**The Concept of Game in the Works of J. Huizinga and L. Wittgenstein.**

**Svetlana Nikitina**

The paper focuses on the concept of "play/game" in J. Huizinga's (mainly in his work "Homo ludens") and L. Wittgenstein's works (in "Philosophical studies" and other papers). The relevance of this concept both to Wittgenstein’s approach to philosophy and to the cultural theory of Huizinga is well-described, but at the moment there are no studies devoted specifically to the comparative analysis of the notion of game in their studies.

For Huizinga as well as for Wittgenstein play is one of the key concepts used both as a methodological tool and an ontological principle. It allows to describe the functioning of language and culture and human activity in general. Although we speak about studies written in different genres and setting different goals, it seems that the choice of this kind of approach results from the need to solve the same problems.

J. Huizinga understands play as a cultural-historical universal which determines the language and creativity, and, in a sense, all spheres of human life. Play is the basis of culture, but the question about the relation between culture and play and their hierarchy is solved ambiguously. The concept of play in Homo ludens" is linked to the idea of choice and freedom, it generates a world of multiple possibilities, where the free subject is implementing a free action (and he himself becomes implemented through it). Another Huizinga’s idea which is important for further analysis, is his assumption that play contains both the sense and the meaning of itself. The concept of play is analyzed in historical and cultural perspective as a tradition and as an opportunity to repeat a particular play within it. From his point of view, breaking the rules destroys play and leads to the offender being excluded from the gaming community.

For Wittgenstein the game is a realization of those conventional rules which allow the communication itself to exist. The list of the games is always an open one, moreover, it is difficult to separate one game from another, and that is why Wittgenstein does not suggest any classification of the possible games in his works. Any game makes sense only if it has certain rules – otherwise both communication and understanding become impossible – which allows Wittgenstein to introduce a rule-following paradox. He suggests the game principle and questions it simultaneously, due to the unclear nature of rule-following mechanism. In his opinion, we cannot formulate unambiguous and clear rules because the system is not strict and rigid. While following the rule within the language game the individual takes a new decision on each turn without carrying out a fixed program, and yet his actions somehow already exist in the present moment. Wittgenstein’s language game should not be understood as focusing solely on language, since he himself describes it as ‘a form of life’.

1) Both Huizinga and Wittgenstein do not give a clear definition of the notion of play or game. Yet they describe it not as a list of rules, but as a system given in its realization as a public action. This approach outlines such questions as the existence of the rules and their status, participant’s (lack of) freedom and the actual bounds of each game.

2) A game of any kind presupposes some existing rules. But where do they exist and how are they secured? Are they mental entities, or is it the community which manifests them? While Wittgenstein’s approach questions the rule-following problem, Huizinga does not describe this paradox in detail even though his approach is potentially inconsistent, but despite this internal inconsistency, the play remains to be a way of structuring the world which cannot be simply abandoned. Both approaches suppose that a game cannot be learnt through its rules only – one needs to embrace it as a whole.

3) Both approaches involve plurality of game situations and – as a consequence –plurality of languages and worlds. The game is an "entrance" to the language for Wittgenstein and an "entrance" to the culture for Huizinga

4) The philosophers solve the problem of freedom in fundamentally different ways. Wittgenstein assumes that while obeying the rule, one does not make a choice, but follows the rule blindly. Yet the question about degree of freedom in the game remains mostly unanswered. For Huizinga, the play provides complete freedom to its participants, and nevertheless it is always realized in a certain context and under certain rigid rules.

5) Both Wittgenstein and Huizinga discuss the status of the language / playing community, and, consequently, the problem of individual language and the relationship between the player and the regulating community.

6) Both conceptions imply a similar epistemic situation, in which the central questions are the following: When can you say *it*? When is it possible to say *it* seriously? When can you play *it*?

Thus, using play / game as a descriptive tool on the mechanisms of functioning of culture and language provides similar possibilities and generates largely the same methodological problems, even despite the fundamental difference between Huizinga’s and Wittgenstein’s approaches.