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Author(s): Georg Henrik von Wright

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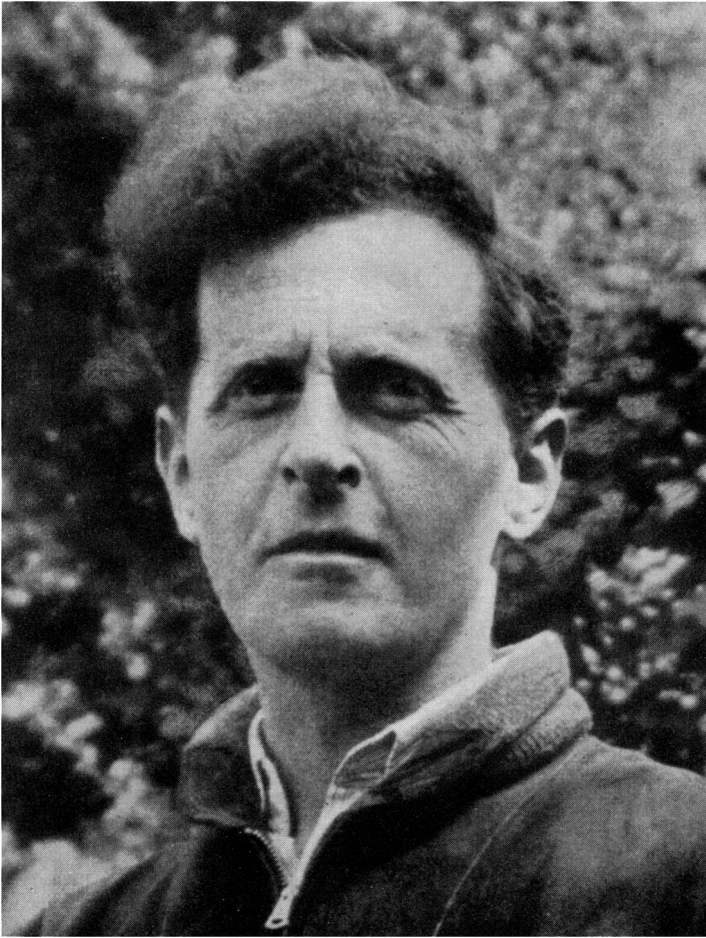
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Ludwig Wittgenstein

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LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

ON April 29, 1951, there died at Cambridge, England, one of the most famous and influential philosophers of our time, Ludwig Wittgenstein.

It has been said that Wittgenstein inspired two important schools of thought, both of which he repudiated. The one is so-called logical positivism or logical empiricism, which played a prominent role during the decade immediately preceding the Second World War. The other is the so-called analytic or linguistic movement, sometimes also called the Cambridge School.¹ It dominates the British philosophy of today and has spread over the entire Anglo-Saxon world and to the countries in which Anglo-Saxon influence is strong.

It is true that the philosophy of Wittgenstein has been of great importance to both of these trends in contemporary thought: to the first, his early work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and discussions with some members of the Vienna Circle; to the second, besides the *Tractatus*, his lectures at Cambridge and also glimpses of the works which he did not publish in his lifetime. It is also partly true that Wittgenstein repudiated the results of his own influence. He did not participate in the world-wide discussion to which his work and his thought had given rise. He was of the opinion—justified, I believe—that his ideas were usually misunderstood and distorted even by those who professed to be his disciples. He doubted that he would be better understood in the future. He once said that he felt as though he were writing for people who would think in a quite different way, breathe a different air of life, from that of present-day men. For people of a different culture, as it were. That was *one* reason why he did not himself publish his later works.

¹ This is a very heterogeneous trend which cannot be covered by *one* name. Even the name "Cambridge School" is not accurate. It seems to me appropriate only in so far as it reminds one of the part which some prominent teachers at Cambridge played in the creating of a philosophic atmosphere typical of our time. The influence of the Cambridge School now prevails at Oxford.

Wittgenstein avoided publicity. He withdrew from every contact with his surroundings which he thought undesirable. Outside the circle of his family and personal friends, very little was known about his life and character. His inaccessibility contributed to absurd legends about his personality and to widespread misunderstandings of his teaching. The biographical data published in his obituaries have often been erroneous.²

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein was born in Vienna on April 26, 1889. The Wittgenstein family had migrated from Saxony to Austria. It is of Jewish descent. It is not, contrary to what has often been stated, related to the house of princes of the same name. Wittgenstein's grandfather was a convert from the Jewish religion to Protestantism. His mother was a Roman Catholic. Ludwig Wittgenstein was baptized in the Catholic Church.

Wittgenstein's father must have been a man of remarkable intelligence and will-power. He was an engineer who became a leading figure in the steel and iron industry of the Danube Monarchy. Wittgenstein's mother was responsible for a strong artistic influence in the family. Both she and her husband were highly musical. The wealthy and cultured home of the Wittgensteins became a center of musical life. Johannes Brahms was a close friend of the family.

Ludwig was the youngest of five sisters and three brothers. Nature was lavish to all the children both in respect of character and of artistic and intellectual talents. Ludwig Wittgenstein was undoubtedly a most uncommon man. Though he was free from that form of vanity which shows itself in a desire to seem different, it was inevitable that he should stand out sharply from his surroundings. It is probably true that he lived on the border of mental illness. A fear of being driven across it followed him throughout his life. But it would be wrong to say of his work that it had a morbid character. It is deeply original but not at all eccentric. It has the same naturalness, frankness, and freedom from all artificiality that was characteristic of him.

² The atmosphere of the biographical articles on Wittgenstein which I have read has as a rule been completely alien to their subject. One exception is an article in *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, no. 2 (1951). Another is the series of articles by Moore in *Mind*.

Wittgenstein was educated at home until he was fourteen. For three years thereafter he was at a school at Linz in Upper Austria. It seems to have been his wish to study physics with Boltzmann in Vienna. However, Boltzmann died in 1906, the same year that Wittgenstein finished school. Wittgenstein proceeded to the Technische Hochschule in Berlin-Charlottenburg.

That he chose to study engineering was a consequence of his early interests and talents, rather than of his father's influence. Throughout his life he was extremely interested in machinery. While a small boy he constructed a sewing machine that aroused much admiration. Even in his last years he could spend a whole day with his beloved steam-engines in the South Kensington Museum. There are several anecdotes of his serving as a mechanic when some machinery got out of order.

Wittgenstein remained in Berlin until the spring of 1908. Then he went to England. In the summer of 1908 he was experimenting with kites at The Kite Flying Upper Atmosphere Station near Glossop, in Derbyshire. The same autumn he registered as a research student in the department of engineering at the University of Manchester. There he remained for three years, until the autumn of 1911, occupied with research in aeronautics. From his kite-flying experiments he passed on to the construction of a jet reaction propeller for aircraft. At first it was the engine that absorbed his interest, but soon he concentrated on the design of the propeller, which was essentially a mathematical task. It was from this time that Wittgenstein's interests began to shift, first to pure mathematics and then to the foundations of mathematics.

Wittgenstein once mentioned to me that the problems on which he worked during his Manchester years have since become very urgent. I regret that I was not curious enough to ask him more. I assume that he was thinking of the role which the reaction engine has recently come to play, especially in aeronautics.³

³ Data about Wittgenstein's time at Manchester have been recorded by Mr. W. Eccles and Mr. W. Mays. The design of the reaction engine and a number of other documents relating to this period in Wittgenstein's life have been deposited in the University Library at Manchester. I am told that Wittgenstein had patented some of his inventions in the field of aeronautics.

In Wittgenstein's life the years from 1906 to 1912 were a time of painful seeking and of final awakening to clarity about his vocation. He told me that in those years he was constantly unhappy. To his restlessness bear witness the several interruptions of work already begun and the flights to something new: the departure from Germany to England, the experiments with kites, the construction of the jet engine, the design of the propeller, the interest in pure mathematics and finally in the philosophy of mathematics.

It is said that Wittgenstein asked someone for advice about literature on the foundations of mathematics and was directed to Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*, which had appeared in 1903. It seems clear that this book profoundly affected Wittgenstein's development. It was probably it which led him to study the works of Frege. The "new" logic, which in Frege and Russell had two of its most brilliant representatives, became the gateway through which Wittgenstein entered philosophy.

If I remember rightly,⁴ Wittgenstein told me that he had read Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* in his youth and that his first philosophy was a Schopenhauerian epistemological idealism. Of how this interest was related to his interest in logic and the philosophy of mathematics I know nothing, except that I remember his saying that it was Frege's conceptual realism which made him abandon his earlier idealistic views.

Having decided to give up his studies in engineering, Wittgenstein first went to Jena in Germany to discuss his plans with Frege. It was apparently Frege who advised Wittgenstein to go to Cambridge and study with Russell. He followed the advice.⁵

⁴ The biographical information which I acquired from conversations with Wittgenstein I did not record on paper until after his death. I felt very strongly that it would have been improper to write them down following our conversations. He did not often talk about his past and only rarely of his youth, which was to him a painful recollection. The idea that someone was collecting data for a biography would certainly have been deeply distasteful to him.

⁵ This is how Wittgenstein related the matter to me. His account is confirmed by notes made by his sister Hermine. Russell seems, therefore, to be mistaken when in his memorial article in *Mind*, n.s., LX (1951), he says that Wittgenstein had not known Frege before he came to Cambridge.

This was probably in the autumn of 1911.⁶ At the beginning of the following year he was admitted to Trinity College and registered in the University, first as an undergraduate and later as an "advanced student." He was at Cambridge for all three terms of the year 1912 and the first two terms of 1913. At the beginning of the autumn of 1913 he visited Norway with David Pinsent, a young mathematician with whom he had made friends at Cambridge. After a short visit to England in October, he returned to Norway alone and took up residence on a farm at Skjolden, in Sogn near Bergen. Here he lived for most of the time until the outbreak of the war in 1914. He liked the people and the country very much. Eventually he learned to speak Norwegian fairly well. In an isolated place near Skjolden he built himself a hut, where he could live in complete seclusion.

The decade before the first Great War was a period of exceptional intellectual activity at Cambridge. Bertrand Russell had arrived at the summit of his powers. He and A. N. Whitehead wrote *Principia Mathematica*, a milestone in the history of logic. The most influential philosopher was G. E. Moore. Wittgenstein soon became intimate with Russell,⁷ and he saw much of Moore and Whitehead. Among Wittgenstein's friends during his early years at Cambridge should also be mentioned J. M. Keynes, the economist, G. H. Hardy, the mathematician, and the logician W. E. Johnson. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is dedicated to the memory of David Pinsent, who fell in the war.

Beside philosophy Wittgenstein did some experimental work in psychology at Cambridge. He carried out an investigation concerning rhythm in music, at the psychological laboratory. He had hoped that the experiments would throw light on some questions of aesthetics that interested him. Wittgenstein was exceptionally musical, even if one judged by the highest standards. He played the clarinet, and for a time he wished to become a conductor. He had a rare talent for whistling. It was a great

⁶ I have not been able to fix the exact dates of Wittgenstein's first visit to Frege and arrival at Cambridge. He was registered at Manchester for the Michaelmas term of 1911.

⁷ Russell tells of his acquaintance with the young Wittgenstein in *Mind*, n.s., LX (1951). He says, "Getting to know Wittgenstein was one of the most exciting intellectual adventures of my life."

pleasure to hear him whistle through a whole concerto, interrupting himself only to draw the listener's attention to some detail of the musical texture.

An important source of our knowledge of Wittgenstein during these years is a series of his letters to Russell, which will be published. Another is Pinsent's diary of their Cambridge life and their travels to Iceland and Norway. The letters and the diary help to illuminate Wittgenstein's personality, not only as a young man, but also as he appeared to his friends of the 1930's and 1940's. The letters also contain interesting information about the gradual development of the work which first established Wittgenstein's fame as a philosopher.

Wittgenstein's earliest philosophical investigations were in the realm of the problems with which Frege and Russell had dealt. Concepts such as "propositional function," "variable," "generality," and "identity" occupied his thoughts. He soon made an interesting discovery, a new symbolism for so-called "truth-functions" that led to the explanation of logical truth as "tautology."⁸

The oldest parts of the *Tractatus* are those dealing with logic. Wittgenstein had formed his principal thoughts on these matters before the outbreak of the war in 1914, and thus before his twenty-sixth year. Later he became engrossed in a new problem. It was the question of the nature of the significant proposition.⁹ Wittgenstein told me how the idea of language as a *picture* of reality occurred to him.¹⁰ He was in a trench on the East front,

⁸ The symbolism in question is much the same as that explained in *Tractatus* 6.1203. The now familiar truth-tables (*Tractatus* 4.31, etc.) he invented later. The originality of Wittgenstein's invention is sometimes disputed. It is pointed out that truth-tables were known to Jevons and Peirce. This overlooks the fact that Wittgenstein used truth-tables as a new notation for molecular propositions, and that the purpose of this new symbolism was to explain the idea of *logical truth*.

⁹ "My *whole* task consists in the explanation of the nature of the proposition," he wrote in one of the philosophical notebooks that he kept during the war.

¹⁰ It would be interesting to know whether Wittgenstein's conception of the proposition as a picture is connected in any way with the Introduction to Heinrich Hertz's *Die Prinzipien der Mechanik*. Wittgenstein knew this work and held it in high esteem. There are traces of the impression that it made on him both in the *Tractatus* and in his later writings.

reading a magazine in which there was a schematic picture depicting the possible sequence of events in an automobile accident. The picture there served as a proposition; that is, as a description of a possible state of affairs. It had this function owing to a correspondence between the parts of the picture and things in reality. It now occurred to Wittgenstein that one might reverse the analogy and say that a *proposition* serves as a *picture*, by virtue of a similar correspondence between *its* parts and the world. The way in which the parts of the proposition are combined—the *structure* of the proposition—depicts a possible combination of elements in reality, a possible state of affairs.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* may be called a synthesis of the theory of truth-functions and the idea that language is a picture of reality. Out of this synthesis arises a third main ingredient of the book, its doctrine of that which cannot be *said*, only *shown*.

At the outbreak of the war, Wittgenstein entered the Austrian army as a volunteer, although he had been exempted from service because of a rupture. He served first on a vessel on the Vistula and later in an artillery workshop at Cracow. In 1915 he was ordered to Olmütz, in Moravia, to be trained as an officer. As previously mentioned, he fought on the East front. In 1918 he was transferred to the South front. Upon the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian army in November, he was taken prisoner by the Italians. It was not until August of the following year that he could return to Austria. During the major part of his captivity, he was in a prison camp near Monte Cassino in south Italy.

When Wittgenstein was captured he had in his rucksack the manuscript of his *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*, which is generally known by the Latin title proposed for it by G. E. Moore, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. He had completed the work when on a leave of absence in Vienna, in August, 1918. While still in captivity he got in touch with Russell by letter and was able to send the manuscript to him, thanks to the aid of one of his friends of the Cambridge years, Keynes. He also sent Frege a copy and corresponded with him.

It was Wittgenstein's habit to write down his thoughts in notebooks. The entries are usually dated; thus they compose a sort of diary. The contents of an earlier notebook are often worked

over again in a later one. Sometimes he dictated to colleagues and pupils. In the spring of 1914 he dictated some thoughts on logic to Moore in Norway. It appears that in the 20's he dictated to Schlick and Waismann. The so-called Blue Book was dictated in conjunction with lectures at Cambridge in 1933-1934. It contains the first, somewhat rough, version of what may be called Wittgenstein's "new" philosophy. The very remarkable Brown Book was dictated privately to some pupils in 1935.

Some of the notebooks which led up to the *Tractatus* have been preserved. These sketches and fragments of earlier versions are of great interest, partly because they show the development of his thoughts, partly because they illuminate many difficult passages in the extremely compressed final version. I have been especially impressed by a notebook of the year 1916. It deals chiefly with the ego, the freedom of the will, the meaning of life, and death. Thus the somewhat aphoristic remarks on these topics in the *Tractatus* are sifted from a quantity of material. The notes show how strong were the impressions that Wittgenstein had received from Schopenhauer. An occasional Spinozistic flavor is also recognizable.

In the earliest notebooks part of the content is written in a code, which Wittgenstein continued to use throughout his life. Only a part of the notes in code have been deciphered. They appear to be of a personal nature. It is too early to pronounce on their interest for a larger public.

The period of the war was a crisis in Wittgenstein's life. To what extent the turmoil of the time and his experiences in war and captivity contributed to the crisis, I cannot say. A circumstance of great importance was that he became acquainted with the ethical and religious writings of Tolstoy. Tolstoy exercised a strong influence on Wittgenstein's view of life, and also led him to study the Gospels.

After the death of his father in 1912 Wittgenstein was in possession of a great fortune. One of his first steps after his return from the war was to give away all his money.¹¹ Henceforth a great

¹¹ Before the war Wittgenstein had made a large anonymous grant for the promotion of literature. Two poets of whom he was in this manner a benefactor were Georg Trakl and Rainer Maria Rilke. (For more details see

simplicity, at times even an extreme frugality, became characteristic of his life. His dress was unconventional; it is impossible to imagine him with necktie or hat. A bed, a table, and a few deck-chairs were all of his furniture. Ornamental objects of whatever kind were banished from his surroundings.

After the war Wittgenstein took up the vocation of schoolmaster. In 1919-1920 he was trained at a college for teachers in elementary schools (*Lehrerbildungsanstalt*) in Vienna. From 1920 to 1926 he taught in various remote villages in the districts of Schneeberg and Semmering in Lower Austria. This suited his wish for a simple and secluded life. In other ways it did not suit him well. It appears that he was in constant friction with the people around him. Finally there was a serious crisis. Wittgenstein resigned his post and quitted forever the career of schoolmaster. He went to work as a gardener's assistant with the monks at Hütteldorf, near Vienna.

In this period, Wittgenstein contemplated entering a monastery. The same thought occurred to him at other times in his life too. That it never came true was, partly at least, because for him the inner conditions of monastic life were not satisfied.

His service with the monks soon came to an end. In the autumn of 1926 Wittgenstein accepted a task that absorbed his time and his genius for two years. He built a mansion in Vienna for one of his sisters. The building is his work down to the smallest detail and is highly characteristic of its creator. It is free from all decoration and marked by a severe exactitude in measure and proportion. Its beauty is of the same simple and static kind that belongs to the sentences of the *Tractatus*. It does not seem to me that the building can be classified as belonging to some one style. But the horizontal roofs and the materials—concrete, glass, and steel—remind the spectator of typically “modern” architecture. (In 1914 Wittgenstein had come to know Adolf Loos, whose work he respected.)

During this same time Wittgenstein did a sculpture in the studio of his friend, the sculptor Drobil. It is the head of a girl

Ludwig Ficker's article "Rilke und der unbekannte Freund" in *Der Brenner*, 1954.) It may be remarked in passing that Wittgenstein had a high opinion of Trakl's talent, but that later in life, at least, he did not greatly admire Rilke, whose poetry he thought artificial.

or an elf. The features have the same finished and restful beauty one finds in Greek sculptures of the classical period and which seems to have been Wittgenstein's ideal. In general, there is a striking contrast between the restlessness, the continual searching and changing, in Wittgenstein's life and personality, and the perfection and finished elegance of his work.

The author of the *Tractatus* thought he had solved all philosophical problems. It was consistent with this view that he should give up philosophy. The publication of the book was largely due to Russell. In 1919 the two friends met in Holland to discuss the manuscript. The problem of finding a publisher caused difficulties and the matter was further complicated by Wittgenstein's strong disapproval of Russell's introduction to the book. Finally, Wittgenstein turned his back on the whole undertaking. The book was published in 1922 by Kegan Paul in London, in a German-English parallel text. In the previous year the German text had appeared in the last issue of Ostwald's *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*. The English translation contains a number of errors which corrupt the meaning and which one would wish to see corrected as soon as possible.¹²

During his years as schoolmaster and architect, Wittgenstein was not completely cut off from contact with the philosophical world. In 1923 a young man from Cambridge, Frank Ramsey, visited him at Puchberg. Ramsey had assisted in the translation of the *Tractatus* and had written, at the age of twenty, a remarkably penetrating review of the book for *Mind*. The visit was repeated a year later. Ramsey tried to persuade Wittgenstein to come to England on a visit. He was helped in his efforts by Keynes, who even procured money for the purpose. In the summer of 1925 Wittgenstein finally did visit his English friends.

After Ramsey, Moritz Schlick, a professor in Vienna, managed to establish contact with Wittgenstein. The study of the latter's book had made a deep impression on this honest and intelligent man, who was to become famous as the founder and leader of the Vienna Circle. Wittgenstein's influence on the philosophic

¹² The translator's note, according to which "the proofs of the translation . . . have been very carefully revised by the author himself," cannot be accurate, in view of what Wittgenstein told me.

movement which the Vienna Circle started is thus in part due to a personal connection, lasting for a number of years, between Wittgenstein and Schlick. Another member of the Circle who was personally influenced by Wittgenstein is Friedrich Waismann, now at Oxford.

Wittgenstein said that he returned to philosophy because he felt that he could again do creative work. An external circumstance of this important step may have been that in March of 1928 he had heard Brouwer lecture in Vienna on the foundations of mathematics. (It is rumored to have been this which stirred him to take up philosophy again.) Early in 1929 Wittgenstein arrived at Cambridge. He was first registered as a research student, a somewhat unusual status for a man whom many already regarded as one of the foremost living representatives of his subject. The idea was that he should work for the Ph. D. It turned out, however, that he could count his prewar residence at Cambridge as credit toward the degree and could present his book, published eight years earlier, as a thesis. He received his degree in June 1929. The following year he was made a Fellow of Trinity College.

Wittgenstein's philosophic standpoint of about the year 1930 can be studied in two bulky typescripts. The first is a dissertation of about eight hundred pages. It is divided into titled chapters and sections, as in conventional learned works. Wittgenstein must have felt this way of writing to be a great constraint on his thoughts. The second typescript at once reveals the author of the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. It may be described as a revision and condensation of the contents of the first typescript. The subject matter is very comprehensive. Much attention is devoted to the philosophy of mathematics. It should also be mentioned that in this typescript Wittgenstein discusses space and time, two notions on which he has made only scattered remarks elsewhere.¹³

¹³ It was probably in reference to one of these typescripts that Bertrand Russell, in 1930, reported to the Council of Trinity College, which was considering the award of a grant to Wittgenstein, as follows: "The theories contained in this new work of Wittgenstein are novel, very original and indubitably important. Whether they are true, I do not know. As a logician, who likes simplicity, I should wish to think that they are not, but from what I have read of them I am quite sure that he ought to have an opportunity to

The article "Some Remarks on Logical Form" also throws some light on Wittgenstein's philosophic position in that period. It is the only philosophical writing that he published subsequent to the *Tractatus*.¹⁴ This paper was supposed to have been read by him to the annual meeting of British philosophers—the Joint Session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society. This was in 1929, and so almost immediately after his return to Cambridge and philosophy. The papers prepared for these meetings are printed and distributed to the participants in advance, and are subsequently collected in a Supplementary Volume to the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Wittgenstein surprised his audience by talking to them on an entirely different topic—the notion of the infinite in mathematics—and not reading his paper at all.

In the manuscripts and typescripts of about 1930 the reader is struck by formulations with which he is familiar from the writings of Schlick and other members of the Vienna Circle. There need be no doubt about the direction of the stream of influence. Wittgenstein's writings of this period are therefore of considerable interest to the historian of philosophic ideas. Their intrinsic value is certainly less than that of either the *Tractatus* or the *Investigations*. This is natural, considering that they represent a transitional stage in Wittgenstein's development. He was at this time fighting his way out of the *Tractatus*.

In about 1933 a radical change took place in Wittgenstein's thinking. There came to him at this time those basic ideas whose development and clarification absorbed him for the rest of his life. I shall not attempt here to describe them. I shall only mention a few historical facts connected with their origin.

Wittgenstein's "new" philosophy entails the rejection of some of the fundamental thoughts of the *Tractatus*. He abandoned the picture-theory of language, the doctrine that all significant propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions, and the doctrine of the unspeakable. One may say that *some* of these

work them out, since when completed they may easily prove to constitute a whole new philosophy." (Quoted with the permission of Lord Russell and the Council of Trinity College, Cambridge.)

¹⁴ While he was a schoolmaster he published a German glossary for elementary schools (Holder-Piehler-Tempski, Vienna, 1926).

thoughts had anyway been superseded by philosophical developments after the publication of the *Tractatus*. But whereas the changes in other quarters had largely consisted in a further development of existing philosophic themes, provided not least of all by Wittgenstein's own early work, the alterations in Wittgenstein's thinking signaled a radical departure from the then existing paths of philosophy.

With this is connected the fact that Wittgenstein's new philosophy is, so far as I can see, entirely outside any philosophical tradition and without literary sources of influence. For this reason it is extremely difficult to understand and to characterize. The author of the *Tractatus* had learned from Frege and Russell. His problems grew out of theirs. The author of the *Philosophical Investigations* has no ancestors in philosophy. It is sometimes said that the later Wittgenstein resembles Moore. This is hardly true. The impression of resemblance may be due partly to the fact that the influence of both Moore and Wittgenstein has contributed to the formation of that trend in contemporary thought known as analytic or linguistic philosophy. It will be a significant task for future historians of philosophy to distinguish these two influences. Moore's and Wittgenstein's ways of thinking are in fact utterly different. Although their friendship lasted until the latter's death, I do not believe that there is any trace of an influence of Moore's philosophy on Wittgenstein. What Wittgenstein appreciated was Moore's intellectual vitality, his love of truth and freedom from vanity.

Of great importance in the origination of Wittgenstein's new ideas was the criticism to which his earlier views were subjected by two of his friends. One was Ramsey, whose premature death in 1930 was a heavy loss to contemporary thought. The other was Piero Sraffa, an Italian economist who had come to Cambridge shortly before Wittgenstein returned there. It was above all Sraffa's acute and forceful criticism that compelled Wittgenstein to abandon his earlier views and set out upon new roads. He said that his discussions with Sraffa finally made him feel like a tree from which all branches had been cut. That this tree could become green again was due to its own vitality. The later Wittgenstein did not receive an inspiration from outside like

that which the earlier Wittgenstein got from Frege and Russell.

From 1929 until his death, Wittgenstein lived—with some interruptions—in England. He became a British subject. But in general he was not fond of English ways of life and he disliked the academic atmosphere of Cambridge. When his Fellowship at Trinity College expired in 1935,¹⁵ he had plans for settling in the Soviet Union. He visited the country with a friend and apparently was pleased with the visit. That nothing came of his plans was due, partly at least, to the harshening of conditions in Russia in the middle 30's. So Wittgenstein remained at Cambridge until the end of the academic year 1935-1936. Thereafter he lived for nearly a year in his hut in Norway. It was then that he began to write the *Philosophical Investigations*. In 1937 he returned to Cambridge, where, two years later, he succeeded Moore to the chair in philosophy.

From the beginning of 1930, with some interruptions, Wittgenstein lectured at Cambridge. As might be expected, his lectures were highly "unacademic." He held them in his own room or in the college rooms of a friend. He had no manuscript or notes. He *thought* before the class. The impression was of a tremendous concentration. The exposition usually led to a question, to which the audience was supposed to suggest an answer. The answers in turn became starting points for new thoughts leading to new questions. It depended on the audience, to a great extent, whether the discussion became fruitful and whether the connecting thread was kept in sight from beginning to end of a lecture and from one lecture to another. Many of his audience were highly qualified people in their various fields. Moore attended Wittgenstein's lectures for some years in the early 30's.¹⁶ Several of England's and some of America's leading philosophers of today have heard Wittgenstein lecture at Cambridge. There exist good, more or less verbatim, notes of some of his lecture courses. Samples of

¹⁵ The Fellowship was prolonged to include the whole of the academic year 1935-1936. When he became a professor, Wittgenstein was again made a Fellow of Trinity College.

¹⁶ Moore has published a full account and an interesting discussion of these lectures in *Mind*. Moore's articles can be said to be a commentary on some of the views which Wittgenstein held in the "period of transition" (1929-1933) preceding the Blue Book.

Wittgenstein's oral teaching will perhaps be published at a future date.

Before Wittgenstein assumed his chair, the second Great War broke out. I think one may say that he wished for the war. But, as in 1914, he did not want to watch it from an ivory tower. He was in London during the "Blitz," serving as a porter at Guy's Hospital. Later he worked in a medical laboratory at Newcastle. It should be mentioned that Wittgenstein had been strongly attracted to the medical profession and that once in the 30's he seriously considered leaving philosophy to take up medicine. During his time at Newcastle he devised some technical innovations that proved useful.

It need not surprise us that Wittgenstein's restless genius was not happy in academic routine. It is likely that if the war had not come his tenure of the chair would have been even more brief. In the Easter term of 1947 he gave his last lectures at Cambridge. In the autumn he was away on a leave, and from the end of the year he ceased to be a professor. He wanted to devote all his remaining strength to his research. As so often before in his life, he went to live in seclusion. For the winter of 1948 he settled on a farm in the Irish countryside. After that he lived quite by himself in a hut beside the ocean, in Gallway on the Irish west coast. His neighbors were primitive fishermen. The life there became physically too strenuous for him, and in the autumn of 1948 he moved to a hotel in Dublin. From then until early spring of the following year he had an excellent working period. It was then he completed the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

During the last two years of his life Wittgenstein was severely ill. In the autumn of 1949 it was found that he suffered from cancer. Wittgenstein was then on a visit to Cambridge after his return from a short stay in the United States. He did not go back to Ireland, but remained with friends in Oxford and in Cambridge. In the autumn of 1950 he visited Norway with a friend and even had plans of settling there again at the beginning of the following year. During part of his illness he was incapable of work. But it is remarkable that during the last two months he was not in bed and was apparently in the best of spirits. As late as two days before his death he wrote down thoughts that are equal to the best he

produced. Part of the writing that Wittgenstein did after his stay in Dublin will be published.

Wittgenstein's very unusual and forceful personality exerted a great influence over others. No one who came in touch with him could fail to be impressed. Some were repelled. Most were attracted or fascinated. One can say that Wittgenstein avoided making acquaintances, but needed and sought friendships. He was an incomparable, but demanding, friend. I believe that most of those who loved him and had his friendship also feared him.

Just as there were many groundless legends concerning Wittgenstein's life and personality, so there grew up much unsound sectarianism among his pupils. This caused Wittgenstein much pain. He thought that his influence as a teacher was, on the whole, harmful to the development of independent minds in his disciples. I am afraid that he was right. And I believe that I can partly understand why it should be so. Because of the depth and originality of his thinking, it is very difficult to understand Wittgenstein's ideas and even more difficult to incorporate them into one's own thinking. At the same time the magic of his personality and style was most inviting and persuasive. To learn from Wittgenstein without coming to adopt his forms of expression and catch-words and even to imitate his tone of voice, his mien and gestures, was almost impossible. The danger was that the thoughts should deteriorate into a jargon. The teaching of great men often has a simplicity and naturalness which makes the difficult appear easy to grasp. Their disciples usually become, therefore, insignificant epigones. The historic significance of such men does not manifest itself in their disciples but through influences of a more indirect, subtle and, often, unexpected kind.

Wittgenstein's most characteristic features were his great and pure seriousness and powerful intelligence. I have never met a man who impressed me so strongly in either respect.

It seems to me that there are two forms of seriousness of character. One is fixed in "strong principles"; the other springs from a passionate heart. The former has to do with morality and the latter, I believe, is closer to religion. Wittgenstein was acutely and even painfully sensitive to considerations of duty, but the earnestness and severity of his personality were more of the

second kind. Yet I do not know whether he can be said to have been "religious" in any but a trivial sense of the word. Certainly he did not have a Christian faith. But neither was his view of life un-Christian, pagan, as was Goethe's. To say that Wittgenstein was not a pantheist is to say something important. "God does not reveal himself *in* the world," he wrote in the *Tractatus*. The thought of God, he said, was above all for him the thought of the fearful judge.

Wittgenstein had the conviction, he sometimes said, that he was doomed. His outlook was typically one of gloom. Modern times were to him a dark age.¹⁷ His idea of the helplessness of human beings was not unlike certain doctrines of predestination.

Wittgenstein was not, strictly speaking a learned man. His temperament was very different from that of the typical scholar. "Cool objectivity" and "detached meditation" are labels which do not suit him at all. He put his whole soul into everything he did. His life was a constant journey, and doubt was the moving force within him. He seldom looked back on his earlier positions, and when he did so it was usually to repudiate them.

Knowledge, for Wittgenstein, was intimately connected with doing. It is significant that his first studies were in the technical sciences. He had a knowledge of mathematics and physics not derived from extensive reading, but from a working familiarity with mathematical and experimental techniques. His many artistic interests had the same active and living character. He could design a house, make a sculpture, or conduct an orchestra. Perhaps he would never have achieved mastery in those fields. But he was no "dilettante." Every manifestation of his multi-dimensional spirit came from the same earnest drive to create.

Wittgenstein had done no systematic reading in the classics of philosophy. He could read only what he could wholeheartedly assimilate. We have seen that as a young man he read Schopenhauer. From Spinoza, Hume, and Kant he said that he could get only occasional glimpses of understanding. I do not think that he could have enjoyed Aristotle or Leibniz, two great logicians before him. But it is significant that he did read and enjoy Plato.

¹⁷ See the Preface to *Philosophical Investigations*: "the darkness of these times."

He must have recognized congenial features, both in Plato's literary and philosophic method and in the temperament behind the thoughts.

Wittgenstein received deeper impressions from some writers in the borderland between philosophy, religion, and poetry than from the philosophers, in the restricted sense of the word. Among the former are St. Augustine, Kierkegaard, Dostoievsky, and Tolstoy. The philosophical sections of St. Augustine's *Confessions* show a striking resemblance to Wittgenstein's own way of doing philosophy. Between Wittgenstein and Pascal there is a trenchant parallelism which deserves closer study. It should also be mentioned that Wittgenstein held the writings of Otto Weininger in high regard.

An aspect of Wittgenstein's work which is certain to attract growing attention is its language. It would be surprising if he were not one day ranked among the classic writers of German prose. The literary merits of the *Tractatus* have not gone unnoticed. The language of the *Philosophical Investigations* is equally remarkable. The style is simple and perspicuous, the construction of sentences firm and free, the rhythm flows easily. The form is sometimes that of dialogue, with questions and replies; sometimes, as in the *Tractatus*, it condenses to aphorisms. There is a striking absence of all literary ornamentation, and of technical jargon or terminology. The union of measured moderation with richest imagination, the simultaneous impression of natural continuation and surprising turns, leads one to think of some other great productions of the genius of Vienna.

It may appear strange that Schopenhauer, one of the masters of philosophic prose, did not influence Wittgenstein's style. An author, however, who reminds one, often astonishingly, of Wittgenstein is Lichtenberg. Wittgenstein esteemed him highly. To what extent, if any, he can be said to have learned from him I do not know. It is deserving of mention that some of Lichtenberg's thoughts on philosophic questions show a striking resemblance to Wittgenstein's.¹⁸

¹⁸ See my paper, "Georg Christoph Lichtenberg als Philosoph," *Theoria*, VIII (1942).

It is fairly certain that both the work and personality of Wittgenstein will provoke varying comments and different interpretations in the future. In Wittgenstein many contrasts meet. We have mentioned the contrast between his searching, restless personality and the repose and perfection of his work. The author of the sentences "The riddle does not exist" and "Everything that can be said can be said clearly" was himself an enigma, and his sentences have a content that often lies deep beneath the surface of the language. It has been said that he was at once a logician and a mystic. *Neither* term is appropriate, but each hints at something true. Those who approach Wittgenstein's work will sometimes look for its essence in a rational, matter of fact dimension, and sometimes more in a supra-empirical, metaphysical one. In the already existing literature on Wittgenstein there are examples of both conceptions. Such "interpretations" have little significance. They must appear as falsifications to anyone who tries to understand Wittgenstein in his rich complexity. They are interesting only as showing in how many directions his influence extends. I have sometimes thought that what makes a man's work *classic* is often just this multiplicity, which invites and at the same time resists our craving for clear understanding.

GEORG HENRIK VON WRIGHT

*University of Helsingfors,
Finland*

NOTE: The author will be most grateful for the communication to him of corrections of any factual errors which may be found in the foregoing article. He will also be interested in any additional information which is relevant to the biography of Ludwig Wittgenstein.