

Review of: Monika Gruber (2016), *Alfred Tarski and the "Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages": A Running Commentary with Consideration of the Polish Original and the German Translation*. Volume 39 of "Logic, Epistemology, and the Unity of Science. Springer. ISBN: 978-3-319-32614-6. Hardcover, 96,29 €.

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Modern formal logic is a curious beast: while it does not abound in comprehensive and detailed historical works, it went through so many changes (both regarding terminology and content) that it deserves even philologically deep inquiries. Choosing the topic and issue of discussion is, however, a delicate matter. One either decides for a classic text that influenced generations of scholars, was translated into various languages and set the stage for further research; or one deals with such smaller fishes that filled the ocean and provided such ideas and material that could have been taken up by big fishes. While usually the policy making big ones cannot exist without the smaller ones, in the history of philosophy and especially in the history of logic it is a quite convenient strategy to start with the big fishes.

Monika Gruber's monograph is also a curious beast. Gruber's hero is perhaps the most famous modern logician, Alfred Tarski and his well-known and much discussed "The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages." The author rightly notes that "[the article] laid foundations for all future theories of truth. Even today, over eighty years later, Tarski's equivalence scheme is the core of every truth theory" (p. 117). Though the choice is classic, it is well justified and the text provides some important clues about where to move forward in our research.

The present monograph is a refined and revised version of Gruber's doctoral dissertation. Nonetheless, "Alfred Tarski and the 'Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages': A Running Commentary with Consideration of the Polish Original and the German Translation" is not a customary book. It is more like a document that should be carried over in our pocket (despite Springer's huge format) to open up whenever a logical/historical problem occurs during a pleasant discussion.

Tarski's groundbreaking work was first published in Polish in 1933. A German translation was followed after some initial difficulties in 1935. While it is known that the German version brought some international reputation to Tarski (even Rudolf Carnap mentioned it in his works after the 1940s that the development of semantics was hindered by the fact that its most important works were composed only in Polish), it is less known the German translation did not always follow accurately the Polish original. It was just the icing on the cake that the English translation of Tarski's work by Joseph Woodger in 1956 was based on the German version and not on the original one. That meant two things: all the supposed mistakes of the German were carried over to the English one and all the usual difficulties of translations between German and English surfaced in Woodger's work. Gruber reviews all these mistakes, ambiguities, mistakable phrases, imprecise formulations, and provides a detailed commentary on all of them.

The book is structured as follows. Chapter 1 is a short introduction about the various editions and texts that were used for the study; it also has a list-like summary of the main terminological and translational issues. Chapter 2 is the main body of the book. It is indeed a running commentary of Tarski's text. Unfortunately due to copyright issues the entire English

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translation is not reproduced; nevertheless the most important sentences and passages are quoted in full length. Gruber always starts by summarizing the content of every page/passage of Tarski's texts. These are followed by a short commentary on and philosophical inquiry about Tarski's thought. Finally, some "Translational Remarks" are added to every passage; after providing the original Polish phrase or sentence, Gruber adds the German and the English versions – typing in bold the discussed words to highlight them – and shows whether they are adequate translations or not. In many cases, it turns out that a given mistake in the English translation is due to the misguided German translation. This is the case, e.g., with "sentence", "statement", "theorem" which are often rendered the same in the German and English translations, causing certain confusions.

It would be a purposeless and unaccomplishable task to review here all the translational and philosophical items from Gruber's menu. Not just because there are indeed many of them but also due to the fact that each of her readers will presumably find other items interesting, important and thought provoking. I will mention here only three things. There are such issues like a certain Polish word was rendered in German as "oft" and in English as "often" while the original word meant "sometimes." Similar confusions are to be found regarding the Polish expression "poprawna i trafna definicja" that was translated into German as "eine korrekt und richtige Definition"; however the phrase ended up in the English version simply as "correct definition" instead of the right "a correct and adequate definition." There are many other such nuances, but one might never know until you get through the whole text that which nuance will turn out to be of utmost importance regarding a delicate point.

A rather bothersome situation is induced by the word "intuitive" and its relatives. In the original Polish version, Tarski used that and related concepts repeatedly, as he wrote in a letter to Twardowski (reproduced in the volume, p. 168), he even "overuse[d]" them. However, if one opens up either the German or English translations, "sometimes the word 'intuition' is omitted and sometimes it is included" (p. 4), but there is no consistency in the translations and they do not deliver the impression of the original to the reader. But, as Gruber points out in the book from time to time, this bears on our understanding of Tarski's development in general and of his article in particular. As Tarski was influenced in the 1920s and 30s by Stanisław Leśniewski whose approach was called "intuitionistic formalism" (p. 3), it might point towards a deeper look on the relation between Tarski's logical philosophy and the cognitive role of intuitions that was often regarded as an important source by Polish mathematicians and logicians.

Gruber also notes from Tarski's letter his reasons to change the terminology between the German and Polish version. Tarski wrote (p. 168) that "meanwhile the logicians here [in Vienna] claim that these terms – in the contexts in which they occur in my paper, – are almost incomprehensible for a German reader." Thus, having various discussions presumably with Carnap and others, Tarski surrendered to the German climate and did not let to translate the "intuitive" phrases literally. While it is often thought that Polish logicians influenced Viennese scholars (e.g. Carnap in semantics), there seems to be perhaps another direction of influence.

As Tarski's article often contains "intuitive" and similar words, Gruber regularly comments on this issue and calls our attention to the misguided translations. Nonetheless, a more detailed inquiry is needed from a historical, philosophical and logical point of view as well. This is not a real complaint though – the nature of Gruber's investigation forced her to skip such relevant and important issues, but at least we are now in a position to know where to look for further topics and lines of research.

The volume ends with the relevant correspondence of Tarski and Twardowski in Chapter 4. The photos of 42 letters are reproduced as authentic sources for historians and logicians, but Gruber also translated all of them into English, making this rich and significant

material available to a broader audience as well. Though the correspondence does not contain many surprises since Gruber cited the most important dates and information in her comments during the main text, it is still useful to have all the letters “in hand” together. As many philosophical and logical ideas are forged at first in correspondence and in personal letters, it is hopeful that more English translations will follow from the Lvov-Warsaw School in order to appreciate better and understand more deeply the history of analytic philosophy in general and of logic in particular.

The volume is structured well, contains only an insignificant amount of typos and errors, though it should be mentioned that after a longer German quotation “Mach 1929” was a somewhat strange reference; as it turned out Gruber quoted the famous manifesto of the Vienna Circle (written by Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath and Hans Hahn) that was published by the Verein Ernst Mach (Ernst Mach Association) in 1929. This was a bit misleading as the manifesto is usually cited under the name of its authors after its English translation from 1973 (and it was recently re-published and edited by Friedrich Stadler and Thomas Uebel). But this is again just a minor thing to complain about. Gruber indeed made a great job in delivering us the main course from the history of modern logic. Philosophers, historians and logicians shall find something here for their own interests, and should open it regularly to get a better understanding of where we come from and – in this context especially – *how* we arrived to our present appreciation of language, logic and philosophy.