Ludwig Wittgenstein had enough first-rate ideas to influence a variety of thinkers; he expressed some ideas vaguely enough to keep hosts of interpreters busy; he changed them often enough to provide work for some score of biographers and historians; and he shrouded them (and himself), in enough mystery to originate a cult.

Each of these facets, which have made Wittgenstein the most widely discussed philosopher of this century, at least in the English-speaking world, played at one time or other, a role in the Vienna Circle. In this chapter, I shall try to reconstruct the influence of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus on the Circle in the years before I attended its meetings. It was in 1924, I believe, that the geometer Kurt Reidemeister, a member of the early Circle, studied the book at Schlick’s and Hahn’s request and presented an extensive report about it in a meeting.
Three aspects of the Tractatus were perfectly consonant with the spirit that prevailed among the members of the Circle even before they had heard about the book: Wittgenstein's antimetaphysical attitude; his positivism; and his view that philosophy is not a theory yielding 'philosophical sentences' but rather an activity aiming at the logical clarification of thoughts.

The third idea is formulated in Tr. 4.112. Wittgenstein's antimetaphysical attitude is apparent in the observation that "most propositions and questions that have been written about philosophical matters are not false but senseless" (Tr. 4.003). His positivism is manifest in his description of the right method in philosophy, which begins with the stipulation (Tr. 6.53) that one should "say nothing except what can be said, that is, propositions of natural science" and in the sentence that "the totality of all true propositions is the total natural science (or the totality of the natural sciences)" (Tr. 4.11; see also III,7).

The clarifying rather than dogmatic role of philosophy is also clearly described in Schlick's book Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre (General Theory of Knowledge, 1918). Moreover, Schlick emphasized this role of philosophy in his lectures even before he had seen the Tractatus. This concept was probably also dormant in the minds of some of the other members of the Circle. It certainly was strengthened in all of them by their study of the Tractatus.

But Wittgenstein's antimetaphysical and positivistic attitude is by no means unequivocal. This is manifested by some of the closing statements in the Tractatus itself. Several members of the early Circle tried to ignore those passages. But Neurath, the Argus of the Circle, repeatedly quoted, "The sense of the world must lie outside