

[coulw6.001. Tr:BJF. 31 August 90: 2nd edited version] Transcription conventions can be found on the last 2-3 pages of each transcript.

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WITTGENSTEIN AND ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Meeting 6: Thursday 19 February 87

TOPICS: RULES;

And also: 'forms of life'; the conceptual and the empirical; criteria; and others.

READING: (1) Baker, G. P., and Hacker, P. M. S. (1984). LANGUAGE, SENSE AND NONSENSE. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell. Chapter 7.: "Rules: Preliminary Clarifications", Chapter 8.: "The Mythology of Rules". (2) Garfinkel, H. (1967). STUDIES IN ETHNOMETHODOLOGY. Englewood-Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. The portions in Chapter 1. on 'coding', 'following coding instructions'. (3) Also suggested: portions in Baker and Hacker's RULES, GRAMMAR AND NECESSITY on rules. (4) PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, paragraphs on rules, e.g., 185-243.

Jeff Coulter: Ok, Rules. So complicated that it is difficult to select a point of entry to talk about it properly. So we'll just jump in.

One way to begin is to note the transformation in Wittgenstein's own thinking about 'rules of language'. By-and-large what we are speaking about here are rules of language in the sense of rules of communication, rules of conceptualization, rules of

reasoning, rules of praxis, in some sense.

In the latter day history of formal logic of language, particularly the work of Frege, which influenced Wittgenstein's own formulations in the TRACTATUS, the idea was that the meaning of a word is specifiable in terms of a rule of interpretation. So, the idea was that whenever you hear the word, in order to know what it means, you have to follow a strict rule of interpretation. And the rules must be such to assign what Frege called a "determinate sense" to the occurrence of the word. And the argument went: If there weren't such strict rules of interpretation, then there could be no common understanding. If - to switch now from Frege to Carnap - according to Carnap if there were no fixed meaning postulates for what he called the NON-LOGICAL vocabulary, as well as the logical vocabulary of the connectives: 'if', 'then', 'or', 'however', etc, if there were no strict meaning postulates governing the non-logical vocabulary, then mutual comprehension would be unintelligible. Miraculous.

Logical rules of reasoning are the rules that guarantee correct thinking about things. Correct, valid thinking, or reasoning is made possible by virtue of there being strict rules governing these things. And, of course, among these strict rules are the fixed, strict rules of interpretation of the components of reasoning and thinking - the symbols used.

There is in Wittgenstein's sense, according to these thinkers, though he doesn't mention Carnap, but according to Frege, and according to his own views in the TRACTATUS, there is a sense in which language has an anatomy, like a skeleton, of fixed, hard, determinate rules, that make it all possible. And, when these strict rules are not being followed, that is our 'imperfection' as speaker/hearers. But there is a skeleton behind it. There is an essential backbone to language and its use, and to reason.

Moreover, those rules can be formulated in a symbolic notation that can have the consistency of a calculus, where one can begin axiomatically, and one can engage in strict deductive processes.

In the later Wittgenstein, as we have seen, the notion of language as a rule-governed phenomenon has begun to change. In developing the notions of language-use and language-games, Wittgenstein appears to be saying something like:

There are still rules at work, but the rules that govern language are only to be discerned in the context of the playing of language-games, i.e., in the context of linguistic practices. And there are no a priori requirements that the rules that govern linguistic practices have to ALL be of the same kind, i.e., analogous to the rules of a calculus. One of the things he says is that the rules governing language-use are much more varied than had hitherto been recognized in the history of formal, logical analyses of language, and of reasoning. And very often in the formalist tradition, the attempt had been made to decontextualize concepts like 'exactness', and 'precision', and 'determinacy', as abstract criteria, rather than to look at the particular kinds of practices, and the language-use that is interwoven with them, in order to see HOW concepts like 'exactness', 'strictness', and 'determinacy' are themselves purpose-relative and context-dependent.

But, Wittgenstein is still quite clear in the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS [Tr: abbreviated PI] that language, and in particular now language-use, linguistic practices, are rule-governed. On that point there is continuity.

In the former conception, where the rules of language had been likened unto a calculus, in the TRACTATUS, Wittgenstein had appeared to assume that speakers and hearers are in some sense already equipped with these rules. And it is against this kind of conception that he develops his remarks around paragraph 80. [Tr: in the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS] or so.

81. F.P.Ramsey once emphasized in conversation with me that logic was a 'normative science'. I do not know exactly what he had in mind, but it was doubtless closely related to what only dawned on me later: namely, that in philosophy we often COMPARE the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language MUST be playing such a game. - But 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 are talking about were an IDEAL language. As if our logic were, so to speak, a logic for a

vacuum. - Whereas logic does not treat of language - or of thought - in the sense in which a natural science treats of a natural phenomenon, and the most that can be said is that we CONSTRUCT ideal languages. But here the word "ideal" is liable to mislead, for it sounds as if these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday language; and as if it took the logician to shew people at last what a proper sentence looked like.

All this, however, can only appear in the right light when one has attained greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning, and thinking. For it will then also become clear what can lead us (and did lead me) to think that if anyone utters a sentence and MEANS or UNDERSTANDS it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules. [Tr: PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, paragraph 81; parentheses in the original]

The subsequent passages, then, go on to undermine, in various ways, the calculus model of rules of language by alerting us to various crucial differences with respect to how rules actually appear to operate in the use of language in everyday practices, and how they were supposed to operate according to pre-conceptions of the traditions of the formal logic of language. 84. [Tr: in the PI] would just be one such instance.

84. I said that the application of a word is not everywhere bounded by rules. But what does a game look like that is everywhere bounded by rules? whose rules never let a doubt creep in, but stop up all the cracks where it might? - Can't we imagine a rule determining the application of a rule, and a doubt which IT removes - and so on?

But that is not to say that we are in doubt because it is possible for us to IMAGINE a doubt. I can easily imagine someone always doubting before he opened his front door whether an abyss did not yawn behind it, and making

sure about it before he went through the door (and he might on some occasion prove to be right) - but that does not make me doubt in the same case. [Tr: PI, paragraph 84.; parentheses in the original]

And he goes on to make his famous comparison between rules and sign-posts:

85. ... Does the sign-post leave no doubt open about the way I have to go? [Tr: PI, paragraph 85.]

In other words, are there rules for interpreting rules, for interpreting rules, for interpreting..., etc.

Does it shew which direction I am to take when I have passed it; whether along the road or the footpath or cross-country? But where is it said which way I am to follow it; whether in the direction of its finger [JC: the sign post] or (e.g.) in the opposite one? [JC: or perhaps to follow it from its finger to its point of origin] - And if there were, not a single sign-post, but a chain of adjacent ones or of chalk marks on the ground - is there only ONE way of interpreting them? - So I can say, the sign-post does after all leave no room for doubt. Or rather it sometimes leaves room for doubt and sometimes not. And now this is no longer a philosophical proposition, but an empirical one. [Tr: PI, paragraph 85.; parentheses in the original]

Moving to the end of paragraph 87.

87. ... The sign-post is in order - if, under normal circumstances, it fulfils its purpose.

88. If I tell someone "Stand roughly here" - may not this explanation work perfectly? And cannot every other one fail too? [Tr: PI, paragraphs 87. and 88.]

So, what we are beginning to move to is a topic that now is getting to center stage, and for which the definitive view is presented in paragraph 201., which is as follows - after all of the work, that you can go through on your own - we get to the point that he wants to leave us with on this question:

201. 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. [JC: i.e., the same 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.

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 one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another [JC: interpretation] standing behind it. What this shews...

Wittgenstein then says what it shows. What it doesn't show, though, is that you have to continue to think about rule-following, rule-governance, as a matter of a process of potentially endless interpretations. Why? What this shows is NOT THAT, but rather:

[Tr: 201. cont.] that there is a way of grasping a rule which is NOT an INTERPRETATION, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases.

Hence there is an inclination to say: every action according to the rule is an interpretation. But we ought to restrict the term "interpretation" to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another. [Tr: PI, paragraph 201.]

Ok, what's he doing? The problematic that he's raising here is that - and I'll put it up on the board as a sort of theorem:

NO RULE [FORMULATION OF A RULE] CAN BY

ITSELF ENCOMPASS THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND MODALITIES OF ITS PROPER APPLICATION.

[Tr: The brackets around 'formulation of a rule' were part of the original.]

No matter how explicit, no matter how elaborate - now to use Harold Garfinkel's language, instead of Wittgenstein's for the moment - no matter how extensive, explicit, or elaborate any formulation of a rule gets to be, it still cannot encompass its own application. It still has got to be applied. It still has got to be put to use. There is no such thing, in that sense, as a rule which, so to speak, automatically determines its own application. Rules don't apply themselves; they are applied. They are put to work. They are used. They are appealed to by reasoners, by practitioners.

Just as the sign-post doesn't tell you exactly how to apply it, you have to bring to the sign-post some sense of what it's about, what its relevance could be, of how to deal with it in any given circumstance, that is also the case for ANY formulation of a rule, including - as Wittgenstein later goes on to argue - strict, algorithmic rules in any part of mathematics. But we'll leave that alone for the moment. We'll probably leave it alone almost altogether. But, for now, we'll be concerned with the kinds of rules that interest us more as sociologists, or analysts.

There are lots and lots of ways in which he tries to make this point, and I believe - for those of you who were at this seminar last time, when we had to move to another room - I suggested that you have a look at Harold Garfinkel. It's almost the same sort of point that Garfinkel was making when he talks about the coders, the work of coding, and following coding instructions. [Tr: see: Garfinkel, H. (1967). STUDIES IN ETHNOMETHODOLOGY. Englewood-Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall] Take any kind of rule you like. It's not just the argument that one could always think of an exceptional circumstance, though it would encompass that argument as well.

So, for example, you have a rule that says "no parking". Well, where are you not to park? Sometimes you have a little arrow, and then you have another sign that says "no parking", [Tr: JC draws/writes on board]

NO PARKING ---->

<---- NO PARKING

Does that mean that you are not to park on the arrow? You are not to park between the arrows? You are not to park above the arrows? Below the arrows?

So, one can start to build into the formulation of a rule: Would it mean that you were not allowed to park if your life depended on it? - if it's a matter of an ambulance, or a fire-engine, or a police vehicle, etc.? And you can, of course, start trying to list the extenuating circumstances, and build them into the rule. But what Wittgenstein is saying is not just that you can never have a finitely completable list of practical circumstances, whose finitude was somehow transcendently guaranteed for any conceivable circumstance, though, of course, you might have a finite one that is practically usable, for certain purposes. It's always possible to find some exceptional circumstance. He's not JUST saying that. What he is saying is that actually how you apply or use the rule is not itself stipulated or specifiable in the rule formulation itself. It never could be. You have to ultimately leave the formulations, leave the rule formulations, and ACT. And as he says somewhere: ultimately we follow rules blindly. By which he means, interpretation comes to an end, and we ACT.

Ed Parsons: It's the end of 219.

Jeff Coulter: The end of 219., lovely, yeah!

[Tr: 219.] ... No; my description only makes sense if it was to be understood symbolically. - I should have said: THIS IS HOW IT STRIKES ME.

When I obey a rule, I do not choose.

I obey the rule BLINDLY. [Tr: PI, paragraph 219.]

Ok, so, we have then this sort of tension. On the one hand, Wittgenstein is saying that no rule in and of itself, so to speak, lays down how it is to be applied. It doesn't lay down its proper constituency, its circumstantiality of use, its modality of application, in some completable way, except for particular purposes. As he says in ZETTEL, you can always add an extra rule to the traffic regulations, if there has been some problem. But, then when you add rules, or tighten up rules, it doesn't mean you are approximating to some over-all ideal, where every possible doubt, every possible misconception, has been plugged by a rule. [Tr: see: Wittgenstein, L. (1967). ZETTEL. [JC - paragraph 440] Edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press] Which is really what the conception of the formalists amounted to with respect to languages and meaning. The argument was, if there weren't strict rules that really governed every possibility of meaning, then there was simply no way in which we could account for how it was we could understand each other. If we didn't share strict definitions, strict rules, then doubt would always be around, and one could never really be sure that one was really understanding the other person's uses, the other person's words, the meanings of their words. And yet, we, in a sense, follow rules blindly.

Well, the argument here is - it basically revolves around what Wittgenstein says at the end of 201. [Tr: of the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS], which is: "What this shews is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is NOT an INTERPRETATION...". So, it's NOT that you somehow have to in your head riffle through, consciously or unconsciously, an interpretation that is now, sort of, itself self-evidently meaningful. Because that is an impossibility, on the grounds that even that interpretation can now be susceptible to a further interpretation, in principle. You can always find, in other words, some WAY of taking that interpretation, no matter what the rule is, no matter how extensive or explicit it is, if you think about it, you can always assign some variably different senses to ANY natural language expression, including formulations of rules governing natural language, on the grounds of this theorem. So, what Wittgenstein seems to be saying is that it's not as if we've hit a kind of bed-rock at the level of having in our possession a self-evidently meaningful interpretation that is now, in some sense, transcendentally completed,

that just by itself, now, determines how we can follow it, determines what we will do, but rather that there are practices that we call "following the rule", "obeying the rule", and practices that are called "going against the rule". And those practices of 'following rules', of 'obeying rules', are, in a sense, NOT themselves - it's a very tricky one to put; we've got to be careful to get the fidelity of it - The practices of obeying the rules are not themselves in one sense the automatic output of the definitive interpretation of the rule, but rather are our common ways of doing things.

Our practices of obeying rules ARE standardizable, are witnessably regular. We can speak about a 'normal' case, NOT because it's the rule itself, or any sort of rule, or some ultimate interpretation of a rule, that now kind of is the thing that 'pushes' us, or that 'moves' us, or is exactly what explains our conduct, but rather we follow the rule blindly. There are practices of obeying rules, and the way in which we, for example, take a rule, like the way in which we use a sign-post, are not standardized purely in virtue of the rules, or the sign-posts, nor are they standardized purely in virtue of the fact that we arrive at some ultimate self-evident, consensually agreed upon 'interpretation', but rather we have standard ways of reacting to, of judging these matters. And these reactions and judgments, these practices of following rules in standardized ways, in a sense, are both in-side and out-side of the web of the rules themselves. I.E., that when I see the sign-post that says "take this route to go to so-and-so", and I start to move along the road, and I eventually get to "so-and-so", I am, of course, following the rule. No doubt about that. But it's not as if my conduct in respect of its rule-following character is an output that is the result of the rule in and of itself, nor is it the result of some ultimate terminus to a potentially elaboratable sequence of interpretations of the rule. It's rather something that we just do. And it's in this sense that Wittgenstein elsewhere speaks about language-games or practices, particularly the practices of rule-following, as resting upon our forms [Tr: of life]. ...

[Tr: tape change]

Jeff Coulter(cont): ... his thinking in respect of rule-following. Paragraph 198. [Tr: in the PI]:

198. "But how can a rule shew me what I have to do at THIS point? Whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule." - That is not what we ought to say, but rather 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.

"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.

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 a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom. [Tr: PI, paragraph 198.]

By "custom" here, Wittgenstein doesn't mean customs in the rather superficial sense of sociological mores, but rather in the deeper sense of regular patterns, standardized patterns.

Ok, now, IF there is, in a sense, then, always a gap between any formulation of a rule and the practice that consists in following the rule, it looks as if logic is abolished. As he says in paragraph 242.:

242. If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions...

And I would venture to put in there as well RULES, because the rules ARE definitional in the Tractarian sense.

..But also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic but does not do so. - It is one thing to describe methods of measurement...

And I would add there that since Wittgenstein elsewhere compares grammar, the logical grammar, to methods of measurement - one could perhaps make the analogy assisted here by reading "methods of measurement", and "grammar" - "and another thing to obtain and state results of measurement".
[Wittgenstein's words - JC]

But what we call "measuring"...

I would now insert 'what we call following a rule of grammar', or 'following any rule'...

..is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.
[Tr: PI, paragraph 242.]

...Is partly determined by a certain constancy in the ways in which we react to and judge rules. And our reactions to and judgments about rules are not themselves circumscribable in their totality by further rules. Although what Wittgenstein is saying is that rules do indeed govern language-use, reasoning, communication praxis, they depend upon NOT there being some ultimately self-evident interpretation of the rule prior to action, but rather that there simply are forms of life that exhibit commonalities of training, judgment, perception, discrimination, and the rest of it, that provide for whatever standardization that there is, and there is no ultimate guarantee about that standardization, and how far our forms of life are, in fact, common.

And at this point Wittgenstein's discussion of the student in a Math class becomes crucial. The example is often known as the 'continuing the series example' - where a student is asked to follow this strict rule: "Add '2'", in the context of being given a sequence of integers, and a bunch of dots. [Tr: JC writes on board]

2, 4, 6, 8, ...

And the student is sitting there adding '2', but then he gets to '1000', and then writes this: [Tr: JC writes on board]

1000, 1004, 1008, 1016, ...

And he is stopped short by the mathematics teacher, who says: "No, no, no, no. I have told you to add '2', which really requires that when you get to '1000', you put '1002', and then '1004', and '1006', and then '1008'". To which the student

turns around and responds: "But there is nothing in the formulation of the rule that specifies to which point it is to be applied in the way that it has previously been applied. In other words, it's perfectly consistent for me to think that the rule meant "Add '2'", until you get to '1000', and then you start adding twice '2', and then you get to '2000', then start adding three times '2'. You haven't told me that that is ruled OUT. Because you really didn't tell me what, in fact, is ruled IN, at a certain point."

Well, now, of course, in a sense, that's perverse. And the mathematics instructor is going to jump on his head, and say: "You're a jerk.", and kick him in the shins, and get him to do it properly. But, it's not because the mathematics instructor can now fall back on a definitive interpretation of a rule that is now going to guarantee that any further actuality of continuation of the series is ruled OUT. All you can do, in this circumstance, is say: "That's not how we take the rule." "That's not how we follow it." "That's not what we call following the 'add 2' rule." But, of course, the 'add 2' rule was just that: 'add 2 to the integers', as you develop them. It didn't say anything about there being some point at which one could then start adding '2' and '2', though that's OBVIOUS, isn't it, that that is not what 'add 2' means, but it wasn't said. That was not what the instructor said.

Ok, so, now let's make it explicit and say: "Add '2', no matter to what point in developing the series you get. Just keep on adding '2'."

And then one can start to be perverse again, and find a way of behaving that is consistent with, though not in fact what we would call 'following the add '2' rule'. Suppose that one started to 'add 2', and consider that what one was really doing was 'adding 1', because every time that one added '2', one was adding two drops of water together. Take the '2' to mean that he was really adding '2' drops of water, and, of course, we all know that when you add '2' drops of water together they make '1', so what he really means is "I add 1". There's all kinds of ways of doing that if you are just inventive enough, or deviant enough, or perverse enough, and, in fact, literally speaking that's not been ruled out, any more than it's taken-for-granted that - here's another example, this time from the REMARKS ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF MATHEMATICS - that '3' plus '4' is '7'. [Tr: 3 + 4 = 7] And yet, of course, that presupposes that

it's not then diagrammatically representable with an over-lapping fusion of the particular points being designated by the natural numbers. So, you have something like: [Tr: JC draws on board. The diagram below is meant to be a Venn diagram, where two circles overlap.]

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      XXXXX  #####
      X      X #      #
      X      X      #
      X  *   # X  *   #
      X      # X  *   #
      X  *   # * X  *   #
      X      # X      #
      X      # X      #
      X      X      #
      X      X      #
      XXXX  #####
'circle a.'  'circle b.'

```

So, in Circle A. we have three points [Tr: indicated in the diagram above by *'s]; then in Circle B. there are four points. Add Circle A. to Circle B., which is adding '3' in A. to '4' in B., and lo and behold we have '6'. I might have got the details of the example wrong. The example is given in Wittgenstein's REMARKS ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF MATHEMATICS.

So, one can do it in all sorts of perverse ways. One can vary even a strict sort of a rule of calculation, if one wants to, by coming up with an interpretation, that is in some sense, and we will accept that it is, it is in some sense consistent with the formulation of the rule. In other words, it wasn't ruled out by it. And it can be seen to be an interpretation. But clearly not one that we would accept, because we have standard practices of implementing, following, obeying, being governed by, rules. But not because we have all arrived at some common, ultimately, self-evident interpretation of the rule. Because there need be no interpretation present, other than simply our saying: "Well, yeah, I get to '1000', and I go '1002', and '1004'; I'm just adding '2'. I'm just following the 'add 2' rule. I don't have to interpret it." And in fact, if we are asked to interpret it, we might find it difficult to interpret it. It is self-evident. And, in fact, the rules DO come off as self-evident, but, of course, they are, in one sense, only self-evident

insofar as our practices show their self-evidence for us. It's not to rule out the possibility that what is self-evident is self-evident in virtue OF these very routinized, standardized practices, and responses and judgments that we make, which are not themselves capturable in terms of some formulatable rules. So, that 'following the rules' always presupposes some kind of normalcy conditions, not just normalcy in terms of an environment, though it does include that, - you know, methods of measurement can only generate agreeable measurements in virtue of there being some constancy in the things we use to measure things with. And so, as Wittgenstein also talks about it in REMARKS ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF MATHEMATICS, the idea of measuring things with rubber rulers, or the idea of assuming that IF we have different measurements, it's not because objects changed their spatio-temporal parameters without our knowing, and then our memory plays tricks on us - but rather that, it's either we make a mistake in our computations, or there is a problem in the instrumentation that we are using, when we align it to the objects.

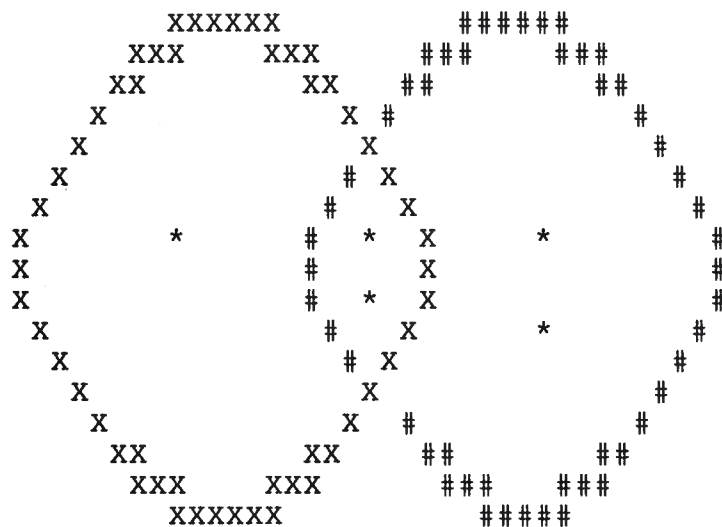
And, one of the things that Wittgenstein does around this nest of problems is to start VARYING the taken-for-granted normalcy conditions, as well as varying, quite perversely, and purposely, the possible interpretations, in order to get us to see these points. But in a sense, though indeed language, communication, and praxis are rule-governed, their rule-governedness, now, is itself contingent upon there being forms of human life that are not themselves prescribable by rule in the sense that it is because there are these pre-scriptive or pro-scriptive rules that our forms of life are the way that they are, but quite the other way around. It's because there are these forms of life that the rules have commonality of their obedience, and the commonality of our use of them that they do. And that is not guaranteed by the rules.

And, of course, there are occasions where fundamental, axiomatic rules can be deliberately varied, and then NEW rule systems can be developed, which are made quite explicit, as in the case of the departure from the Euclidean geometrical axioms by people like Lobachevsky and Reimann and the establishment of geometry's spherical surfaces, in which, even a concept that Waismann holds up as a model for a "closed" textual concept - i.e., "triangle", the triangle is any three sided figure whose angles sum to 180 degrees - in spherical

geometry, that's not the case. The angles can sum quite differently, because of the spherical surface, and many of the basic points, and line axioms of Euclid's geometry, which are strict, axiomatic rules, are systematically varied. But then, you have, now, to implement and follow, and use these NEW rules in the proper way, which still means that there has to be a set a stable practices that support and nourish those ways of 'obeying' them and 'following' them, and so on.

Ok, let me just stop for a moment there and see if there are any points you want to raise.

[Tr: Jeff Coulter reconsiders the example from the REMARKS ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF MATHEMATICS...as follows:



circle a.

circle b.

[Tr: Where $3 + 4 = 7$. But in the diagram, $3 + 4 = 5$.] It doesn't matter. You all get the idea.

Caesar Mavratsas.: So what would be the difference if we could talk about standard interpretations of the rule? {JC: and?} You said that we do have standard interpretations of the rules.

Jeff Coulter: Start if off.

George Psathas: Is it to say that interpretations precede practices? To say that practice is practice. It doesn't require interpretation in order to practice.

Jeff Coulter: Right. Exactly.

It's not to say that we might not for some rules, in certain circumstances, come up with similar interpretations, i.e., similar paraphrases, reformulations, and so forth. But there is still

this matter of how you can then move from a standard interpretation to its implementation, and what the relationship is between the two, since even a standard interpretation is itself always susceptible to interpretation. Like, it cannot apply itself; it has got to itself be applied.

One of things that has, of course, been completely blown out of the water by all of this discussion of Wittgenstein's is the idea that norms determine action, or rules determine behavior. It cannot be the case. It's not to deny that behavior is rule-governed. But now, what Wittgenstein is doing, is saying is: Well when you say THAT, be very careful or you will fall into the trap that I did in the TRACTATUS, which is when you think of behavior as rule-governed, you think of it as rule-governed in the sense that the conduct that instantiates its being governed by a rule sort of flows from a self-evidently, no-further-interpretable, formulation of the rule. And there is no such thing.

Caesar Mavratsas: But if you say that rules can be forms of life, then one could ask what do forms of life depend on?

Jeff Coulter: Yes, you could ask that. Except that what Wittgenstein tends to say is that when you hit forms of life, your spade gets turned. He says it's like bedrock. They are the no-further-justifiable grounds of practices. Forms of life are the grounds of our practices, which themselves cannot be further intellectualized, justified, etc. So that, for example, one classical example of a form of life that actually bears upon this matter, because of the use of the example of sign-posts, is the thing of ostensive definition, where you point something out to the child, compared to pointing to a ball of wool in the presence of a kitten. When you point to a ball of wool in the presence of a kitten, the kitten may well look from the finger up to, let's say, your shoulder blade. Whereas children, infants, characteristically look in the direction of the point. They take it as if it were an arrow. And it's not because they have learned a rule that says: Whenever you see your parents using an extended finger, look away from the finger, as if it were an arrow that were to hit a target. They haven't learned any such rule. It's just done. And the assumptions that we make that get built into our training as human agents, including, now, training in following rules, consists in such things.

Hunter treats many of them as biological or organic, in the broad sense. But there are also in Wittgenstein's view, commonalities of behavior across the species that are not simply matters that can be given a full explanation in terms of biology, but are simply parts of our common human nature. And, indeed, in a sense, what you get out of the line of a lot of what Wittgenstein is saying is a kind of a conception of the notion of human nature.

Jeff Stetson: Would this be criticized by people saying: Well you criticized Parsons for this when he talks about 'brute facts', you just have to accept it as such? Would 'in the nature of', 'it must be something within'?... This bothered me with the Pitkin paper as well, it seems consistently, within Pitkin, talking about 'it's just within the nature of'. But that can be liable to the critique that we may make of Parsons in many cases: 'the norm is just it, that's all there is'.

Jeff Coulter: Could you pin it down a bit more? Like where in Pitkin does it seem to be open to criticism?

Jeff Stetson: There are a number of cases that I have written down that refer to how the child initiates the notion of learning a language. And, for example, it gets fortified, or it uses the expression of the parent as being very favorable, and can be seen as interpreted in the Behaviorist position, where the child recognizes the reinforcing aspects of that.

Jeff Coulter: Well, this discourse about reactions and training, {JS: yeah} rings in our ears Behavioristically. And that's Ok, unless you are going now to make a full blown theory out of it, employing notions like 'conditioning', and 'reinforcement', and the rest of it. Because Wittgenstein is trying to assert, rightly or wrongly, that he is not engaged in constructing a theory, for example, of language acquisition. And that he would be the first to withdraw if any of his claims were not 'truistic'. So, it's not that he is wedded to a particular Behavioristic or non-Behavioristic THEORY of learning or acquiring the capacity to follow rules, but rather trying to indicate in sometimes generic, sometimes particular, ways, how it actually seems to be in a pre-theoretical sense.

George Psathas: Wouldn't you say it's not a search for origins, it's not a search for causal determinations? It's non-causal, this way of analyzing? The results of analysis are a non-causal kind of theorizing. It's not the search for origins, and it's not deterministic, in that sense. So, it goes counter to all of those theories in which we've been taught to look for either 'determination', 'cause', or (), either in the biology or in the interactional psychology, whatever, of the organism. But he doesn't have a notion of where it comes from. (That forms of life are!, right?)

Jeff Coulter: Right, right. But, I think it can be argued that it is not a Deus Ex Machina when he's getting into difficulties. I think the implication of the forms of life is always specific to a given causal argument, where the particular form of life that he wants to make reference to, he feels he has to make reference to it in virtue of the course of the argument to that point. I don't think that it would be fair to say, except perhaps for the generic appeal of the notion, that in any given detailed invocation of it, that it is a Deus Ex Machina - it's like it's invoked because we've now run out of analytic schemes. It's like we don't know now what further to say, so in comes forms of life, and it just sort of grounds it all, where rules can't ground it, and logic doesn't ground it, and nothing else grounds it... I think you will find that there are quite particularized references to the specific aspects of human nature that are species wide. They are always species wide, because grammar is species wide. It's not the grammar of English or French or German, BUT grammar of linguistic practice.

George Psathas: But would you say that it begs the question in regard to 'culture'?

Jeff Coulter: Go ahead.

George Psathas: It doesn't address the culture, but you could say that what it is doing is explicating practices which have been considered to be 'cultural practices', and so then the question is: What is their range of occurrence and applicability? That is, where does the notion of forms of life extend to? Or how far does it extend? Or, if you want, within which language? Or is it to say all language? And then is it non-cultural? Or not just in culture? The implication could be that it is somehow biological, or inherent, or human nature, as an alternative.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah. I think one of the reasons why Hunter - let me just give you the reference to this, by the way, because it is worth your having a look at: J. F. M. Hunter's paper: 'Forms of Life' in Wittgenstein's PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS' in Klemke's [Tr: Editor] ESSAYS ON WITTGENSTEIN [Tr: Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971], where Hunter works up his, what he calls "organismic" conception of forms of life.

It was developed as an argument against Peter Winch's (part), who tends to identify 'forms of life' as 'culture'. And quite a few people have done so. Baker and Hacker in their second volume on Wittgenstein called RULES, GRAMMAR AND NECESSITY [Tr: Basil Blackwell, 1985], have a whole discussion of 'forms of life', and of the culture/organismic dichotomy --- arguing in a very interesting way that for Wittgenstein the culture/nature dichotomy is to be abandoned. First of all the argument goes: every example of a form of life that is drawn upon or appealed to is species-wide, otherwise it is - in fact there is somewhere where he says, or it is said of him in conversation - I can't remember where this reference comes from, but there is a place where he says - if any of my observations are 'particular' to a certain time and place, in respect of my characterizations of how human beings are, to that effect: throw it in the garbage! That they have to be generic. And if ever they are not, then it's a failure. But it is fairly clear, I think, that at least in some places, he's not just talking about, like for example, the propensity to move your fingers rapidly away from a hot object, which is one of the things that grounds our pain language, because that kind of thing is a bit of our pre-linguistic pain behavior in the context of which we would start to learn to say things like: First of all, perhaps we start with 'moaning and groaning', and then we get slotted in the expressions like "that's painful", or whatever. But also customs, or practices, that are universal, which are not simply reflexological, or clearly a matter of the limits on memory, that are species wide, but basic practices, like, for example, 'showing sympathy for an injured man', which is something that he also argues grounds various aspects of our language-games involving the concept of 'pain'. Where the sympathetic reaction that we go to tend somebody who is suddenly hurt, is neither clearly biological nor clearly cultural, but an aspect of human nature, with biological basis and cultural distribution, of course. And

it's those sorts of examples that- Baker and Hacker work this this up in more detail than I can off the cuff at the moment. It's a good treatment.

George Psathas: Well I mean at least the point is, in terms of implications for sociology: It's not as though he is doing an analysis of THE culture, or of A culture.

Jeff Coulter: He hardly ever uses the word 'culture'.

George Psathas: And it's not as if he were doing an analysis of the biological organism, because it's not biological, right? So the question is: what is it?....

[Tr: tape change]

George Psathas: (cont.)... cross-cultural kinds of studies. Let's see if it (indeed seems to what?). That's been the way that it has conventionally been interpreted: You know, I hope this is the case for the species, but I can't really ground that claim until I have additional evidence from other times and places, to see whether time and place - i.e., culture - is - whether it's transcendent, and therefore culture is species-wide. But he is not interested in that. It's not to say that he is not interested, that's Ok, but it's also to say that he doesn't see that that is the direction, that that is a way of either finding his arguments as either false or true, it's not that. So, then, what are the grounds for finding his claims to be more than simply claims?

Jeff Coulter: In respect of some of these claimed aspects of forms of life, I think they are really truistic, so it's uninteresting to figure that- But some of them may have a contentious character.

George Psathas: Yeah. It's claimed a universality, right? {JC: right.} Which, to me, also fits with some of the phenomenological sorts of search as well, so that kind of universality of certainty...

Dusan Bjelic: Well, he said we have ONE form of life, and he said, if, for instance, animals would be able to speak, we wouldn't be able to understand them. That if lions were able to speak, we wouldn't understand the lions, because that will be a different form of life. So, in some sense,

when he said we have one form of life, he means ().

Jeff Coulter: Well, he also talks about the common behavior of mankind. The common behavior of mankind being the sort of standards that permit the intertranslatability of all human tongues, and providing for us our points of rational translatability. So, there is a sense in which, to do a sort of anthropological put-down, we are still with the criteria for the proper application of a whole bunch of concepts, and, it seems to me, that it wouldn't be the kind of point that would be susceptible to a simple empirical validation or dis-validation. For instance, supposing one went to the Ik, the mountain people that Colin Turnbull studied, who were supposed not to have a moral order, which, of course, is nonsense. They do indeed have a moral order, but there are certain very profound differences. For example, they figure that it is OK to let their old people go out and die among the wolves, and we don't. And there are various other things that we consider pretty gross; but they still have things like a moral order. Suppose, though that one were to ask about such things as the tendency to give sympathy to an injured person? And one encountered a society (in the period of time) that one could practically encounter a whole society, say it was a small tribe, and one found that when they encountered members among them who were injured, that they exhibited no propensity whatsoever to go and tend them. That in itself now poses a bunch of questions for us. For example, it does not by itself gainsay the idea that the concept of pain is generic to the species. What, in fact, you would have to do now is, maintaining that as an in-defeasible aspect of what it is to be human, you'd now go into the given detail and find out what is particular about that. If however, you found that they never flinched or winced or groaned and seemed to not have any pain at all, across a wide range of things, then it's not, I think, that now one would start to figure here's a very peculiar deviation from the human norm, but one might want to wonder whether they were in fact "human beings".

It might turn out that way; that might turn out to be a way of wondering whether here's a different form of life. So, there's a sense in which there is a whole bunch of concepts, and a conceptual apparatus, that connect with the notion of the 'human', that is NOT completely plastic. The concept of the 'human' and the 'human form of

life' is not completely open-ended. So, in your sense, it's absolutely right, there is a form of life. But Wittgenstein doesn't ever say, I don't think, in any of his writings that 'form of life' simply means all of human life. But I think the idea that the concept of the 'human' is grammatically tied to all of these other things is part of the picture. He's saying that these are our forms of representation.

Now, of course, if you did encounter a tribe, a group, a society, that, as he puts it somewhere, you couldn't (feel your feet with them), it would mean that you were incapable of translating their language. An incapacity, not practically, but in principle incapacity to translate a language, would lead you then perhaps to wonder whether it was a language. Like they can make noises in certain circumstances. There seems to be some regularity to the sounds they make. You can't get a handle on it, because there are no commonalities. It's not now that you think here's a completely untranslatable language, but rather: maybe this isn't a language. And it's the same sort of argument that is made time and time again with respect to these questions of anthropological relevance.

Edith Rosenthal: His keystone is always the concept of 'regularity'. So, if you don't say that these people don't have a moral order because they let the sick people go out and die, it's just- like a moral order includes negatives as well as positives, so it would be a negative for this moral order: "You ought NOT to help these people". {JC: exactly. right} So, the keystone then becomes 'consistent practice' rather than the content of the practice.

Jeff Coulter: There must be some content too that's connectable. It can't just be pure form. No, no. I mean if there were NO relationship between OUR color spectrum and theirs, then there is no basis for translating what they are talking about AS talking about colors.

Edith Rosenthal: Well, is there a two step process that first they have to have a regular identification between what we would call 'red', and some symbol or sound or something? That is step one. And step two is that it is then translatable into some symbol that we have?

Jeff Coulter: It's not empirical like that. As he puts it in ZETTEL, concept formation determines the limits of the empirical, i.e., there would be no way of finding a radically alien color scheme, or a radically alien moral/value system, because there would be no way of making a determination that we were talking about the same thing at all.

So, there has got to be, if you're going to call it a 'different moral system', even a 'radically different moral system', there has still got to be some basis on which you are calling it a 'MORAL system'. Similarly with colors, color recognition, discrimination, methods of measurement, counting; the common practices of conduct.

One of the things that I think we've got in Wittgenstein is not just a sort of "species consciousness" notion working. It does tend, in some respects, as he puts it, to adduce anthropological detail, but it does so in a way that continuously reminds us not of a local chauvinism to our conceptual schemes, but rather a grammatical linkage that exists between what could count as an 'x', and some set of empirical search procedures. So, in one way Wittgenstein, and Winch particularly, are often thought of as simply relativists. The idea being that on the basis of our own language, and our own concepts, we go around the world and we can start finding in other cultures certain sorts of differences, but they are differences only with respect to OUR concepts. And in terms of their concepts, they have a perfect sort of integrity. So, that really, then, there is no sort of real bridge between us, because we are always speaking from within our own conceptual scheme. But when Wittgenstein talks about OUR conceptual scheme, he's talking about THE SPECIES' conceptual apparatus. He's not talking about the British, the Americans, the French, the Russians, etc. And that is more or less virtuously circular. And even down to the concept of the 'human', it's virtuously circular in that sense. And it's that very difficult matter where you can't really decide where the conceptual ends and the empirical begins, because what counts as the empirical is conceptually available, and only available, through concepts. And what counts as the concepts are only available given that there is empirically standardized USE of those concepts. So, the conceptual and the empirical, the linguistic and the real, are, in Wittgenstein, completely mutually constitutive.

Isamu Kamada: [Tr: very hard to hear.
Raises the issue of Saul Kripke's interpretation of
PI 201, which many people think is revolutionary.]

Jeff Coulter: Ok, let me talk a bit about
Saul Kripke. Saul Kripke has a book called
WITTGENSTEIN ON RULES AND PRIVATE LANGUAGE [Tr:
1982, Harvard University Press.]. And the only
reason I happened not to put it on the reading list
is it is, in terms of the bulk of Wittgenstein's
scholarship, quite a deviant interpretation, but a
highly interesting one. And I didn't put it on
because I wanted to get some consistency in the
exegesis, so that we at least have some basis on
which then to encounter different texts. But now
is probably as good a time as any.

According to Saul Kripke, Wittgenstein is a
radical skeptic. He is a radical skeptic on the
grounds that since - this is Kripke's
interpretation - since language is rule-governed,
and all rules are amenable to more than one
possible interpretation - note 'possible'
interpretation - that therefore anything that is in
accord with a rule could also be made out to be in
conflict with it -- He was sufficiently adept at
perverse interpretations as was the student in the
math class -- that therefore there is NO basis for
our saying that we ever really DO understand each
other. That what seems right, and is right, is
purely a function of contingent, communal
practices, that do no more than give us the
impression of understanding, and, to that extent,
we can see in Wittgenstein's discussion of rules a
new and more vigorous form of the skeptical
problem.

But it seems to me, not only does Kripke miss
- as Baker and Hacker point out in their critique
of Kripke in their little book called SKEPTICISM,
RULES AND LANGUAGE, but elsewhere in their exegeses
- Kripke misses the point that Wittgenstein makes,
that has to do with 'forms of life', and that has
to do with the idea of 'following the rule
blindly'. That particular paragraph is not
analyzed by Kripke. So, for Kripke, you see, the
fact that any rule can have an interpretation, and
that you could, in principle, have an infinite
regress of rules for interpreting rules, for
interpreting rules, etc. For Kripke that leads us
to throw up our hands and say: Well, geez, that's
good grounds for skepticism. But he misses the
ultimate, kind of, if you like, grounds of rules IN

the practices of following them.

In any case, the whole idea of Wittgenstein as a skeptic should have been, at least, approached skeptically in virtue of the existence of ON CERTAINTY, which Kripke nowhere discusses, which is Wittgenstein's last work, and is a sustained attack on skepticism directly, upon Cartesian forms of skepticism.

[Tr: omits]

Dusan Bjelic: In the context of what you have said, and the argument that rules are grounded in forms of life, couldn't you say that forms of life actually work as a context? Or as we as Ethnomethodologists would say, a social context? That provides us with how to use the rules, how to follow the rules?

Jeff Coulter: Well look, the forms of life that have been spoken of, like the standard reactions and judgments, they are not really-

Dusan Bjelic: parts of the context.

Jeff Coulter: Well, parts of the context of what? I don't know....of the rule-follower.

Dusan Bjelic: Well, I mean, one always follows rules in context, and they are always context dependent. {JC: right} You cannot predict which rule is going to be followed how. But once you have a context, then we know what is intelligible to follow the rule. {JC: right} And in that sense, forms of life tell us what is intelligible, what it is to follow the rule. {JC: yeah.} What is in accord-

Jeff Coulter: Well they don't tell us.

Dusan Bjelic: Yeah. All right.

Jeff Coulter: They are a part of.

Dusan Bjelic: a priori?

Jeff Coulter: Because of proto-phenomena. Forms of life are proto-phenomena. Is that referenced in the index of the PI? This might help. I think I remember something about this: Proto-phenomenon: 654.

654. Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon'. That is, where we ought to have said: THIS LANGUAGE-GAME IS PLAYED. [Tr: PI, paragraph 654.]

Dave Bogen: Is that connected to-

Jeff Coulter: the prior thing. ... It's in the context of following a map, which is analogous to following a rule. [Tr: pause] Anyway, no, it's not quite in the context I thought it was. Interesting thought. It's worth playing with that.

Dave Bogen: There is this reference in Hunter's chapter [Tr: UNDERSTANDING WITTGENSTEIN, 1985, Edinburgh University Press] to 'grammatical states', that's still unclear for me, that seems to be referring to something along those lines.

Jeff Coulter: Where is that?

Dave Bogen: On page 36., under "The role of abilities, dispositions, attitudes". Where state is not really a state. Referring to paragraph 572. [Tr: in the PI]

[Tr: pause]

Jeff Coulter: Yeah, I think it is fair to say that these folks have (lacked) a part of the context of practices. It's got to be right. Because it's the criteria that- they're parts of the criteria. Many of the forms of life are, in fact, criteria for the applicability of certain predicates to people, like: 'obeying a rule'. And criteria are always part of a context. And yet, you see, it's a very broad notion of context, as when Wittgenstein talks about 'behavior in it's context', where it seems like: You've got behavior, and then you've got the surroundings. But we've got to be careful about that, because where Wittgenstein talks about-

Dusan Bjelic: But here we are in accord with the context, one wants to say, or behavior that is intelligible in the context, which doesn't mean environment, but rather an intrinsic intelligibility of given practices.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah.

George Psathas: Why isn't it co-constituted in the same sense as the concept of 'real'?

Jeff Coulter: It has to be! That's what I was going on to say. And one of the things is where Wittgenstein sometimes says things like: Don't just look at the behavior; look at the surroundings in order to understand how the concepts operate for the behavior. Surroundings there tends to make it seem as if there you've got the behavior, and there around the behavior you've got the context. But, of course, that's not the way he's really using the notion, since what the context could be that's relevant is partly available only in and through the behavior. Now, it's probably true that Wittgenstein nowhere explicitly makes that kind of hermeneutical circle argument, but I think it's abundantly clear the way he's working. Where, for example, he says things like: The behavior of pain is only pain-behavior in particular circumstances. So, obviously there is behavior of pain, like wincing, groaning, crying. But I can now go "AKAWAHHH!", and all the rest of it, and you know damn well though that's behavior of pain; it's not pain-behavior. How is it not pain-behavior? Because of the context, in this sense. But, how do you know what might be relevant context for that adjudication? It's because you know what kinds of criteria would have to be satisfied for that kind of thing to have properly instantiated the pain. And they weren't satisfied in any way.

Dusan Bjelic: Well that is one difference between ethnography and ethnomethodology. Where in ethnography you have to describe context, and in ethnomethodology you have to explicate a context by getting the practice. Because it is context that is the practice.

Jeff Coulter: That's right, although a bit elliptically stated!!

Jeff Stetson: Bateson uses the analogy of the bowl of soup. You pour the soup out and you don't have the context. The bowl is context, the soup is the agent, action, or so on. You pour the soup out, you don't have the context anymore. It wouldn't be a bowl of soup anymore.

Jeff Coulter: Right, absolutely.

Caesar Mavratsas: So, the context isn't the form of life then?

Jeff Coulter: No, no. Well here Harold [Tr: Garfinkel] is useful. There is no concept of context IN GENERAL. And Wittgenstein nowhere tries to elaborate upon what A context must be. Indeed contextual particulars are non-enumerable. They are as varied as our lives, as he puts it. But there's no doubt that in considering something like rule-following, among the contextual criteria that would have to be satisfied for somebody's performance to be thought of as indeed rule-following or rule-governed, you would have to make reference analytically to such things as certain capacities they have, certain training they have gone through, certain background judgments that are presupposed, which are indeed the kinds of things Wittgenstein's talking about when he talks about 'forms of life'. And they are standardized and common things.

Let me find a passage.

[Tr: 199 in PI] 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).

To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique.

and elsewhere he puts: To understand a language is to understand a form of life.

Edith Rosenthal: Jeff, can you say that form of life is like a residual concept? - that he feels the need to create a dialectical situation between the practice and 'something'. The practice doesn't take place in a vacuum. The idea 'form of life' is the balancing - it's the 'other thing'. And they relate to one another, and there is a dialectical relation between them. Can it be stated that way?

Jeff Coulter: Yeah, yeah.

George Psathas: Isn't it risking going toward a Cartesian metaphysics?, where now we're trying to find a thing-ness to form of life, vis-a-vis we should juxtapose something else?

[Tr: tape change]

George Psathas(cont): ...mutually implicating. It's not a matter of definition. It's not a matter of trying to separate something out, or even to stipulate, because that would go counter to everything that he's (). So, it seems to me the problem is with our own way of thinking. It's just that you can't think that way.

Jeff Coulter: Yes, it's part of the problem here of analysis. We want to all the time pick these things apart, and sometimes there is perhaps something lost in that.

Dave Bogen: Well, it just seems to me too that you find it difficult to think that way - it seems that it's very difficult to listen to somebody speak that way without finding that they are contradicting themselves in some way. So, for instance you say: There are contexts in which the ordinary accompaniments of pain are not that - are not accompaniments of pain. But then how did you talk about that as accompaniments of pain, because that's not what they were? You see the point? If you say there are contexts in which what we take to be the ordinary accompaniments of pain do not occur as that, contextually. It just doesn't fill it out. And then what were those things? Now we could give a list, over here, of what they might be, THE context that made sense out of that. But we've spoken about them in this place where that makes no sense, because they are not accompaniments of pain there. So, even the language used when trying to explain context-dependence doesn't allow for a consistent statement. A coherent statement of context-dependence can't be heard in this respect.

Dusan Bjelic: That's why he uses metaphoric language, his descriptive language, because he understands that actually all language springs out of form of life. But it's like rather that we imagine like a flower is blossoming out of the (). It's rather that way that you can speak about that then to give a definition of it.

Jeff Coulter: No, you certainly can't- he's certainly not interested in compiling lists of things like contextual conditions, or whatever. And yet our ways of talking about 'criteria', 'conditions', 'circumstances', and so on, seems to call for their enumerability. It seems as if we should be able - as he puts in various places -- Look at where he talks about 'thinking'. There's a place where he addresses this exact issue, and let me try to find it. [Tr: pause] It's where he says something like: One learns the use of the word 'think' in certain circumstances, but one does not learn to describe those circumstances, and that's why they are only described in cases. That's more or less what he says, and I'd like to find it. [ZETTEL, paragraphs: 118-119]

Let's take a break for a few moments, because it's in my office.

[Tr: break]

Jeff Coulter: I just can't track down the reference, but I think it is in ZETTEL. [see ZETTEL, paragraphs: 118-119 - JC] But those things are said often. Those kinds of things are said about various concepts, and the point of that is to note that what's involved in learning criteria for the use of things like the predicates of various kinds, where he wants to say that the criteria are defeasible kinds of things - though he doesn't use the word defeasibility. He wants to say that the criteria are only operative in certain circumstances, and it is in that context that he comes up with this remark about how we learn to use the word 'think'. (). Except I think it's in ZETTEL where he is mostly interested in psychological verbs and nouns. And he says: Though we learn them in certain circumstances, it's not as if we learn the circumstances, so that we could list them, or that we could characterize them explicitly. We may be able to characterize something about a circumstance that shows us that a word has been abused, or misused. And, in fact, that connects quite nicely with one of the things that Hunter says in his paper on "Depth Grammar" [Tr: Hunter, J. F. M. (1985). UNDERSTANDING WITTGENSTEIN. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press. Chapter 24. "Depth Grammar".], where, if you remember, he notes that most of the cases of depth grammar are cases where Wittgenstein is saying what you cannot say in order to mean. You cannot say why it ought to be 'x' in circumstance 'c'. And so the notion of 'criteria',

'contextual criteria', public, socially available, contextual criteria FOR the attributability, or the ratifiable avowability, of any predicate whatsoever, any concept whatsoever, is not something that, like a rule, carries with it its own ways of being applied. And one of the reasons why he says: We learn it IN circumstances, but we don't learn THE circumstances, is again to note that it's not as if we need now some explicit interpretive supplement to the criteria in order to find out how it applies. The application is, in a sense, part of our form of life. So, we simply KNOW. We simply USE these words properly, and CAN, when called to account for a misuse, sometimes now reflect upon, and adduce in justification, something that could count as a criterion for those circumstances. And we can well know that that criterion would not be operative if the circumstances were different, but we might not be able to now specify a closed set of such things. But the fact that we can't do that doesn't mean that we can't speak about 'rules', and 'criteria'. The point here is to travel that road between the fallacy of Frege and the TRACTATUS, in which comprehension and practice is guaranteed by fixed, context independent algorithms, if you like, and on the other hand, the notion that there really are no rules - like, because that's an incorrect conception, that therefore there really are no rules. There really are no criteria. It's all just a matter of ad hoc negotiation, in situ practical achievement, or whatever you like. That, in other words, it's all a matter of flux, and the operation of Foucaultian power trips. And like there is no grammar. It's just a matter of what you can enforce will go. What works, works. It's not THAT either. As he says quite clearly, we may seem to but we are NOT abolishing logic. Ultimately, of course, that might under the pressure of criticism turn out to be an indefensible position, and maybe even the latter conception of logic is undermined. But, at least, in the INVESTIGATIONS, and in ZETTEL, it's crucial to the idea of there being a logic TO communication, reason, and praxis that we talk about rules and criteria. But now we have a much more subtle characterization of how they actually operate in our lives. Although what we want to do very often since the kind of thing that Dave mentioned crops up, -like if it's a rule, for god's sake, then you've got to be able to tell us what the circumstances are exactly, otherwise why call it a rule? But that sort of thing only gets its life from a preconception about what a thing must be to be a rule that's really Tractarian in

inspiration. As he puts it in connection with 'exactness' in paragraph 88.:

88. If I tell someone "Stand roughly here" - may not this explanation work perfectly? And cannot every other one fail too?

But isn't it an inexact explanation? - Yes; why shouldn't we call it "inexact"? Only let us understand what "inexact" means. For it does not mean "unusable". [Tr: PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, paragraph 88.]

As he puts as well in paragraph 79. toward the end:

79. ... But where are the bounds of the incidental? - If I had given a definition of the name in such a case, I should now be ready to alter it.

He's talking about how we know how to use names. And it seems as if we have to know not just- we have to know what the name is, we have to know the criteria for applying the name, and we have to know the circumstances in which to apply the name in order to be able to apply the name. But since circumstances are non-enumerable, as he's alluding to here, where he says: "But where are the bounds of the incidental?" [Tr: PI, paragraph 79.], it's almost as if it's now exploding the whole notion of there being a rule at all. But he keeps coming back to this idea that it's a calculus conception of rules and their operation in which the whole thing is axiomatic and closed, so that every step is mechanically connected to every prior step, and every bit of information is exhaustively produced, in order for the whole thing to be meaningful. It's that conception that is, as he said, merely a prejudice - that that does not necessarily belong to the grammar of the concept of a rule. So the answer to: "But where are the bounds of the incidental?" -- By the way G. E. M. Anscombe argues that the best way to read Wittgenstein is always to try to answer these questions. -- "But where are the bounds of the incidental?" The answer is: It's not known but it doesn't matter for the purpose of following a rule. It's worth reading that whole paragraph, actually, paragraph 79. in respect of this topic.

[79.] ... {JC: So} Should it be said that I am using a word whose meaning I don't know, and so am talking nonsense? - Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts. (And when you see them there is a good deal that you will not say.)

[79.] ... I use the name "N" without a FIXED meaning. (But that detracts as little from its usefulness, as it detracts from that of a table that stands on four legs instead of three and so sometimes wobbles.) [Tr: PI, paragraph 79., parentheses in the original]

There are so many paragraphs like that. Paragraph 101.:

101. We want to say that there can't be any vagueness in logic. The idea now absorbs us, that the ideal 'MUST' be found in reality. Meanwhile we do not as yet see 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.

102. The strict and clear rules of the logical structure of propositions appear to us as something in the background - hidden in the medium of the understanding. I already see them (even though through a medium): for I understand the propositional sign, I use it to say something.

100. "But still, it isn't a game, if there is some vagueness IN THE RULES". - But DOES this prevent its being a game? - "Perhaps you'll call it a game, but at any rate it certainly isn't a perfect game." This means: it has impurities, and what I am interested in at present is the pure article. - But I want to say: we misunderstand the role of the ideal in our language. That is to say: we too should call it a

game, only we are dazzled by the ideal and therefore fail to see the actual use of the word "game" clearly.

So, those things go round and round, and he keeps coming back to the business of the relationship between rules, criteria, and circumstances, and exactness and precision, in a way to undermine his former conception, but never to abandon notions like 'precision', 'rule', 'criteria', and 'circumstance'. The question is whether he really does get away with it.

Certainly, somebody like Derrida, who had a different conception of language, though one that has a distinct kind of affinity to Wittgenstein, would seem to be finding in the UN-pre-codifiability of circumstances, some sort of lever there to sort of query or be skeptical about notions like 'rule'. It seems to me that that is already being attended to. It's simply not a pre-requisite for being said to 'follow a rule', to 'know what the rule is' that one can LIST or enumerate the circumstances. Perhaps the theorem in the first place -- because NO rule COULD, so why make it a criterion for what a rule could be? You know, no rule could house its own circumstances of application, so therefore the ideal is a false ideal.

Dusan Bjelic: But doesn't 'form of life' actually justify that () of rule, that we can speak about a rule? Where there is a ()

Jeff Coulter: I'm sorry I don't understand.

Dusan Bjelic: Ok, you said that there is no warrant to speak about the rules the way Wittgenstein did, because we cannot predicate a circumstances, so why then talk about them? {JC: Right} But under what Wittgenstein would say, under any circumstance form of life would be involved somehow. That's what we know in advance, because we cannot get out of our form of life in which we are embedded. That for they as some kind of a priori structure, which we could-

Jeff Coulter: the possibility of ().

Dusan Bjelic: Yeah, right -- And we cannot avoid that. {JC: right, right. Yeah.} And that's what is- Why is socially relevant? -- because that it is where we all agree no in-

Jeff Coulter: Not in definitions, but in terms of forms of life. {DB: right, right} Not in opinions, but in forms of life.

Dusan Bjelic: Right, right. That is what we can always predicate. But it seems to me that they don't understand that.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah. Yeah.

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

These transcriptions were prepared from an audio recording, the auditory quality of which was not always optimal. Participating members, especially Jeff Coulter, have reviewed initial drafts of the transcripts and have attempted to clarify portions that were particularly difficult to hear, and also provided assistance in correcting errors in transcription that were made during the production of the first draft of each session. The generous assistance of all those involved is gratefully acknowledged. Particular appreciation goes out to Jeff Stetson who took on the laborious task of copy-editing. Unfortunately, not all errors in transcription, and not all inaudible portions could be corrected given the time lag in producing the transcriptions. The transcriber apologizes for any remaining typographical errors.

The following are conventions employed in producing the transcriptions of these meetings:

[x] square brackets: Text in square brackets is for the most part that of the transcriber. Such text is indicated by "Tr:" at the beginning of the brackets. It includes: 1. paraphrases of talk, 2. clarification of indefinite references, for example pointing, drawing or writing on the chalk-board, producing a behavioral display etc., 3. information about references to texts referred to in the talk, 4. other general remarks and clarifications and 5. indications of omissions and tape changes. PLEASE NOTE that there is almost always some bit of talk missing at the points of tape change. On occasion, comments in square brackets are insertions offered by those who have edited the text and are indicated

as such by the initials of the person in question, e.g., [JC: xxxxxxxx]. Also, if additions or deletions are made in text quoted during the class, then these changes are noted in square brackets, with the speakers initials included within the brackets.

- { x } braces: Text in braces is the talk of persons who are commenting on or responding to the talk of another person who currently has the floor. This talk is introduced by the initials of the person making the remark and/or comment, e.g., {JC: xxxx}.
- (x) parentheses surrounding text: Text in parentheses is the transcriber's best guess as to what was being said when there is some doubt about exactly what was said due to the poor auditory quality of the tape.
- () empty parentheses: Parentheses containing no text indicate a portion of the talk which is not transcribable due to the poor auditory quality of the tape, although it is possible to tell that something was being said.

CAPITALIZATION: Capitalization is used to indicate titles (or partial titles, e.g.: INVESTIGATIONS for the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS) for books. It is also used to indicate vocal emphasis by the speaker in question, i.e., something which is spoken noticeably louder, or with more emphasis than the surrounding talk. It was not possible to underline text in the editing/text-formating system employed, which is why capitalization rather than underlining was used in the above cases. This also influenced the forming of terms in languages other than English, e.g.: Ubersicht, vis-a vis, etc, which are neither capitalized, nor underlined, although occasionally are explicated in square brackets following the text in question.