

Hidé Ishiguro

Wittgenstein, Leibniz



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Despite the excellent working facilities in the Wissenschaftskolleg — especially the efficiency with which books are obtained from the local libraries and the wonderful secretarial assistance — I did not accomplish as much as I wished. As always in philosophy, I found myself destroying much of what I wrote and changing my mind. For the main project of the book on Wittgenstein's philosophy of language the central problem is the difference, if any, between singular thoughts and general thoughts. What is the nature of so-called *de re* thoughts? Is there any reason why singular thoughts succeed in being about things in the world better than do general thoughts? How do they designate or refer to them?

I was able to lecture on two of my chapters, one in the Leibniz Gesellschaft in Hannover, the other at the Freie Universität, and to profit from the discussions that ensued. I gained from conversations with the two linguist fellows in the Wissenschaftskolleg, and was able to clarify the reading of some of Wittgenstein's disputed texts with the German philosophers at the Wissenschaftskolleg. Most of all, I was stimulated by an exchange of ideas with German philosophers working on very similar problems. Regular visits from young philosophers in Berlin working on Wittgenstein to discuss various issues were enjoyable also. In philosophy one often gets provincial, and one is ignorant of what goes on in other places. In analytical philosophy one is often more ignorant about what happens in Germany now, however much one may read Frege, Wittgenstein, Carnap, etc. I also gave a seminar on the general problem at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes des Sciences Sociales in Paris, where I had a lively discussion.

As for my work on the second edition of my Leibniz book, I was able to revise three of four chapters which I had planned to rewrite. I lectured on one of the new chapters which I am adding at the Sorbonne to a responsive audience. I was able to check many points in the text at the Leibniz Gesellschaft in Hannover. Most of my work is therefore finished, but I am still far from satisfied over the revision of two chapters. I need to make clear what it is, according to Leibniz, for someone to have a concept, and how exactly one determines the identity of concepts. I need also to make clear the relation of modal notions and possible worlds. This is a problem not only central to Leibniz but for many contemporary philosophers of logic. It was an advantage to discuss certain problems of general concern in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Germany with the Germanists in the Wissenschaftskolleg, and to receive many lively comments after a lecture given in the University of Göttingen on 'Gefühl als Erkenntnis'.

So quite apart from the advantage of being in Berlin in a year when a great number of theatre presentations, exhibitions, and concerts were available, I feel I have profited very much from being in Germany professionally. This is something, I confess, I had not quite expected, and it was a pleasant surprise, and a gain.