

Kripkenstein: The Patriarchy is a Language Game

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I. Introduction

This paper will dedicate itself to understanding the way that language functions in relation to the human condition. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* will serve as the structure for this paper so that I may develop a sustained conversation about Wittgenstein's language games, the nature of rule following within those games, and what this means for contemporary justice issues. In the ensuing sections, I will outline the logic at work in Wittgenstein's language games and present the skeptic's paradox for these rules. In addition, I will apply these concepts to Kripke's analysis. I will then provide Wittgenstein's solution to the problem alongside the conclusions that Kripke makes about Wittgenstein's language games and the solution to the paradox. Finally, I will invite us to consider the significance of this philosophical approach in terms of patriarchal power and a feminist critique. This project aims to discuss the significance of language, and the magnitude of conceptualizing the human being's relationship to language: a conversation rooted in the work of some of the most influential twentieth century philosophers.

My focus in this paper will be the rules of Wittgenstein's language games and Kripke's analysis of this philosophy to ask the questions: "How does one know and then follow the rules of a language game? And is it possible to change them?" A Kripkensteinian analysis, a name used to reference a reading of Wittgenstein offered by Kripke, will provide grounds for answering these questions in light of *Philosophical*

Investigations. Before such an undertaking, however, it seems necessary to ask about the purpose of such a paper. To answer that, I would like to present an example that begins to outline some philosophy of language in its complexities and relationship to the human condition.

Before some attention is given to the subject of language, it is common to consider language the tool that human beings have developed over time for the sake of communication. Consider a young child, for example, who is in the process of learning a language from their various caretakers, family, babysitters, etc. While she may only have the ability to say a few words which provide minimal communication about basic needs, the child will continue to gain agency with language through exposure and through explicit teaching. Or, consider the child's communicative ability before she learns how to *say words*. The child cries when she is hungry and may have reached for her grandfather when she wanted to be held; this sort of action, crying out or reaching for the grandfather, while not verbal, is a part of the language- the system of communication-- in which she is being formed. This sort of communication, where the child reaches out and her grandfather knows to hold her, is not an instructed form of communication. I mean to say that it is unlikely that her caretakers have spent time training the child to reach for them to get their attention. The action itself is in place of verbal ability and is the child's way of communicating before language skills are developed and accessible. So the child's communicative skills will likely develop so that an infant, as she grows and matures, will learn that her reaching toward her grandfather often results in their holding her. Her grandfather will participate in communication

with their child not only by holding her, but also by repeating basic words to and around her in order to develop her verbal ability; both the holding and the verbal practice (as well as a number of other aspects) are parts of the structure of language. A common understanding of language is one that considers language a mechanism created by and available to living beings (most often, human beings). Rather than merely understanding language as this tool invented by human beings to perform a communicative task, the human condition is such that it is always already participating and bound to a number of structures, one of them being language, which governs all of communication. As the human being develops, language is revealed to them in a variety of ways, with language becoming more complex and, in return, causing the human being to become more complex. Rather than understanding language as a proper training or acquisition of a tool which allows the human being to assign meaning to the world, language can more accurately be understood as that which *reveals some of the world's meaning*. Language is the mediator of meaning between the world and the human person.

A sustained argument that commits itself to this philosophy of language is necessarily transformative. It changes the way that one might understand human beings in relation to the world; the relationship becomes one of revelation instead of designation. Language becomes the intermediary which reveals the meaning of the world to those who are participating in language. As I show in this section, this requires a particular way of participating in language and the Wittgensteinian language games will provide a helpful structure for understanding language as participatory.

Language gives rise to the question of ambiguity. In conversation, miscommunication and confusion are expected from time to time. The response to this sort of predicament is often an attempt at clarifying language or further explaining the concept at hand because of an assumption that language is something that happens individually or that all language is born out of and then ostends to the objective truth of the world. This sort of attempt, however, is an attempt to clarify the world's meaning. For example, I often come across people who use the word "man" as a substitute for "humanity", "human being", or "humankind". My response is always a clarifying question because the term seems so ambiguous. Historically, the divide between the nature of men and women was stark and assumed so that, when one used the term "man", it was because they were talking about the human condition as it favored a patriarchal system. The broad and generalized usage of "man" is generally reflective of the more readily available opportunity and prioritized condition of men. Along with the ambiguity of the term "man", there is an assumption being made in its use about the default nature of a human being. It is an assertion that *man* is the neutral disposition and *woman* is somehow a deviation from the intended nature of form of human. While the system of patriarchy is still entangled in the contemporary human condition, and possibly precisely because this system is so entangled in the contemporary human condition, the use of "man" to mean "human being" is a confusing and antiquated use of term. Yet, my clarifying question is almost always met with an answer to the effect of, "actually, 'man' and 'human being' mean the same thing." Do they?

Even in a system where one understands language as the tool of the human being used to determine or assign meaning, this example remains confusing. The words “human” and “man” seem to designate two populations that inevitably overlap but are necessarily different. To claim that the two words are synonymous is an attempt at not only assigning the world’s meaning, but redefining its meaning. This example in particular testifies to the patriarchal structure that pervades the human condition because of the assumption about the neutrality of the the word “man.” Should one, however, adopt an understanding of language as the mediation of meaning so that the world’s meaning is slowly uncovered with the practice of language, the speaker’s relationship to the words “man” and “human” are transformed. There is no longer room for a defense which says that the words are synonymous because the objective meanings of man and human are revealed *to the speaker through language* rather than the speaker using language as a tool to define “man” or “human.” A defensive response that attempts to define “man” and “human” as the same is an attempt to clarify-- or rather, redefine- the world’s meaning. Yet, submitting oneself to language as the mediator of meaning between the world and the human condition gives rise to revelation about the distinction between these two words and the ontological priority of language. The transformative nature of language in this way demands the sustained attention and care provided by Wittgenstein and Kripke with regard to language games, which this paper will analyze.

II. Wittgenstein's Language Games

Ludwig Wittgenstein is a twentieth century philosopher whose works reveals a dramatic shift in his early work to his later in his own philosophy of language. Two of his texts, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, outline two philosophies where the latter dedicates significant time and thought to undoing some of the work done in the former. Whereas his *Tractatus* spends its time asserting a philosophy of language based in picture theory and truth-functionality, *Philosophical Investigations* instead develops its language games based in contextualized rule following. Our focus here will be on philosophy of language found in *Philosophical Investigations* through an explication of both Ludwig Wittgenstein and Saul Kripke's work on the skeptic's problem and its proposed solution. Our first project, however, should be to gain a sufficient facility with Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language with particular regard to his language games, their function, and his argument that meaning is found in the practice of such games.

Philosophical Investigations provides a multifaceted philosophy of language rooted in Wittgenstein's idea of language games. He introduces this idea early in the text before the complexities and constituents of language games are entirely evident. Wittgenstein first uses the term "language games" in *Philosophical Investigations* § 7, "We can also think of the whole process of using words . . . as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games "language-games" and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a

'language-game'.'¹ The nature of the definition of "language game" became clearer to me as I realized the extent of the implications of such a description; Wittgenstein has now provided description of nature of language games, their function, and the access we have to them in human circumstances. Two important nuances here are (1) the distinction made between language games and "primitive" language games and (2) the accessibility of language game theory to most anyone who participates in the human condition.

To speak about (1), it is helpful to think about Wittgenstein's opening example of a primitive language game between a builder and an assistant. The workers use only "block," "pillar," "slab," and "beam" (§2) for communication with the ultimate goal of constructing some sort of structure. The example serves its purpose by elucidating the nature of primitive language games; even basic communication utilizing only four words and four objects requires a certain clarity and mutual understanding about which words designate which objects and also *what happens* once those objects are designated. The complexities of even the most simple language-games become more evident when one considers the way that tone of voice, expression, and other nuances are crucial for communication to happen with the declaration of any of the designators "block!" "pillar!" "slab!" or "beam!" so that the builder and assistant may sufficiently complete their project. Even a moment's recognition of this complexity gives insight to the intricacies and demands of contemporary language. For Wittgenstein to make the distinction between the two, language games and primitive language games, is helpful

¹Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe et al., Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

when recognizing the construction example as the most primitive of language games and allowing that to inform conceptions about language games and prepare for the complexities that accompany them.

Further, it is necessary to touch on the accessibility of language games to those participating in the human condition. It is significant that Wittgenstein makes explicit that he is speaking of the project in which we are constantly participating. It is not difficult for philosophy of language (or philosophy of many sorts, for that matter) to become increasingly abstract, despite its dealing with a significant facet of the practiced human condition. For Wittgenstein, language games and the human condition are interdependent in some regards, which we will see as we analyze the skeptic's paradox, and so discussion of language games using natural-language examples is helpful for understanding his argument and for capturing its pragmatism. Consideration of the concrete reality of the process a child goes through as they participate in language provides a counter balance to the abstraction of language games and allows for us to see the functions and implications of language games in the material world. An ambiguous concept that pervades the material world is now made available to we who are participating in the concept, even if we have not immersed ourselves in the metaphysics of language to the degree the author has done.

Of course, the nature of language games has only just been addressed, and Wittgenstein spends the entirety of *Philosophical Investigations* developing their different aspects and functions. For further exploration of language games, Wittgenstein says, "It is sometimes said: animals do not talk because they lack the mental abilities.

And this means: ‘They do not think, and that is why they do not talk.’ But -- they simply do not talk. Or better: they do not use language -- if we disregard the most primitive forms of language. -- Giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, having a chat, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing” (§ 25). Let us return to our example of the young child who reaches for her babysitter, aunt, parent, etc. and the conditions and effects that both necessitated the reach and resulted from it. Wittgenstein makes an important move in §25 by turning our attention to the intricacies of language; not only is there significance² in our words, but, more importantly, in the practical physicality of communication. The young girl who has not yet developed verbal ability reaches for her parent, babysitter, caretaker, etc., in order to communicate her wanting to be held or needing attention in some capacity. It seems at least insufficient to make the claim that the child is reaching for her parent rather than speaking because she “does not speak” (to return to Wittgenstein’s animal example). Her physical means of communication supplement verbal ability and are essential to her participation in the language game because all communication is language. This is true not only for children. The communicative process that Wittgenstein has named “language games” is not a restriction to words, but includes the intricacies and complexities of every means of communication. The girl’s reaching as an indication for her need are as much a part

² “Significance” here is not used necessarily synonymously with *meaningful*. I suppose that there is a way to use it synonymous to meaningful and still hold to a Wittgensteinian system of language, but the specificities of the word *meaning* in a Wittgensteinian structure, especially when not yet explored in this paper, could give rise to confusion. By “significance”, I mean only to say that we should pay some attention to this point. Speaking of “language” cannot only mean the words that we say, but action, tone of voice, etc., and to dismiss those things would be to fail to fully capture Wittgenstein’s point.

of the language game as her *verbal request* for food, water, or whatever else she may need once she has developed her verbal ability.

Wittgenstein has outlined the nature and function of language games in their complexity and their relevance to daily communicative practices for human beings. It becomes an important project, then, to determine *how* people participate in such games. Just as recreational games, language games have rules which determine the way which they are played and are essential to the consistency with which the game is played. I mean to say that the rules are essential to communication within the language game. In fact, the rules *are* the game because the nature of the game-- of meaning-- is to be found in the use of rules. Wittgenstein says, "Just think of the kinds of case where we say that a game is played according to a particular rule. |27| The rule may be an aid in teaching the game. The learner is told it and given practice in applying it. -- Or it is a tool of the game itself. -- Or a rule is employed neither in the teaching nor in the game itself; nor is it set down in a list of rules. One learns the game by watching how others play it." (§54) This provides an important nuance to the role that rules play within language games. Let us turn to another example in order to better understand the function of rules.

Imagine a group of children playing on the monkeybars on a playground. Most of the children are competent in their completion of swinging across the monkey bars but one of them is entirely new to the exercise. Scared to make an attempt, this child (let us call him student A) vocalizes his worry about falling and injuring himself because he is unfamiliar with the safest way to make it across the bars. Another student (let us call her

student B), perhaps the most proficient, may begin to explain her strategy to student A. She starts with both hands on the first bar, jumps off of the ladder to give her some momentum to swing to the next bar, and so on. Still, student A's fears may not have been soothed and he imagines that jumping off the ladder with too much force could cause him to lose his grip, but jumping without enough force may prevent him from reaching the next bar. Rather than trying to coerce student A into trying to cross the monkeybars by soothing each of his fears, student B eventually says, "Watch me as I cross the monkeybars and you'll see with how much force I jump, how I swing from bar to bar, and so on." So student B crosses the monkeybars and the fears of student A are relatively soothed as his classmate has provided an example for mitigating the potential danger of the monkeybars in a way that her words could not have done. He attempts to cross them himself, but a halfway through, he loses some of his momentum, and slips off the monkeybars. Frustrated but unharmed, he watches students C, D, and E cross the monkeybars to get a clearer idea of what caused his drop in momentum and ensure his completion of the task. Finally, he makes another attempt, putting into practice the jumping and swinging of the other children, and makes it across the monkeybars with success. This same process is true of language games.

The child's emersion in the context is much more vital to their success than the verbal explanation of the rules. Note that student A was not given a written list of rules or even detailed instruction from his classmates; he was given a few tips and was then dependent on the examples of his classmates and his own attempt. Language games function similarly; even if one is perfectly familiar with the rules of the language game,

their successful participation in the game will come from example and immersion because execution demands more than a cognitive or rational familiarity. While we may be able to recognize and even name some of the rules that are present in the language game, they are primarily and for the most part unrecognized. Rules are so fundamentally embedded in the structure of the game that they function to govern the practices of those with facility in the game. This makes many rules impossible to recognize as rules. Wittgenstein asserts that it is exposure to the language game from those who already have strong facility with the rules (and, of course, this strong facility only comes from their own exposure and practice of the rules) that develops competency and ability to participate in the game.

Philosophical Investigations presents Wittgenstein's philosophy of language as participation in language games in all of their varying complexity. While he notes that primitive language games do exist, the contemporary communicative process is much more intricate than, say, his opening example of the primitive language game of the builders. Communication is not simply words exchanged between people, but includes action, demeanor, tone of voice etc. One's ability to participate well in any given language game will take practice, especially considering the aforementioned complexities, and will ultimately be the result of exposure and practice; while one may have familiarity and even verbal confirmation of the rules of the game, agency within these rules will come from *observing and practicing* the way that the rules are practiced by those with competency in the language game. The language game system comes with

its set of problems and curiosities, which will be the task of a significant portion of the rest of this essay.

III. The Skeptic's Problem

After developing his theory of language games and providing a structure in which one might accept this theory, Wittgenstein addresses an incredible problem of this philosophy; this problem is one grounded in skepticism. Wittgenstein's problematizing his own philosophy is vital to his providing means for one to accept this theory of language. To consider the skeptical problem in its fullness, it is helpful to do so in conversation with the work of Saul Kripke, who offers analysis of Wittgenstein's philosophy as well as helpful analysis in his *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Partnered with Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, we can get a clear view of the skeptical problem, language games, and the way that these two topics inform one another in crucial ways.

Within his structure of language games as a means for outlining his philosophy of language, Wittgenstein addresses the skeptical problem that accompanies such a rule-following system. He provides us with a question which asks after the nature of rule following so that we may consider his thoughts on meaning and how that informs each rule. Wittgenstein says, "This was our Paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule. The answer was: if every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule, then it can also be brought into conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here." (§201) This problematization of rules is asking after the justification for

application of the rule. It seems as though any instantiation of a given rule can be justified as such an instantiation; if this is the case, how do rules function helpfully? Imagine the children on the monkeybars arguing over the advice that they should be giving to student A where some of the students insist that gaining momentum is essential to successfully crossing the monkeybars while others argue that it is consequential to the activity. A rule created in order to settle this debate may be temporarily useful until *that* rule becomes the source of debate and the children find themselves creating an infinite collection of rules to define the structure of their rules. The skeptic's paradox problematizes the structure of language games by evaluating the structure that is in place to govern rules themselves. It asks *why and how* rules are applied in any given manner and recognizes that, before Wittgenstein offers his solution to this problem, there is no warrant or reason for interpreting any rule in a specific way. A rule which can be applied in any fashion and determined as a correct application or, a converse of such a problem, a rule which can be applied seemingly correctly and yet deemed incorrect, cannot possibly dictate any game.

As discussed above, Wittgenstein has established that a person participates in a language game through exposure and experience; student A watches students B, C, D, and E cross the monkey bars and uses that exposure to the rules to inform their own practice until they, too, have mastered the crossing of the monkey bars. When the student falls off of the monkey bars upon their first attempt, he is able to recognize his failure to participate in the project because he has already seen his classmate successfully complete the task. It is his comparison of his attempt against hers, as well

as his classmates' confirmation of such comparison, that both allows him to recognize his lack of momentum as the source of failure in his first attempt and provides a solution to his mistake. The skeptical problem removes all verifiability via comparative analysis. Now, considering the skeptical problem, student B may be able to lose momentum halfway across the monkey bars, fall off, and make no such claim about his failure to complete the task.

Helpful commentary for a fuller understanding of this problem comes from Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. He offers the example of the equation '68+57' and provides the solution '125'. Then, he supposes that a skeptic asks after the meaning of '+', offering a function he titles quus, rather than the presupposed function of plus. Quus, he continues functions as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}x \oplus y &= x + y, \text{ if } x, y < 57 \\ &= 5 \text{ otherwise}\end{aligned}$$

Thus, Kripke's original answer, '125', is no longer assumed, because there is no reason for Kripke to have instantiated the 'plus' function rather than the 'quus' function (7-9)³. His explanation of the skeptic's paradox through example shows that (1) the meaning of rules is susceptible to new interpretation, (2) there is no fact about a rule that fixes its meaning for all past and future instantiations of the rule, and (3) Wittgenstein's concern in terms of this paradox lies in the application of the rules over time and in new cases. Let us consider each of these branches of the skeptic's paradox as it occurs to Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein.

³ Kripke, Saul A. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition*. Blackwell, 2007.

Kripke provides room for conversation around the interpretation of rules. His concern does not lay primarily in the possibility of confusion between two people, although that concern is probably one of significance, but rather, in the possibility of a new application of a rule with each use. He elaborates on his example of his interpretation of 'plus' to mean 'addition' rather than 'quaddition' and says, "But then it appears to follow that there was no fact about me that constituted my having meant plus rather than quus . . . If there was no such thing as my meaning plus rather than quus in the past, neither can there be any such thing in the present . . . There can be no fact as to what I mean by 'plus', or any other word at any time. (21)" This claim is an important one to the essence of Wittgenstein's skeptical paradox. Firstly, it functions to deny the claims of a truth-functional picture theory, such as that found in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which Kripke will do with more clarity and specificity later in his text. Most significantly, this claim is asking after the Wittgensteinian concern of an infinite regress of a "rule for interpreting a rule" (17, § 84). There is nothing about his instantiation of addition that justifies its use; it would be just as likely and reasonable for him to have exercised the function of 'quus'. Of course, he would not have used such an application of the rule as 'quus' without having been aware of the function, but the skeptic has now provided a new interpretation of 'plus' which necessitates a question about all other iterations of plus.

Kripke continues to discuss the nature of rules in further detail by asking after that which informs the rule's application. It seems as though, in the case of 'plus' for example, a person, often as a child, is taught that any numbers x and y are performed

according to the addition function whenever ‘plus’ is placed between them. First, the child learns the function and then practices the function indefinitely. After some amount of practice, the child will seem to have mastered the function of addition and, any time they see any numbers x and y conjoined by ‘plus’, they will provide the sum⁴. This practice-- that which has given rise to the proficiency with the additive function-- however, is finite. There are only a certain number of equations which one will perform before they have decidedly mastered the addition function. The skeptic’s paradox, then, becomes even more intriguing when one considers that there is no infinite confirmation of a function, but that finite experiences inform all future instantiation of the function. Kripke says, “To say that there is a general rule in my mind that tells me how to add in the future is only to throw the problem back on to other rules that also seem to be given only in terms of finitely many cases” (22). He gives us a problem that combines this infinite regress of “rules for determining rules” met with the finitude of rule practice; each rule’s “correct” instantiation is determined by a finite number of cases and, when questioned, is determined only by other rules whose correct applications are also defended by only a finite number of cases. In the Kripkensteinian language structure, the most obvious solution to this problem comes with an assertion of lasting and external truth. Should one accept the existence of such meaning, they could explain that a rule functions because of the meaning of the rule which survives any number of cases and exists outside of any one case. However, Wittgenstein and Kripke both argue that

⁴ I want to recognize the potential for error; there is occasional miscalculation that comes with an attempt at completing an arithmetical problem. However, a clerical error does not necessarily indicate a confusion about the function of addition. We are concerned here with someone whose incorrect response results from a confusion about the function of addition rather than someone whose incorrect response comes from error in calculation.

this sort of meaning does not exist and the function of rules are only ever determined by finite case practice (43). The skeptical problem is perpetuated by Kripke and Wittgenstein's eradication of external meaning or truth functionality as the rule's correct instantiation is only dependent on the finite number of previous cases informing the newest application.

Wittgenstein has now proposed a structure of language, a skeptical paradox within the structure, and reason to understand the skeptic's problem as rightly problematic. In Kripke's analysis of this work, he provides a helpful clarification about Wittgenstein's intentions to provide some of the structure and direction for the ensuing conversation. Kripke notes, ". . . Wittgenstein seems to be more concerned with the question 'Am I right in thinking that I am still applying the same rule?' than with the question 'Is my application of the rule right?'" (29) Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's concerns seem to be explicated in his example of addition and quaddition as two of any number of potential functions of 'plus'. While it does seem like one could rightly consider the implications of the new 'quaddative' function on previously executed equations, the question with which Kripke is most concerned is "why did you choose to instantiate an additive function in *this* case?" Through the problematization of the rules, Kripke has taken away any sort of external truth to the rules as well as any means for supporting a given instantiation of the rule via other rules and conditions. The present application no longer has purpose. Kripke, now aware of the quaddition interpretation of the 'plus function' could have, with just as much reason, applied the 'quaddition' function to the equation '68+57' and provided the answer '5'. The nature of

the question is that of the purpose of the present application; he is not particularly concerned with asking after the larger nature of 'plus' in terms of addition and quaddition so that there is question about every equation that uses 'plus'. I mean to say that the paradox does not suggest that all iterations of the 'plus' function are at stake but that there is not sufficient reason for believing that 'plus' is to be executed as addition, rather than quaddition, in this circumstance. A Kripkensteinian analysis of the equation '68+57' would recognize that, historically, there has existed reason for the instantiation of the addition function for 'plus' without making any assumptions about the present function of 'plus'. Having interpreted a rule in one way previously does not provide reason for understanding the rule in any such way moving forward if one takes seriously the skeptic's paradox. Furthermore, the paradox is concerned with what *does* govern the use of any given rule and whether or not there are means for determining, affirming, and/or denying an application of a rule.

Kripke's detailing of Wittgenstein's skeptic's paradox in *Philosophical Investigations* provides clear examples where the paradox has direct implications for different types of language. He problematizes common understandings of meaning which argue that external, truth-functional meaning lies beyond particular instantiation of rules. A Kripkensteinian structure, however, asserts that no such meaning exists and that application of the rules is only ever supported by a previous finite number of instantiations, which is insufficient to resolve the skeptic's paradox. This analysis outlines the linguistic implications of the skeptic's problem by providing a framework for questioning the applications of rules and then provides a way to progress the

conversation so that language is not stripped of use, even while considering the skeptical problem.

IV. The Kripkensteinian Solution

At this point in our exploration of Wittgenstein's language-games per Kripke, we have established the nature of language games, the skeptical problem, and the implications accompanying the skeptical problem that makes it one worth paying attention to and trying to solve. Wittgenstein dedicates the latter half of his *Philosophical Investigations* to this task: that is, presenting a solution to the skeptical paradox. Kripke's interpretation of this part of the *Investigations* is an intriguing one because of the suggestion that Wittgenstein's argument is twofold: the first part being his solution to the skeptical paradox and the second being a rejection of private language. While common conception is that Wittgenstein's denial of private language follows his solution to the skeptical problem, Kripke asserts that his solution is his denial of private language.

Because of the complexity of the skeptical paradox, especially considering the denial of external truth, the solution will require a creative precision: qualities not lacking from Kripkenstein's suggestion. After the rejection of a few insufficient theories for resolution⁵, Kripke offers a new understanding of Wittgenstein's question. The

⁵ There are three different theories that necessitate rejection before Kripke can offer a different understanding of Wittgenstein's question. Firstly, he addresses dispositionalists, which argue that it is not the sheer fact of the past instantiations of the rule that determine its function. In other words, it is not because I have exercised '+' as addition in the past that I should interpret it as addition in the present case, but something of the opposite order. The dispositionalist would instead assert that it is one's disposition that determined this interpretation in the past and this same disposition which will determine the answer both presently and in the future (23). Kripke's response, however, is that one's disposition is to

eradication of truth conditions necessitates a replacement theory for understanding meaning. For Wittgenstein, this comes in the form of justification conditions, which Kripke describes in two questions. He interprets Wittgenstein to be saying, “. . . first, ‘Under what conditions may this form of words be appropriately asserted (or denied)?’; second, given an answer to the first question, ‘What is the role, and the utility, in our lives of our practice of asserting (or denying) the form of words under these conditions?’”

(73) These questions redirect our attention so that one is no longer searching for a nonexistent external objective truth on which their interpretations and applications of rules may stand. Rather, the rules themselves provide the grounds for meaning.

Language does not function so that it refers to external meaning that informs the way that one names, describes, etc., but, instead, meaning happens in the use of rules themselves. Upon further analysis of these justification conditions, Kripke says, “Now the replacement of truth conditions by justification conditions has a dual role in the *Investigations*. First, it offers a new approach to the problems of how language has meaning, contrasted with that of the *Tractatus*. But second, it can be applied to give an account of assertions about meaning themselves, regarded as assertions within our

say that, “. . . the totality of my dispositions, is finite” (26). and so the attempt to avoid the finitude of dependency on past experience by appealing to the disposition also falls short to the limitations of finitude. Secondly, Kripke address the simplistic solution, which asserts that a person would most likely interpret a rule in whatever way is simplest. Kripke’s response to this is to first determine that the argument at hand is not an exclusively epistemic problem; the claim is that, “. . . an omniscient being, with access to *all* available facts, still would not find any fact that differentiates between the plus and quus hypotheses. Such an omniscient being would have neither need nor use for simplicity considerations.” (39) Finally, Kripke addresses a behaviorist disposition to the skeptical problem. The nature of this rejection has a slightly different nuance than the first two: there is a tendency for people to interpret Wittgenstein with a behaviorist disposition and then to address the problem in the same manner. He explains that, should one rightly understand Wittgenstein’s language games, skeptical problem, and solution, it would be clear that his response is not one of behaviorism, but one that directly rejects the idea (44).

language” (77). This analysis is important to understanding the way that Wittgenstein’s justification conditions function; Wittgenstein has now eradicated any semblance of Platonic meaning, which would assert an eternal, unchanging, external truth, and replaced our interpretation of meaning with something much more contextualized, which I will show. Objective, timeless meaning has been discredited and replaced by questions about the conditions under which one would be justified in interpreting a rule in any given way.

With Wittgenstein’s question redefined, the groundwork for understanding Wittgenstein’s solution to the paradox has been laid, which Kripke provides by continuing his example of arithmetic. Wittgenstein’s solution to the paradox comes in the form of a communal or contextual definition of meaning so that one’s participation⁶ in a language game determines the way that they should apply a rule. Kripke explains this as he says, “When we pronounce that a child has mastered the rule of addition, we mean that we can entrust him to react as we do in interactions . . . Our entire lives depend on countless such interactions, and on the ‘game’ of attributing to others the mastery of certain concepts or rules, thereby showing that we expect them to behave as we do” (93). A language game is developed when a community of people determine one

⁶ “Participation” is not to be understood here necessarily in terms of one’s own agency or free will; this sort of interpretation might be dependent on the language game we are discussing. For something as universally accepted as the function of addition, there are not people “opting in” or “opting out” of addition; should a student be asked to repeat the first grade because they are not proficient in addition, their parent would not reply with, “Instead, my child is performing quaddition.” Even if the parent replied that way, they would not be met with understanding or an “agree to disagree” disposition. The ‘addition’ function of ‘plus’ is not up for debate or interpretation and so I am not arguing here that one’s “participation” in the language game which asserts that ‘+’ is interpreted as ‘addition’ is a decision to be made by an individual. I do, however, think that there exist language games where there is more room for conscious acceptance or denial: an argument you will find in more detail in the section which considers patriarchy as its own language game.

collective interpretation of a rule and people are permitted into the community based on their ability to apply this rule correctly. This process happens with reference to the other rules of the game as the standard for objectivity and, in most cases, happens unconsciously, because of the fundamental and largely unnamable nature of many of the language game's rules. Kripke's example says that a child is said to have mastered addition when they are able to perform an equation where any given numbers x and y are conjoined by '+' and the child provides the sum that would have been given by the teacher. Because the language game which interprets 'plus' with the function of addition includes those who are proficient in the games of knowing, mathematics, etc., the implications of such an example are far reaching. However, different language games are determined by different people, namely, those who are practiced participants in the game. Again, determinations about the rules and any changes to the rules, while dependent on the community of a language game, are rarely made consciously or in a way that one would even be able to name. To return to our previous example, student A is said to have completed the task of crossing the monkey bars when he swings to the *end* because of the language game developed by students B, C, D, and E (or possibly all of the children at the particular playground or the creators of monkey bars). Suppose, however, that students X, Y, and, Z arrive at the playground and they begin to play their own game on the monkey bars where the player swings halfway across the monkey bars, drops to the ground, and runs to the end of the bars. It seems counterintuitive to what we may know about monkey bars, but seems probable that such a game could have been created by a group of children on the playground. The community of students A-E have

determined their interpretation for *completing the task*, which is to swing all the way across the monkey bars, whereas students X-Z have operated under different rules, which call for climbing half way and running half way. What should happen upon our two groups of students meeting at the monkey bars? Or, even more interestingly, what should happen if a teacher approached students X-Z to tell them that dropping from the monkey bars is unsafe and, therefore, outruled? Kripke explains that someone's inability to interpret the rules of a language game result in the exclusion from that community (95). Failure to comply with the community's agreed interpretations proves, according to the function of language games, an inability to function in the community at all. This means that the student who interprets 'plus' to demand the 'quum' of 'x+y', rather than the sum, or students X, Y, and Z, who interpret the nature of playing on the monkey bars differently from the teacher and other students, are rejected from their respective communities.

For Kripke, this development of Wittgenstein's has implications that are largely missed until later in his text. Wittgensteinian readers and scholars often attribute a rejection of private language to Wittgenstein, but not until later in his *Philosophical Investigations*; Kripke, however, interprets Wittgenstein's community-based solution to the skeptic's paradox as the rejection of private language. Kripke explicates his interpretation to say, "It is his solution, I will argue, that contains the argument against private language . . . For, if we see Wittgenstein's problem as a real one, it is clear that he has often been read from the wrong perspective . . . The main problem is not 'How can we show any language-- or some other special form of language-- to be impossible?';

rather, it is ‘How can we show any language at all (public, private, or what-have-you) to be possible?’” (62) Rather than attempting to prove that there is ambiguity or complexity in language, Wittgenstein’s language game model for meaning demands that there is proof that language is possible upon meeting the skeptic's paradox.

Wittgenstein's proof of the possibility of language is found in his solution to the paradox. Kripke's analysis determines that this solution also contains Wittgenstein's rejection of private language. (68) This analysis seems correct for, should Wittgenstein not have offered such a solution, his language games would be subsumed by the skeptic’s problem and he would, once again, be faced with the impossibility of language.

The idea that the larger community upholds the integrity of the language game provides a stark contrast to the timeless objectivity of a truth condition theory. Should a community interpret a rule differently that had been historically, no matter how arbitrarily or purposelessly, the language game would necessarily change because there is no external truth that preserves the original interpretation. The malleability of language games is a topic for further discussion in the next section, but it will be important for us to first clarify Kripke’s interpretation of this function. He says, “There is no objective fact-- that we all mean addition by ‘+’, or even that a given individual does-- that explains our agreement in particular cases. Rather our license to say of each other that we mean addition by ‘+’ is a part of a ‘language game’ that sustains itself only because of the brute fact that we generally agree. (Nothing about ‘grasping concepts’ guarantees that it will not break down tomorrow.)” (97) Without the community’s adoption of one instantiation of a rule, the truth of that application is no longer

assumed; without a community, there is no justifying such a truth at all. This eradicates the idea of private language because consideration of a rule in isolation provides no standing for the application of the rule. (109) Should the teacher and/or students B, C, D, and E determine that the rightful way to experience monkey bars is the process explained by students X, Y, and Z, there is no objective or external truth that would keep them committed to the original interpretation. It is important to note that the explicit notions of decision, agreement, and agency presented in this example are not necessarily true of the nature of language games. Changing rules may come and, in fact, usually present themselves, as a matter of unconscious change reflective of a cultural adaptation and practice, introduction of new language, or a number of other things. However, there are instances such as the one I will provide in my concluding chapter, where changing the rules of a game requires a cognitive recognition of the insufficiency and, in this case, harm, of the current rules and intentional behavior to change them. Kripke further explains that this community-justified truth, explicit and recognized or unconscious, cannot even be understood to say that an entire community is necessarily correct in their interpretation of truth, but that they simply agree with one another so that someone new to the community would not seem to have grounds for asserting any different interpretation (112). Language games are dependent on communal practice of the rules and it is in this relationship that Kripke finds Wittgenstein's rejection of private language. A structure where meaning is found in the practice of rules amongst players of the game inherently excludes the possibility of private language as one player

of their own game would not have means for learning rules or a community of players with which to determine applications of rules.

The Kripkensteinian solution to the skeptical paradox is found in the agreement of a community: an assertion which also denies the possibility of private language. The lack of objective truth means that meaning is no longer dependent on truth conditions but on justification conditions so that a community's agreement on the function of any given rule ('+', monkey bars, etc.) determines the function of that rule for any given instantiation of that rule within the community. Of course, in some cases, that necessarily subjugates the rule to the potential for change, should the community and/or the way that a community interprets a rule undergo change itself.

V. Why This Matters: The Patriarchy is a Language Game

At this point, we have discussed and analyzed Kripkensteinian language games in terms of a few different examples; these situations served as means for understanding the concepts themselves so that the philosophies offered by both Wittgenstein and Kripke were accessible for conversation and consideration. In order to present my closing thoughts on the topic, I would like for us to consider a number of new examples whose purpose may be slightly different than that of their predecessors. While these examples may be helpful for understanding Kripkensteinian language games as a new context is made available, the purpose of this section is to show the *importance* of the work we have done thus far. The framework that I will present allows us to see how language games are an essential part of the human condition, making their nature and

function essential to understanding the contemporary climate. This thought experiment will challenge us to think of patriarchy as a language game.

A while back, I was quite sick with tonsillitis, meaning that my voice was gone and speaking had become challenging. After a long day of classes and work, I made my way to my to my professor's office for my last meeting of the day. I sat outside of her office in the early evening awaiting her arrival and considering the best way for me to present her with my material for an upcoming presentation considering my inability to speak. Most everyone in the office had left for the day, so I sat alone, reading and typing, when a student approached. I asked him if he was looking for the professor with whom I was to have my meeting; I was her teaching assistant and, so, familiar with the general schedule and structures of her classes, so it was likely that if he had such a question, I would have been able to answer it. His reply to my offer was not one I expected (nor should I have had any reason to expect it).

“Yes, I am looking for her. I have a meeting not a question. Are you a feminist?” The final question followed the preceding two statements without so much as a breath of hesitation, despite its seeming out of place, out of context, and aggressively inappropriate (and inappropriately aggressive). Taken aback and not having the vocal capacity for much else, my reply was a simple, “. . . Yes, passionately; are you?”

Clearly more agitated, the student replied, “No, and passionately. So, what do you think of Ford vs. Kavanaugh?” Our conversation did not last much longer; he was only able to ask me a handful more questions before my professor arrived and the aggression was instantaneously mitigated by the presence of another person. The exchange could

not have lasted any more than ten minutes and yet, it necessitated considerations about my absence of voice, my being alone in the building, and the aggression with which this student was addressing the sanctity of women's bodies in terms of one of the country's most contentious contemporary sexual assault cases. This story is one of many.

When I was nineteen years old, the passenger side mirror of my car was broken off and I decided that I wanted to fix the mirror myself, rather than take it to an auto shop. I ordered the parts I needed online, watched a number of videos about the intricacies of taking apart the inside of the car door and, eventually, was confident that I knew enough to replace the mirror myself. A friend and I spent one afternoon slowly and carefully following each step that I had memorized and were far along in the project when we came upon the last part that we needed to unscrew to replace the mirror. We realized that the screw was both rusted and stripped, making it impossible for us to remove from the car. After a bit of convincing, I put aside my desire to fix it all myself and we drove to a nearby auto shop so that we could have the screw removed. There were two men left at the shop; they removed the screw for me and then informed me that the exchange needed to be "under the table". I wasn't necessarily comfortable with the exchange, but was eager to get back to replacing the mirror, so I paid them and attempted to leave. But before I could, one of the men put his arm around my shoulder and handed me a business card while saying, "Tell your friends to stop on by. And, if you ever have any more trouble, you come back and see me, okay?" I grew uneasy and tried to untangle myself from under his arm, but the more I squirmed, the more he tightened his grip around me, and it became clear to me that I would not be leaving until he chose

to let go of my body. “I want to see that smile back here soon, okay?” he said. After a few of my attempts to appease him with half smiles and unassured nods, he let me go and I left, feeling defeated and disturbed.

Another time, I was sitting in a fast food restaurant with a friend of mine when a middle-aged man standing behind me began to yell a number of comments about my body and the things he’d choose to do to it. I paid him no attention and continued to eat my food, but my doing so gave rise to his speaking louder and louder until the entire restaurant was silent and watching him. His language was violent, aggressive, and clear about the fact that his intentions would be unphased by my lack of consent. I was afraid, and looked only at my friend, trying my best to ignore the situation and hoping that someone else would speak up for the sake of my safety. The man was a person of color and, upon my ignoring his violent sexual harassment, he called me a racist and left the building.

Lastly, I would like for us to consider an experience I had in the classroom. I got a phone call from a professor asking me to begin her Introduction to Philosophy class; she had been running late to school and did not want her students to leave. My job for the first few minutes was relatively simple: answer questions; their next exam was only a few days away and they would benefit from the opportunity to ask questions they may have about Plato. I walked in the room excited about the opportunity to be a facilitator of learning in such an environment. My initial attempts to simply answer questions about Plato failed as one student began interrogating me about my stance as a feminist, amongst other things. His arbitrary declarations and disillusioned questions were

littered with antagonistic vocabulary and statements about “man” and “mankind.” There was not an answer I offered that solved the issue and, somehow, I had become the object of examination and suspicion instead of the teaching assistant reviewing Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. The student’s disgust for feminism dominated the classroom until my commentary about his lack of preparation for the upcoming exam redirected our conversation back to Plato.

I am grateful to have ended each of these examples with statements about my own safety or diffusing the situations and recognize that there are innumerable circumstances, some my own and many the experiences of other people, that do not end in this same way. My physical safety, however, did not mean that even one moment of any of these situations was unforgotten. My eventual reclamation of the conversation outside my professors office, my body at the autoshop and the fastfood restaurant, and my role in the classroom were the beginnings of sustained considerations about the climate that allowed for any of those things to happen. Through conversations with people that I trust, reading significant texts, and my own consideration, I eventually came upon the following questions: (1) How were such circumstances even plausible (how was it the case that my position as a student, customer, facilitator, etc. was so swiftly taken and then reversed to cause harm?) (2) Why were the other customers, guests, and students present not only complacent, but invested in such a clearly (or, what I hoped would have been clearly) harmful environment? (3) Is there something that I can do differently *next time* I am in this situation? It is in answering these three questions where the significance and importance of language games will be made clear.

Firstly, let us consider a denial of objective truth (or truth-functional language) in a Kripkean analysis of Wittgenstein's language games. As explicated above, Wittgenstein's language game theory functions not so that any given word or statement points out an external truth which correlates to the word but so that the truth of any given rule is determined only by the community's agreement. A consideration of this function in a patriarchal structure may be a consideration with the consistent use of "man" to talk about the human population. This function of the word "man" is problematic in its ambiguity; it often invites genuine confusion about whether you mean to speak of men or to speak of all human beings. It also says something about the nature of the sociological climate if the nature of *men* is not sufficiently representative of the *human* population but is the assumed neutral disposition of a human. The assumption that *man* is a sufficient word for any human being claims that *man* is the natural and neutral disposition of humanity and *woman* is some sort of deviation from this state. For both of these reasons, when someone makes a claim to me about "man", my response is typically a question about whether they have made an attempt to speak about the population of *men* or the population of *people*; with consistency, the speaker replies "man *means* human." This response can only function in two ways: either the speaker is pointing out an objective external truth which, if we are taking Wittgenstein's language games seriously, does not exist; or the speaker is referring to a rule of their language game to justify their usage of the word. Clearly, my concern will be with the latter, which asserts that a community of people has affirmed the instantiation of a rule

where one may adequately speak about the entire human population by using the word “man.”

Kripke explicates the nature of this community-justified rule following by explaining that there is no objectivity about the world or outside of language that justifies any given rule but, “Rather our license to say of each other that we mean addition by ‘+’ is a part of a ‘language game’ that sustains itself only because of the brute fact that we generally agree. (Nothing about ‘grasping concepts’ guarantees that it will not break down tomorrow.)” (97) A community’s mutual affirmation that *man* is not only representative of the human population but, infact, the neutral disposition of humanity, answers, albeit disappointingly, two of my three previous questions.⁷ (1) The aggressive conversation with the student in class and with the man in the restaurant was made possible because the larger community has historically confirmed language which appealed to men. For a woman to be in the front of the classroom has the potential to be at least confusing for someone whose language game has long affirmed rules which prefer men (and it is not irrelevant to consider that my typical role with regard to this student is that of *peer*, with minimal power to insist on a generally neutral classroom environment). Despite that my speaking to the class had not previously mentioned feminism in any capacity, the student’s eventual knowledge that my disposition is a feminist one gave rise to his demand for the minimal authority that my (very) temporary position awarded me for the sake of righteous protection over his language game which

⁷ (1) How was such a conversation even plausible (how was it the case that my position as a facilitator was so swiftly taken and then reversed to cause harm?) (2) Why were the other 40 students in the room not only complacent, but invested in such a clearly (or, what I hoped would have been clearly) harmful environment? (3) Is there something that I can do differently *next time* I am in this situation?

so evidently favors men. (2) This same reasoning applies to the disposition of the rest of the classroom: a male student's interrogation of the feminist at the front of the room may have seemed appropriate to students whose subconscious inclinations may be to protect the rules to the only language game to which they have been exposed. To apply a Kripkensteinian community-justified language game system to the current situation is to say that the community *generally agrees* with a patriarchal system . . . my hope for the human condition is that this language game may "break down tomorrow." And that is my answer to question number three.

(3) Should we take language-games as offered by Wittgenstein and analyzed by Kripke seriously, we can understand language games which privilege men, including verbalized language, tones of voice, actions, etc., as a community of people who have all agreed that these patriarchal instantiations are the correct interpretations of rules. As previously mentioned, people who prove incapable of following the rules of the language game are ostracized from the community. I would like to suggest that the role of the feminist is similar to that of the one who proves incapable of rule-following; our job is to *reject* the rules. Our consistent protest for alterity, including a language that recognizes the ambiguity and injustice of allowing *maleness* to be the main image of the human condition, is a refusal of the rules of the patriarchy. The nature of feminism is to vehemently deny the language game of the patriarchy and demand a language game that appreciates difference. Instead of the current condition which both prefers and privileges a very specific concept of man, the feminist recognizes the sanctity of the human being. The feminist denies forced assimilation and value found in sameness and

demands justice for each person. How significant is it, then, to remember that patriarchal systems have not discovered the truth and, in turn, instantiate such truth in their perpetuations of injustice. Patriarchy does not have any more reason to dominate the contemporary human condition than feminism does except for the common agreement amongst our larger community to abide by arbitrarily harmful rules. While rules are rarely conspicuous or recognizable, the rules of patriarchy are, at least in part, namable. Feminism is the rise of those that have recognized patriarchal rules for what that are, and, consequently, often refused those rules. As a result, the feminist position is punished by alienation. As a response, we are forming a more inclusive community for language rules. In our new game, language no longer mediates a disillusioned sense of injustice back onto the human condition as though it were objective truth but, instead, develops a nature of fluidity so that our language game may permit an inclusive progression of the human condition. Where complacency with the contemporary game perpetuates harm, a conscious decision to refuse the rules that cause harm and to *choose* language that promotes humanization will give rise to a new language game of radical alterity. So let us be creators and instantiators of a community that demands justice and celebrates difference.

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