

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Remarks On Color* by Ludwig Wittgenstein, G.E.M. Anscombe, Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle

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Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks On Color*, ed., G.E.M. Anscombe. Translated by Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978. 63 pages of German text with facing translation.

Like nearly everything Wittgenstein wrote, *Remarks On Color* makes for anything but easy reading: indeed, it is not clear whether a reader previously unacquainted with Wittgenstein will be in a position to glean much by way of insight into the nature of color from the barrage of questions and aphorisms he levels at us. This is certainly not to assert that the little volume is unworthy of the efforts that will have to go into coming to grips with it. Wittgenstein would not have it any other way, for in asking questions like, "Why is it that something can be transparent green but not transparent white?" or "Why can't we conceive of these [brown hot and grey hot] as a lower degree of white hot?" Or "Do the blind know what it is like to see [i.e. because they can learn the difference between 'blind' and 'sighted']?" he is asking us to do nothing else than to rethink what we normally take for granted about color. This process is rewarding only because it is remarkably difficult and even painful. One feature of Wittgenstein's discussion which will surely be of interest to Germanists is Wittgenstein's sympathy with Goethe's mode of raising questions about what we see as it helps us to gain the proper perspective (!) on the crucial question "what is color — here as throughout there are noteworthy parallels to Anton von Webern's Goethean notion that music is natural law as related to the sense of hearing in the *Path to the New Music*." For Wittgenstein it is less a matter of disparaging Newton's scientific account of color than it is of distinguishing what is empirical and scientific about color from the logical and conceptual structure of our reasoning about color (our color "language games"). Wittgenstein abjures all attempts — Goethean or phenomenological — to provide alternatives to the scientific account of color; rather, he wishes to remind us that our ordinary modes of color discourse developed conceptually as well as temporally prior to scientific abstraction. However, in order to get this distinction straight we have to understand how we learn to employ color concepts in the first place. Thus, understanding the logic of color concepts is for Wittgenstein to understand how we have acquired our modes of comparison of color terms.

This book is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it illustrates Wittgenstein's fundamental notions (e.g., "language game") graphically.

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Secondly, it is one of the very last of Wittgenstein's writings and thus gives us a picture of what his final preoccupations and views were. However, it should be pointed out that the text we have is less than half of the actual manuscript that Wittgenstein left us. Another large part of the work has been published separately under the title *On Certainty*. The two together still do not constitute the whole text. All of this will only cause textual scholars to anticipate more anxiously the complete German edition of Wittgenstein's works currently in preparation at Tübingen. Moreover, the translation is not entirely felicitous. Like Miss Anscombe's meticulously idiomatic translation of the *Philosophical Interpretations*, the translation is smoothly elegant; yet there are instances where crucial words might have been translated more literally. For example, "erfinden" is usually rendered "construct" rather than the more literal "invent" or even "devise," with the result that there is an ever so slight change of emphasis from the German to the English. This is important in that it tends to obscure Wittgenstein's increasingly radical commitment to epistemological conventionalism in his last years.

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Karen Monson, *Alban Berg: A Modern Biography of the Composer of Wozzeck and Lulu*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979. 396 pages.

In his book on Alban Berg of 1955 Hans Ferdinand Redlich included a brief chapter on Berg's life, writing: "It would be unrealistic to attempt an exhaustive biography of Alban Berg less than twenty years after his death. Before that is done, several decades must pass." He hinted at "enigmatic undercurrents" in Berg's life and wrote of "the fascinating contradictions in the composer's personality." Until the death of Alban Berg's widow, Helene, in 1976 at the age of 91, more than four decades had passed since her husband's death. With the release of letters and papers, which had been jealously guarded by Helene, clues to Berg's "enigmatic" personality have come to light.

In her interesting and readable biography of Alban Berg, Karen Monson presents and interprets these clues, which lead to a better understanding of

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