NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

FACULTY OF FINE ART

DEPARTMENT OF SCULPTURE

To Play a Language Game:

Wittgenstein on the Inner, Rules and Private Language

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Submitted to

the Faculty of History of Art and Design

and

Complementary Studies

in Candidacy for the Degree of

B.A. in Fine Art Sculpture

1996

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of the 'individual', since the Age of Enlightenment, is a predominant factor in the construction of Western culture. Before, throughout the Middle Ages and even in the Renaissance the notion of God as omnipotent was strongly established, thus the new ideological and scientific currents of the Enlightenment started a slow process, in favour of a growing emphasis placed on the idea of the individual.

Parallel with the increasing importance of the individual, it appears also that the interest within philosophy changed from the spiritual element associated with the concept of 'soul', to the less spiritual though still enigmatic concept of 'inner'.

If we now, from a contemporary perspective asks what exactly is the 'inner' and what components it consists of, numerous difficulties arise. The mass of fleeting experiences associated with the inner seem impossible to define or even describe to other people. What we feel appears to remain within our own private languages, 'knowable' only to the individual her/himself.

Suggestions have been made to the effect that communication of feelings or emotions is impossible. How can we 'translate' or 'rephrase' our inner experiences either through the rules of verbal language, in this case 20th century English, or through Western 20th century visual language, sculpture, painting etc?

Is the only world I can say I know, the internal world of my own consciousness?

Ludwig Wittgenstein's later work can be said to deal with these issues. After a long period of time in which he was almost giving in to the idea of solipsism, Wittgenstein, especially in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), offers an unconventional approach to the problem of the inner and it's relationship with the rules of language.

In this paper I will primarily discuss Wittgenstein's writings, but also refer to some of the numerous critics and theorists who have tried to explain what Wittgenstein 'really meant'. Throughout this text it will be shown that it is of vital importance to consider these interpreters, since Wittgenstein's writings published during his lifetime are rather sparse. However the dynamic and originality of his work can be looked upon as a starting point, from where a continuous debate is still going on.

My aim here is not to come up with any 'new ways' of interpreting Wittgenstein but rather to bring up some specific points for discussion, since I consider the notion of

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the inner and its relationship to signs not only a question for philosophy, but of crucial importance for anyone concerned with the complexities of visual or verbal language.

The first chapter in this text will explore Wittgenstein's method of demystifying the traditional notion of the inner and, inevitably, this will bring up his arguments on rule following as well as his rejection of private language. The two latter arguments will be discussed in the second and the third chapter respectively. Also in the last chapter partly through his 'rejection of philosophy' Wittgenstein will be compared with the poststructuralist Jacques Derrida.

I have found in the research for this text that there are no definite solutions given to the problems that will appear, quite the contrary, Wittgenstein offers as many questions as answers. However, the value of his work I believe, lies precisely in the questioning, the short intense remarks and in more contemporary terms, Wittgenstein's 'deconstructionist' method of writing.

Chapter one

DEMYSTIFYING THE INNER

In this chapter I will present Wittgenstein's way of demystifying traditional metaphysical presumptions about the nature of the 'inner'. Most of the Wittgensteinian interpreters who will be referred to are contemporary, and I will start by introducing the recent work of Paul Johnston, dealing with the difficulties of 'observing' the inner.

Johnston presents two problems (Johnston, 1993, p.2) as to why the notion of the inner is so complex, the first dealing with the relation between psychology and the inner. According to Johnston, Wittgenstein claimed that the notion that the psychologist studies and observes the inner is an implausible assumption. A psychologist does not and cannot study the inner, rather s/he observes the *manifestations* of the inner, such as actions, image making and verbal language.

Psychology is discussed in various remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* where Wittgenstein asks whether psychology is not more about observing behaviour, than observing the mind? Putting the question like this might even indicate the notion of an opposition between mind and behaviour, whereas the conventional idea would assume a link between the two, an interdependence where the behaviour is caused according to the state of mind.

If a psychologist cannot see, read or observe our inner can we do it ourselves? The second problem (Johnston on Wittgenstein, 1993), deals with the idea of introspection and is perhaps even more complex and unsolvable.

One of the many problems that arises is: how can the person in question actually differentiate between observing an experience from only 'having it'? A paradox also arises from the fact that one cannot observe something that isn't primarily described; if we do not know what the inner is we do not know what exactly to look for, and thereby we can't observe it. Finally, even if someone claimed that s/he had observed her/his own inner emotions, what is the validity of that since what s/he 'observed' might not at all be what someone else would define as inner emotions.

An evident problem that occurs in Johnston's interpretations of Wittgenstein is that the 'inner' seemingly is looked upon, however intangible and fleeting, as *one* homogeneous concept. This is rather problematic in terms of trying to *demystify* a conventional notion of what the inner is, and to be able to do this I will briefly mention

some points made on this subject by one of Wittgenstein's contemporaries - Gilbert Ryle (1949).

According to Ryle, a common assumption in our culture is that even if we find certain subjective concepts somewhat 'unspeakable', at least objective matters are considered and defined as dealing with something that we all, under the right circumstances, understand and experience in the same way. If hypothetically we look upon the inner as not being heterogeneous, and instead consider that parts of the inner are actually objective rather than subjective, we are at a completely different starting point. Ryle's way of analysing the inner, like Wittgenstein's, consist of analysing our language use and constantly narrowing down general, for most of us, nearly indefinable concepts. He would probably object to Johnston's use of 'inner emotions', since Ryle claims that 'emotion' is only a part of the inner, which in turn should be reduced much further to concepts such as: inclinations, moods, agitations and feelings (Ryle, 1949, p.81).

The importance of Ryle's argument is to show that through this sort of reduction some of these 'subheadings' of 'emotion' must be looked upon as being objective instead of subjective. And since 'emotion' is considered as merely a part of the inner other 'parts', for example 'thinking', can be reduced and ordered *ad absurdum* in a similar way. Both Ryle's and Wittgenstein's interests concerning the inner lie within the realm of language use. However it appears that Ryle is interested in how language could be used more *sufficiently*, whereas Wittgenstein is more interested in precisely *how* language is actually used, with its numerous subjective and objective overlappings. Moreover it is crucial that the notion of the inner as necessarily being something subjective and private is put under question.

It might be objected to this discussion that we are 'only dealing with language'. This is surely a correct observation which will be discussed extensively throughout the text - since language is the only field in which we know with certainty that the term of the 'inner', exists. But rather than drawing any conclusions at this point, at least we can acknowledge that there is a major linguistic and logical muddle accompanying the notion of observing the inner, either from the outside or the inside. Wittgenstein writes:

> He (sic) cannot *know* whether I am thinking, but I know it. What do I know? That what I am doing now is *thinking*? And what do I compare it with in order to know that? And may I not be mistaken about it? So all that is left is: I know that I am doing what I am doing. (Wittgenstein in Kenny (ed.), 1994, p.214)

I don't think that Wittgenstein in this remark is trying to say that 'thinking' cannot be said to exist. However I would argue that he wants us to reconsider the assumption that the inner consists of indescribable, elusive experiences known only to the individual her/himself. Also the fact is that we do discuss (what is generally called) our inner feelings with each other but how is that possible? An answer could be that our use of language is *translations* or *pictures* of our private thoughts. This might seem plausible at first, but it certainly doesn't correspond to the conventional assumption above. How can the individual translate something that is hypothetically indefinable to another person, that, *a priori*, the latter could not possibly have experienced? This leads to the notion that the connection between a hidden private concept and a sign or utterence, can for a viewer or listener be very difficult to decode objectively. Obviously this holds also for the speaker her/himself: how often do we not struggle to find the right sign for what we want to convey?

Furthermore, we must ask whether there is an actual process of translating or decoding our thoughts every time we say something? Perhaps the idea of translating thoughts is a complete misconception? Wittgenstein writes in *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (1980):

> If someone says to me what he has thought - has he really said what he *thought*? Would not the actual mental event have to remain undescribed?
> (Wittgenstein in vonWright (ed.), 1980, §577)

He continues:

> "I don't know what you are thinking to yourself. Say what you are thinking". - That means something like "Talk!"
> (Wittgenstein in vonWright (ed.), 1980, §585)

Both these remarks definitely seem to suggest that the process of 'translating' our 'inner events' into signs is not as straightforward as we might think. To understand this more clearly it has to be put into the context of what Wittgenstein described as, an inner process's need of an outward criteria. Here we have to return to Ryle and be attentive to the generality of the definition of the inner. I think these remarks are referring to the 'not necessarily subjective' sides but generally - word versus world. This means basically that for a statement to be considered as 'true' it has to have an outward criteria, against which it can be checked.

Following the hypothesis that the individual's inner world is inaccessible to other people, a *translation* of her thoughts has, *a priori*, no possible criteria against

which its accuracy can be checked! Unfortunately the individual cannot either 'check' it her/himself, not only because of the possibility of untruthfulness, but simply because s/he *neither* has a criteria to compare it with, and s/he could misjudge or even think s/he misjudges when s/he didn't and so forth. So, does it really make any sense to talk about translation if we cannot distinguish between accurate and inaccurate accounts? If the process of distinguishing between what is right from what seems right is no longer possible, both the notion of 'accuracy' and of 'translation' becomes as elusive and intangible as the notion of the inner itself.

Saul Kripke has considered this problem in *Wittgenstein On rules and Private Language* (1982), which I will refer to in order to try to clarify some of these difficulties. Roughly, Kripke's suggestion is that the proper definition of the outward criteria for an inner process is, first of all, dependent on the circumstances in which the person happened to be in. Secondly, this could be compared with her/his behaviour resulting in that the 'others' can consider 'circumstances and behaviour' as the outward criteria - and from here agree or disagree with her/his statement. This is in a way furthering the problem discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Is there an opposition between mind and behaviour? I believe that Wittgenstein thinks so and that it can be demonstrated by re-examining the way language works. It is also of crucial importance to get used to the idea of perhaps an opposition between our concept of the inner, i.e. the way in which we have made signs to signify it, and what it actually 'is'. I will return to this later, but for now I will give examples of how Kripke interprets Wittgenstein's ideas, on this subject.

In terms of a word such as 'chair', the connection between the word and its outward criteria 'the object chair' is fairly straightforward. The accuracy of the statement 'I am sitting on a chair' can be easily checked by others and defined as truthful or not. However, a concept such as 'pain' and its connection to something in the 'outer' world is not clear but sounds rather paradoxical.

How can we decide when a child has mastered the avowal 'I am in pain'? To put this as analogous to the example with the chair, the adult should then feel (the child's, her/his own?) pain. Obviously this is not the case, rather it is the behaviour of the child, such as crying, and the external situation that function as the criteria against which the statement 'I am in pain' can be checked. Wittgenstein uses the example of pain in this way extensively throughout his work, but the problem is that one can feel pain without crying as well as one can cry without feeling pain. Or perhaps it is me misusing the word 'pain'. Is its definition a behaviour that can be seen or heard by other people?

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I think that Wittgenstein is trying to argue the point that there are *rules* which we must follow in order to make distinctions for an accurate or inaccurate sign for an inner experience. This is certainly one of the key points in Wittgenstein's method of demystifying the inner which forces us to reassess our previous ideas of psychological concepts. He is refuting the notion that language is an actual translation of the individual's inner private emotions and processes. This also rejects the entire idea of the inner as something private, since neither the individual her/himself nor anyone else can distinguish between an inner experience actually taking place, and, the individual merely believing that it took place. Again, this seems to prove the point quoted above, when we ask someone about what they think it really means something completely different like - 'Talk!'

Since these arguments undermine our presupposition about how we understand the inner and everything ascribed to it, an absence is left which might be difficult to fill. It can be tempting to fall into the alternative, behaviourism - meaning the belief that the proper basis of psychological science is the objective study of behaviour under stimuli. But what purpose would that serve? A complete rejection or ignorance concerning the uncertainties of the inner?

To ask the question which Johnston poses, whether we should deny the notion of the inner or try to understand it, is rather pointless since this is not really what is at stake. To return to the earlier discussion at the beginning of this chapter - the only place we know with certainty that the inner exists, is in our language use. So a more sensible question would be: does the notion of the inner actually exist anywhere else outside particular, what Wittgenstein calls 'language games', or should the 'inner' be regarded as nothing more than a metonymy?

The concept of 'language games' is fundamental for understanding Wittgenstein's later work, and particularly the notion of the inner, rule following and the private language argument. Throughout *Philosophical Investigations* this term is used a lot, somehow shifting in the associations it seems to allude to. However the way in which the concept of 'language games' is most frequently used by Wittgenstein is put like this:

> These (language games) are ways of using signs simpler than those in
> which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday
> language./..../ When we look at such simple forms of language, the
> mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary language disappears.
> (Wittgenstein in Kenny (ed.), 1994, p.46.)

Through considering the term itself, it is evident that Wittgenstein draws similarities between language use and games. However the common factor of card games, ball games, board games etc, and language games is not clear cut, rather, there is a complicated system of overlappings and criss-crossing of similarities (Wittgenstein, 1953, §66). Thus this comparison, as mentioned in the quotation, suggests a clearing away of the 'mental mist' in language use.

Knowing the emphasis Wittgenstein placed on the notion of language games, it is clear that the question whether the inner is to be found anywhere else than in some of these language games, becomes highly problematic. This has caused a lot of dispute between different scholars. Johnston for example argues that Wittgenstein was trying to 'understand' the notion of the inner, which almost inevitably also alludes to metaphysical associations. Others have been more sceptical keeping Wittgenstein's rejection of metaphysics in mind, and have interpreted Wittgenstein as completely denying the inner. Cook writes:

> Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind consists largely of denying that people have intellectual powers. (Cook, 1994, p.269)

At first sight it might seem that the 'inner' and 'intellectual powers' as Cook put it, should be considered as opposites alluding to the notion of regarding the inner as subjective and the intellect as objective. But this is the *very* assumption that Wittgenstein is objecting to. Furthermore in the context of this quotion 'intellectual powers' is not necessarily referring to 'elitist abilities', but instead to frequently used language terms such as for example 'perceiving' and 'remembering'. Hence, we will see that this notion plays a part both in the argument of a demystification of the inner, as well as in other arguments which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Influenced by the thinking of Berkeley, Wittgenstein considered that the existence of something like a brain or the mechanism of a clock consists "in their being perceived" (Cook, 1994, p.270). This means that even if we are seeing the hands of a clock moving, we cannot know that there is an actual mechanism inside the clock, until we have opened it up. Both Berkeley and Wittgenstein would argue that the same idea holds for a brain: someone's having or not having a brain is irrelevant (since normally we do not check it) to activities such as speaking, calculating or making art.

As always with Wittgenstein one has to remember that in the majority of his work he is very much concerned with rejecting the whole idea of philosophy. This is unfortunate since Wittgenstein's ideas are in constant danger of only being considered

within this discipline. However if we instead try to bring the argument deriving from Berkeley into the realm of 'common' language use, and juxtapose it to the argument of the inner, it is easy to understand that numerous theorists would claim that Wittgenstein rejected the inner entirely, on the same basis as rejecting 'intellectual abilities'. According to Cook, Wittgenstein sees it as a major confusion to believe that a possible inner has anything to do at all with activities such as say, sculpting or writing. Wittgenstein writes:

> The prejudice in favour of psycho-physical parallelism is also a fruit of the primitive conception of grammar. (Wittgenstein in Cook (ed.), 1994, p.271)

This statement and the majority of the discussions in this chapter point to the crucial connection between the concept of the inner and our language use. Wittgenstein has also argued that language can not be looked upon as translations or pictures of elusive inner experiences. As suggested above the concept of the inner certainly does have a placement within particular language games guided by specific rules. The notion of rules in language will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter and we will finally see how this plays an important part in Wittgenstein's perception on private language or inner speech.

Chapter two

RULE FOLLOWING

As we saw in the previous chapter Wittgenstein places a lot of emphasis on the necessity of an outer criteria for an inner event. In this chapter I will discuss the idea of 'public criteria' or in other words - rule following. What does it really mean to follow a rule in language and how does it relate to the concept of the inner?

As mentioned earlier Wittgenstein speaks about language games. This concept is crucially linked with the idea of rule following, for just as games have their own particular rules, so have different language games. The way of reasoning when comparing our use of language with following rules, seems to suggest that the Wittgensteinian view on language is not based on truth conditions, rather on *assertability conditions*, i.e. how 'successfully or unsuccessfully' we follow the rules of a particular language game.

The definitions of 'rule following' and 'language use' appear to be rather fluid. However, briefly the link between these concepts is not to say that they are synonymous, rather the former should be looked upon as being one component within the latter. 'Language games' can furthermore, comparing with the previous chapter, be looked upon as referring to the different rhetorics or styles which take place within different conventions and institutions.

One of the most extensive investigations within the debate on Wittgenstein's rule following is made by Saul Kripke (1982). However one has to be attentive to the fact that his writings have received a lot of criticism, with claims that Kripke has attributed to Wittgenstein views that he never held. Kripke comments that his paper,

> ...should be thought of as expounding neither "Wittgenstein's" argument nor "Kripke's": rather Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke. (Kripke, 1982, p.5)

Kripke discusses rule following in language under the title *The Wittgensteinian paradox,* which also suggests the unresolved and problematic nature of the argument.

There are two specific remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* that have caused major dispute and disagreement. Paragraphs 201 and 202 Kripke claims, present the

core of Wittgenstein's writings not only on rule following and the private language argument, but of his whole philosophical research. I will start by quoting these remarks and thereafter try to give account for different readings and interpretations.

> This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: 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. (Wittgenstein, 1953, §201)

The next paragraph reads:

> And hence also "obeying a rule" is a practise. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule "privately": otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same as obeying it. (Wittgenstein, 1953, §202)

Kripke claims that the position Wittgenstein takes up in these remarks and some of the previous ones is 'sceptical' and that Wittgenstein has invented a "new form of philosophical scepticism" (Kripke, 1982, p.7). At first sight §201 seems to suggest that applying a word for a concept according to a rule is neither possible nor impossible, thus this floats into some sort of nonsense or agnosticism. In turn this leads to the conclusion that language is impossible, or at least useless for communicating something which we may call 'meaning'. The second remark, *prima facie*, seems to confirm the previous one with the slight addition that if language is impossible, private language or inner speech must also be concluded as an impossibility.

We are now, if we ever regarded language with greater esteem, in a rather dark situation. At this point it is important to take a closer look at how Kripke reads these remarks, but equally important to take into consideration some other critics, specifically G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker (1984), who have written an extensive 'reply' to Kripke's account.

Wittgenstein uses a lot of mathematical examples to come to terms with how we come to understand a rule but also how to decide *when* we have understood it. Important to note though is that Wittgenstein actually considered our words for sensations to follow more or less the same rules as a mathematical language, hence the discussion below should be considered within a wider context than it may seem.

Kripke refers to these mathematical examples in his text and discusses the notion of what he calls 'quus' rather than 'plus'. The argument involves the supposition that, say I feel confident that I have grasped the rule for addition and claim with certainty that '68+57' equals '125'. However, someone that Kripke from here onwards will refer to as the 'sceptic' claims that if I used 'plus' the way I did in the past, the answer would turn out to be '5'! This is clearly nonsensical, but if we let the sceptic ask *what I actually* did to come up with '125', my answer would be something like: I just followed the rule and did what I have done so many times in the *past* when seeing the symbol '+'. But what was this function? Hypothetically, when I learnt how to use '+' it never involved numbers bigger than '57'. This is plausible since one always starts of with small numbers, so *ex hyphotesi, this* function is *not* called 'plus';'+' but 'quus';'$\oplus$'. Kripke defines '$\oplus$' by:

$$x \oplus y = x+y, \text{ if } x,y < 57$$
$$= 5 \text{ , otherwise. (Kripke, 1982, p.9)}$$

Now the sceptic is accusing me of misinterpreting my previous usage of 'plus' and claims that I always meant 'quus', and therefore my answer must be wrong!

This hypothesis is logically possible and evidently derives from the similar idea of Wittgenstein's, 'add 2'. The point of both these arguments is that when we carry out mathematical (and other language) exercises we do not actually make a new decision each time we for example 'add 2'. Rather, what we seemingly do, is follow a certain system without question or as Wittgenstein puts it, we follow the rule *blindly*. The importance of this at first sight merely esoteric hypothesis, is that our conventional uses of words such as 'understanding', 'meaning' and 'knowing' are forced to be put in question. Obviously this is also where the discussion in Chapter One on Wittgenstein's scepticism concerning mental abilities becomes relevant. Conclusively, knowing and understanding rule following then, returning to §202, is not an ability but instead an action or practise.

In both these cases a common factor can be found which deals with the concept of time. Major problems seem to arise when rule following is put into that context: is the individual following the rule as s/he did in the past, or is the rule however slightly, continuously changing? This has to be looked into more closely to try to 'understand' Wittgenstein's way of thinking as well as grasping his paradox.

To put this into an historical context, already in the *Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus* (1922), Wittgenstein shows his scepticism towards looking at time in

the linear way of past-present-future. Interpreted by Cook the ideal language which the *Tractatus* presents is a language without verbs and this obviously includes a language without tensed verbs. This derives from the idea that:

> in the world as it is (as opposed to our conceptual world) there is no past or future - there is only the experience of the present moment. (Cook, 1994, p.241)

Practically though, the *Tractatus* doesn't really give any hints how ordinary language 'as we know it' could be translated into a tenseless language.

However, Wittgenstein came to reject or rather reassess a lot of the ideas in the *Tractatus* in his later writings. In *Philosophical Remarks* (Wittgenstein in Cook (ed.), 1994), he doubts his Tractarian idea and writes:

> We are tempted to say: Only the present moment has reality. And then the first reply must be: As opposed to what? (Wittgensten in Cook (ed.), 1994, p.243)

According to Cook, Wittgenstein also suggests in his later work that the concept 'present' is often misused in philosophy. He explains the word 'present' not as an opposition to 'past' and 'future', not as something that occurs within space, but is space itself. This leads to a rejection of the conventional notion of time as an ever continuing filmstrip, projecting an ever fleeting present.

Acknowledging this, it is also obvious that Wittgenstein's notion of memory might be much more problematic than the general assumption relating to the idea of the film-strip. This is crucial as we will see, when talking about obeying a rule that we have learnt in the 'past': Kripke's notion of 'quus' for example.

Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein's former tutor and friend, held a so called 'realist view' of the past which affected Wittgenstein's way of thinking. Part of Russell's argument is that for all we know;

> the world sprang into being five minutes ago, exactly as it was then, with a population "that remembered" a wholly unreal past. (Russell, 1921, p.159)

Moreover Russell claimed that there can be no philosophical objections against the idea that 'events' take place at different times, i.e. a sense-datum experienced now is definitely in the *present*, whereas a memory is definitely something lingering in the *past*. Due to this latter claim, Wittgenstein came to reject Russell's argument. The

problem this argument brings up according to Wittgenstein is similar to the problem about observing the inner, how can we distinguish between what we remember and what we think we remember? To get beyond this problem, Wittgenstein rejects the realist view of the past and instead makes the present or the future the criteria against which the memory can be checked.

It is also important to take into consideration that both Russell and Wittgenstein agreed with the 'Humean view of the world' meaning that each event that takes place is independent of every other. I think that Wittgenstein was trying to get to the idea, again comparing with Chapter One, that it is irrelevant when talking about memory whether we actually *had a childhood or not*: since language use according to Wittgenstein is not about 'knowledge' in this case about a vanished past, but rather about following the present rules of a particular language game. An individual remembering something is evidently an event taking place in the present but not only that, also "what one remembers", (Cook, 1994, p.251), is from Wittgenstein's point of view something taking place in the present.

This might, *prima facie,* seem possible but then everything we actually *do* (think we) remember that cannot be verified in the present or the future, should accordingly be classified as fiction, or even complete nonsense? The answer to this is difficult to find and neither Russell nor Wittgenstein gives a clear plausible solution. Perhaps the only way out would be to reject the Humean view of the world, but the consequences of this would also leave us in limbo.

In Baker's and Hacker's paper, Kripke is portrayed as taking no notice of Wittgenstein's claim that the present is the place for verification of a memory. Kripke holds that remembering something like learning to follow a rule can't be verified empirically by the past, *thus neither by the present.* Consequently, from this hypothesis no event or behaviour taking place in the past can constitute someone's meaning x by 'x', so nothing either in her/his present use of 'x' can constitute conflict or agreement with what s/he meant by 'x'. No one, not the individual her/himself or anyone else can 'know' if s/he uses x now, the same way as s/he did in the past. This is the paradox Kripke interprets from §201 which does lead to the conclusion that there is no such thing as following a rule in terms of choosing which word to use in a specific situation. The word that in the end will be chosen has no common meaning or translation, and the idea that language conveys meaning must be wrong.

This, according to Baker and Hacker, is not talking about scepticism but about complete nihilism. However as we have seen in the above writings Cook offers a

different interpretation (thus no solution) to Wittgenstein's problem and it seems that Baker and Hacker are on the same track. The way they look at §201 is not that it is rejecting the notion that rules guide our language use, and thereby more importantly: they guide our *actions and behaviour*.

> Rather, what is repudiated is the suggestion that a rule determines an
> action as being in accord with it only in virtue of an interpretation.
> (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p.420)

The repudiated notion of an 'interpretation' here, clearly refers to the rejection of the idea of 'interpreting an inner state into words'. Hence, whereas Kripke more or less eliminates all possible foundations on which some kind of order concerning our language use can be built, Baker and Hacker, just like Kripke, acknowledge that language use is definitely not interpretations of inner processes though they argue that language use is by necessity rule governed. What Wittgenstein 'really meant' can only be answered hypothetically but I suggest that in this case Baker and Hacker are getting closest.

What this also suggests concerning the memory argument, is that it is not about interpreting the rule, hence we do not have to look into the vanished past for a criteria which the statement can accord with. No, to learn how to use the word 'red' has nothing to do with interpreting 'inner knowledge', nothing makes us say 'red' when asked for the colour of an object. Just as there isn't an interpretation of our 'inner knowledge', the rules within the language game we are presently playing, make us use the word 'pain' in a specific situation. Again, as discussed earlier the only thing we can rely on is other people's use of words. Wittgenstein argues that when someone learns the word 'red' what s/he learns is:

> *whatever we too* call "red".... But what then is something red? "Well
> *that* (pointing)." (Wittgenstein in von Wright (ed.), 1980, 312)

So it seems that the only thing we can rely on as a criteria is other people's present choice of words. It has also been argued referring to the quote above, that the only somehow sufficient and acceptable word in Wittgenstein's view is exactly: *'that'*.

What then, would happen if agreement ceased? Is it possible for only *one* person *once* in her/his life to obey a rule? In the next chapter we will see that the notion of rule following cannot be left at the stage where it is now, and that it is tightly bound to the private language argument. Kripke even argues that by stating one of the

problems, inevitably, the other is also stated. However, I will try to give a wider account for the different theories surrounding this argument. Hopefully, also, some of the above raised questions might be, not resolved, but to some extent clarified.

Chapter three

THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

Thus far into the text it should be fairly clear that Wittgenstein considered private language or inner speech as logically impossible. Especially in the early sixties this reasoning received a lot of attention from theorists such as Ayer, Rhees and Anscombe, mainly because of its rejection of traditional metaphysics and its support of the demystification of the inner.

G.E.M. Anscombe is one of the key figures since the fifties who is involved in translating and making Wittgenstein's work available in English. She is also one of the many commentators on Wittgenstein's private language argument.

In a text written by Anscombe (1982) she explains the impossibility of inner speech as due to the impossibility of a private ostensive definition. Obviously this is linked to the idea of rule following, since in the definition of this concept there is an *a priori* dependence on 'the community'. Privately one can not follow a rule, as Wittgenstein claims in §202, because of the impossibility of differentiating between following the rule and thinking one is following the rule. Conclusively and by necessity the words 'rule' and 'ostensive' are incorrectly used if they are not referring to the actions of a *multitude* of people. Hence because of this, we can see that a distinction has to be made between the concept of 'private' and the concept of 'rule'.

So what do we really mean by a language referring to, as Anscombe puts it, a private object? Well, by definition a private object is obviously something which another person can't have; so should my body then, or even my *walking*, be considered as private objects? It could be argued that these are merely verbal points, but why is it that the idea of a private language, or speaking to oneself actually seems so plausible for a lot of people?

At first sight 'speaking to oneself' could be looked upon as being possible, and it is a general assumption that we all have our *'alter ego'*: hence a person can give her/himself orders, warnings or ask an 'internally' posed question and then answer it. But surely all this is only possible if we, so to speak, look upon the individual as consisting of two very distinct units, one that is the 'knowing' one and the other as the 'not-knowing' always questioning one. Wittgenstein makes the comparison with the absurd question whether one can, in the proper sense *gain* something, if one's right

hand gives the left hand money? Obviously most people would give a negative answer to this question, and we have to ask whether it is really possible to convey something that could be defined as *knowledge* from the example of the 'knowing' and 'not-knowing' units? Can inward speech be defined as *communication* and, if not, can it then be defined as a language?

Wittgenstein is by no means the first person to ask these questions. The phenomenologist Edmund Husserl rejects the idea of inward communication on a somewhat different basis than Wittgenstein though the outcome is the same. In *Speech and Phenomena*, (Derrida, 1973), Husserl's rejection is portrayed as being based on the notion of the importance of 'self presence'. The whole idea of internally speaking to oneself is really just a 'waste of time' and evades the goal of self presence since, one has to so to speak, rephrase one's own thoughts into language and then back to thoughts again.

However Husserl's standpoint is often misunderstood and many theorists, such as for example Madan Sarup (1993) and Suzanne Cunningham (in Hutcheson, 1981), would argue that Husserl is committed to a private language. In turn, Wittgenstein's arguments have been used to prove Husserl's position to be unintelligible. According to Peter Hutcheson (1981), this misinterpretation is caused by the difficulties in understanding Husserl's so called 'phenomenological reduction'. This concept according to Hutcheson could be defined as a "reduction of real transcendent objects to immanent objects" (Hutcheson, 1981, p.111). But to interpret 'immanent' as equating to 'private' as Cunningham does is attributing to Hutcheson a fatal mistake. Also, according to this essay, it is important to remember that, by this argument, 'language' does not refer to objects, but *terms* in language do. Therefore language *per se* can not be private in Husserl's view regardless of whether specific terms within language refer to private or public 'objects'. I will return to Husserl later, in the context of Derrida's work.

It is clear that a concept such as 'private' evokes a multiplicity of associations and interpretations. In terms of formulating this text I am obviously dealing with 'silent' even 'internal' language. However, it could not be defined as 'private' language, nor necessarily subjective, rather this specific 'thinking' that I am concerned with, must be seen as to be objective and rule governed. Thus, I would probably not participate in this activity if there weren't other people who just like me, blindly follow the same rules. Does this mean then that if, hypothetically, a catastrophe killed everybody in my surroundings my knowledge of language would vanish?

I think Wittgenstein's answer to this question would be that theoretically, it would. This question and also whether a person existing in isolation could make up a language or not, has caused a lot of polemics among Wittgenstein's interpreters. Wittgenstein tried to solve the latter question through the following example in *Philosophical Investigations*: Imagine that someone tries to keep a diary on a specific sensation, and to do this, s/he writes down the sign 'S' every time the sensation is felt. Is it possible though to talk about rules in this case? Wittgenstein asks:

> Are the rules of a private language *impressions* of rules? (Wittgenstein, 1953, §259)

Inevitably, we seem to return again to the argument that one cannot know whether one is having that specific sensation, or merely think so. As well as that, in regard to the person trying to make up a private language, does s/he really have any reason to call 'S' the sign for a *sensation*? Obviously this refers to the fact that the word 'sensation' is part of our common language, and that a person in isolation would come up with the same sign is highly implausible.

Some scholars have associated this problem to the well known story about Robinson Crusoe living isolated on an island. Kripke puts it like this:

> The falsity of the private model need not mean that a *physically isolated* individual cannot be said to follow rules; rather that an individual, *considered in isolation* (whether or not he is physically isolated), cannot be said to do so. (Kripke, 1982 p.110)

Seen from this perspective it is clear that it is the community that decides whether the person is, first of all in 'isolation' or not and secondly, depending on their 'decision' whether s/he is conditioned, i.e., can be said to follow rules or not. A similar view is expressed by Christopher Peacocke (1981), who claims that if someone like Crusoe was taken into our community and reacted (verbally or through action is not clear) like everybody else s/he could be defined as a 'rule-follower'. But surely Crusoe could make up his own completely different rules even if they are not isomorphic to ours? What both Kripke and Peacocke seem to suggest then is that for something to be defined as a 'rule', it must necessarily be part of *our* rules! As Baker and Hacker ask: why is it that we can not grasp through Crusoe's specific practises and activities, *his* rules?

I think this is a very good point which questions the justification of taking someone 'into our community' for us to define as 'X' or 'not X', as conditioned or not conditioned. The argument also takes for granted that everybody in 'our community' are

actually following the same rules, which must be questioned. It is evident that all through history there have been people who have refused to follow some of the existing verbal and visual rules and have even convinced others that her/his rules are 'better'. A very good contemporary example of this is the discourse of certain feminist groups who have argued for changes in the rules since 'our community' obviously is an abbreviation of 'our *patriarchal* community'. Can one not say then, that certain people have actually made up, at least partly, 'private languages' that sometimes in turn have changed 'our community' and not the other way around as Kripke and Peacocke argue? There is definitely a sense of major emphasis put onto the notion that 'community' always equals 'homogeneity' which, within contemporary and above all within feminist debates, is being questioned more and more.

When 'rules' do change within a particular culture, Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), calls the phenomenon a 'change of paradigm'. By necessity this must involve changes in the meanings of certain descriptive terms with the effect that the entire world-view and ontology of the community will change. Later, Kuhn made the distinction between two different sorts of paradigm: The first denotes changes of "the entire constellations of beliefs" (Kuhn, 1970, in Harrison & Orton (eds.), 1984, p.229), and the second merely; "one sort of element in that constellation" (Kuhn, 1970, in Harrison & Orton (eds.), 1984, p.229).

The discussion of Robinson Crusoe and the change of emphasis from the individual to the group is, in Wittgenstein's work, presented in the form of a hypothesis. However, as I have tried to show through analysing the writings of Peacocke, Kripke as well as Baker and Hacker the argument becomes interesting from a different perspective: how do we react when taking someone who is not following the same rules, into our community? Wittgenstein and his followers in the Analytical School based most of their philosophical arguments on hypothetical situations with a hypothetical individual. However much earlier, through Marxist theory in particular, another philosophical discourse was being formed on the foundation of 'social context'. Even if Marxism as a political doctrine has more or less failed by its own criteria the notion of 'social context' is very much alive within contemporary critical theory. It can be argued that this is particularly evident within feminist discourses with its strong advocacy of the importance of taking social reality into consideration. From a feminist perspective it is also obvious that the rule Wittgenstein is following throughout his work, when continuously referring to the individual as *male*, is questioned.

Can we generalize and say then, that the move within critical theory towards a 'social context', from individual to community and from homogeneity to hetrogeneity, all represent what Kuhn is talking about: a change of paradigm? It *could* be argued that we have gone through a change of paradigm, namely from modernity to the 'used and abused' concept of postmodernity. Thus, the examples of changes that I have mentioned above are all so called 'binary oppositions' (this concept will be discussed more extensively later), which is very much part of traditional language use. So perhaps at least Kuhn's *second* kind of paradigm can be applied to this change. The example of Wittgenstein's use of 'he' as referring to the individual, then, doesn't necessarily mean that Wittgenstein 'personally' was sexist, but that *the rules of the community* in which he lived were sexist.

From this constellation that is usually referred to as postmodernity, I will single out parts of the work of Jacques Derrida for a comparasion with Wittgenstein. Henry Staten (1985), has argued that the value of Wittgenstein's work today ought, like Derrida's, to be looked upon as a 'method' or style of writing rather than as a philosophical doctrine.

Derrida as well as Wittgenstein is very much concerned with deconstructing the whole concept of philosophy and one of his early works was concerned with deconstructing Husserl's phenomenological notion of the essential 'self-presence'. According to Derrida (1973), Husserl rejects private inner language and placed a lot of emphasis on the importance of *hearing* yourself speak, i.e. the importance of the *voice*. Throughout the history of western philosophy it has generally been assumed that the voice is more linked to 'presence' and is therefore superior to writing. I believe that this (compare with the previous discussion on Husserl) is the proper place to use Wittgenstein's work as a critique of Husserl. We can now apply Wittgenstein's question quoted in Chapter Two: as opposed to what, does Husserl perceive the 'present' as representing 'reality' or as having more 'importance'? Seemingly Husserl looks at the concept of time as equating with the 'film strip' notion discussed previously, and he would answer that the present obviously is compared with the past and the future. Knowing that Wittgenstein considered the notion of time very differently, *this* is the argument which divides the two doctrines, thus *not* the private language argument.

Derrida deconstructs Husserl's phenomenology by questioning what he calls 'phonocentrism' which alludes to Husserl's preference of speech over writing. This notion is rejected since Derrida regards signifiers, whether in speech or writing as merely being capable of referring to *other* signifiers, instead of referring to a particular

signified, in other words, signs as being metonymies rather than metaphors. Thus, as well as deconstructing phonocentrism, Derrida deconstructs 'logocentrism', the belief that everything 'begins' and 'ends' with the Word - the Logos. Following Derrida there can be no ideal self presence, hence striving for self presence as Husserl does is in vain, since Derrida suggests that such a thing just doesn't exist. Through deconstructing the notion of the voice as superior to writing, Derrida is also deconstructing the notion of the individual. This follows from the notion that the voice is more linked to the individual, whereas writing is more separated and the author doesn't have to be in the reader's immediate surroundings. So in Derrida's work there is an emphasis placed on the shift not from the individual to the group or from subject to object, but on breaking down the oppositions between these concepts.

As already mentioned an interesting aspect of Derrida's work is his rejection of 'binary oppositions' (Sarup, 1993). According to Garry Hagberg (1995), Wittgenstein rejects 'dualism' which is evidently a very similar stand point to Derrida's. At first sight a breakdown of dualism or binary oppositions can be seen in the context of language as very chaotic. I am by no means refuting the fact that such a breakdown would bring utter confusion, since the traditional structure of our language is built up exactly by continuously opposing two different concepts. This is obviously crucial for our present investigation with key concepts such as inner - outer, subject - object and female - male. So, if the binary oppositions are broken down between these concepts, what can we do but wander in the dark without any foundations 'as we know them'. As we know them in language that is. Thus, if we try to consider for example the opposition of subject - object, *outside* a language game, the concepts as well as their opposition become undistinguished, overlapping and floating. If the rules of most of our language games weren't based on dualism and binary oppositions, would philosophy address completely different problems, and would we look at the world around us differently? Wittgenstein rejects the notion of the inner if considered as an opposition to the outer. But since he doesn't agree with dualism in the first place, could this suggest then, that he doesn't necessarily reject the notion of *what we call* the inner completely, but merely that it is called the *'inner'*?

However, Wittgenstein is not concerned with exploring the possibilities of paradigm-or-rule changes within a community, neither is he interested with any sociolinguistic discourses. Rather his work is always dealing with the individual caught in a seemingly never changing, static paradigm. He is refuting private language and solipsism yet it is easy to associate his style of writing to a private monologue, or even

to an "inner dialogue". Also, his interest lies in reducing and dismissing philosophical prejudices about the fundaments of language, and not in the relationship between language and society. Therefore it might not have been within the usual context of this work , however not necessarily impossible, to introduce somewhat political notions when referring to Wittgenstein's work.

CONCLUSION

Wittgenstein, as opposed to Husserl, did not set out to answer any of the metaphysical questions such as the body-mind problem or the 'mysteries' of the human soul. Instead he chose first and foremost to demystify these metaphysical notions, and then to place them within the however irrational and, if you want, 'superficial' realm of language. This has caused Wittgenstein to be accused of robbing philosophy both of its greatness and purpose.

The difficulty with both Derrida's deconstruction and Wittgenstein's work if merely considered as methods, is that inevitably; "il n'y a pas d'hors text /.../ (meaning that) everything is language" (Derrida in Brunette (ed.), 1994, p.35). 'Language', here, evidently refers to verbal language and it is also clear that when Wittgenstein speaks of language, he means it exclusively as a verbal phenomenon.

But what about *visual* language? Writing this from a postmodern context, the argument that justifies art as 'being a language' has already been successfully made by art theorists such as Frascina, Harrison and Mitchell, but still, to consider visual and verbal language in exactly the same way is problematic.

Even in postmodernism, the notion that the artist her/himself is the only one who has privileged access to the 'meaning' of an art object is flourishing, as well as the notion that art is a visual translation of inner experiences. But, if allowing that both Wittgenstein and Derrida criticized binary oppositions, it has consequences also for the generally assumed opposition between visual and verbal concepts. So should we, from now, always look upon the visual within the exact same considerations as the verbal? In that case we have a long way to go since dualism and binary oppositions still, and perhaps always will, build the foundations and rules of most of our language games.

I will leave these questions open and if we 'mortals' find them problematic, it might be a consolation (or an anxiety) to consider that so do the people we have categorized as 'thinkers'. Wittgenstein says appropriately:

> in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound. (Wittgenstein in Hagberg (ed.), 1995, p.135)

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