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SISTEMA DE ESTUDIOS DE POSGRADO

EL CONCEPTO DE JUEGO EN WITTGENSTEIN Y DERRIDA

Tesis sometida a la consideración de la Comisión del Programa de Estudios de Posgrado en  
Filosofía para optar al grado y título de Maestría Académica en Filosofía

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# Resumen<sup>1</sup>

Se pretende construir un vínculo entre la noción wittgensteiniana de Sprachspiel (juego de lenguaje) y la noción derridiana de dissémination (diseminación) a través del concepto de juego. La importancia de esta relación consiste en mostrar cómo algunas propuestas de dos pensadores que abordan de manera distinta problemas filosóficos similares, relacionados con el significado del lenguaje, pueden converger e incluso complementarse.

La consideración del método comparativo en filosofía por parte de Ralph Weber (2013) es seguida parcialmente para estructurar y desarrollar esta investigación. Sin embargo, más allá de una comparación, la investigación busca hacer converger los dos relatos (Sprachspiel y dissémination) utilizando el concepto de juego como área de intersección entre ambas nociones.

En la introducción se ofrecen consideraciones en torno a las peculiaridades del trabajo y precauciones para quien lo lea. El primer capítulo se dedica a los antecedentes de la noción de juego tanto en Wittgenstein como en Derrida; el segundo se encarga de establecer el área de intersección y reconocer los relatos; mientras que el tercero es donde se anticipa el vínculo entre las nociones que nos ocupan a través de la consideración de algunas de sus afinidades y contraposiciones. Para concluir se toman los alcances obtenidos en la investigación para construir el vínculo entre las nociones.

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<sup>1</sup> Resumen/abstract is influenced somehow by Pérez-Porras' one (2020).

# Abstract

Building a link between Wittgenstein's notion of Sprachspiel (language-game) and Derrida's notion of dissémination (dissemination) is intended through the concept of game. Its value lies in showing how some developments of thinkers who approach similar philosophical problems differently, related to the meaning of language, can converge and even complement each other.

Ralph Weber's (2013) approach to comparative method in philosophy is partially followed as a way to structure and develop the research. However, beyond a comparison, this research aims to establish a convergence between the two relata (Sprachspiel and dissémination) using the concept of game as an area of intersection between them.

In the introduction are given considerations about peculiarities of this work and warnings to the reader. The first chapter is dedicated to the background of Wittgenstein's and Derrida's notion of game; the next chapter establishes the area of intersection and recognizes the two relata; and the last chapter is devoted to address some affinities and contrapositions between the relata as a prelude to their link. Finally, in the conclusion the outputs of the research are taken to render the link between the notions.

# Abbreviations<sup>2</sup>

The following editions appear also in the references. In Derrida's case, citations are provided with two sets of pages. The first refers to a French edition, while the second refers to an English translation.

Works by Derrida:

- 'DIF' 'Différance'. In *Marges de la philosophie*. Minuit, 1972b, pp. 1-29.  
'Différance'. In *Margins of Philosophy*. Harvester, 1982, pp. 1-27.
- 'DIS' 'La dissémination'. In *La dissémination*. Seuil, 1972a, pp. 319-407.  
'Dissemination'. In *Dissemination*. Athlone, 1981a, pp. 287-366.
- 'DS' 'La double séance'. In *La dissémination*. Seuil, 1972a, pp. 199-318.  
'The Double Session'. In *Dissemination*. Athlone, 1981a, pp. 173-286.
- DG *De la grammatologie*. Minuit, 1967a.  
*Of Grammatology*. John Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- 'E' 'Envoi'. In *Psyché* (vol I). Galilée, 1998, pp. 109-143.  
'Envoi'. In *Psyche* (vol I). Stanford University Press, 2007, pp. 94-128.

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<sup>2</sup> The style of citation of Derrida's and Wittgenstein's works is inspired in several texts. In particular: An issue of the *Oxford Literary Review* entitled "A Decade After Derrida" (2014); *Guía de lectura de Ser y Tiempo* (2016) by Jesús Adrián Escudero; *Jacques Derrida: Opening Lines* (1998) by Marian Hobson; *The Cambridge Introduction to Jacques Derrida* (2007) by Leslie Hill; *Derrida's Of Grammatology* (2008) by Arthur Bradley; and the second edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (2018) edited by Hans Sluga & David G. Stern.

- 'HL' 'Hors livre'. In *La dissémination*. Seuil, 1972a, pp. 7-67.  
'Outwork'. In *Dissemination*. Athlone, 1981a, pp. 1-59.
- 'MB' 'La mythologie blanche'. In *Marges de la philosophie*. Minuit, 1972b, pp. 247-324.  
'White Mythology'. In *Margins of Philosophy*. Harvester, 1982, pp. 207-271.
- P *Positions*. Minuit, 1972c.  
*Positions*. The University of Chicago Press, 1981b.
- 'PH' 'La pharmacie de Platon'. In *La dissémination*. Seuil, 1972a, pp. 69-198.  
'Plato's Pharmacy'. In *Dissemination*. Athlone, 1981a, pp. 61-172.
- PS *Points de suspension*. Galilée, 1992.  
*Points... Interviews*. Stanford University Press, 1995b.
- 'SEC' 'Signature événement contexte'. In *Marges de la philosophie*.  
Minuit, 1972b, pp. 365-393.  
'Signature Event Context'. In *Margins of Philosophy*.  
Harvester, 1982, pp. 307-330.
- 'SSJ' 'La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines'.  
In *L'écriture et la différence*. Seuil, 1967b, pp. 409-428.  
'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'.  
In *Writing and Difference*. Routledge, 2001, pp. 351-370.
- 'T' 'Tympan'. In *Marges de la philosophie*. Minuit, 1972b, pp. i-xxv.  
'Tympan'. In *Margins of Philosophy*. Harvester, 1982, pp. ix-xxix.
- VP *Le voix et le phénomène*. PUF, 1967.  
*Speech and Phenomena*. Northwestern University Press, 1973.

Works by Wittgenstein:

- 'BB' 'Blue Book'. In *The Blue and Brown Books*. Blackwell, 2007a.
- BUF Bemerkungen über Frazers "The Golden Bough." *Synthese*, 1967, pp. 233–253.  
Remarks on Frazer's "The Golden Bough." In *The Mythology in our Language*.  
HUA Books, 2018, pp. 29-75.
- 'PP' 'Philosophy of Psychology'. In *Philosophical Investigations* (previously  
known as the second part of PU). Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 182-243.
- PU *Philosophical Investigations*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- TLP *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Routledge, 2001.
- TS *The Big Typescript*. Blackwell, 2005.
- UG *On Certainty*. Basil Blackwell/Oxford, 1969.
- VB *Culture and Value*. Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- Z *Zettel*. University of California Press, 2007b.



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# Introduction

As it is known, the concept of game has been a fruitful one. Many and different fields of knowledge have used it in a wide variety of forms and connotations. Nowadays it is still relevant. Its applications can be found from formal and natural sciences to social sciences. Of course, philosophy is not an exception, although it seems to have not had a relevant role across the history of Western philosophy. At least until the last century, where it became little by little more relevant. For example, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Fink, and Derrida are some thinkers related to the concept of game in the philosophy of the twentieth century.

Probably the first thing that comes to mind when the concept of game is addressed is its ludic side, related to pastime and amusement. However, we are not dealing here with this side of the notion of game. Besides, we are not evaluating and comparing particular games. Wittgenstein's and Derrida's addressing of game is for us more related to the searching for an alternative approach to consider traditional philosophical problems associated with meaning.

In Derrida's case, through the concept of game he is dialoging with the history of Western philosophy, while Wittgenstein does it mainly with his own positions stated in the *Tractatus*.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, he also refers to philosophers close to him like Moore, Russell, or Frege, and other thinkers like Plato or Augustine. Therefore, their developments around game should be seen as taking part of a wider picture.

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, in the preface of the *Investigations*, he states: "I had occasion to reread my first book (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) and to explain its ideas. Then it suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old ideas and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my older way of thinking."

On the use of the concept of game, it should be noted that Wittgenstein uses the term "Spiel" in his German texts, commonly translated as "game" in English; and Derrida uses the term "jeu," translated in English mainly as "play," but sometimes also as "game." In fact, "play" and "game" are not strictly synonyms, at least in Derrida's and Wittgenstein's texts, as David B. Allison stated:

One striking difference, of course, consists in: Wittgenstein's emphasis on the manner in which we come to acquire our use of language. Thus, one "learns" to play language "games" in the same way one learns any other game. (...) In this respect, Derrida devotes scant attention to the individual's acquisition of language skills, or to linguistic competence in general. (1978, p. 100n17)

Wittgenstein mainly uses game to describe human activities, more or less defined, as the source of meaning.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Derrida focuses his attention on game to explain the provisional situation (of an ongoing process) which brings meaning to words.

It should be noted that our text uses the English words "play" and "game" as expressions accounting for the same process/phenomenon. "Play" is often taken as a verb and "game" as a noun. Game/play is a curious concept and in English it is more evident how it tends to withdraw itself from a definite word, enabling a play in turn between "game" and "play." The reader will find that our treatment of game/play imply inconsistencies when we are addressing excerpts from translations which use "play" as a noun accounting for either "Spiel" or "jeu."<sup>5</sup> More on the relation among Spiel/jeu/game/play will be covered in the second chapter.

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<sup>4</sup> In postanalytic discussions (Donald Davidson, Richard Rorty, Paul Boghossian, Katarzyna Jaszczolt, Robert Brandom, and others), Wittgenstein's second period is recognized as the transition from a standpoint focused on the relation between syntax and semantics to a viewpoint focused on the relation between semantics and pragmatics. Indeed, a complex relationship where logic, linguistics, and psychology are involved.

<sup>5</sup> For an English speaker, it could sound weird when "play" is addressed as "game." We are just trying to maintain the consistency between "Spiel" and "jeu" found at least between Derrida's and Wittgenstein's thought, that which seems to be partially lost in English editions when Wittgenstein's "Spiel" is translated as "game" and Derrida's "jeu" as "play."

About the structure of the research there are also some things to say. It was intended to use the approach of comparative philosophy proposed by Ralph Weber both for structuring the research as well as the method to be followed. For him, a comparison in philosophy should have, at least, the following components:

(i) A comparison is always done by someone; (ii) at least two relata (comparata) are compared; (iii) the comparata are compared in some common respect (tertium comparationis); and (iv) the result of a comparison is a relation between the comparata based on the chosen respect. To this, a fifth aspect might be added, what I call the "pre-comparative tertium", which refers to a point of commonality that is posited or asserted in the determination of the comparata as that which is to be compared. (2013, pp. 595-596)

In this research the two relata are Sprachspiel and dissémination, the tertium comparationis is the concept of game, and the pre-comparative tertium (the reason why Sprachspiel and dissémination are chosen as comparatas) could be the shared aim of these notions of addressing meaning in language without appealing to an essence. For us, the first component should make evident that:

Each [comparison] is motivated by some specific reason(s) and pursued to reach some specific goal(s) that may well point beyond the "comparison itself" to questions of personal taste, personal or collective identity, institutional pressures, religious, moral, political or other agendas, continuations of earlier debates or conversations, and so on. (Weber, 2013, p. 596)

Looking for a convergence between Sprachspiel and dissémination, which is the goal of this research, could also imply an alteration on the status of the tertium comparationis. For that reason, it must be noted that the notion of game here addressed is not completely independent from Derrida's and Wittgenstein's texts, or even independent from language-

game and dissemination. Game as the area of intersection,<sup>6</sup> rather than a traditional and/or legitimate tertium comparationis, is also built from explicit and tacit elaborations from the texts of these authors dealing with the comparatas, but also with other related notions.

The reason for taking the notion of game from Derrida's and Wittgenstein's texts likely sought to not use a notion which could result unrelated to Wittgenstein's and Derrida's addressing of game. Maybe it was grounded in the intention to build something although strictly belonging neither to Derrida's nor Wittgenstein's approach to game, it could be a point of view able enough to focus properly on notions surrounding Derrida's and Wittgenstein's account of game, such as Sprachspiel or dissémination. All of this seeking the aimed link between these notions.

From our point of view the concept of game here accounted tends to resist being taken as an independent tertium comparationis without mixing with the relatas. Even in the approach to the relatas we have appealed to other terms. They, like game, are not sharp notions. For language-game we have recourse to family resemblance, forms of life, praxis, and twisted method, for instance. In the case of dissemination are taken into account, for example, différance, writing, trace, and paleonymy.

The strategy followed could result in a reading of Wittgenstein's approach to game through Derrida's account of game, or the other way around. In fact, approaching dissemination through language-game and vice versa is what leads us to say that they are complementary notions. This way of proceeding could not be compatible with a comparison in a strict sense. As Chakrabarti and Weber state, it could result in a "one-sided" comparison: "A rather crude version of the criticism holds that "one-sided" comparisons unduly take one *comparandum* as a *tertium comparationis* and thereby distort the results of the comparison with the other *comparandum*"(2016, p. 9).

Another issue that could affect the results of the research, whether it is taken as a compari-

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<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Professor Mario Solis Umaña, who suggested shifting from tertium comparationis to something more appropriate according to my research.

son or not, is the knowledge about the relata. Wittgenstein's notion of language-game is for us more familiar than Derrida's dissemination. There could be also a distortion because:

A comparer who is more "familiar" with one comparandum than with the other which is often said to fundamentally distort the results of the comparison, as when, say, a specialist of Plato or John Rawls dares casting a comparative glance at the Confucian *Analects* or Kautilya's *Artha Śāstra*. (Chakrabarti & Weber, 2016, p. 9)<sup>7</sup>

Those deficiencies of the research at some point lead us to leave aside the intentions of developing a comparison in the strict sense, albeit they could also be related to the already mentioned fact that: "A comparison is always done by someone." In the end, the research keeps Weber's aforementioned structure. Game, rather than being a tertium comparationis, it is changed to be an intersection area.

On Wittgenstein's texts published posthumously without his explicit consent,<sup>8</sup> we are just assuming them as being part of Wittgenstein's thought. Ralph Shain, for example, considers the *Blue Book* and the *Investigations* as having plausible inconsistencies related to other texts published without Wittgenstein's direct approval like *On Certainty* or *Culture and Value* (cf. 2018a, p. 198n12; 2018b, p. 457). Even on whether there is a continuity between *The Blue and Brown Books* and the *Investigations*, Hans Sluga advises caution (cf. 2006, p. 7n1). Inconsistencies among cited texts of Wittgenstein's second period or even among Derrida's addressed works are not taken into account.

One more warning. Initially it was aimed to relate Sprachspiel and différance.<sup>9</sup> This fact has plausible repercussions in the way of developing the research, such as reading dissemination through différance. However, both notions are interrelated. Depending on the point of view assumed, one could say that dissemination takes part of différance or vice versa.

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<sup>7</sup> See Weber (2014; 2021) for more on his approach to comparative philosophy.

<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein "let his literary executors know that he wanted them to publish the *Investigations*, but left it to their discretion to publish anything else from his writings. Similarly, the *Blue Book* was dictated to students and thus deliberately distributed to others" (Shain, 2018b, p. 457).

<sup>9</sup> Following a recommendation made by my advisor, différance was replaced with dissemination.

Following Derrida, they could even be just different nominal names trying to account (but failing) for the same process (cf. 'DIF', p. 13/12; 28/26-27).

A possible approach to dissemination from the point of view of *différance*, and adopted in this research, is the following. The notion of *différance* accounts for 1) otherness/differentness enabling meaning (the legacy of structural linguistics) 2) A temporal and spatial deferring which allows meaningful expressions to take place in different contexts. For us, the notion of dissemination could be identified with that second feature of *différance*. Of course, through this temporal and spatial gap accounted by dissemination, it is also possible to reach a dissimilarity among things, enabling a plurality of things happening either in different moments or/and places.

Finally, the way in which the text is presented does not necessarily match the order of its building. For instance, it is maybe evident in section 1.2. At least its main ideas were developed when the major part of the draft of chapter two and three was already written.

# 1. Background to the concept of game in Wittgenstein and Derrida

## 1.1 Influence of Frege and Sraffa on Wittgenstein

Frege's influence on Wittgenstein's philosophy is well known. Wittgenstein himself acknowledges it in the preface of *Tractatus* alongside Russell's influence: "I will only mention that I am indebted to Frege's great works and of the writings of my friend Mr. Bertrand Russell for much of the stimulation of my thoughts." The relevance of Wittgenstein's thought related to Frege's works is enough for an author like Michael Dummett to suggest that the only true way to extend some Fregean notions is through their development made by Wittgenstein (1985, p. 29). Thus, in the first part of this section two Fregean related principles will be taken into account concerning the concept of game: 1) Principle of context and 2) Anti-psychologism.

The other well-known significant influence in the development of Wittgenstein's thought, since his return to Cambridge in 1929, was the Italian economist Piero Sraffa. Already in the *Investigations'* preface, it is stated: "I am indebted to that which a teacher of this university, Mr P. Sraffa, for many years unceasingly applied to my thoughts. It is to this stimulus that I owe the most fruitful ideas of this book." Following the relevance attributed by Wittgenstein to his relation with Sraffa in the previous quote, the second part of this section is devoted to Sraffa's (and through him, Gramsci's) contributions to the pragmatic side of the notion of language-game (and to the notion of game through it).

### 1.1.1 Frege: Principle of context and anti-psychologism

Frege uses the principle of context in *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (1884) to define the concept of number, but its scope is broader. There he writes: “It is only in the context of a proposition that words have any meaning” (1960, § 62, p. 73). So it is idle to ask for the meaning of a word without an environment bringing it sense. That is clear in the introduction of the *Grundlagen*, where Frege states as a principle for his inquiry: “Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition” (1960, p. xxii).

The influence of the principle of context on Wittgenstein is evident at least in some of his texts. Already in *Tractatus* 3.3, there is a direct reference to this principle. Wittgenstein states: “Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning.” The principle of context is not only accepted in the semantic theory of the *Tractatus*, also it is used in the ontological side of this text. Names are proxies of objects, they do not have value by themselves, rather their sense comes from the objects as the world’s substance (TLP, 2.021). Therefore, the relation between names and statements must be likewise the relation between objects and states of affairs. In fact, the resemblance of the principle of context can also be found in other propositions too, such as: “It is essential to things that they should be possible constituents of states of affairs”; “if things can occur in states of affairs this possibility must be in them from the beginning”; and “things are independent in so far as they can occur in all *possible* situations, but this form of independence is a form of connection with states of affairs, a form of dependence” (TLP, 2.011, 2.0121, 2.0122).

The use of the principle of context in the *Investigations* becomes more important due to the notion of language-game. Just as objects must be part of a state of affairs according to the *Tractatus*, words of everyday language must be lexicalized into human practices to become meaningful (cf. PU, § 23). Nonetheless, the principle of context does not apply only to indicative sentences, rather all kinds of language uses are considered. Even the truth value of propositions is not something fixed, as proposed by Frege and followed in the *Tractatus*; instead, it is determined by mutable language-games.

As is noted by commenters, this principle also allows Frege to avoid any kind of psychologism in his research. If we ask a word for its meaning in isolation, it is easier to generate a mental representation as its meaning (Dummett, 1973, p. 495; Valdés-Villanueva, 1998, p. 21).

Frege's anti-psychologism, transversal to all his academic career, can be summarized in another principle of the *Grundlagen*: "Always to separate sharply the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective" (1960, p. xxii). In his most famous work, *Über Sinn und Bedeutung* (1892), we can find the distinction between sense (mode of designation) and reference (objective) of any proposition as an extension of his rejection of something psychological as the ground of logic and thought. For Frege, the latter is not subjective, rather it is identified with the sense of the statement, even though thinking as its correlative process constitutes a psychological event. Frege uses an easy example to show this distinction:

Somebody observes the Moon through a telescope. I compare the Moon itself to the reference; it is the object of the observation, mediated by the real image projected by the object glass in the interior of the telescope, and by the retinal image of the observer. The former I compare to the sense, the latter to the conception or experience. The optical image in the telescope is indeed one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of observation; but it is still objective, inasmuch as it can be used by several observers. At any rate it could be arranged for several to use it simultaneously. But each one would have his own retinal image. (1948, p. 213)

Here the image projected inside the telescope illustrates the sense, which is accompanied by the subjective sensation of who looks through it. Related, in a late text entitled *Der Gedanke* (1918), Frege writes: "The thought, in itself immaterial, clothes itself in the material garment of a sentence and thereby becomes comprehensible to us. We say a sentence expresses a thought" (1956, p. 292).

The orientation given by the anti-psychologism reveals the influence of the Riemannian conceptualist tradition on Frege's work. Alongside mathematicians of Göttingen of the nineteenth century, Frege distances himself from the prevailing way of doing mathematics

in Berlin influenced by Weierstraß and his "arithmetization of analysis" (Tappenden, 2006, pp. 99–100, 105–112). Instead, Frege follows Riemann, refusing to consider mathematical objects as mental.

The well-known (and frequently misunderstood) affirmation of the meaning as use (which implies mastering a technique [cf. PU, § 199]) reveals the Fregean anti-psychologism in the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein states:

Don't think of understanding as a "mental process" at all! — For *that* is the way of talking which confuses you. Instead, ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say "Now I know how to go on"? (...) | In the sense in which there are processes (including mental processes) which are characteristic of understanding, understanding is not a mental process. (PU, § 154)

Like thought for Frege, for whom it is entirely objective, Wittgenstein avoids linking understanding to mental representations. The latter, rather, associates understanding with an intersubjective realm. Both accept the psychological side involved either in thought or understanding, but only as a mediator to reach something else.

The use of the concept of game in Wittgenstein's philosophy takes these two Fregean principles and explores new possibilities with them. Notions such as language-game or family resemblance and even his rejection of the possibility of private languages are hard to understand correctly without Frege.

### 1.1.2 Sraffa: Anthropological turn

The passage related by Monk in his biography of Wittgenstein shows us an astonished Wittgenstein after being asked by Sraffa for the logical form of the Neapolitan skeptic gesture of brushing the chin with the fingertips (1991, pp. 260–261).<sup>10</sup> Of course, with this gesture, Sraffa would not just ask for the logical form of his gesture itself, he would also show the

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<sup>10</sup> According to Sen, Sraffa approaches this event as "if not entirely apocryphal ('I can't remember such a specific occasion'), was more of a tale with a moral than an actual event" (2003, p. 1242).

relevance of social conventions in the meaning of language (Sen, 2003, pp. 1242–1243). Doing so, somehow, could be seen also as rejecting the representational foundation of meaning as the presence of something in the mind.

Wittgenstein, as noted by Sen (2003, p. 1242), also said to Georg Henrik von Wright that the conversations with Sraffa made him feel “like a tree from which all branches have been cut” (2001, p. 15). Nevertheless, Sraffa’s critique was not only destructive, it was also constructive (Sen, 2004, p. 28). This becomes evident if we consider that Wittgenstein and Sraffa maintained weekly meetings for years.

Sraffa plays a crucial role in the anthropological turn in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Wittgenstein’s treatment of meaning as use implies the consideration of praxis (Tätigkeit) as a context that brings meaning to the words and every human activity overall. If we look at the preface of Sraffa’s *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*, as it is suggested by Sen (2003, p. 1253n24), there Sraffa seems to query the theory of prices where demand and supply generate an equilibrium. This equilibrium is probably allowed by the consideration of constant returns in all industries<sup>11</sup> (cf. Sraffa, 1960, p. v). A approach of Sraffa to deal with the problems carried by assumptions was to consider also observational facts, as Sen states:

Sraffa’s demonstration that a snapshot picture of just the production conditions of the economy can tell us so much about possible prices is not only a remarkable analytical diagnosis, it is also a finding of considerable intellectual interest to people who want to think about the correspondence between quantities produced and prices charged. (2003, p. 1248)

We can read Sraffa’s approach (according to Sen) in Fregean terms, which is to ask for prices only related to production and social circumstances, and never do it in isolation from the factual. It is easy (although reductionist?) to see how with Sraffa the Fregean principle of context adds the mutable nature of social conditions to Wittgenstein’s philosophy. In this way,

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<sup>11</sup> More on Sraffa’s economic views and his interpretation of Marshall’s theory could be found in Davis (2002, sec. 2).

Wittgenstein's second period is not a complete break with the philosophy of the *Tractatus*. His turn can be also seen as a readaptation of some earlier notions.<sup>12</sup>

Wittgenstein's new approach comes back even to Gramsci, called by Sen "The Gramsci connection," whom Sraffa knew well because they worked together in the leftist journal *L'Ordine Nuovo* (Sen, 2003, p. 1244).<sup>13</sup> Traces of Gramsci's philosophy of praxis and his considerations on language's nature can be found in Wittgenstein's anthropological approach. Let us consider the following excerpts from Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere*:

It seems that one can say that language is essentially a collective term which does not presuppose any single thing existing in time and space. Language also means culture and philosophy (if only at the level of common sense) and therefore the fact of language is in reality a multiplicity of facts more or less organically coherent and co-ordinated. (Forgacs, 2000, p. 347)

Also, Amartya Sen (2003, p. 1245) focuses his attention on the next fragment:

In acquiring one's conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting. We are all conformists of some conformism or other always man-in-the-mass or collective man. (Forgacs, 2000, p. 325)

The first excerpt is explicit about the social and decentralized nature of language. The consideration of language as a combination of a multiplicity of facts is related to how Wittgenstein explains the nature of concepts in the *Investigations* (cf. PU, § 67). The second quotation shows the relevance of conventions regarding meaning. Its last sentence about conformism also leads us to Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, where he claims that doubt is only possible assuming certainty: "The game of doubting already presupposes certainty" (UG, § 115). Therefore, our

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<sup>12</sup> See note 3.

<sup>13</sup> Davis (2002) also attempts to draw a relation among Gramsci, Sraffa, and Wittgenstein, as the title of this journal article suggests.

starting approach to life and world (worldview) already departs from conventional norms stated by the "collective man."

Considering only these two quotes of Gramsci, it is easy to see why Sraffa dismissed his influence on Wittgenstein when he was approached by Sen with related questions. For him, maybe all the objections to Wittgenstein's early philosophy came from Marxist everyday discussions (Sen, 2003, pp. 1243, 1245).

The value of Sraffa, and Gramsci through him, concerning the concept of game in Wittgenstein's philosophy lies in realizing that inside the elaboration of this notion itself, a game always is played by someone who in turn is placed in a specific social context. Thus, the players' relevance is such that they (as a whole, having intersubjective power) can modify over the time those games in which they are involved.

## 1.2 Influence of Fink and Axelos on Derrida

Derrida in a note found in *Of Grammatology*<sup>14</sup> gives some explicit references about people and their works related to game (of the world?) for him: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Fink, and Axelos are the names mentioned (DG, pp. 73-74n14/326n14). The immediate sentence before the note says: "It is therefore *the game of the world* that must be first thought; before attempting to understand all the forms of play in the world" (DG, p. 73/50). Although the whole paragraph preceding the note takes also into account the issue of game itself, probably the works given in Derrida's note involve more like an addressing of such problematic of the game of the world. At least that seems to be the case of Fink's *Play as Symbol of the World* (however, Fink's path to establish game as symbol of the world includes different approaches to the concept of game like its relation to the being, human existence and particular games) and Kostas Axelos account of game. Beyond that, Derrida's note could be a valuable tool. It offers some places to look at, if one is interested in the background of his concept of game.

In this section, we are leaving aside the plausible influence of thinkers or theories that could have played a role in Derrida's account of the concept of game, such as Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, and the psychoanalytic theory, for example. The section does not aim to be exhaustive, rather just intends to offer a historical sketch that helps to understand Derrida's approach to game.

The first part of the section is devoted to Fink's approach to game, in particular the non-actuality as its fundamental feature, while the second part deals with Axelos' account of game stressing at the end errancy and wandering as its features. Those approaches are oriented to account for the deferred and unsaturated side of game and dissemination in Derrida.

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<sup>14</sup> Suggested also by Ian Alexander Moore and Christopher Turner, and Stuart Elden (2015, p. 331n54; 2016, p. 11n9).

### 1.2.1 Fink: Non-actuality of game

Derrida's criticism of Husserl's phenomenology is well known. Nevertheless, Derrida himself acknowledges phenomenology as a fundamental prior stage of his own philosophy. In particular, about his notion of game, he states the following:

To think play radically the ontological and transcendental problematics must first be seriously *exhausted*; the question of the meaning of being, the being of the entity and of the transcendental origin of the world —of the world-ness of the world— must be patiently and rigorously worked through, the critical movement of the Husserlian and Heideggerian questions must be effectively followed to the very end, and their effectiveness and legibility must be conserved. Even if it were crossed out. (DG, p. 73/50)

Derrida also says that: "One could call *play* the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction [ébranlement] of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence" (DG, p. 73/50). However, as it was already mentioned, he thinks that addressing the game of the world is a necessary step in order to look at other kinds of games, including that radical approach to game (cf. DG, p. 73/50). Indeed, phenomenology is a significant path to think about the game of the world, at least under erasure as Derrida suggests.

The issue of the game of the world in Derrida seems to be related to Fink's approach as state Moore and Turner: "Derrida's various remarks on play, especially on the play of the world and the play of *différance*, may be fruitfully read alongside Fink's *Play as Symbol of the World*, which Derrida himself cites in *Of Grammatology*." It would not be a random fact since Moore and Turner also mention "Fink's particular importance for the French reception of phenomenology," but "it was not just Fink's work on Husserl and phenomenology that influenced twentieth-century French thinkers, however. His writings on play were also crucial for figures such as Derrida, Kostas Axelos, and Henri Lefebvre" (2016, pp. 8–9). In turn, Elden,

on *Spiel als Weltsymbol* says that it “is important (...) for acting as a bridge between the German and French intellectual traditions” (2008, p. 51).

Fink’s *Play as Symbol of the World*<sup>15</sup> is a philosophical approach to game (Spiel) trying to account for the ontological side of game, in particular between human play and, something called by Fink, the game of the world. Those familiar with Heidegger’s phenomenological work will find Fink’s starting point known.<sup>16</sup>

The question of game is a relevant issue in philosophy according to Fink, rather than being relegated to a secondary position. He claims that: “For us, play is not an arbitrary theme of philosophy, which can occupy itself with anything and everything. Play has an extraordinary status in its being an existential basic phenomenon, just as primordial as mortality, love, work, and struggle” (2016, p. 204). Even game could teach us what philosophy is about:

A play can suggestively portray, in an essential sense, what philosophy is and in what way it is. We thereby have a peculiar reversal. Instead of philosophically saying what play is, what philosophy itself is can be said in the play of an ancient tragedy. The philosophical statement concerning play can even be encompassed by a play’s interpretation of philosophizing. These are noteworthy connections which we do not easily see through and which are full of questions. (2016, p. 46)<sup>17</sup>

As the above quote shows, Fink’s account of game is an enterprise where the (philosophical) standpoint or approach itself is involved in the addressing of game. As we will see later with Derrida and Wittgenstein, addressing game in a philosophical way seems to also imply taking part in it. That seems to be clear to Fink when he writes that:

Our task is to find an approach for our thinking about play. For if we are not

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<sup>15</sup> Moore and Turner translate the title of the book as *Play as Symbol of the World*, but according to Elden the title of the book means “play, or the game, as symbol of the world” (2015, p. 13).

<sup>16</sup> For a relation between Fink’s concept of world and Husserl’s and Heidegger’s thought, see Elden (2008).

<sup>17</sup> Here Fink is using “play” in two different senses. A philosophical questioning around play turned into a theatrical play accounting for philosophy. About the English connotation of play related to a performance, see note 25.

simply and cheerfully to describe and depict the phenomenon of play, but rather wish to direct a thoughtful question to it, we must seek to understand what is understood in it on its own terms. (2016, p. 78)

Fink does not deal with taxonomies or particular games (at least in *Play as Symbol of the World*), rather he tries to provide an account for game itself, but to accomplish his task he has to be part of the game, his theoretical intentions have to take place at least in the same level as game does. Nonetheless, it does not mean that particular games and the experience of game in everyday life are not worthy. Precisely, such pre-theoretical experiences show the intimate relation between human beings and game making even possible the raising of Fink's issues around game, because it is an "existential basic phenomenon."

A feature attributed to game by Fink and easily found in Derrida's developments around game and related notions is its non-actuality. Throughout *Play as Symbol of the World* Fink insists on this feature as something which does not mean non-existence. In the first stages of the development of this feature in the book, Fink compares this non-actuality with the actuality of (mental?) representations, as could be stated in the next quotation:

But what is merely imagined and therefore nugatory is nevertheless not simply nothing. It exists as imagined, as a phantasm, as a representational content. What is merely represented is not something actual, but it is nevertheless itself actual as an intentional moment of an act of representing. An actual act of representing contains a sense of "non-actuality." We thereby see how the statement "either something is actual or non-actual" contradicts itself in its operative presuppositions; for the "something which is not actual" is nevertheless, for all that, itself actual as the act of representing something non-actual. (2016, p. 84)<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Related, see Derrida's addressing of Husserl's ideality in *Speech and Phenomena*: "Ideality (...) does not exist, is not real or is *irreal*—not in the sense of being a fiction, but in another sense which may have several names, whose possibility will permit us to speak of nonreality and essential necessity, the noema, the intelligible object, and in general the nonworldly. This nonworldliness is not another worldliness, this ideality is not an existent that has fallen from the sky; its origin will always be the possible repetition of a productive act" (VP, p. 4/6).

Already in the quote, it is possible to find some topics developed by Derrida some years later like the question about phantasms, his approach to binary oppositions, or his developments around metaphysics of presence. Fink's non-actuality of game and his exemplification with a representation is the way to introduce game as a symbol rather than being just an idle reproduction of what happens in serious (productive) life. Non-actuality is not a feature among others to Fink. Addressing human play, he writes that:

"Non-actuality" is thus an essential, fundamental feature of human play. And it is not merely *a* fundamental feature; it is the decisive fundamental feature. The actuality of play activity is a perpetual, continual, productive comportment to the "non-actuality" of the playworld. Wherever there are philosophical questions about play that are connected to the general problem of Being, it is precisely the moment of actual "non-actuality," the strange entwinement of Being and appearance, that requires conceptual mastery. (2016, p. 92)

Fink's remark about the non-actuality of game as an essential and the decisive feature of game seems to imply the mixture between game and non-actuality. Where non-actuality appears also game does, at least partially. There are several terms developed by Derrida including this actual non-actuality. In the deferred side of *différance* as dissemination that is clear. The unsaturation of contexts, addressed in the chapter three, is possible due to the non-actuality of dissemination inasmuch as there is something always left out when a closure or a fulfillment of a context is pursued. Here deferring works as a gap impeding a full presence which could make a context become closed, saturated, and actual. Overall, all the issue of quasi-transcendentals and the trembling of binary oppositions in Derrida seems to imply this kind of non-actuality mentioned by Fink.

Game's non-actuality works like a representation. However, it is not a representation in the sense of a mirror. There seems to be a kind of independence from the phenomenon referred to, which in turn does not mean absolute subjectivity. Game's non-actuality remains enigmatic:

"Non-actuality" here does not mean "non-being," as probably everyone will acknowledge, does not mean a sheer nothing, but rather an enigmatic something, which does not exist like customary existing things but is also not nugatory like a hallucination or a merely subjective delusion. The "non-actuality" of the playworld is an appearance of its own kind. (2016, p. 126)

As already mentioned, it seems that Fink's uses non-actuality to be able to introduce game as a symbol. Nonetheless, there are some middle steps trying to make this path more understandable. As already seen, representation is an example of game's non-actuality. We also have mimesis as a way to explain what kind of reproduction has a representation according to Fink. He dedicates several paragraphs to distance his approach to game and mimesis from Plato's interpretation. For example, the following:

If play is a *mimēsis*, it is nevertheless not mirrorlike in the strict sense. The poet, the *poiētēs*, does not at all relate to the lawgivers, generals, and statesmen like a slavishly, faithfully reproducing mirror that would, moreover, be reliant on legislators, generals, and statesmen acting as seriously during the poetic mirroring—as the poet does toward appearance. If the poet reproduces such forms of life, then this still happens freely—at the very least he is not dependent on the simultaneous presence of his model. He can reproduce from his memory, from his imagination, without the reproduced thing being actual at precisely the same time. (2016, p. 109)

Fink is trying to get away from Plato's degradation of game. However, to accomplish his task he embraces the tradition of metaphysics going back to Plato (and even back to Heraclitus as we will see below) to rework the concept of game (a kind of paleonymy in Derridean terms). He says that "the philosophical question concerning play cannot be explicated without explicit reference to the Platonic critique of the poets" (2016, p. 126). Something similar is done by Derrida regarding Plato when he approaches mimesis and game in the last section of *Plato's Pharmacy* or in the first part of *The Double Session*, for example.

Fink states that “the less ‘reproductive’, the more strongly ‘symbolic’ an image is” (2016, p. 119). That is the movement made by Fink approaching game as more than merely reproduction. Immediately after he adds an important remark:

We certainly ought not thereby to misunderstand the symbol as a sign and to replace the graphic function of the image by the abstract function of the sign. A sign need not be similar in appearance to the thing signified. (2016, p. 119)

Here it seems like Fink is trying to go beyond something like the Saussurean linguistic sign. He continues:

"Symbols" themselves can appear in various things, in simple things, but also in images and even in signs as well. It is wrong, however, to want to elucidate the symbolic character of the symbol by what pertains to the image or the sign. (2016, p. 119)

However, Fink accepts that the symbol was initially a sign where “both features were significant for the symbol: The ‘fragmentation’ and the ‘completion.’” In fact, from the etymology of the word “*Symbolon* comes from *ymballein*, ‘coinciding,’ and signifies a coinciding of the fragment with what completes it” (2016, p. 120). The relation symbol/sign seems confusing so far. Fink adds the following regarding symbol:

We have already begun to do so by briefly discussing and formally indicating the concept of the symbol. We do not understand by this any sort of sign that indicates, depicts, represents, stands in for something, and so forth. A symbolon is a fragment that has been determined for completion. But the philosophical concept of the symbol does not pertain to inner-worldly completions of fragmentary forms of life. Rather, it is precisely each innerworldly being that is conceived as a fragment of Being, as finite individuality split off from the one, all-encompassing Being. Each finite thing as such is a fragment, is exposed in its individuation,

is torn away from all others, is enclosed within its limits, is only this —and not everything else. (...) And yet it is never alone as this self-standing thing. (2016, p. 127)

Symbol as a fragment which lacks from its completion. Derridean unsaturation as a feature of dissemination is reverberating here again. The inability to reach the whole and the tranquility brought with it. Derrida's overcoming of the Saussurean sign could be also recalled. A signifier completed by a signified (or vice versa) in turn composed by signifiers. Fink's fragments, although cannot reach a completion, establish a play in relation to the whole (world and/or Being) through the symbolic function:

The symbolic likening must be able to be "reversed." What happens vicariously in the part must recur in the greater whole. It is not only that the whole shines back in partial things, which are capable of a symbolic representation of the whole, but the parts thus distinguished are also able to influence the whole: *pars pro toto*. (2016, p. 159)

Symbol likening is a game itself, it seems to account for the lack of a complete subordination of the parts by the whole. Indeed, there is a play between them. A play where game is a symbol of the world, and the world is a symbol of game. The latter will be more clear in the following section, when Heraclitus' fragment 52 is addressed.

Fink's approach to game helps us to understand the way in which Derrida uses the term. The non-actuality attributed by Fink to the game has implications beyond Derrida's explicit addressing of game. Non-actuality goes along other Derrida's terms such as *différance*, dissemination, and trace. The deferred or delayed side of them understood also as displacement carry this kind of non-actuality accounted by Fink.

Finally, just as Fink tries to go beyond actuality/non-actuality, it seems like he also wants to break down the distinction amusement/seriousness regarding game being just a ludic activity opposed to productive and serious activities. He says the following about the relation between non-actuality and game:

"Non-actuality" is no objection, no degradation. In play they feel closer to what is essential and genuine. Their play has an entirely peculiar and strange seriousness. We lack the proper concepts for it, although we still commonly enough go about with the difference between play and work, play and seriousness. But these schemata break down when it becomes necessary to actually grasp the magical cult-play of the primitive and the play of the child. (2016, p. 122)

Here the overcoming of the opposition amusement/seriousness, although related to cult-play and child play, could be seen as the beginning of the trembling of this distinction. In chapter two, where Derrida's approach to the Greek distinction παιδιὰ (paidia)/σπουδή (spoudē)<sup>19</sup> is tackled, Fink's first steps to overcome their opposition could be playing around.

### 1.2.2 Axelos: Game as errancy and wandering

Axelos' approach to game could be seen as the next stage of Fink's addressing of game. He "develops Fink's ideas concerning play and the world in such works as *Vers la pensée planétaire* (Toward a planetary thinking), *Le jeu du monde* (The play of the world), and *Horizons du monde* (Horizons of the world)" (Moore & Turner, 2016, p. 9). Derrida's note in turn includes two of his texts: *Vers la pensée planétaire* (1964) and *Einführung in ein künftiges Denken: Über Marx und Heidegger* (1966). Only part is available in English from the former book, *Planetary Interlude* (1968), which includes excerpts from the introduction and the concluding chapter as is noted in the translation itself. The other text was translated as *Introduction to a Future Way of Thought: On Marx and Heidegger* (2015), and it is not directly addressed here.

In Axelos as well as in Fink, there is an attempt to think being/world as a game. This enterprise takes us back to Heraclitus and his already mentioned fragment 52:<sup>20</sup> "Lifetime is

<sup>19</sup> For some Greek terms, their transliteration and meanings, see the electronic version of Liddell, Scott, & Jones' lexicon mentioned in the references (n.d.).

<sup>20</sup> According to Diels and Kranz, as stated in the English edition of *Spiel als Weltsymbol* (Fink, 2016, p. 334n9). The ancient Greek fragment states: αἰὼν παῖς ἔστι παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἢ βασιλῆϊ (Kahn, 1979, p. 70). About αἰὼν (aiōn) translation, see Elden (2008, p. 49).

a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child" (Kahn, 1979, p. 71). This fragment is translated in the English version of *Spiel als Weltsymbol*, probably in Fink's German translation from ancient Greek, as: "'The course of the world is a child playing, who moves the pieces on the board here and there, is a child's kingdom'" (2016, p. 51). Here is the reason why we claimed that the world is in turn a symbol of the game.

*Planetary Interlude* gives an English translation of what seems to be Axelos' French translation of the fragment:<sup>21</sup> "'Time is a child at play, moving pawns; the royalty of a child'" (1968, p. 7). In fact, Fink's work, "principally on the world, was profoundly important to Axelos, especially regarding their shared project of elaborating Heraclitus's famous fragment that declared time, the world, or the universe was 'like a child playing a game'" (Elden, 2015, p. 13).

Axelos' approach to the relation game/world could be summarized as his following claim does:

The *world* deploys itself as a *game*. That means that it refuses any sense, any rule that is exterior to itself. The play of the world itself is different from all the particular games that are played *in* the world. Almost two-and-a-half thousand years after Heraclitus, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Fink and I have insisted on this approach to the world as game. (2005, p. 28)

Fink and Axelos seem to approach world as the "being" being embedded in time. The course of the world, as Fink's translation of Heraclitus' fragment says, is that which deploys as a game. Although the game of the world is different from games taking place in the world, those games are sets of the game of the world: the "Set of sets," as Axelos calls it (1979b):<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Axelos was Greek, fluent also in French and German. One of his doctoral dissertations was about Heraclitus, *Héraclite et la philosophie: La première saisie de l'être en devenir de la totalité*. It was published as a book in 1962 (Elden, 2015, pp. 9–10).

<sup>22</sup> There are two English translations of this work. The other translation (1979a) says the following, as a note made by the translator about the title of the text, which includes the terms involved here: "The original title is 'Le jeu de l'ensemble des ensembles.' The term 'ensemble' carries with it several precise meanings, and Axelos plays with them all. At times 'system,' at others 'a mathematical set,' and yet again 'whole' or 'totality'" (p. 24).

It [game, the Set of sets, game of the world] pervades them all [particular games, sets], it incorporates them: all "are in" the game and all "make" the game which is not the game of someone or something. Behind the masks no one and nothing is hidden, other than the game of the world (Axelos, 1968, p. 6).

The world being deployed as a game has similarities with Derrida's treatment of Mallarmé's "éventail," as we will see in the next chapter. In a text, translated as *The World: Being Becoming Totality* taken from *Systematique ouverte* (1984), Axelos says that "like dawn and sunset, the World rises to the horizon as it fades and fades as it rises, with this unveiling-and-veiling constituting errancy" (2006, p. 647) The folding and unfolding of Mallarmé's hand fan accounted by Derrida is like this veiling/unveiling of the world. Those unveilings of the world as openings constitute what Axelos' calls epochs:

The "history of the World" is not simply a universal or world history, as the unfolding of the opening or errancy —and not just of factual or abstract errors, misguided ways, and vagabond adventures —marks the epochs of our openings to the world and our transformational operations. (2006, p. 643)

Openings mark epochs (fragments) as the trace of the attempts made by us to approach the world seem to carry the historical side that also belongs to world. The world "itself unfolds as god, as nature, it beckons man, knows a (hi)story, gives birth to art and poetry which attempt to express it (Axelos, 2006, p. 643). Those openings although risen from errancy are not meaningless.

Errancy and wandering are terms related to game in Axelos' approach. When he was asked about "planetary technology,"<sup>23</sup> he answered the following on the relation game/errancy:

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<sup>23</sup> It seems to be an important notion in Axelos' thought. In the back cover of the English edition of *Einführung in ein künftiges Denken* we found: "Anticipating the age of planetary technology Kostas Axelos, a Greek-French philosopher, approaches the technological question in this book, first published in 1966, by connecting the thought of Karl Marx and Martin Heidegger. Following from his study of Marx as a thinker of technology, and foreseeing debates about globalization, Axelos recognizes that technology now determines the world. Providing an introduction to some of his major themes, including the play of the world, Axelos asks if planetary technology requires a new, a future way of thought."

In Greek, planet means wandering star [*astre errant*].<sup>24</sup> All planetary movement is therefore errant, it takes place in the play of errancy. Errancy is not the converse of truth, it does not mean error or vagrancy. Everything that we name as truth – empirical or transcendental – is precipitated into errancy; the truth does not illuminate what it is, it is done, it demolishes itself. (2005, p. 28)

Game as an activity without external motivations, goals or targets —and indeed without ground— is what for us means errancy. Wandering is the result of being(s) as inscrusted in the course of time. Truth, as something outside of the play between time and beings, in the context of the previous excerpt seems to try to stop the fluxed nature of the relation between beings and time. However, it cannot escape from the errancy which it comes from, that is why it is precipitated back into errancy. In Axelos' words: "There are, however, neither definitive words nor actions. Everyone is simultaneously right (and wrong) on levels which struggle with each other, and comes into contact with a small particle of the wandering (*errant*) truth" (1968, p. 10).

Wandering, as we will see, is a related connotation in French to "jeu." But Derrida's approach to game and its condition of wandering is probably influenced by Axelos because he cites him. Already in Axelos, it is possible to find the following excerpt which resembles Derrida's style of doing philosophy, and even somehow could be a statement claimed by Derrida about game as a strategy without finality:

The Game is not the last masterword, that is, it should not be understood as a new and convenient masterword, password and watchword for action. It remains the unthought - if not the unthinkable -, the undivulged, the impracticable. It plays with us, impels us toward action and upsets all the games, all the actualizations. As if it were unplayable. The wandering (*errantes*) truths of the world and the true wanderings (*errances*) of man confront each other and compose this game. The

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<sup>24</sup> Square brackets included in the quoted text.

Game of the World is the question. It is for men to play the game of questions and answers. (1968, p. 68)

## 2. Influence of the concept of game on Sprachspiel and dissémination

### 2.1 Establishing a convergence area: Spiel, jeu and the concept of game

Let us start this section by taking a look at the translations of "Spiel" and "jeu" in Wittgenstein's and Derrida's texts. "Spiel" and "Sprachspiel" are translated in the French edition of the *Investigations* respectively as "jeu" and "jeu de langage." In context, for instance, a quote from section seven: "Ich werde auch das Ganze: der Sprache und der Tätigkeiten, mit denen sie verwoben ist, das 'Sprachspiel' nennen." In French: "J'appellerai aussi 'jeu de langage' l'ensemble formé par le langage et les activités avec lesquelles il est entrelacé." In the English edition, this quote is translated as: "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven, a 'language-game'."

"Jeu" seems to be translated in the German edition of Derrida's texts as "Spiel." In context, for example, the following quote from *Outwork*: "Le jeu de la dissémination, s'en serait-on douté, le cite [Paul Claudel] souvent à comparaître" (p. 53). The German edition translates this passage as: "Das Spiel der Dissemination zitiert ihn [Paul Claudel], man hätte es sich denken können, häufig, mitzuerscheinen" (p. 54). The English edition does it as follows: "The play of dissemination, as one might have suspected, often has occasion to call upon him [Paul

Claudel]" (p. 46).

As one can verify, the distinction between "Spiel" and "jeu" is more evident in English.<sup>25</sup> Actually, there is a semantic nuance on the distinction between "game" and "play" in English, and that is important because Wittgenstein himself uses the expression "language game" in *The Blue and Brown Books*, which were written in English.

In the first instance, "play" does not seek a definitive completion, while most games have a set outcome, although there are games that do not. Also, those connotations arise because "play" is mainly taken as a verb while "game" stands as a noun. Nonetheless, "Spiel" and "jeu" seem to be equivalents between German and French in Derrida's and Wittgenstein's texts. Even in Spanish, both "Spiel" and "jeu" are translated, in Wittgenstein's and Derrida's texts, as "juego." Besides, for Allison's paper, the similarities between them (Spiel and jeu) are more important than their distinctions (1978, p. 100).

Through the notion of game, both Wittgenstein's and Derrida's accounts of meaning avoid mental representations. Wittgenstein dedicates paragraphs of the *Investigations* to analyze and disprove the name-object approach to language (and also the possibility of private languages). On the other hand, Derrida devotes some parts of his most famous book, *Of Grammatology*, to overcome Saussurean linguistic sign and its residuals of representationalism found in the signifier considered as a sound pattern.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, both Derrida and Wittgenstein use the notion of game to bypass higher orders of predication. All the elements of a context are interrelated in the same predication level, and contexts too are related to each other in the same manner. Their approaches avoid

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<sup>25</sup> Moore and Turner in the introduction to their translation of Fink's *Play as a Symbol of the World* (2016) write that "Spiel in German means both 'play' and 'game.' We have rendered it both ways depending on context" (p. 10). In turn, J. Hillis Miller on Derrida's "jeu" points: "As Gayatri Spivak's perfectly legitimate translations of 'jeu' in my key citation indicates [It is therefore the game of the world {le jeu du monde} that must be first thought; before attempting to understand all the forms of play {jeu} in the world], the word can mean both 'game' and 'play' in the same sentence. In English, 'play' can name a drama enacted on the stage, as 'Spiel' can in German, as in Wagner's 'Singspielen', though 'drame' is the normal French word for a stage play" (2011, p. 44).

<sup>26</sup> Following Roy Harris' introduction (in the Bloomsbury Revelations Edition) to his translation of the *Course in General Linguistics*, here "sound pattern" stands for "image acoustique," instead of other English expressions like "acoustic image" or "sound-image" (2013, p. xxi).

privileged viewpoints able to refer to other elements without taking part of the game played by the last ones. For that, even the notion of element as something unitary and simple is not a priori taken for granted.

In Wittgenstein's case, the latter could be understood by contrasting his approach to Frege's theory of meaning. For Frege, the core of a theory of meaning is the concept of truth. When Wittgenstein states that language does not consist just in assertions, rather that there are countless different kinds of sentences, he is moving away from truth-functional semantics (focused on the truth or falsehood of statements), removing the concept of truth from the center (cf. PU, § 23). This is no longer an essentialist theory of meaning, rather different uses of the term "meaning" in several contexts.<sup>27</sup>

Derrida, in relation to *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, for Benoît Peeters "sought to replace the old hermeneutics that dreamed of 'deciphering a truth' with a mode of interpretation that 'affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism' ['SSJ', p. 427/369-370]" (2013, p. 167). Asserting that Derrida tried to replace hermeneutics sounds bold if we have in mind that Peeters does not clarify what he refers to by "old hermeneutics." However, we share with him the intentions of Derrida's thought of highlighting game rather than truth. A game that humans have not mastered, not for lack of skill, instead, because we are implied in its incessant development.

The notion of game is a way for Wittgenstein and Derrida to assume the consequences of their own analyses involving their viewpoints regarding themselves.<sup>28</sup> Otherwise, they will result in the naive return to what they are trying to elude: Standpoints with transcendental or fixed components, such as metaphysics of presence in Derrida's case and logical atomism in Wittgenstein's. They do not want only to reject classical philosophical affirmations about language and related issues just to contradict those affirmations. Instead, they are coherent

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<sup>27</sup> About the relation between assertions and other kinds of sentences as well as Wittgenstein's approach to Frege's theory of meaning, see the chapter called "Assertion" in Dummett's *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (1973).

<sup>28</sup> One way because in Wittgenstein's case, at the end of the *Tractatus* (where the notion of game is not explicitly mentioned), he states that through the propositions themselves developed in the book, those become senseless (6.54). They constitute a false exit in Derridean terms.

with their own approaches trying to carry them into their last outcomes. In that way, they are more consistent (which is not good taken on its own) than other philosophical approaches with offside zones (i.e., without taking part of the game). Wittgenstein and Derrida apply, following Shain's (2005) terms, "philosophical" or "performative consistency" being philosophers "whose theory has implications for the use of language, and who uses language in line with—or claims to express his theories in line with—the implications of the theory" (p. 81). Actually, in the preface of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes:

Originally it was my intention to bring all this [his thoughts] together in a book. (...) But it seemed to me essential that in the book the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural, smooth sequence. |<sup>29</sup> After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. (...) my thoughts soon grew feeble if I tried to force them along a single track against their natural inclination. — And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For it compels us to travel criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought.

Derrida, on his own, in *Différance* states:

What I will propose here will not be elaborated simply as a philosophical discourse, operating according to principles, postulates, axioms or definitions, and proceeding along the discursive lines of a linear order of reasons. In the delineation of *différance* everything is strategic and adventurous. ('DIF', pp. 6-7/6-7)

Through these paragraphs, one can suspect that the concept of game—and other related notions—also is implied in the way of its exposition. They do not address it from a privileged standpoint. Instead, the nature of their approaches—as Wittgenstein said—is involved itself. The approach to the concept of game, either of Derrida or Wittgenstein, requires being

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<sup>29</sup> " | " is used for paragraph or line breaks.

included in the game because the starting point of their approaches is already part of the game. Both authors acknowledge their viewpoints as arisen from it.

Following Timothy Williamson, game here could be approached as a vague notion, where “the limits of vagueness are themselves vague,” “the meta-language in which we describe the vagueness of a vague language will itself be vague” (and therefore not useful to get rid from first order vagueness), “vague terms are meaningful,” and “vagueness can be understood only from within” (1996, pp. 2–3, 7).

Summarizing, Derrida and Wittgenstein use the concept of game as a means, not as an end. It is not possible to close or master that which is represented through it. A strategy without finality, as Jolán Orbán (cf. 1998, § 12) states following the Derridean account of strategy:<sup>30</sup> “[It] is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a telos or theme of domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the development of the field” (‘DIF’, p. 7/ 7). They are not interested in polishing and delimiting absolutely their respective notions of game. Because the notion itself takes part of a process addressed, making it impossible to foresee an aimed further state (as the classic notion of strategy does) by using the notion game.

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<sup>30</sup> Orbán (1998, § 12) cites, instead, the following quote in French: “Finally, a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics, or empirical wandering if the value of empiricism did not itself acquire its entire meaning in its opposition to philosophical responsibility. If there is a certain wandering in the tracing of *différance*, it no more follows the lines of philosophical-logical discourse than that of its symmetrical and integral inverse, empirical-logical discourse. The concept of play keeps itself beyond this opposition, announcing, on the eve of philosophy and beyond it, the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end” (‘DIF’, p. 7/7).

## 2.2 Recognizing the first relata: The concept of game in Sprachspiel constitution

Here it is explained how the notion of language-game is related to game through the relation between Spiel and Beispiel, and via the twisting method. Then the use of examples concerning the notion of game is taken in relation to the question of rule following. Finally, how language-game through related notions (family resemblance and form of life) also appeals to the notion of game. Here game is an access point to this relationship, but not the only one available.

### 2.2.1 Spiel, Beispiel, twisting method, rules, and their influence on the definition of Sprachspiel

When Wittgenstein uses the term language-game in his texts, the importance of the notion of game in his philosophy is obvious. The wording of language-game (Sprachspiel) shows it. But there is as well a nominal continuity between these two words (game and language-game) coming from "Beispiel" as is noted by Henry Staten: "They are the examples (Beispiele) which make up this series of language games (Sprachspiele), a language game consisting of and taught by examples" (1986, p. 104). However, examples are not limited to the components of specific language-games or the way to teach them as Staten wrote. Instead, it is through examples that Wittgenstein is able to introduce his notion of language-game. Therefore, the general side of the notion of language-game is built appealing to examples.

If we look at "Beispiel" (example) in brothers Grimm's dictionary we find that "spiel," in this case, is not related to "ludus." Rather, it comes from "spell" and "beispell" which are linked to narrative. In this way, also related to παροιμία (paroimia) and παραβολή (parabolē), and related to a narration of what lies in the path (cf. 2021).<sup>31</sup> Hence, Beispiel could be related

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<sup>31</sup> Related, Johan Huizinga states: "Old English or Anglo-Saxon also knew the word *spelian*, but exclusively in the specific sense of "to represent somebody else" or "to take another's place", *vicem gerere*. It is used for instance of the ram which was offered up in the place of Isaac. This connotation, though proper also to "play" in the sense of "playing a part", is not the primary one. We must leave aside the question of how far *spelian* is grammatically

to everyday life experiences and our approach to those events.

Let us understand "bei Spiele" as elements brought into action and guided by certain rules that mediate the relationship with their environment. Therefore, the function of examples is to show how general statements are contextualized into —more or less— specific frameworks, and in this way, also regulating the relation between concepts and our understanding of them.

The relation between examples and that which those stand for is maybe an old issue in philosophy. In this regard, Kant devotes attention to examples in his first *Critique*. There he writes:

For as far as the correctness and precision of the insight of the understanding is concerned, examples [Beispiele] more usually do it some damage, since they only seldom adequately fulfill the condition of the rule (as casus in terminis) and beyond this often weaken the effort of the understanding to gain sufficient insight into rules in the universal and independently of the particular circumstances of experience, and thus in the end accustom us to use those rules more like formulas than like principles. Thus examples are the leading-strings [Gängelwagen] of the power of judgment [Urteilstkraft], which he who lacks the natural talent for judgment can never do without. (KrV, B173-174)<sup>32</sup>

Kant rejects from examples their empiric nature, linking our understanding to specific situations, preventing us from reaching the generality of concepts. Thus, taking certain examples as the reference of a concept. Nevertheless, when he tries to explain the function of examples regarding judgment, he also uses a suitable example: "Gängelwagen."<sup>33</sup> Examples help to develop discernment (Urteilstkraft), and this is not a minor task: "They sharpen the power of

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connected with the German "spielen", and abstain from discussing the relationship between "Spiel" and the English "spell", "gospel". The ending -spiel as in the German "Beispiel" or "Kirchspiel" and the Dutch *kerspel*, *dingspel* (an old judiciary district) is usually derived from the same root as the above English words [spell, gospel?], and not from "Spiel" (*spel*)" (1955, p. 38).

<sup>32</sup> Quotes from the first *Critique* refer to Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood's translation (1998b).

<sup>33</sup> Guyer and Wood (1998b) translate it as "leading-strings," but maybe a more appropriate translation would be "walker," as does Werner S. Pluhar (1996).

judgment" (KrV, B173).

Indeed, Wittgenstein himself is concerned with this issue in a section of the so-called *Big Typescript* titled: "Explanation of Generality by Examples." There Wittgenstein addresses the relation between concepts and examples, showing the necessity of the latter to understand concepts. There he writes: "An example is the point of departure for further calculation" (cf. TS, § 74, p. 333).<sup>34</sup> When we explain a concept, the examples employed do not stand for their own sake, they must serve as a guide to act in a specific way. But this way of acting is not a priori entirely determined. To use a concept is not necessary to have a mental representation of it, but this kind of determination could come after acting through reflection (cf. TS, § 74, p. 333). Already in the *Blue Book* is to be found the relevance of examples for understanding:

The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term.<sup>35</sup> ('BB', pp. 19-20)<sup>36</sup>

Wittgenstein, as well as Kant, considers examples as the walkers of discernment. Nonetheless, examples are the paradigmatic way of understanding concepts because they are related to our primitive acquisition of language, widely related to their application insofar as they constitute ostensive definitions. Reaching the intensionality (meaning) of a concept is an impromptu action that accompanies the usage of examples. We do not reach a concept just with its extension (the elements which a concept designates).<sup>37</sup>

In a paragraph of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein is concerned with the relation between

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<sup>34</sup> For *The Big Typescript* the pagination of the original Wittgenstein's text is used, as noted in the edition referenced.

<sup>35</sup> Sraffa's attention towards observational facts could be related here. See section 1.1.2.

<sup>36</sup> Pagination of the *Blue Book* refers to the edition mentioned in references as *The Blue and Brown Books*.

<sup>37</sup> See also a related issue about analogies addressed in the *Blue Book*. For instance, Wittgenstein states that: "No sharp boundary can be drawn round the cases in which we should say that a man was misled by an analogy" ('BB', p. 28).

examples and the concept of game:

One can say that the concept of a game [der Begriff "Spiel"] is a concept with blurred edges. — "But is a blurred concept a *concept* at all?" — Is a photograph that is not sharp a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace a picture that is not sharp by one that is? Isn't one that isn't sharp often just what we need? | Frege compares a concept to a region, and says that a region without clear boundaries can't be called a region at all. This presumably means that we can't do anything with it. — But is it senseless to say "Stay roughly here"? Imagine that I were standing with someone in a city square and said that. As I say it, I do not bother drawing any boundary, but just make a pointing gesture — as if I were indicating a particular spot. And this is just how one might explain what a game is. One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way. — I do not mean by this expression, however, that he is supposed to see in those examples that common feature which I — for some reason — was unable to formulate, but that he is now to employ those examples in a particular way. Here giving examples is not an indirect way of explaining — in default of a better one. For any general explanation may be misunderstood too. (PU, § 71)

Wittgenstein uses examples as a way to explain concepts, but examples are not a guarantee to understand a concept. Examples are tools as valuable as general explanations regarding the grasp of concepts. Besides, an accurate framework where examples are used is not always preferable to an inaccurate one. It depends on which concept we are trying to explain.

Game is not the only concept that has blurred edges according to Wittgenstein. Rather, it is a common feature of concepts to be defined by different uses. About, he writes:

I use the name "N" without a *fixed* meaning. (But that impairs its use as little as the use of a table is impaired by the fact that it stands on four legs instead of three

and so sometimes wobbles). (PU, § 79)<sup>38</sup>

There is not something like a fixed essence of a concept that regulates a priori its use, but instead several related uses enable the possibility of referring to something as a concept. To complement this perspective of the *Investigations*, in *Zettel* Wittgenstein writes:

Nothing is commoner than for the meaning of an expression to oscillate, for a phenomenon to be regarded sometimes as a symptom, sometimes as a criterion, of a state of affairs. And mostly in such a case the shift of meaning is not noted. (Z, § 438)<sup>39</sup>

Here it is important to explain the distinction between criterion and symptom which Wittgenstein tries to raise. Criterion stands for the possibility of affirming or negating something about a given state of affairs, while a symptom only lets me elaborate hypotheses concerning a state of affairs. In the first instance, through a criterion I can examine a symptom, the reverse is not possible. In Wittgenstein's words: "I call 'symptom' a phenomenon of which experience has taught us that it coincided, in some way or other, with the phenomenon which is our defining criterion" ('BB', p. 25). For example, measuring the temperature of someone with a thermometer is a criterion to determine if she has a fever, while a symptom could be touching her forehead and feeling that it is warm. Only through the measure of this warmth one is able to determine if it is high enough to be considered a fever (the phenomenon coinciding with the criterion).

What is important from the above quotation from *Zettel* is that Wittgenstein is not rejecting the use of a particular element as the provisional essence of something. We can approach an element as the substance in a particular state of affairs, but that does not mean that this approach cannot change in a further consideration. For instance, if we look at this element

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<sup>38</sup> The table example is related to the distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that" stated by Gilbert Ryle in his book *The Concept of Mind* published in 1949.

<sup>39</sup> Regarding oscillation between "fluxed" and "hardened" propositions, see *On Certainty* §§ 95-99. Some of those sections will be addressed in the next chapter.

from an alternative standpoint. Touching the forehead of someone could be a criterion to decide if one measures his temperature with a thermometer or not depending on how warm it feels. Our former symptom has turned into a criterion. In the end, as Wittgenstein says: "In practice, if you were asked which phenomenon is the defining criterion and which is a symptom, you would in most cases be unable to answer this question except by making an arbitrary decision *ad hoc*" ('BB', p. 25).

A particular approach depends on what one wants to account for. Usually, we are not aware of these oscillations among approaches because we commonly take our own outlook as given, without anticipating alternative viewpoints.

In relation to the concept of understanding, Wittgenstein also attributes it to different uses: "— I would rather say that these kinds of use of 'understanding' make up its meaning, make up my *concept* of understanding" (PU, § 532). He does something similar on the concept of number:

We extend our concept of number, as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre.  
And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. (PU, § 67)

In *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (1979), edited by Brian McGuinness, this approach of the concept of number is also found:

What looks like a concept is the title of a chapter in grammar. In speaking of different kinds of number, for example, you are not dealing with different concepts. We do not have one concept of number that splits up into different sub-concepts. Numbers do not fall into sub-classes: instead we have different kinds of word before us in a sense similar to that in which grammar distinguishes between nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. There are certain similarities between the syntax of different kinds of number, and this is why we call them all numbers. (p. 102)

In this quotation, we can note (the beginning of?) the decreasing relevance of the term logic

in favor of the term grammar in Wittgenstein's philosophy, where all the elements started to have the "same" value. These kinds of considerations bring Wittgenstein to establish in the *Investigations* that the consistency of concepts does not lie in a specific use, rather in multiple connections between them. Here Wittgenstein applies the "twisting method"<sup>40</sup> to understand arguments and concepts.

When fixed elements are avoided, at the first sight one is naively tempted to believe that a system tends only to chaos. Wittgenstein proposes an alternative through the twisting method, establishing a collective strength made possible by a network of different elements. Thus, attention is placed in relations rather than in particular elements. The concept of game is related to the twisting method insofar as all elements have equal value and are interrelated with each other.

The influence of twisting method on language-games could be seen in the section 23 of the *Investigations* through their interwoven condition. There Wittgenstein lists diverse kinds of language-games, from "solving a problem in applied arithmetic" to "cracking a joke." The notion of language-game itself is woven of multiple kinds of human activities (cf. PU, § 7). Furthermore, by the notion of language-game Wittgenstein does not address just a special use of language, rather the "game condition" is implicit in language and its twisted relation with human practices. This cross-linked condition is transmitted from Wittgenstein's approach, through his notion of language-game, to the different human practices accounted for by this notion. Concepts are boundless due to their threading fiber by fiber. Each fiber accounts for a use. The last point will be addressed in the next section.

Going back to the issue of examples, this time related to the question of rule following, one can understand game as a concept with blurred edges via the relation of examples concerning a concept. Wittgenstein gives the following hypothetical situation: "So it's possible to say 'Now I no longer see this as a rose, but only as a plant!' | Or: 'Now I see it only as a rose, but no longer as *this* rose'" (TS, § 74, p. 330). There is an oscillation between the approach of the

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<sup>40</sup> "Método de 'trenzado'" according to Jesús Padilla-Gálvez (2017, p. 14).

individuality of an example and the approach of the features that made it an example of a particular concept. There is not such a sharp distinction between them. The context of use is what determines the relation between these approaches.

One understands an example as such because one is able to follow its rule of application, and this rule is taught by exemplification. That does not mean that it is possible to state a meta-rule which establishes how to use first-order rules. If a meta-rule is allowed, the possibility of stating a further meta-rule (a meta-meta-rule) is opened, and so on. Following the Tractarian spirit, a rule cannot be said because one could state another rule for the former. Instead, the rule shows itself through its applications as exemplification. Therefore, “the rule which has been taught and is subsequently applied interests us only so far as it is involved in the application. A rule, so far as it interests us, does not act at a distance” (‘BB’, p. 14).

In the end, “once I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: ‘This is simply what I do’” (PU, § 217). Rules do not force us to act in a particular way, they just work as a guide to act, because “is there not also the case where we play, and make up the rules as we go along? And even where we alter them — as we go along” (PU, § 83). Rules are not the basis of language-games. They just provide us with some orientation to be integrated into a particular language-game. By explanations it is not possible to saturate the link between a rule and its applications. The bedrock is the activities that also form part of language-games.

When Wittgenstein states his definition of language-games in the *Blue Book*, it is also possible to verify the intersection between examples and language-games. He defines them as: “The forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words” (‘BB’, p. 17). These forms are full of ostensive definitions, showing the intentions of Wittgenstein in establishing the meaning as use. In fact, in the *Investigations* this aim is explicit: “One could say: an ostensive definition explains the use — the meaning — of a word if the role the word is supposed to play in the language is already clear” (PU, § 30). The role of the word must be clear when we use examples because “it is the rules that are valid for the example that make

it into an example" (TS, § 74, p. 332). There are preconditions that make ostensive definitions intelligible, "one has already to know (or be able to do) something before one can ask [or understand] what something is called" (PU, § 30). For instance, knowing if something is an example of simplicity —or compositeness— depends on the language-game where an example is such (cf. PU, § 47).

The concept of game used in Wittgenstein's notion of language-game thus could be understood as an endless oscillation between generality and factuality mediated by examples, like the fibers of this relation. Examples which, as shown in the section 71 of the *Investigations*, are intended to be taken in a particular way, although "they don't pressure us" (TS, § 74, p. 333). That is, they do not force us to act in a determined way, just suggest a way to proceed like street signs (cf. PU, § 85). As stated above, it is through examples that Wittgenstein becomes able to introduce his notion of language-game.

## **2.2.2 Recourse of Sprachspiel to the concept of game through related notions: Familienähnlichkeit, Lebensform and Tätigkeiten**

Language-games show their recourse to the notion of game through other related terms developed simultaneously by Wittgenstein. These other notions help to understand more widely what Wittgenstein wanted to account for by language-game. In fact, following what has been achieved in the last section, it is not possible to draw a definitive border between those notions and language-game. In this section, the focus will remain on language-game and their relation to the concept of game, but the outlook changes.

Among the use of examples, the notion of family resemblance (Familienähnlichkeit)<sup>41</sup> is in turn an example used by Wittgenstein to explain how language-games are related in "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and in the small" (PU, § 66).<sup>42</sup> There are not incommensurable language-games, and distinct

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<sup>41</sup> "Family likeness" in the *Blue Book*, as reminds Sluga (2006, p. 7).

<sup>42</sup> According to Sluga, even the notion of language-game itself is a family resemblance notion: "There is no such thing as the general form of the proposition, he insists [Wittgenstein], there is no fixed essence to language,

signs can be part of multiple language-games. One could say that language-games play with each other both synchronically and diachronically through the notion of family resemblance (cf. Shain, 2007, p. 145). New language-games could be created through analogy with old ones. Wittgenstein uses an example to illustrate the woven and transtemporal constitution of language:

Our language can be regarded as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, of houses with extensions from various periods, and all this surrounded by a multitude of new suburbs with straight and regular streets and uniform houses. (PU, § 18)

Thus, family resemblance works as vestiges showing the mutability and history of language-games. Different places of Wittgenstein's ancient city contrast with each other, but there are also connections between them. One can walk from the maze of little streets to the new suburbs with regular streets, and thus attending not only to the game between the elements of a determined state of affairs, but at the same time visiting the game settled by states of affairs of different periods. Concerning particular family resemblance terms, this mutability over time is called by Williamson "dynamic quality" where "the extent of its legitimate application [of a family resemblance term] can grow over time" (1996, p. 85).

Language-games share family resemblances between them, although it is not possible to foresee the rise of new ones (cf. UG, § 559). These resemblances do not follow default patterns, that is why it is impossible to anticipate the formation of new language-games. Even the variety of language-games is not just given: "This diversity [of language-games] is not something fixed, given once for all. New language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten" (PU, § 23). This multiplicity is implied in the mutation of language-games and does not determine further mutations.

Another notion related to language-game is form of life (Lebensform). Frequently the

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and thus the concept of language-game cannot be formally defined, and all this is so because 'proposition,' 'language,' and 'language-game' are, in fact, family resemblance terms" (2006, p. 3).

term form of life has been overused by commenters as the ground of language-games.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, they are not based on grounds (cf. UG, § 559). Form of life should not be understood as an essential feature of language-games, instead, it should be comprehended concerning praxis (Tätigkeit). Through forms of life, Wittgenstein is not worried about building a concept which underpins language-games, rather forms of life should show that language-games form part of activities. They do not stand by themselves, they are related to human practices, as well as these practices are related to language-games. As Wittgenstein wrote: “— (...) to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life” (PU, § 19). Imagining a form of life also means to imagine a language as a code through which the members of this form of life communicate with each other. That is why they are interrelated.

This reciprocal conditioning between language-games and activities is also a language-game, as Wittgenstein notes: “I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven, a ‘language-game’” (PU, § 7). The notion of language-game does not only stand for describing different uses of language raised from ordinary life situations, it also accounts for the relation among activities and those uses of language.

A language-game always occurs related to a form of life. Therefore, when we use a language-game, it is necessary to consider as given a determined state of affairs concerning a form of life, but that does not mean that forms of life are changeless. Just like language-games mutate, forms of life also do it. They are also part of language-games.

There are three quotes in the *Investigations* which can elucidate the relation between language-games and forms of life. The first one: “— Giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, having a chat, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing” (PU, § 25). The different uses of language do not emerge from more primitive activities. Talking as well as eating emerge from the same conditions. According to Wittgenstein, there is no absolute distinction between language-games and the activities linked to them.

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<sup>43</sup> Wittgenstein himself explicitly uses the term "Lebensform" in the *Investigations* on just three occasions (PU, §§ 19, 23, 241).

There are no higher-order languages-games, all of them lie in the same plane.

Wittgenstein usually avoids using such second or higher-order levels of predication, as we can verify in the next quote:

One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word "philosophy", there must be a second-order philosophy. But that's not the way it is; it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word "orthography" among others without then being second-order. (PU, § 121)

Even when he addresses self-referential terms, where one easily tends to suppose at least one more level of predication, he avoids them. To resolve those cases Wittgenstein chooses recursivity of language-games. So it is easy to suppose that through human activities or form of life, he does not pursue a deeper ground to language-games.

The next quote refers to the interrelation between languages-games and activities from the viewpoint of the constitution of concepts: "If a concept points to [abzielt] a characteristic of human handwriting, it has no application [Anwendung] to beings that do not write" ('PP', § 1). Concepts emerge from specific language-games, they carry certain particularities of the context where they were raised, so it is idle to consider concepts without taking into account the particularities of their language-games. One could say that concepts maintain some of these particularities even if their language-game mutates or they are used in other language-games.

Making an analytical distinction, forms of life and family resemblance allow the intentions of linking elements standing in distinct contexts. Through them, the play of language-games is not subjective, but rather intersubjective, going beyond the particularities of specific language-games.

## 2.3 Recognizing the second relata: The concept of game in dissemination constitution

As we were following the links of a chain, here we go from the notion of game to dissemination, and from it to *différance* and trace. Finally, we will return to game. The first step shows how game is related to dissemination; the second and third show how dissemination through *différance* and trace return to the notion of game. Obviously, the chain can be followed in different ways. Another one could go, for example, from trace and *différance* to dissemination and game.

### 2.3.1 Influence of jeu and its relation to writing on dissemination definition

Derrida does not address the issue of game (*jeu*) as a concept. If we follow him, a concept fixes an unequivocal relation between signifier and signified, something which Derrida tends to avoid. He writes on play as act, in the first part of *The Double Session*<sup>44</sup> about mimesis related to Mallarmé's *Mimique*, that: "The act [*jeu*]<sup>45</sup> always plays [*joue*] out a difference without reference, or rather without a referent, without any absolute exteriority, and hence, without any inside" (*DS*, p. 248/219).<sup>46</sup> So, the notion of game present in his texts is usually related to indeterminacy (which does not necessarily mean unintelligibility) and oscillation. Like wandering, without a specific closed end, like the already seen Axelos' approach.

In fact, Derrida is following the wager, risk, and gambling connotations that "*jeu*" has in French. If we look at *Le Robert* dictionary, connotations of "*jeu*" are "mouvement aisé, régulier d'un objet, d'un organe, d'un mécanisme" and "espace ménagé pour le mouvement aisé d'un objet"; the latter includes "défaut de serrage entre deux pièces d'un mécanisme" (n.d.).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Derrida deals in this text, at least in the first part, with Mallarmé's *Mimique*, stating that *μίμησις* (*mimēsis*) does not stand just for a copy or imitation of something else. Rather, *μίμησις* stands for his own, as imitation itself, even beyond the idea of "imitation." See also Johnson (1981, pp. xxvi–xxix).

<sup>45</sup> The English edition of *La double séance* seems to suggest that "*jeu*" stands for game, play, and act (cf. p. 216).

<sup>46</sup> Fink's account of *μίμησις* beyond a representation, in the sense of a mirror, reverberates here.

<sup>47</sup> Related, see also the entry of "*jeu*" in Littré (1873–1874), in particular, connotations 26 and 27.

Meanings closely related to oscillation and provisionality. About, J. Hillis Miller (2011) writes that:

"Jeu" can also mean a looseness in connections or articulations as when one says, "There is play in this steering wheel", or even "There is play in this word, leading to word play". Certainly such play exists in ordinary usages of "jeu", as well as in Derrida's play with those usages. (p. 44)

Game plays for its own sake and does not follow a further target, there is not a teleological pursuit. Nothing escapes from the game. That is why it has neither exteriority nor inside, although there are non-saturated contexts playing the game.

Game is a notion used by Derrida in close relation to his approach to writing. They are different sides of the same issue of deferral relations. For instance, in the last section of *Plato's Pharmacy*, Derrida also compares game with his notion of writing:

Having no essence, introducing difference as the condition for the presence of essence, opening up the possibility of the double, the copy, the imitation, the simulacrum the game [jeu] and the *graphē* are constantly disappearing as they go along. They cannot, in classical affirmation, be affirmed without being negated. ('PH', p. 181/157)

The play among different contexts is a key issue in Derrida's account of language. For him, it is only possible through "writing," allowing the drawing of a word or statement from their original context and inserting it in other contexts without becoming unintelligible. According to Derrida, this play between contexts is inherent to the language itself, it is not accidental. In *Signature Event Context*, he notes:

A written sign carries with it a force of breaking with its context, that is, the set of presences which organize the moment of its inscription. This force of breaking is not an accidental predicate, but the very structure of the written. ('SEC', p. 377/317)

Writing as well as game share the feature of being delayed, non-actual in Fink's terms. It does not stand for an actual state of affairs. It always refers to something present turned absent through the addressing itself. This structural absence implied in the affirmation of writing enables the possibility of using a word in different contexts.<sup>48</sup> This game begins with writing and influences the entire language as is stated in *Of Grammatology*:

The secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifieds in general, affects them always already, the moment they enter the game. There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying [signifiants] references that constitute language. The advent of writing is the advent of this play. (DG, p. 16/7)

The overcoming of the Saussurean sign is playing here. This displacement affects the whole of language and is not an accident. Instead, it is the possibility of its unfolding. Also, the Derridean notions are implied in the game of writing. There is not a higher-order level which safeguards Derrida's own analyses from the game of signifiers. Even the notion of game is involved in the process described by itself. In that way, game (understood as a masterword following Axelos) is negated while it is affirmed. It also enters into the process of mutation and iteration that it tries to describe. As will be seen in the next section, Derrida addresses *différance* as a false exit (or entry) of the system of language. That is a shared condition of many of his neologisms related to language. Derrida does not want to remove metaphysics. He aims to print on it a new orientation from the tradition itself and thus inhabiting it, playing with its terms to show how they cannot reach what they try to. Namely, having a saturated and atemporal meaning.

Returning to in the last section of *Plato's Pharmacy*, it is possible to find in the ancient Greek word παιδιά (paidia) an antecedent of Derrida's use of game. For him, this word should not be translated only as pastime (divertissement), opposed to σπουδή (spoudē; serious). In that

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<sup>48</sup> This issue is also addressed in the next section concerning the deferred side of *différance* approached as dissemination.

way, game would be part of a binary relation as any other mentioned by Derrida (good/bad, form/matter, and others). These intentions are clear in the next quotation:

The opposition *spoudē/paidia* will never be one of simple symmetry. *Either* play is *nothing* (and that is its only *chance*); either it can give place to no activity, to no discourse worthy of the name—that is, one charged with truth or at least with meaning—and then it is *alogos* or *atopos*. Or *else* play begins to be something and its very presence lays it open to some sort of dialectical confiscation. It takes on meaning and works in the service of seriousness, truth, and ontology. (...) As soon as it comes into being and into language, play erases itself as such. As soon as it comes into being and into language, play *erases itself as such*. Just as writing must erase itself as such before truth. ('PH', pp. 180-181/156)

Game for Derrida is not an entity, its existence is deferred, non-actual. That is why its only chance is to be no-thing. As a nominal expression, game tries to account for the process of an endless iteration and replacement among the elements that constitute language. Thus, the translation of παιδιά should show the disruptive nature of that which game accounts for, a play of elements without a further monitoring than themselves, making tremble its (intended) opposition to σπουδή.

In the last sentence of the above quote, Heidegger's influence is evident on Derrida. There are similarities with the following excerpt taken from Heidegger's essay of 1930, entitled *On the Essence of Truth*:

Concealment deprives ἀλήθεια of disclosure yet does not render it στέρησις (privation); rather, concealment preserves what is most proper to ἀλήθεια as its own. Considered with respect to truth as disclosedness, concealment is then un-disclosedness and accordingly the un-truth that is most proper to the essence of truth. (GA 9, p. 89)

Game as something that erases itself recalls to ἀλήθεια (alētheia) as an unveiling that also veils

(as world does for Axelos). In turn, this treatment of ἀλήθεια by Heidegger departs from his ontological difference between being (Sein) and entity (Seiend). All that lies in language does it as an entity, but game though is not an entity, through its nominal expression becomes one and thus erases itself, just as the "being" becomes an entity erasing its condition of no-thing through language.

About this relation with Heidegger, Derrida stresses a distinction between *différance* and Heidegger's ontological difference that could be extended to his notion of game: "*Différance* is not a 'species' of the genus *ontological difference* (...) *différance* is not a process of propiation in any sense whatever. It is neither position (appropriation) nor negation (expropriation), but rather other" ('DIF', p. 27n1/26n26). Here Derrida avoids the metaphysics of presence implicated in Heidegger's term "being." Unlike Heidegger, Derrida is not appealing to the return of a mythical and remote origin. Game as a *différance*-related notion shares these features because it ostensibly takes place beyond the tension between presence and absence, just oscillation on its own.

The notion of game is also addressed by Derrida in an earlier essay entitled *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, after quoting Lévi-Strauss replying to critics about his non-exhaustive inventory of South American myths (1969, pp. 7–8). In this regard, Derrida notes:

Totalization can be judged impossible in the classical style: one then refers to the empirical endeavor of either a subject or a finite richness which it can never master. There is too much, more than one can say. But nontotalization can also be determined in another way: no longer from the standpoint of a concept of finitude as relegation to the empirical, but from the standpoint of the concept of *play*. If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field—that is, language and a finite language—excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only

because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions. ('SSJ', p. 423/365)

This quotation constitutes one of the best explanations on the notion of game that Derrida provides in his early texts. Through it, one can understand the place of this notion in his approach to language. It is used to explain its non-totalizing nature. Game not only describes the substitutions and relations among the components of language, it also shows the non-existence of a fixed element regulating these substitutions. In that way, as Derrida states, game establishes a tension with presence:

Play is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Play is always play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence. Being must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way around. ('SSJ', p. 426/369)

Game does not stand for chaos and nonsense, it describes the provisional and changing status of meaning always subject to mutation. These changes leave traces in the meaning of elements, that is why along with the mutation goes a chain carrying the history of changes. This chain enables the possibility of drawing a history of concepts.

The notion of game would be ontologically prior to the relation between presence and absence, and not presence and absence as the condition for game. As stated before, game would not be the cause of the oscillation between presence and absence. Rather, the sole possibility of game would be what allows the relation presence/absence. Nonetheless, as noted in the last quote, game as a subtracted phenomenon always takes place as the play between absence and presence.

Game, therefore, seems to be a transcendental condition but is not. Instead, game is a quasi-transcendental notion, a term attempting to go beyond binary thinking. It intends to be neither immanent nor transcendent, neither affirms nor denies the conditions of possibility of something.<sup>49</sup> Game is a strategy without finality, as Derrida shows in the next quote: “The concept of play keeps itself beyond this opposition [between philosophical-logical discourse and empirical-logical discourse], announcing, on the eve of philosophy and beyond it, the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end” (‘DIF’, p. 7/7). The last sentence enables us to go from game to dissemination as a strategy also without targets or goals.

Broadly speaking, dissemination states that meaning begins intrinsically scattered instead of having a progressive development. This further unfolding of meaning is just a consequence of the disseminated status of language. Just as the concept of game is supposed to describe the movement between presence and absence, dissemination describes the segregated condition of language since always. As Derrida writes: “Far from presupposing that a virgin substance thus precedes or oversees it, dispersing or withholding itself in a negative second moment, dissemination *affirms* the always divided generation of meaning. Dissemination—spills it in advance” (‘DS’, pp. 299-300/268). This divided generation of meaning takes place in multiple folds like Axelos’ openings of the world as epochs. In turn, Derrida takes the notion of fold from Mallarmé’s “éventail” (hand fan). One can think of dissemination as a hand fan where its slats are folds of meaning. These slats differ from each other but also are interconnected. However, dissemination is not only polysemy, a determined and fixed variety of signifieds for a signifier with a foreseeable horizon of unfolding.

Polysemy puts meaning offside —of game—, establishing “the horizon of the final parousia of a meaning at last deciphered, revealed, made present in the rich collection of its determinations” (‘DIS’, p. 389/350). Polysemy organizes a priori a settled number of meanings for a word, making present all possible development. On the other hand, dissemination plays on polysemy as a succession of meanings through game, because, as Derrida writes in

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<sup>49</sup> On quasi-transcendentals in Derrida see, for instance, Hurst (2004) and Rorty (1995).

*Tympan*, “what is then woven does not play the game of tight succession. Rather, it plays on succession. Do not forget that to weave (tramer, trameare) is first to make holes, to traverse, to work one-side-and-the-other of the warp [chaîne]” (“T”, p. xxv/xxviii). Besides, dissemination is embedded in time since its deferred constitution, not just in its deployment, impeding to foresee future folds of meaning.<sup>50</sup> Derrida, regarding Mallarmé’s hand fan, writes:

To read Mallarmé’s éventail {fan} (...) involves not only the description of a phenomenological structure whose complexity is also a challenge; it is also to remark that the fan re-marks itself: no doubt it designates the empirical object one thinks one knows under that name, but then, through a tropic twist (analogy, metaphor, metonymy), it turns toward all the semic units that have been identified (wing, fold, plume, page, rustling, flight, dancer, veil, etc., each one finding itself folding and unfolding, opening/closing with the movement of a fan, etc.); it opens and closes each one, but it also inscribes above and beyond that movement the very movement and structure of the fan-as-text, the deployment and retraction of all its valences. (“DIS”, p. 283/251)

The openings and closings movements of the hand fan, which make possible the unfolding and folding of its distinct parts, is implied in its own movement. The hand fan remarks itself says Derrida. These supplementary marks affects further deployment: “It marks the structurally necessary position of a supplementary inscription that could always be added to or subtracted from the series [of valences]” (“DIS”, p. 283/252). Dissemination, through its supplementary condition, shows the impossibility of the saturation of contexts. Besides this divided and delayed generation of meaning, dissemination also accounts for risking, gambling, and wagering related to meaning. Dissemination:

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<sup>50</sup> The difference between dissemination and polysemy could be easily understood through the distinction stated by Derrida, in the introduction to the documentary Derrida, between future (polysemy) and l’avenir (dissemination). The first one refers to foreseeable events, while l’avenir accounts for unexpected ones (Dick & Ziering, 2002).

Endlessly opens up a *snag* in writing that can no longer be mended, a spot where neither meaning, however plural, nor *any form of presence* can pin/pen down {*agrapher*} the trace. Dissemination treats —doctors— that point where the movement of signification would regularly come to *tie down* the play of the trace, thus producing (a) history. The security of each point arrested in the name of the law is hence blown up. ('HL', p. 33/26)

The provisionality and oscillation features of game can be noted in the above quotation. Dissemination also accounts for the impossibility of stopping the play of differences. There where a meaning seems to be fixed, dissemination reminds one of the play of the trace.

### **2.3.2 Recourse of dissémination to the concept of game through related notions: *différance* and trace**

Just as occurs with language-game, dissemination only achieves its purpose in regard to other Derridean terms. This necessity of using dissemination-related notions rests in Derrida's own exposition of dissemination (probably because of its own disseminated condition). Essays related to dissemination, such as *Différance*, where Derrida accounts related concerns give some evidence on this. For us, Derrida, between roughly 1967-1972, addresses similar topics in different texts. Thus, all of those texts are in some way interrelated. If one wants to have a representative approach of a particular notion developed in this period, dissemination in our case, it is a good idea to appeal to other notions.

Derrida himself explicitly addresses other of his notions as marks (not effects) of dissemination in *Outwork*. These marks are not guided by dual oppositions, nor account for a third term that reconciles these binary opposition: "They are the marks of dissemination (and not of polysemy) in that they cannot be pinned down at any one *point* by the concept or the tenor of a signified", and thus, "they can never be enclosed within any finite taxonomy, not to speak of any lexicon as such" ('HL', p. 32/25).

Barbara Johnson, the translator of the English edition of *Dissemination*, stresses in a footnote

the relevance of the above quotations. These terms (*différance*, *gramme*, *trace*, *supplement*, *hymen*, and others) are not traditional concepts. Concerning this point, she states: "Derrida is here both inviting and warning against such a procedure [make a lexicon], which, while it points up Derrida's neologistic innovations, reinscribes the effects of those innovations within a finite, pointillistic topology" (1981, p. 25n24). Strictly speaking, and following Derrida's suggested treatment, it is not possible to elaborate a sort (in a full sense) with them because they do not refer to something pre-established and contained. That is why they are marks of dissemination and not of polysemy. Doing a taxonomy with these terms deceives the intentions that have inspired their creation (which of course is not bad in itself). Indeed, Derrida seems to suggest that these terms are a false exit of language, something that classical metaphysics is not aware of concerning its foundational concepts. For Derrida, the value of foundational notions resides in showing their impossibility. On *différance*, he states:

This unnameable [*différance*] is the play which makes possible nominal effects, the relatively unitary and atomic structures that are called names, the chains of substitutions of names in which, for example, the nominal effect *différance* is itself *enmeshed*, carried off, reinscribed, just as a false entry or a false exit is still part of the game, a function of the system. ('DIF', p. 28/26-27)

By calling *différance* unnamable, Derrida is questioning the relation between atomic elements such as names and objects. Here attempting to omit a name is not just a whim, he is placing in the same level unnameableness, *différance*, and game. These terms do not account for a relation like name/object or signifier/signified.

There are no "outsides" in Derrida's approach because he acknowledges that doing so would imply the restoring of that which is avoided. That is to say, something fixed where the game does not take place, as it was already seen in the beginning of the chapter. *Différance* is a deliberately failed attempt to refer to something nameless. Through this attempt, he shows the impossibility of such reference. In fact, "*différance* remains a metaphysical name, and all the names that it receives in our language are still, as names, metaphysical" ('DIF', p. 28/26).

It is a false exit because it still having the form of a sign, alluding to a fixed relation between signifier and signified.

The relation among Derridean terms is shown by the fact that one could substitute *différance* by other related notions, depending on the context where it occurs, which also entail *différance*:

If we consider the chain in which *différance* lends itself to a certain number of nonsynonymous substitutions, according to the necessity of the context, why have recourse to the "reserve," to "archi-writing," to the "archi-trace," to "spacing," that is, to the "supplement," or to the *pharmakon*, and soon to the hymen, to the margin-mark-march, etc. ('DIF', p. 13/12)

Derrida is highlighting the relevance of context regarding the manner in which *différance* could occur. What *différance* tries to account is dispensable from its nominal expression. On this issue, in Spivak's preface to her translation of *Of Grammatology*, she writes:

The movement of "difference-itself," precariously saved by its resident "contradiction," has many nicknames: trace, *différance*, reserve, supplement, dissemination, hymen, greffe, *pharmakon*, parergon, and so on. They form a chain where each may be substituted for the other. But not exactly (of course, even two uses of the same word would not be exactly the same. (1997, p. lxx)

*Différance* is not excluded from the game described by it. All the terms aforementioned are several attempts to account for the same (which in turn does not remain the same).

As is well-known, *différance* is a neologism created by Derrida which establishes a play between the term *différance* and the already existent French word "différence" (difference). Both are homophones but not homographs. In French, their pronunciation does not allow one to notice this spelling distinction. Concerning this unnoticed graphic change in their utterance, Derrida says that his "discourse will be less a justification of, and even less an apology for, this silent lapse in spelling, than a kind of insistent intensification of its play"

(‘DIF’, p. 3/3). Derrida appeals to oscillation in the nominal construction of *différance*. Being unable to recognize whether *différence* or *différance* is pronounced puts oneself into the game. This game includes the wording of the term itself implying a swing between "e" and "a" (cf. Orbán, 1998, § 14).

Dissemination could be approached as the deferred or delayed side of *différance* since:

*Différer* in this sense is to temporize, to take recourse, consciously or unconsciously, in the temporal and temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of "desire" or "will," and equally effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect. (‘DIF’, p. 8/8)

The non-saturation of contexts explained through dissemination could be understood by this temporization of *différance*. Always something is left out when the fulfillment of a context is pursued. This delayed condition establishes a diachronic —and even synchronic— game among contexts and signs.

This temporization of *différance* as dissemination is also spacing, a scattering. The play of differences is just possible with an interval or distance, a strip of distance and movement that allows the interaction among the elements of the game. Concurrently, this possibility of movement allows iteration (cf. ‘DIF’, p. 8/8). The performance of repetition takes place only where the possibility of a seesaw between presence and absence is enabled. Otherwise, absence and presence could not swap each other, and iteration would not take place. That seems to be the reason why Derrida says that game is prior to the shifting between presence and absence.

Temporization returns us to the writing issue. Writing, understood in the general sense as a proxy of something absence, plays an important role in the delayed and spaced condition that makes non-saturation possible. Writing takes place:

When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the

sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence.  
 ('DIF', p. 9/9)

The process of signifying consists in the game between presence and absence, a deferred presence that goes beyond this dichotomy. Because signs work bypassing an absolute presence, Derrida claims that written signs structurally have the possibility of transcending their context of production, as already mentioned in the previous section. He states:

It belongs to the [written] sign to be legible, even if the moment of its production is irremediably lost, and even if I do not know what its alleged author-scriptor meant consciously and intentionally at the moment he wrote it. ('SEC', p. 377/317)

There is a differential play in terms of meaning between the signs taking part in a new context (i.e., other than their primitive context), allowing those signs to have a particular meaning, and their original context of production (i.e., paleonymy as we will see below). Derrida is not denying that fact in the last quote, but he claims that primitive lexicalization does not exclude the use of a sign in other contexts. Because a sign is intrinsically able to work without a full presence, even going beyond its own context, due to the temporal spacing of *différance* as dissemination:

This force of rupture [with its context] is due to the spacing that constitutes the written sign: the spacing which separates it from other elements of the internal contextual chain (the always open possibility of its extraction and grafting), but also from all the forms of a present referent (past or to come in the modified form of the present past or to come) that is objective or subjective. This spacing is not the simple negativity of a lack, but the emergence of the mark. ('SEC', pp. 377-378/317)

Extraction, grafting, and iteration, are possible because of the side of *différance* which implies temporal spacing. Here it is important to note that a sign cannot be intelligible without

a context. Derrida rejects the privilege of the primitive context as the ultimate code of interpretation. Nonetheless, that does mean that a sign can stand by itself. One could say that the chain of differences inscribed on it does not allow a sign to stand by its own. “Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences” (‘DIF’, p. 11/11). Thus, a sign must take place in a context.

Alongside this chain of *différance* there is the trace or mark above already mentioned. A trace could be understood as a negative effect, it does not reveal the existence of something that was fully present in another time. Instead, it reveals the lack of such presence. Just as temporal spacing makes possible the rupture of signs with their native —or any— context, spacing (and temporization) left marks of these gaps among signs. Hence, trace accounts for the marks of iteration (token) of a sign (type).

What we want to stress concerning the trace in relation to dissemination is the historic nature of language, which does not mean that it was created by any society. Language in everyday life always is considered as given. Obviously, a word can be extracted from its original context and be grafted in another, but it does not mean that the word lost all the connections with its former contexts where it took place, “it would be an affirmation of the autonomy of meaning, of the ideal purity of an abstract, theoretical history of the concept” (‘HL’, p. 11/5).<sup>51</sup>

Derrida addresses this side of the trace when he approaches the issue of paleonymy (the use of old names with new orientations) in the preface of *Dissemination*, and he does it in *White Mythology*. In particular, with the metaphysical vestiges of concepts. As Shain suggests, the question of paleonymy is a challenge to Wittgenstein’s attempt to dissolve philosophical problems (2007, p. 145). However, we should have in mind that for Derrida “there is no such

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<sup>51</sup> Derrida and Wittgenstein avoid metaphysics of meaning. They tend to delete the meaning as a semantic autonomous content. They stand for contextuality of meaning through the notion of game, rather than compositionality of meaning (atemporal elements that have their own meaning outside of contexts). We will face this issue in the next chapter.

thing as a 'metaphysical-concept.' There is no such thing as a 'metaphysical-name.' The 'metaphysical' is a certain determination or direction taken by a sequence or 'chain'" ('HL', p. 12/6). The metaphysical side of concepts is not removable (as paleonymy tries to show), but it is neither the ground of them. For instance, the ancient Greek word ὕλη (hylē) stood for the ordinary use as "wood" or "forest," and at the same time, it was used metaphysically by Aristotle accounting for "matter."

Concepts are like chains with open links that engage with other chains with open links, and those engagements always leave marks on the links of chains. A particular engagement (context) of the chain of ὕλη with other chains (concepts) constitutes its meaning as wood, matter, or something else. Dissemination accounts for the endless possibility of such engagements since concepts are constituted by open links, opening the game.

### 3. A convergence between Sprachspiel and dissémination through the concept of game

As a result of the explicit and implicit developments made by Derrida and Wittgenstein approached so far on dissémination and Sprachspiel, the notion of game as the intersection area between them could be built through the following general features: 1) All the participants addressed are at the same level, even the notion of game and participant themselves (reflexivity/recursivity)<sup>52</sup> 2) Those participants are not completely fixed (flux) 3) There are patterns of interaction among participants, but also patterns are subject to change (trace/family resemblance) 4) Further patterns among participants are unforeseeable (dissemination going beyond polysemy/mutation and raising of new language-games). Following these features of game as an outlook, this chapter provides the first attempts to establish a convergence between language-game and dissémination (and related notions).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Here reflexivity and recursivity go along with each other. Making an analytical distinction, reflexivity refers to the feedback between the notion of game itself and that which is addressed through it (mutability) because of the mentioned lack of higher predication levels. Recursivity, on the other hand, stands for the implication of the game itself in the description of what the notion of game is (even when examples of particular games are addressed), therefore, following Derrida, being a false exit or entry.

<sup>53</sup> The notion of game here addressed could share some commonalities with what James P. Carse calls "infinite game." He described it as played for the sake of the game itself, just "for the purpose of continuing the play." This kind of game has no spatial frontiers: "There are no spatial or numerical boundaries to an infinite game. No world is marked with the barriers of infinite play," and also without temporal limits: "The time of an infinite

### 3.1 Game and metaphysics: Family resemblances/paleonymy, language therapy/metaphysical language and mythology

Dissémination and Sprachspiel as notions related to metaphysical issues (metaphysics, understood as autonomous meaning of words, i.e., outside of any context) through the notion of game, lead us to some issues that a link between those notions should face. Here we will address two of them: 1) The contraposition between family resemblance and paleonymy; 2) The relation between language therapy and metaphysics/mythology. Those issues help us, as an access point, to begin establishing the convergence between Sprachspiel and Dissémination from the standpoint of the notion of game.

As stated in the previous chapter, Derrida and Wittgenstein avoid metaphysics of meaning. They tend to get away from approaches of meaning as a semantic autonomous content, that is to say, as something isolated from every context. The notions of language-game and dissemination are implied in this rejection. Family resemblance as a related notion to language-game and paleonymy as a related notion to dissemination also take part in this issue.

The relation between language-game and family resemblance was established in the previous chapter. However, the relation between dissemination and paleonymy was not directly addressed. It was just hinted at in the last paragraphs dedicated to the trace. Indeed, it is through the notion of trace, accounting for the historic nature of language, that paleonymy becomes an important notion. Also, some features of dissemination could be explicitly seen through paleonymy: unsaturated condition of contexts, trade of words between contexts, and the rising of new connotations of words.

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game is not world time, but time created within the play itself. Since each play of an infinite game eliminates boundaries, it opens to players a new horizon of time." An infinite game has those features because "while finite games are externally defined, infinite games are internally defined." And of course, since an infinite game has no boundaries, "there is but one infinite game," However, about the issue of boundaries, "finite games can be played within an infinite game, but an infinite game cannot be played within a finite game" (1986, §§ 1, 6, 7, 101). Carse's notion of infinite game is important because he approaches it without making a complex taxonomy of particular games.

Paleonymy is approached by Derrida in *Positions* asking: “What, then, is the ‘strategic’ necessity that requires the occasional maintenance of an old name in order to launch a new concept?” (P, p. 96/71). Just as with the notion of game, paleonymy is a strategy without finality. Derrida continues questioning: “Why does *strategy* refer to the *play* of the strategem [*jeu du stratagème*] rather than to the hierarchical organization of the means and the end?” (P, p. 96/71). Derrida does not stand for the univocal relation between a name and a concept. Here maintaining an old name does not necessarily imply carrying on old concepts without being modified. In this way, “a name does not name the punctual simplicity of a concept, but rather a system of predicates defining a concept, a conceptual structure centered on a given predicate” (P, p. 96/71). Moreover, this quotation reminds us of the already mentioned quote of the preface of *Outwork*: “There is no such thing as a ‘metaphysical-name.’ The ‘metaphysical’ is a certain determination or direction taken by a sequence or ‘chain’” (‘HL’, p. 12/6). This idea also appears in *Signature Event Context*: “Each concept, moreover, belongs to a systematic chain, and itself constitutes a system of predicates. There is no metaphysical concept in and of itself. There is a work —metaphysical or not— on conceptual systems” (‘SEC’, pp. 392-393/329). Thus, one could say that a name, as a system of predicates, is a determination —among others— of the chain (of meaning) defining a particular concept.

Derrida explains the process of paleonymy through two steps:

(1) to the extraction of a reduced predicative trait that is held in reserve, limited in a given conceptual structure (limited for motivations and relations of force to be analyzed), *named X*; (2) to the delimitation, the grafting and regulated extension of the extracted predicate, the name X being maintained as a kind of *lever of intervention*, in order to maintain a grasp on the previous organization, which is to be transformed effectively. Therefore, extraction, graft, extension: you know that this is what I call, according to the process I have just described, *writing*. (P, p. 96/71)

As we can verify in this quote, a name is just a tool to lexicalize a system of predicates. In fact,

a tool that could be used with different systems of predicates because there is not a univocal relation between names and concepts/signifieds. Here names are only meaningful in relation to their predicates (which in turn could also be names). The latter are not just accessories to names. Thus, the extraction of a name, rather, is the extraction of a set of predicates, and paleonymy is just the change of the predicates that are focused regarding a name.<sup>54</sup>

According to Ed Pluth, paleonymy: “Proceeds by continuing to use an old, traditional name while making the name different from what it always was, because one or more of the predicates associated with that name is being rethought and reworked” (2007, p. 19). However, paleonymy also could be understood as a name allowing the communication among different contexts, among different systems of predicates (the former systems and the new one pursuit be established), because paleonymy as a process always takes place in an already existent name.

An example (related to the previous one about ὄλη) could be helpful to understand paleonymy. In the history of Western philosophy there are words that have changed their meaning. A well known example is Plato’s adoption of the term εἶδος (eidos) in his so-called theory of forms, which also attached new connotations to the term. In ordinary life the term referred to something seen, but Plato used to refer to something only intelligible. With this extraction and grafting of the term εἶδος, from the point of view of paleonymy, Plato is not just taking the name εἶδος isolated from all its previous predicates. Rather, although he attributed other predicates to εἶδος in his theory, former predicates of εἶδος related to ordinary life could arise. Thus, it is possible to say, at least metaphorically, that one sees a form when one has understood it, and a form could be ugly or beautiful.<sup>55</sup> The latter, predicatives related to sight

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<sup>54</sup> Translation could be raised as a paleonymy related process. On representation, Derrida writes: “I think we must begin with the hypothesis that the word ‘representation’ translates no Greek word in any transparent way, without remainder, without reinterpretation and deep historical reinscription. This is not a problem of translation, it is *the* problem of translation” (‘E’, p. 116/101).

<sup>55</sup> It could be interesting to verify the scope of the overlap between predicates of different fields in Plato’s texts. For example, aesthetics (including theory of perception) and ethics concerning forms. Nicholas Riegel (2014) in his text *Goodness and Beauty in Plato* explores the link between τὸ ἀγαθόν (to agathon) and τὸ καλόν (to kalon) concluding that goodness and beauty are coextensive although not identical.

(and other senses).

There are at least two positions regarding the relation between paleonymy and metaphysics. On one hand, Shain writes that: “For Derrida the use of old terms in new ways—at least when used by philosophers to attempt to escape metaphysics, possibly in all other cases as well—raises the ‘question of paleonymy’” (2007, p. 145). Here the question of paleonymy refers to the inability of old terms to escape from old metaphysical uses. On the other hand, Pluth thinks that paleonymy “can, in principle, involve using a strong or dominant concept from the philosophical, metaphysical tradition, changing its attributes with an eye to abandoning the concept altogether someday” (2007, p. 19). Pluth’s reading of paleonymy seems to open the possibility of reaching a complete new lexicalization of names, leaving aside older metaphysical uses. In particular, the final words in the citation of Pluth above, after the last comma, suggest that it is possible to foresee a future where the former concept loses its relation to a name. In this way, the actual predicates related to that name do not resemble or refer to the previous predicates linked to its former concept.

Pluth’s reading could easily be read as teleological, ignoring the risky side of paleonymy. This risky side is addressed by Derrida in the following quote:

To put the old names to work, or even just to leave them in circulation, will always, of course, involve some risk: the risk of settling down or of regressing into the system that has been, or is in the process of being, deconstructed. To deny this risk would be to confirm it: it would be to see the signifier—in this case the name—as a merely circumstantial, conventional occurrence of the concept or as a concession without any specific effect. It would be an affirmation of the autonomy of meaning.  
(‘HL’, p. 11/5)

Nonetheless, Pluth’s account of paleonymy somehow also includes its risky side, when he states immediately after his above last mentioned quote that “the concept in question would always be in scare quotes” (2007, p. 19). The concept which is supposed to leave its former connotations still carrying the same name and because of that needs to be inside quotation

marks. The risk of returning to the old system keeps being latent. Here the issue of sous rature (under erasure) arises. In fact, any name subjected to the process of paleonymy is a name to be written under erasure, and therefore becoming an endless erasure hoping to leave aside what makes it possible. That is to say, former signified(s) implicated in the signifier in question.

Pluth's text (2007) is about Lacan. For this reason his treatment of paleonymy is oriented to address Lacan's developments. In that text can be found an example where the risky side of paleonymy arises related to Lacan's use of an old name:

Lacan's theory of the subject is taking a central philosophical and metaphysical concept and trying to understand it differently, without hoping for a better, more appropriate name for it. As a result, from Derrida's perspective, Lacan runs the risk of simply repeating what was metaphysical about the subject. (p. 19)

If we follow this quotation, Lacan is applying somehow the approach of paleonymy to preserve the name "subject" but trying to rework it. The last sentence from the above quote shows the risky side of paleonymy addressed by Derrida. Using an old name opens the possibility of falling into its former connotations.

Paleonymy, understood as an ongoing process, as an infinite game (following Carse's notion), enables the gambling between the old uses of names resisting being reworked and the new connotations trying to dock into old names. Through paleonymy it is possible to verify how trace works, linking old uses to new ones.

In the end, it seems that Shain's account of paleonymy follows more closely what Derrida writes about it in the preface of *Dissemination*, while Pluth focuses his attention only on the explanation stated in *Positions*. These two interpretations of paleonymy given by Shain and Pluth are also introduced because they allow us to account for the relation between family resemblance and paleonymy. In the previous chapter, we have mentioned the question of paleonymy as a challenge to Wittgenstein's intentions to dissolve philosophical problems. This challenge arises, according to Shain, through the contrapositions between the notion of

family resemblance and paleonymy (2007, p. 145).

Shain understands family resemblance as a synchronic and diachronic idea, where:

Words may have different referents from earlier uses of the same words, and words may be used currently with different referents —and all of these uses may be legitimate. None need be the "essential" or "true" meaning. Hence, it need not raise any metaphysical issues when words are used in different ways as long as these new uses are related to previous or current uses. (2007, p. 145)

In this quote can be confirmed the woven and transtemporal features of language accounted for the notion of family resemblance in the last chapter. Both paleonymy and family resemblance play with multiple but related connotations of words. The contraposition between them could be partially overcome, if we think both as processes of extracting and grafting words and their uses among different contexts or language-games without promoting any of those earlier uses. Both of these notions stand for the trading that builds up language. A game played between different uses of words. Different patterns related to one another. The above so-called features 1 and 3 of the notion of game are present here if we take contexts too as first order participants of the game: Contexts are on the same level and play each other. A play that could establish a pattern, although as feature 4 states: Subject to unforeseeable changes.

Nonetheless, there is an important distinction. The work or re-orientation printed on the old names through paleonymy is a task made by someone,<sup>56</sup> although made possible by the disseminated condition of language. On the other hand, the extraction and grafting process of family resemblance is an intersubjective phenomenon taking place in the language understood also as a language-game.

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<sup>56</sup> The necessity of someone to execute paleonymy seems to print a finality on it, leaving aside its aforementioned lack of goals. In fact, there is local or contextual finality, but applying paleonymy to a name does not imply closing the possibility of raising further connotations related to that name and fixing its scope. Paleonymy cannot ensure such a mastering of a name. If the possibility of the return of old connotations associated to the name used is taken into account, even that local finality is not ensured. Paleonymy, in Derridean terms, is a blind tactic, without a further strategy guiding it (cf. 'DIF', p. 7/7).

As stated before, for Derrida the metaphysical connotations of words are not privileged above other applications. The metaphysical is just a direction among others. Paleonymy as well as family resemblance reminds us that words have a non-movable history behind them. Wittgenstein wrote something related to these new orientations of words:

You interpret a grammatical movement that you have made as a quasi-physical phenomenon which you are observing. (...) | Above all, you have found a new conception. As if you had invented a new way of painting; or, again, a new metre, or a new kind of song. — (PU, § 401)

Following the line of this quote, the metaphysical use of words (and any new use) consists of grammatical movements always translatable to our ordinary language (cf. 'BB', p. 23). These movements give way to new uses of words, new conceptions. A new language-game consists of multiple grammatical movements, nonetheless, a language-game cannot be made subjectively. It has to be embedded into human practices and needs to be played intersubjectively. Taking Shain's approach to family resemblance as both a diachronic and a synchronic notion, it accounts for the history of those movements, not only a diachronic history, but also a synchronic history of those movements.

This history of words, allowed by paleonymy and family resemblance, could apply to both philosophical and ordinary life uses of words since there is not a clear delimitation between them, at least for Derrida. As he said in an interview in 1988, and Shain (2005, p. 88) reminds: "Philosophy finds its element in so-called natural language. (...) This means that philosophical language or languages are more or less well defined and coherent subsets within natural languages or rather the uses of natural languages" (PS, p. 238/225). Although the metaphysical use of words is not privileged, it could not be completely removed from ordinary use of languages as well as the connotations of ordinary use are implied in the constitution of metaphysics. Besides, natural languages are modified by the metaphysical use of their words. According to this, philosophical problems (as something dealing with a more deeper and fundamental reality) cannot be completely dissolved because the metaphysical

use of words also constitutes our ordinary languages. In *White Mythology* that is clear, the "original" palimpsest is still accessible even when names are reworked. Nonetheless, this access is available only through other names that are also reworked, via (philosophical) metaphors (cf. 'MB', pp. 251-252/211-212).

Philosophical or metaphysical languages, understood as subsets inside natural languages follow the approach stated before, where those uses are not privileged above others. Understanding ordinary languages as a set and its uses as subsets supports the rejection of higher levels of predication. In Axelos' terms, the set (Set of sets) which contains the other sets also takes part of the game.

Sets constitute subsets just as subsets constitute sets. Here "sub" does not mean subordination or being secondary. Deleting a subset from a set, also implies deleting a part of the set itself. Even subsets of different sets are mutually translatable because "one may find equivalents and regulated translations between these subsets from one natural language to another" (PS, p. 238/225).

Here we face the question about family resemblances between ordinary and metaphysical use of language in Wittgenstein's texts. As it will be seen, for us his rejection of metaphysics is not univocal. In his texts at least a strong explicit rejection and a soft implicit approval of metaphysics could be found. This relation between philosophical and ordinary language is one question raised by Shain (2005) as a way, among three, to organize Derrida's references to Wittgenstein (p. 72).

Language therapy<sup>57</sup> departs from a strong rejection of metaphysics either because the latter is unaware of its meta (higher order) intentions (i.e., approaching its second order statements as first order claims referring directly to facts) or approaches those meta intentions as legitimate (i.e., making statements from a higher position because it brings a better and/or a deeper understanding about facts). Both alternatives would depart from misunderstandings

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<sup>57</sup> Language therapy is an expression that Wittgenstein himself does not use, although he uses the term "therapies" in the *Investigations*, § 133. See also the following section: "The philosopher treats a question; like an illness" (PU, § 255).

about how language works.

We find this strong rejection in the *Investigations*, especially in the section 116: "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use." This is how philosophical problems should be dissolved according to Wittgenstein.<sup>58</sup>

The context, where this claim is stated, is also important. The first part of the section states:

When philosophers use a word — "knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "proposition/sentence", "name" — and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home? — (PU, § 116)

Wittgenstein's texts are clear about the necessity of getting away from the intentions of new or alternative uses which aim to improve or replace ordinary language, as the metaphysical use does. He rejects the metaphysical use of words inasmuch as it intends to be a second order of predication, the (explicit or implicit) "meta" pretensions of metaphysics. Bringing words back to their ordinary use is to remove the meta pretension intending to constitute a higher order of predication in relation to their ordinary usage.

The last quote shows a good example of how metaphysics is approached by Wittgenstein. However, if we consider metaphysics as another language-game, as grammatical movements, it is possible to soften Wittgenstein's rejection against metaphysics. Recalling Dummett, even when Wittgenstein denies the possibility of asserting theses in philosophy, his developments around the impossibility of private languages (among others) could be rendered as philosophical propositions, although for Wittgenstein those statements were just "grammatical remarks" (2010, p. 13). In a similar line, Williamson states that Wittgenstein's work "was always driven by theoretical concerns" (1996, p. 72).

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<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, for Derrida: "It is at bottom with philosophy that one would correct philosophy, I mean, the bad effects of philosophy" ('E', p. 114/100).

Just as Derrida sees the mythology inside language as something still accessible, Wittgenstein approaches mythology as something latent in language related either to its anthropological side or to hardened propositions. Probably Wittgenstein's approach to mythology could help to understand his soft or implicit acceptance of metaphysics.

There is a quote concerning Wittgenstein's acceptance of metaphysics (being just another language-game, like any other) that could be related in his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*: "A whole mythology is deposited in our language"<sup>59</sup> (BUF, p. 242/#24).<sup>60</sup> Like other aphorisms of Wittgenstein, this remark is obscure, even if we look at the previous and the next remark. What he means by "mythology" in that quote is the question to be tackled.

There are different interpretations of the quotation.<sup>61</sup> Heonik Kwon writes: "If 'a whole mythology is deposited in our language' (#24), the philosopher's work is then to discover the great treasure deposited deep down the tree of language, the richness and diversity of language and life" (2018, p. 95). Kwon's interpretation seems to approach language as something with hidden zones or levels, and philosophers having the task of discovering something deeper, unreachable at first glance. Immediately after the above quote, Kwon cites the next Wittgenstein's remark: "We must plow [durchpflügen] over language in its entirety," which could support his affirmation (BUF, p. 240/#17). Nonetheless, Kwon adds an illustrative example related to the task of plowing: "Wittgenstein briefly worked as a gardener and often compared philosophy to gardening, especially in his *Culture and Value*" (2018, p. 95). Knut Christian Myhre writes the following in relation to Wittgenstein's plowing:

In methodological terms, it means that the description can trace relationships from anywhere, as the language-game can be unfurled from the words, practices, or

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<sup>59</sup> In Nietzsche can be found the following related statement: "A philosophical mythology lies concealed in language which breaks out again every moment, however careful one may be otherwise" (WS, § 11). For Nietzsche's relation to Wittgenstein, see Alvarez and Ridley (2005).

<sup>60</sup> We are using for the pagination of *Bemerkungen über Frazer's "The Golden Bough,"* the numeration of pages included in the version of *Synthese* (1967), edited by Rush Rhees, followed by the numeration of the remarks proposed by Giovanni da Col and Stephen Palmié in their edition of 2018.

<sup>61</sup> da Col and Palmié's edition includes a new translation of Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Frazer's The Golden Bough*. The book also contains chapters written by different authors on Wittgenstein's remarks.

objects it contains or entails, or folded out of any of the other language-games with which it interlinks. Since neither things nor practices or words ground or anchor each other, the description can and must proceed pragmatically from one to the other. (2018, p. 105)

The idea of gardening, contrary to our first approach to Kwon's interpretation, reinforces the non-existence of levels of predication above already mentioned. The task of gardening itself does not imply that there are (in the garden) hidden zones. Then, to plow over language in its entirety implies, as Myhre stated, to trace relationships among different zones without taking any of these zones as the central starting point, as Wittgenstein suggests in the previously mentioned preface of the *Investigations*: "For it [his investigation] compels us to travel criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought." The richness and diversity of language and life is not to be found deep down the tree of language rather in the tracing of relationships among different parts of the tree.<sup>62</sup>

Returning to the issue of mythology/metaphysics, Michael Puett, states that Wittgenstein's mythology:

Is present not as historical remnants from a previous period of human evolution but a mythology that is with us still, as it is in the Beltane ritual.<sup>63</sup> That is with us still in all the complexities of being human, including our unsettledness and our sinister sides. (2018, p. 142)

Puett seems to understand mythology as something intrinsic to humankind and rituals like

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<sup>62</sup> Here we find related Carse's account of garden and gardening: "'Garden' does not refer to the bounded plot at the edge of the house or the margin of the city. This is not a garden one lives beside, but a garden one lives within. It is a place of growth, of maximized spontaneity. To garden is not to engage in a hobby or an amusement; it is to design a culture capable of adjusting to the widest possible range of surprise in nature. Gardeners are acutely attentive to the deep patterns of natural order, but are also aware that there will always be much lying beyond their vision. Gardening is a horizontal activity" (1986, § 80).

<sup>63</sup> According to Palmié (2018), Wittgenstein addressed "Frazer's account of the eighteenth-century Beltane Fire Festival, in which a cake in which a button had been baked was ceremonially consumed by the celebrants, and the person who got the piece with the button was mockingly threatened with being thrown into the fire. Frazer sees this as an attenuated 'survival' of past rituals of human sacrifice" (p. 16).

the Beltane festival as expressing that mythology. Then, language carries a mythology because humans are ritualistic. However, Wittgenstein also states that: "Magic<sup>64</sup> always rests on the idea of symbolism and of language" (BUF, p. 237/#11). Therefore rituals, and the magic involved in them, also lie in the capabilities provided by language.

Rituals are expressions of mythology which intend to account for reality without care directly about describing facts. Those expressions, like in metaphysical approaches, rather try to develop (although tending to fail) approaches to facts beyond the facts themselves (a higher order of predication?). Rituals as well as metaphysics are language-games where its (implicit or explicit) meta pretension does not succeed. However, even considering that failure, rituals as well as metaphysics have a meaningful and pragmatic role in human lives. From a Kantian perspective, they explain much more about us as humans than the reality addressed. Hence, the soft acceptance of metaphysics by Wittgenstein, beyond taking it as grammatical movements, could be also approached appealing to the anthropological side of his notion of language-game.<sup>65</sup>

The other approach to mythology in Wittgenstein's texts is to be found in *On Certainty*:

It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. (UG, § 96)

If one looks at the previous section (§ 95), hardened propositions are related to a world-picture, propositions which are temporarily fixed to give, let us say, a context where empirical propositions make sense or reach a meaning. Such hardened propositions is what Wittgenstein calls here "mythology":

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<sup>64</sup> About magic there are some remarks in the *Bemerkungen über Frazers* dealing with it. For example: "Magic gives representation to a wish; it expresses a wish," where the representation of a wish implies its fulfillment; and magic, contrary to science, does not progress because it "possesses no direction of development internal to itself" (BUF, p. 237/#11; p. 246/#37).

<sup>65</sup> The so-called Wittgenstein's epistemic relativism could rise here. See Kusch (2016).

The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other. (UG, § 97)

As it was already seen, a symptom could turn into a criterion and vice versa. Metaphysical propositions aim to be hardened propositions to which the rest of propositions were attached, although forgetting that fixed propositions could become flux again. In Derridean terms, the original palimpsest could be alive again.

If we follow our development of the notion of game in Wittgenstein's texts through language-game and other related notions, where concepts are built upon different uses through family resemblance rather than via clear delimitations, metaphysics is at least a language-game constituted by multiple grammatical movements. Besides, it has effects upon other languages-games, including ordinary language, as well as other language-games have effects upon it. Therefore, here we have a soft and implicit acceptance of metaphysics. Even if we look at the anthropological side of the notion of language-game, we found a soft acceptance of metaphysics via human practices like rituals and magic when the latter are considered as language-games. Those share with metaphysics the feature of aiming to be self-sufficient.

On the philosophical use of language, both Derrida and Wittgenstein agree with the fact that it occurs inside natural languages. However, in Derrida's texts there seems to be a feedback between the philosophical and the ordinary use of words, making it impossible to establish a clear distinction between them. In the end, a philosophical use of a word could become the ordinary use of this word. On the other hand, Wittgenstein's language therapy could carry some naivety (from a Derridean point of view) if we take together his intended distinction between ordinary/philosophical use of words and his intentions to reduce the latter to the former (since a philosophical use, following Wittgenstein, tends to be just a misuse of ordinary language inasmuch as its grammar is not understood by the

metaphysical/philosophical approaches).<sup>66</sup>

### **3.2 Game and meaning: Principle of context and unsaturation of contexts**

Analytically, in the first instance, dissemination stands for unsaturation of contexts (feature 2 and 4 of game), while language-game stands for the principle of context (feature 3 of game: Context as a pattern of interaction among participants). However, one could find in a more detailed approach to dissemination that it also stands for contextuality and language-game does the same for unsaturation of contexts, although those features are less evident. Besides, the notions are also implied in that which they address.

One could understand unsaturation accounting for the disseminated condition of language (and its meaning) and contextuality accounting for specific threads (language-games) of the (criss-crossing) game in which language (and life) is woven. Furthermore, as stated before, the approach of dissemination depends on the context where it appears, it is just a (failed) nominal expression trying to account for something which does not need that expression, and language-game is a notion with blurred edges, making it impossible to specify a clear definition of the notion itself and thus saturating it. There is a feedback, a game in terms of meaning, between the generality (unsaturation) of those notions and what is addressed with them (context).

Trying to take into account the particularities of the concepts that we are dealing with, the task in this section is to do a criss-cross work. Namely, relating dissemination and language-game to each other through their contextual and unsaturated conditions with the help of the notion of game as the area of intersection. Is language-game a disseminated notion and dissemination (beyond its nominal expression) a notion which depends on particular

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<sup>66</sup> Related to language and its ordinary and metaphysical uses in Derrida and Wittgenstein see, for instance, Truong-Rootham (1996).

contexts? If we say no to the last part of the question, are we returning to the metaphysical and autonomous account of meaning? We are engaged in this section with those questions.

The issue of contextuality in dissemination returns us to *Signature Event Context*, where Derrida addresses the displacement inherent to words in relation to contexts. Signs are signs because of their availability to appear outside of their native context, as we saw above in our discussion of writing. However, "this does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring [ancrage]" ('SEC', p. 381/320). This lack of anchoring is what dissemination tries to represent beyond particular contexts, that is to say, the impossibility of stopping the already mentioned play of the trace and its divided generation of meaning. Dissemination itself needs a context of utterance to become intelligible, but at the same time it points beyond the context toward that which is left out of its actual context. There is a tension between the contextuality of dissemination (which could carry another nominal expression) and its overwhelming nature.<sup>67</sup>

Contextuality is also part of Derrida's *Envoi*. Addressing how philosophy also corrects its bad effects, he mentions the following about the concept of representation:

A gesture that is very common and apparently profoundly philosophical: to think what a concept means in itself, to think what representation is, the essence of representation in general. This philosophical gesture first transports the word to its greatest obscurity, in a highly artificial way, by abstracting it from every context and every use value, as if a word were regulated by a concept independently of any contextualized function, and even independently of any sentence. ('E', p. 114/100)

Therefore, contexts, although unsaturated, need some determination to bring meaning to

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<sup>67</sup> Contextuality and unsaturation in dissemination could be approached as a quasi-transcendental relation. There its condition of possibility, the context where it takes place, becomes its condition of impossibility inasmuch as it tends to constrain the implications of dissemination. See Hurst (2004), in particular the section called "An Analogy Between the Giving of a Gift and Différance."

words. In that text, about representation in ordinary life, Derrida writes:

In ordinary situations of ordinary language (if there are such things, as we ordinarily believe) the question of knowing what we intend by the name of representation is very unlikely to arise, and if it arises, it does not last a second. It is enough that there be a context that, while not saturated, is reasonably well determined, just as it is in what we call ordinary experience. ('E', p. 133/119)

A context "reasonably well determined" resembles Wittgenstein's above mentioned hypothetical "'Stay roughly here'" (PU, § 71). Both, although express the necessity of giving an environment where the statement makes sense, at the same time suggest how a statement in ordinary life could be understandable without a sharp context. Here could be verified too the play between contextuality and unsaturation as a reciprocal feedback taking place at the same level (feature 1 of game).

Following the Wittgensteinian "stay roughly here," let us approach language-game accounts for contextuality. As stated in the first chapter, it comes from Frege's principle of context, which declares the necessity of an environment to allow words to reach a meaning. In turn, to ask for the meaning of something only within an environment which brings it a meaning implies, at least partially, the acceptance of the divided generation of meaning. Thus, denying a simple generation where a meaning could be reached by something in isolation.

Wittgenstein's "stay roughly here" seems to accept the Fregean principle of context, but also includes a rejection of Frege's approach (according to Wittgenstein) to concepts. He writes in the following and already addressed section:

Frege compares a concept to a region, and says that a region without clear boundaries can't be called a region at all. This presumably means that we can't do anything with it. But is it senseless to say "Stay roughly here"? Imagine that I were standing with someone in a city square and said that. As I say it, I do not bother drawing any boundary but just make a pointing gesture — as if I were indicating a particular spot. (PU, § 71)

Indicating a particular spot (context), although is needed to make the message intelligible, works as the also above addressed street signs. It lets open the interpretation of the gesture. This unsaturation applies also to every statement of language: "If I tell someone 'Stay roughly here' — may this explanation not work perfectly? And may not any other one fail too?" (PU, § 88). The risk of being misunderstood is still always latent (unsaturation enables this possibility). "Stay roughly here" is not a worse explanation compared to a more detailed one. It just underlines the impossibility of closing the game of meaning. It is a good example in showing how contextuality and unsaturation are related to each other.

There is an unsaturation of the expressions (in a general sense, not limited to words) used among language-games. The same expression or gesture could be used in several language-games with a different meaning and sharing just its signifier. Above we said that "family resemblance works as vestiges that shows mutability and history of language-games" (p. 41). Nonetheless, one could raise some issues about unsaturation in language-games if one abstracts the notion from every context, bypassing the tension between context and unsaturation. For example, 1) in terms of reaching a meaning, which kind of unsaturation is present both in the notion of language-game itself and in the phenomena which it stands for?; 2) if a language-game is non-saturable, or if there are just several saturated language-games using the same nominal expressions (via family resemblances) unrelatedly to each other (synchronic issue). Therefore, changes happening over time in the meaning of their expressions imply the transformation of the whole of language-games, making the language-game in question independent from its former stages (diachronic issue).<sup>68</sup> Even if, beyond their particular context, there is a synchronic and diachronic interaction affecting the meaning of expressions of language-games, one could ask 3) if there is a saturation of those synchronic and diachronic relations, making illegitimate the use of an expression in a new and unrelated way in relation to its previous or other contemporary uses. As could be evident, those

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<sup>68</sup> Kusch (2016) mentions that Anthony Grayling and Rudolf Haller cite the following related passage as an evidence for epistemic relativism in *On Certainty*: "When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change" (UG, § 65).

issues could be dissolved when one approaches language-game as a notion without clear delimitations. It is a disseminated notion since its wired constitution is built upon examples and the woven relations among them.

Language-game stands for specific practices and also for the relation between those practices and the human and pragmatic context where they are embedded.<sup>69</sup> The so-called forms of life insofar as they are activities do not ground language-games; rather, they are part of a language-game, as was seen in the previous chapter. There is not something lying outside of language-games that could be pointed out with them. The unsaturation of the notion of language-game comes from the fact that it is not clearly defined, not on account of the lack of some kind of correspondence with something like facts.

The second issue implies that one were able to distinguish when inside a specific language-game two states of it were different enough to be considered as independent from each other, and thus, as two different language-games because they use the same nominal expressions in a considerably different way. One could also think of a specific language-game in which changes in the use of the same expressions are considered as a part of such language-game (cf. PU, § 83). Following Wittgenstein's approach to the meaning of simplicity, which depends on the language-game where the term is used, to determine when a specific language-game changes into another, because the same nominal expression is used differently, also depends on the language-game that we are playing (cf. PU, § 47).

The third issue is related to the introduction of new gestures in language-games. In *Culture and Value*, one finds the following statement: "And the [musical] theme, moreover, is a new part of our language; it becomes incorporated into it; we learn a new gesture" (VB, p. 52).<sup>70</sup> For Oliva (2015) this introduction of a new gesture neither comes from a previous

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<sup>69</sup> See note 4. Wittgenstein's contribution to contemporary pragmatics is well-known: "The 'pragmatic turn' (Mey 2001: 4) is now definable not only as a manifesto that proclaims a shift from the focus on sentence structure to the uses we make of sentences in communication as initiated by Peirce, Morris or Carnap, and nowadays generally associated with Wittgenstein's *Investigations* (1953). Instead, it is implemented as powerful pragmatic theories" (Jaszczolt & Allan, 2012, pp 1-2).

<sup>70</sup> Pagination is taken from the *Culture and Value* edition mentioned in the references.

expression nor translates another already existent expression; rather, as Wittgenstein mentions, it constitutes a new part of our language (p. 112). Following those remarks, there could be new and legitimate expressions in a current language-game.

The issue of unsaturation of contexts is also related to skepticism. As Graham Priest (1995) relates, following Kripke's (1982) approach to Wittgenstein, the question of whether it is possible to grasp an absolute meaning, according to Wittgenstein, implies taking in consideration that a rule and its application is learned by a social convention. Nonetheless, as we already saw, a rule alongside its social convention just points a way to act and does not have the ability of pressuring us in order to act in a specific way. From this fact, Kripke derives skepticism. As Priest wrote, "there is nothing to determine that words mean anything at all," although, "one of the language games we play is about meaning" (1995, pp. 232, 234).

The position of Henry Pickford (2016) is the contrary on this issue. He writes that for Kripke (and also for Derrida) "understanding an expression involves interpreting the expression" without taking into account the normative relevance that has, in terms of establishing its meaning, the activity (context?) in which an expression is encrusted. For Wittgenstein, according to Pickford, "it is only in the context of that very practice, custom, institution, that one can speak of normative significance." The mistake is then seeing that "just as a dispositional account fails to capture normativity for an individual's understanding of an expression [and therefore leading to skepticism], so too does the dispositional account fail to capture normativity for a community's understanding of an expression" (pp. 24-25). That is to say, that normative significance of an expression (i.e., the way in which an expression should be understood according to the established convention of the community where the expression is taking place) is an intersubjective phenomenon going beyond the ability to grasp that normative significance by particular members of the community. If there are no definitive reasons to understand an expression in a particular way from a subjective perspective, it does not mean that from the intersubjective standpoint of the community and its conventions such a particular way does not exist or is illegitimate.

Thus, one could say that a context should include the way in which members of the community usually act in particular circumstances. Somehow, at the same time that a particular member of a community approaches a context aiming to state a new interpretation, sentence or gesture, the context also approaches her with the normativity established by its members (functioning as the way in which she was taught to act by those members, for instance). We face here again a play between the interpretation of particular members (where unsaturation and subjectivity plays a role) and the already established convention (being part of the context in question where intersubjectivity takes part) regarding the legitimacy of a new or unknown movement taking place in a language-game or in a set of the language.<sup>71</sup>

Problems seem to arise when a rule, and even a language-game or context, is addressed as a meta notion, outside of the game, as a closure of the play of meaning in Derridean terms. Both language-game and dissemination stand for a reciprocal relation between the unsaturated status of words/expressions and the particular context (including social conventions) where the former need to take place to reach a meaning. In between this relation of unsaturation/contextuality is where game shows itself.

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Brandom's approach to Hegel's *Phenomenology* could be considered here. According to Brandom (2019), "recollective rationality" is the way in which Hegel accounts for the interdependence between attitudes and statuses which bring a determined conceptual content and its legitimate applications (cf. pp. 17, 19, 25-26, 30).

## Conclusion

Now it is time to render the convergence between language-game and dissemination explicitly. The resources found throughout the previous pages are like fragments (Fink reverberates here) of the intended relation. The first two parts of the link refers to features of the convergence enabled by game working as the area of intersection, while the third part it is a complement between the notions as an extension of the convergence, which in turn could be read as a specific way of how the convergence between language-game and dissemination works.

First, in their generality both notions carry reflexivity and recursivity.<sup>72</sup> Game as a blurred notion, which tends to oscillate in part due to its blurred condition, makes it impossible to abstract itself from which it accounts. It is not completely defined and therefore has to play along with the game described by it.

Those features (reflexivity and recursivity) in language-game and dissemination are conditions inherited from being built upon the style of game (just as family resemblance notions, as shown before). Dissemination as something dispensable even from its own nominal expression and language-game as a notion made upon examples (as its ostensive definitions) are implications of being "game-wired" notions. Likewise does their —many times noted throughout the text— inability to assert statements from a second level of predication. The mutability of language-games imply the mutability of the general notion of language-game, and even when the contribution of dissemination lies in pointing outside of its context

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<sup>72</sup> About reflexivity and recursivity, see note 52.

of utterance, it still depending on such context.

Second, since both notions embrace feedback among contexts and their mutability over time, they address synchronic and diachronic relations of meaning. Dissemination does this through paleonymy and trace and language-game through its family resemblance condition. Those relations allow them to grasp intersubjectivity rather than account only for subjective phenomena.

Third, dissemination stresses the unsaturated side of game, while language-game highlights the contextuality of game. Here taking part of the convergence between the notions, they complement each other. Through dissemination, it is possible to make more evident the unsaturation of language-game (language-game[s] change over time) and through language-game the contextuality of dissemination could be focused (dissemination and its nominal expression depends on the language-game where it takes place).

Finally, it is at least curious how two thinkers with quite different backgrounds (Nietzsche's influence could be shared, for instance), taking part of different traditions, and having their particular style of doing philosophy, approach game to account for similar philosophical problems related to meaning. It is as if one, to be consistent with the approach given by the concept of game, had to follow its "rules." Game, therefore, enables the possibility of doing a criss-crossing work not only among concepts, but also among those who think them and their traditions, as I tried to show here.

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<sup>74</sup> Aforementioned αἰών and αἰών seem to account for the same term.

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