

NOTA

The Paris Wittgenstein Group

Our group has been working on Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle for many years. We started with Wittgenstein. Just reading. Then, to understand him better, we decided to know more about the Vienna Circle philosophical movement and socio-political context. After an International Colloquium (on "Vienna Circle: Doctrines and Controversies", Créteil-Paris, 1983, published by Klincksieck, 1986) and some editing and translation work (*Manifeste du Cercle de Vienne*, PUF, 1985), we felt ready to get back to Wittgenstein, although not so much Wittgenstein I or Wittgenstein II as two separate periods, but Wittgenstein "in transition", whose grammatical turn helps to understand the unity of his thought.

It is in this spirit that we agreed to co-organize the International Colloquium for the Wittgenstein centenary in June 1989 (again Paris-Créteil, to be published under the title: "Wittgenstein et la Philosophie Aujourd'hui", next fall by Klincksieck).

In France, it seems that there is an increasing interest in Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle, especially if compared to 1935 and 1937 when the Vienna Circle had an opportunity to present its philosophy in Paris. The reception of such "analytical" ideas was not a success, and our French philosophers were certainly not well prepared for it. Wittgenstein was almost unknown in our country (except by Jean Cavailles and very few others). It is possible that Wittgenstein's recent fame and fashion helped enhance the image of the Vienna Circle. The current intellectual effect in France is in many respects similar to the effect in Germany when Wittgenstein's *Schriften* appeared in Suhrkamp, as described by Habermas.

However, fame and fashion are rather an obstacle to understanding. While patient work was being done, Wittgenstein became a source of attraction: exactly what he struggles against in his philosophy. A literary reading began to threaten the understanding of his message. We realized how difficult it was to have access to his "transition" writings of the thirties. Nonetheless, we were convinced that his conversations with the Vienna Circle, during approximately the same years, were terribly important, that they were the sign of main changes in his thought. That is why we decided to turn ourselves to unpublished material of the same period.

We first thought that we would work on the *Big Typescript*. G. H. Von Wright's answer to a letter of mine was a real encouragement. However, the rights for translation depended upon the solution of the editing problem, a solution which, as far as I know, is still to be found. There are many other unpublished materials of the 30's. Gordon Baker (Oxford) suggested that we work on the *Dictations*, which may well be the continuation of Wittgenstein's *Conversations* at Schlick's house, transcribed by Waismann. These papers are dictations made to Waismann. Baker's suggestion was the first step towards a joint work on the *Dictations*.

We now find ourselves engaged in the slow process of translating papers which have to be simultaneously retyped in view of an English edition by Gordon Baker (to be published by Blackwell). This task requires synchronization since we are working in connection with him. Our French translation should appear in 1993, roughly at the same time as the English edition. The Presses Universitaires de France have, once more, accepted our project. We intend to publish our work in two volumes, one of translation, the other one with critical commentaries and articles. Gordon Baker will participate in the final result in his own manner, as an editor of the English version, and as an inspirer of the project.

Our group is composed of the following scholars: Christiane Chauviré, Jean-Pierre Cometti, Gérard Guest, Jan Sebestik, François Schmitz and myself, with Gordon Baker's collaboration. We hold a seminar all year through from December to end of June. The seminar is devoted to Wittgenstein's philosophical grammar in connection with our project of publication. Public conferences by scholars, including scholars from abroad, alternate with translation-work in a more closed context of meeting and discussion. We try to make our way through the difficult text of Wittgenstein's thought by using the joint professional abilities of the small community we form (German, logic, mathematics) on the basis of a deeply shared interest in the philosophy of Wittgenstein, combined with a critical attention to some of its aspects such as: its place in the history of philosophy, its relation or lack of relation to it, the problematic progressiveness of its method, tempting analogies with German phenomenology, etc.

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