

MASTER'S THESIS

The later Wittgenstein on grammar, necessity and normativity

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**The Later Wittgenstein on
Grammar, Necessity and Normativity**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is primarily concerned with Wittgenstein's notions of grammar, necessity and normativity, which have been considered the core of the later Wittgenstein's philosophy. In this research, I focused my investigation on Wittgenstein's main propositions regarding these notions: First, grammar is autonomous, i.e., alternative grammars are always conceivable; and second, necessity is normative rather than factual in nature. Furthermore, I will also examine the realists' philosophical puzzle concerning the notion of necessity by commenting on Javier Kalhat's views.

Wittgenstein contends that necessary propositions are normatively true instead of factually true. Necessary propositions are necessarily true not because they correspond to the reality, but because they form the norm of representation in our grammar as grammatical rules. Although Wittgenstein believes that grammar is autonomous and alternative grammars are always possible, he does not deny there can be necessary truth in a particular grammar. Grammatical rules are normative; they are the standards of judging what is true and what is false. Since they are the standards, or the imperatives, they are not refutable, just as it does not make sense to say that the command "go to bed now!" can be refuted. Therefore, Wittgenstein holds that necessary propositions are grammatical rules which cannot be refuted. Although alternative grammatical rules are always conceivable, this grammatical diversity will not undermine the necessity of the necessary propositions in our language game. It is because, in Wittgenstein's own words, "[such an alternative] doesn't exist in this game" (Z, §134) though it is possible to have one.

Until today, the realists' philosophical puzzle concerning the notion of necessity has not been entirely removed. Therefore, I find this topic worth a reexamination. Javier Kalhat, as a realist, has written a paper entitled "Has the later Wittgenstein accounted for necessity?" This paper would be an example that demonstrates his misunderstandings concerning Wittgenstein's notions of grammar and necessity. I would argue that H. -J. Glock has successfully defended Wittgenstein's position from Kalhat's challenge in his paper "Necessity and language: In defence of conventionalism". Finally, I would also

evaluate whether Kalhat can defend himself in his later paper “Necessity and language: The gap is still very real” in reply to Glock. This research is expected to reach the conclusion that the realists have failed in rejecting Wittgenstein’s assimilation of necessary truth to grammatical rule. Before such a conclusion can be made, many of Wittgenstein’s related concepts need to be stated and clarified beforehand, such as the concepts of meaning, understanding and rule-following. When all these notions are examined and clarified one by one, the plausibility of Wittgenstein’s argument regarding necessity will be exhibited in a clearer way to the realists.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 On the Conception of Philosophy —From the <i>Tractatus</i> to the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>	5
Chapter 2 On the Notions of Understanding and Rule-following	20
Chapter 3 On the Conception of Grammar and the Arbitrariness of Grammar	41
Chapter 4 On the Notion of Necessity	70
Chapter 5 Kalhat's Example: Illnesses Concerning the Notion of Necessity and Its Therapies	98
Conclusion	120
List of References	123
Curriculum Vitae	128