp. 429-445.



capacity to act. These dimensions affect, as in any complex practice, the end of actions and also influence the regularity or continuation of the practice.

We have presented some dimensions of moral responsibility in rule following, such as teaching, culture, and one's self-concept. From the perspective of the moral responsibility, the important thing is that these dimensions involve one's self-concept and that of others. Moral responsibility involves others in the process of how we reflect upon them and decide what to do. We are born into a world; others teach us before we know how to act this way. Even if one becomes autonomous in one's choices later, the capacity to be such, are grounded in the relations with others. This is social and also individual in an obvious way; we communicate with others as a way of clarifying what we should do. Clarity means that we work with moral responsibility until we reach a decision about what action is right. Thus, the ability to act with moral responsibility is realized in individual's relations to others.

Since all practices are never entirely personal, they are learned, and they are taught; they are part of a shared form of life. It is only through experiences of interacting with others that we master the abilities of rule following. Nevertheless, this does not mean that practices share necessarily a single common feature. Rather, they involve different responses, choices, and actions as situations demand. It is obvious that there is a balance in rule following concerning personality and sociality. That is, rule following does not only concern an individual but that individual in fundamental respects with other people as well. This makes us as responsible individuals. Here moral responsibility emerges from how we treat others, how they treat us, and how we see them treating each other. This network of relations represents the inseparability of rule following and of moral responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein considers language as a game. Language games do not consist of necessarily well defined rules for moves when dealing with the language. Similarly, when one speaks, one does not necessarily employ well defined grammatical rules in any application, since, according to Wittgenstein, the rules do not follow any given necessary structure of the world. The idea of rule resting on the association of words with transcendental objects is incoherent, since it is unclear how the mind grasps these objects, and this idea only produce a view of mythologized concept of rule. According to Wittgenstein, it is not the task of philosophy of language to go beyond the rules which can be exhibited as underlying the usage of everyday language. The distinction between correct and incorrect applications of words cannot be made a priori by invoking abstract or transcendental objects, since there is no realm outside language. Platonism invokes a connection in which the rule determines infinite totality of applications independently of us, and contains the whole series of possibilities in linguistic applications. However, Platonist account cannot justify the connection between language and the Ideal world, since it accepts the rule as an abstract entity; and it also cannot justify the existence of abstract rules which determine infinite totality of applications. Hence, Platonic position has been avoided, rejecting transcendental objects.

Wittgenstein's view of language is an attempt to avoid Platonist approach in philosophy of language. The focus of Wittgenstein's critique of the Platonist view has been to show that the mind of the individual cannot provide transcendental structure of the Ideal World. In addition, the mind cannot attempt to find a Platonic structure. Rather, for Wittgenstein, this structure is practical; it is the dynamic interactions of people in certain regularities, and patterns of action over time.

The other ideal language like in the *Tractatus*, which is rejected by Wittgenstein, is governed by conformity to set of rules or logical syntax. Language is compared to a model with exact meanings and fixed rules. *Tractatus* claims that the proposition determines reality completely. The idea is that an artificial language can be derived which represents an abstract condition underlying every natural language. Nevertheless, later Wittgenstein objects that ordinary usage is determined by necessary propositional rules. According to him, we use language without fixed propositions or definitions. Rules do not mirror the logical forms of reality, since “The harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language.” (PG §162) He does not deny the existence of linguistic rules, rules of usage, but he denies the possibility of ever isolating and describing them, since language is interwoven with world. Thus, a rule does not count as independently of language using as a standard of correctness. Rather it is a matter of its use in a certain context, a certain practice.

The crucial question regarding concept of rule following is “how to apply a rule?” It also includes a problem i.e., whether an interpretation is necessary to bridge the gap between the rule and its application. This is one of the questions which Wittgenstein deals in *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein thinks that there is no such a gap between rule and its application. Otherwise, such a gap leads to problems of paradox and regression of interpretation, since this gap is filled with interpretation. However, there are multiple interpretations for any action, the action can be characterized both in a way that accords with a given rule or conflicts with it. According to Wittgenstein, this constitutes the source of the paradox: even if the application of a rule is correct, the action could be made out to conflict with it. Thus, the paradox stems from the idea that grasping a rule always is an interpretation.

The other problem with interpretation is regression of interpretation. It can be summarized as follows: it is true that we may express a picture or interpretation, but how do we know that this interpretation corresponds to the meaning of that word. Does this expression also not have “a meaning” which requires a further interpretation? If so, this expression will require another interpretation. That is, if an interpretation or a rule needs to be supplemented with another interpretation, then the interpretation of the rule needs a further interpretation and so on. So, the appeal to

interpretations causes an infinite regress. Thus, one may never know whether the interpretation of a rule is correct or not.

How can we avoid from these problems? Wittgenstein does not reject that rules guide an action, but he rejects that all instances of following a rule must involve interpretations. Since a rule can be interpreted in countless ways, interpretation can be conceived as prescribing any course of action whatsoever. In fact, Wittgenstein's critique of interpretation is an attack on interpretation as an inner process. He denies that following a rule involves an inner process of interpretation. He also claims that if we do not give up interpretation as mediating thing between rule and its application, then "whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we cannot talk about 'right'." (*PI* §258) Thus to avoid the problems which interpretation create, we should give up mediation between rule and its application. Then, if there is no third thing between a rule and its application, then there must be an internal, unmediated relation between them; namely, there is no an intermediary third thing between them. Thus, the way out of the paradox is to state that there is no gap between rule and its application; there is, however, an internal relation between them. If we accept there is no gap between them, in a similar way, we can avoid another problem, the problem of regression of interpretation.

The other essential problematic matter regarding rule is the concept of understanding. The source of the problem is to assume that rules have two separate aspects: expression and application. When this assumption is accepted, then a gap appears between understanding a rule and knowing how to apply it. Wittgenstein claims that it is not possible to understand a rule but not know how to apply it, since if one does not know how to apply a rule, one does not understand what it really means. For him, it is possible to apply a rule without really knowing the full expression of that rule. Thus understanding, according to Wittgenstein, does not entail knowing its full expression.

Wittgenstein rejects the idea that understanding is identified with an entity, a mental state, or an inner process.<sup>216</sup> It has been claimed that understanding a rule as a mental state provides all the correct uses of a rule. On the contrary, for Wittgenstein, concept of understanding and rule following have been explained as an *ability* rather than a mental process, since learning to follow a rule is not only learning its expression, but also learning what that rule requires.

Wittgenstein claims that understanding means being able to use words in a various situations. For example, if someone who understands the word ‘pain’, she is able to apply it to different sensations, e.g., to the feeling when her leg is broken, or when her finger is burnt, etc. Thus, the *grammar* of the word “understands” is closely related to such terms: ‘can’, ‘is able to’, ‘to know’. (*PI* §150) In other words, understanding a rule means knowing how to use it or being able to apply it. We may conclude then that the grammar of ‘understanding’ is similar to the grammar of ‘ability’.

One key term concerning the concept of rule following in the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein is “criterion.” Although he uses this term in a somewhat different, technical way, its meaning may ultimately be derived from everyday usage. Wittgenstein says that criteria are specified by giving an answer to the question “*How do you know that so and so is the case?*” The answer consists in giving a criterion for saying that so and so is the case. (*BB* p.24)

According to Wittgenstein, no mental picture, whether image or concept, could serve as our ultimate criterion of whether a descriptive expression “fits” an object. If we do not relate the word to the observable characteristics in the object through some mediating mental picture, how is, then, the word is related to the object? The answer, according to Wittgenstein, is not by some “mysterious” relation between the word and its object, but by all the particular connections consist in the actual usage of the word in the language. To justify one’s use of a description by giving criteria is to appeal to a practice.

There may be more than one criterion for each case. In justifying the use of an expression by criteria, it is possible to give more than one criteria. Whether or not

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<sup>216</sup> Eric John Loomis, *Meaning, Generality, and Rules: Language and Logic in the Later Wittgenstein* (Ph.D. dissertation, Austin: The University of Texas, 1999), pp.94-95.

a word correctly applies may depend upon various criteria which may be present or absent. These various criteria may even conflict with one another. Which criteria are relevant to the use of a term in one case depends on its uses.

Criterion 'determines' the meaning of the words and sentences by the usage. If one does not know the criteria for the use of an expression, then she does not understand its meaning. A term has no meaning until it is connected with the characteristics of the objects which it applies to. A term is used to refer to the characteristics of objects and these characteristics serve as criteria for the use of term. Thus, criterion for the use of an expression is central to its meaning, and it is mentioned in any definition of that expression.

By conceptual structures, we are not discovering hidden essence of things. Wittgenstein writes "One cannot guess how a word functions... One has to look at its use and learn from that." (*PI* §109) To learn the use of a sign we look to ordinary language to discover the function it has, or the purpose it serves there. We know the use of signs by actually using them. The rules of usage are not only public, but are also a part of us. A person cannot follow a rule unless they are in conformity with a common way of acting that is displayed in the behavior of everyone who has had the same training, instruction, direction, and guidance. This means that the concept of rule following implies the form of life or practice of rule followers.

The concept of form of life does not point to some mysterious realm of biological, natural, or historical facts, but to cultural features of human history. This agreement in behavior and responses cannot be explained by reference to the rules of a particular practice because, in fact, it is the agreement in actions that enables us to follow the same rules.

Regularity is a background requirement for language use, since without it there could be no meanings, and no rules. A rule manifested in a practice only when humans agree in what they do and in how they assess their actions regularly. One can make sense only assuming that words can be repeated meaningfully and this comes through a practice that can supply the standards for correct use. Then, manifestation of a rule in practice needs regularity in actions.

Bloor interprets the regularity in a form of life as sociological account, and claims that concepts of rule and practice have status for an adequate social theory.

Rules are social objects actively applied by individuals. For this reason, individual's actions are subject to a community consensus which constitutes necessary order for meaning. Bloor claims that since a rule cannot determine only by itself which application is right, then, rule requires as a third thing a social 'institution' that decides what the right application is. Therefore, institution appears as an external sociological element to bridge the gap between a rule and its application. The basic difference between Bloor's argument and Wittgenstein's view is that while Wittgenstein thinks that there is no gap between a rule and a correct course of action, Bloor ignores that not only a rule is connected internally to an action, but also that there is no rule until there is a technique of applying it.

A rule should be normative to evaluate the use of concepts. Practical regularities have to be accompanied by expression of acceptance, or rejection, or criticism, since mere regularity in practice is not sufficient for the manifestation of a rule.<sup>217</sup> Wittgenstein's account of normativity is not reduced to mere regularities, since for him the normative attitudes are an essential competent of the rule following practices. If rules do not function in guiding an action, in justifying and explaining, in teaching and correcting, in evaluating and criticizing, they are not rules in any case. Then, when someone is following a rule, not merely acting in accord with it, she possesses also normative abilities that characterize that rule. In that sense, rule following is an ability to use the rule in normative activities. Then, grammatical rules are practical, they must be repeatable, and not something only doing once, since, in Wittgenstein's view, a language is normative insofar as its rules can be both correctly and incorrectly applied in a form of life.<sup>218</sup>

As far as we draw from Wittgenstein's views, rule following has two dimensions: on the one hand, there is the form of life, which provides a background for rule following, and on the other hand, there is the individual. Individual is free to give a new meaning to concepts or rules; however, this does not mean she has no responsibility to apply a rule correctly. Both dimensions are important with respect to rule following. Wittgenstein's view of rule following advocates a position neither of pure subjectivity nor of pure objectivity. By rejecting private language, Wittgenstein

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<sup>217</sup> Jose M. Medina, *Wittgenstein in Transition: Meaning, Rules and Practices*, p.295.

<sup>218</sup> Hans Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, (USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.151.

avoids pure subjectivity. On the other hand, since objectivity in rule following is located in a grammatical context of concepts, rule following does not promise exact objectivity. That is, it may be said there is a balance concerning subjectivity and objectivity in Wittgensteinian account of rule following. Moreover, for Wittgenstein even though there is no necessary rule that forces people to act in a way, we still do have right application. In this respect, Wittgensteinian concept of rule following contains a sort of moral responsibility to do the right application. As known, rule following exhibited in various occasions as acting rightly. This is what Wittgenstein means by practice or “praxis” as he uses the term. Practice or praxis is used in the sense that doing right thing in any action, not just in theory.

Since all practices are never entirely personal, they are learned, and they are taught; they are part of a shared form of life. It is only through experiences of interacting with others that we master the abilities of rule following. Nevertheless, this does not mean that practices share necessarily a single common feature. Rather, they involve different responses, choices, and actions as situations demand. It is obvious that there is a balance in rule following concerning personality and sociality. That is, rule following does not only concern an individual but that individual in fundamental respects with other people as well. This makes us as responsible individuals. Here moral responsibility emerges from how we treat others, how they treat us, and how we see them treating each other. This network of relations represents the inseparability of rule following and of moral responsibility.

We can say that the concept of rule following involves a reaction to the typical objectivist or individualist approaches, and it surpasses the basic dichotomies: objectivity /subjectivity, society/individual, system/event, and mind/body. For some interpretation, Wittgenstein’s discussion only leads to the skeptical conclusion that there are no rules to be followed and so no facts about what words mean. However, in the thesis we saw that when Wittgenstein rejects necessary determination of rules, he does not slip into skeptical paradoxes or relativist considerations. In fact, he claims that grounds in language are matters of background practices in a form of life.



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