Wittgenstein’s professional odyssey involved wandering between aviation and philosophy with a slight, but definite, temptation in the direction of psychology. His philosophical odyssey began with Ludwig Boltzmann and the infant discipline of philosophy of science. It took a Schopenhauerian turn around 1905 but not for long, as an encounter with the work of Gottlob Frege changed all that forever. But even his understanding of the heritage of Frege ended up being tempered by his Viennese heritage from Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos and Otto Weininger. This complex legacy would make the Tractatus incomprensibile to friends and foes alike – and more or less unpublishable, except on the basis of Bertrand Russell’s Introduction and through the efforts of his secretary, Dorothy Wrinch, with the publishers.

Having solved all of the traditional problems of philosophy definitively and unsayable, Wittgenstein chose to pursue the Tolstoian life of a village schoolmaster in one of the poorest parts of Austria.

"The work is strictly philosophical and, at the same time, literary, but there is no babbling in it."
Family villa in Neuwaldegg

Palais Wittgenstein

Music salon at Palais Wittgenstein

Hochreit, the summer estate of the Wittgenstein family

1889
26 April
Born in Vienna, in the family villa in Neuwaldegg

1903-1906
Staatoberschule in Linz

1906-1908
Engineer studies at the Technische Hochschule Berlin-Charlottenburg

1908-1911
Manchester, College of Technology: Research student in the laboratory of the engineering department, later also voluntary Observer of the weather station

1913
1 February
Staatsoberrealschule in Linz

1914
April
Visit from G.E. Moore in Skjolden

1911
21 June
Submission of a detailed draft for a flight propeller drive to the Patent Office

1912
1 February
Cambridge Trinity College, as Undergraduate

7-27 Sept.
Trip to island, together with Finstein

12 October
Furnishing an apartment in Whewell's Court

22 November
“Lecture “What is Philosophy?” for The Cambridge Apostles

1913
20 January
Death of his father Karl Wittgenstein

20 December
Meeting with Bertrand Russell in Innsbruck

20 February
Wittgenstein transfers the publishing rights to Kegan Paul in London

1914
1 February
Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus is published in English-German version

March
Dr. "Sallnâme va Falsâfe" va râd-"Shâ'ab"" va râd-"Shâ'ab" va râd-"Shâ'ab" va râd-"Shâ'ab" va râd-"Shâ'ab"

27 November
Furnishing an apartment in Whewell's Court

28 November
Logical-Philosophical Treatise appears in the "Annals of Natural Philosophy"

1915
February
Work as an engineer, supervision of the forge at the workshop

1916
May
Return from Skjolden to Vienna

1917
18 March
Transfer as a simple gunner to the front in Bukowina

25 December
Return from Skjolden to Vienna

1918
8 May
Death of David Pinsent, killed in a flying accident

May-June
Submission of a detailed draft for a flight propeller drive to the Patent Office

1919
7 February
San Pellegino/Bergamo

1920
7 April
Furnishing an apartment in Whewell's Court

1921
20 May
Transfer to a field artillery workshop train no. 1

1922
22 June
Logical-Philosophical Treatise appears in the "Annals of Natural Philosophy"

1923
August
Meeting to Puchberg, Lower Austria

1927
3 August
Meeting with Bertrand Russell in Innsbruck

1928
August
Meeting with Bertrand Russell in Innsbruck

1929
August
Meeting with Bertrand Russell in Innsbruck

1930
December
Meeting with Bertrand Russell in Innsbruck

1873-1913
Family villa in Neuwaldegg

1889-1913
Staatoberschule in Linz

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Wittgenstein moved to Manchester in May 1908, after three semesters studying mechanical engineering at the Technical High School Charlottenburg (1906-1908). As a rather informal research student at the university, he was involved in experiments and research on aeronautics until 1911. As early as 1909 Wittgenstein presented his proposals for the solution of a leading problem of mathematical logic to the Russell circle, and most likely in the summer of 1911 he got in contact with the great logician Gottlob Frege.

FIRST VISIT TO GOTTLOB FREGE IN JENA

I wrote to Frege putting forward some objections to his theories, and waited anxiously for a reply. To my great pleasure, Frege wrote and asked me to come and see him. When I arrived I saw a row of boys’ school caps and heard a noise of boys playing in the garden. Frege, I learned later, had had a sad married life – his children had died young, and then his wife; he had an adopted son, to whom I believe he was a kind and good father. I was shown into Frege’s study. Frege was a small neat man with a pointed beard, who bounced around the room as he talked. He absolutely never used a word without knowing what it meant; he expressed astonishment that a man should be praised for that! The last time I saw Frege, as we were waiting at the station for my train, I said to him “Don’t you ever find any difficulty in your theory that numbers are objects?!” He replied “Sometimes I seem to see a difficulty – but then again I don’t see it.”

I believe that I have never invented a new line of thought: that has always been presented by others. He once showed me an obituary of a colleague, who, it was said, never used a word without knowing what it meant: he explained astonishment that a man who said something expressed astonishment that a man should be praised for that. The last time I saw Frege, as we were waiting at the station for my train, I said to him “Don’t you ever find any difficulty in your theory that numbers are objects?!” He replied “Sometimes I seem to see a difficulty – but then again I don’t see it.”

-- Ludwig Wittgenstein in a personal communication to Peter Geach (Courtesy Brian McGuinness. Young Ludwig, 1988)

MAIN PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES ON WITTGENSTEIN

I believe that I have never invented a new line of thought: that has always been given me by someone else. I have only seized on it immediately with a passionate urge for the work of clarification. That is how Boltzmann, Hertz, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weisinger, Spengler, and Sraffa influenced me.

Culture and Value

"I believe that I have never invented a new line of thought: that has always been given me by someone else. I have only seized on it immediately with a passionate urge for the work of clarification. That is how Boltzmann, Hertz, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weisinger, Spengler, and Sraffa influenced me."

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In 1912 I visited Ludwig in Cambridge. He had become friends with Russell and both of us had been invited to tea in Russell’s beautiful college room. I can still see it now, with its tall bookcases filling all the wall space, and the high, old-fashioned windows with their beautifully symmetrical stone mullions and transoms. Suddenly Russell said to me, “We expect the next big step in philosophy to be taken by your brother.” This statement was so extraordinary and incredible to me that for a moment everything went black.

– Hermine Wittgenstein, Family Memoir

She is not at all fatal – older than he is, and very plain, pleasant but not exciting. It was rather uphill work at times – I think she was rather shy. At last he and I fell to arguing as if she were not there. She says he is quite different since he came to Cambridge – so much happier; she feels it is the right place for him.

– Bertrand Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 10 July 1912

Wittgenstein’s reception of Frege’s legacy - the project to rewrite the first 11 chapters of Bertrand Russell’s Mathematical Principles of the Viennese Wittgenstein.

At the end of his first term at Cambridge he came to me and said: “Will you please tell me whether I am a complete idiot or not? ... Because, if I am a complete idiot, I shall become an aeronaut; but, if not, I shall become a philosopher.” I told him to write me something during the vacation on some philosophical subject ... At the beginning of the following term he brought me the fulfillment of this suggestion. After reading only one sentence, I said to him: “No, you must not become an aeronaut.”

– Bertrand Russell, Last Philosophical Testament

Wittgenstein has been talking a lot, at different times, about “Philistines” – a name he gives to people he dislikes! [...] We talked about Woman’s suffrage: he is very much against it – for no particular reason except that “all the women he knows are such idiots”.

– David H. Pinsent, Diary 7 February 1913
“It’s the quiet and, perhaps, the wonderful scenery; I mean, its quiet seriousness.”

Wittgenstein to G.E. Moore

Being alone here does me no end of good and I do not think I could now bear life among people. Inside me, everything is in a state of ferment! Ludwig Wittgenstein to Bertrand Russell, Nov-Dec 1913

Wittgenstein first visited Norway in the summer of 1913, on a holiday together with David Finsent. He had never enjoyed a holiday so much and was convinced that, as soon as he could get back to Norway and resume his work, he would be—happy. He believed he could never do his best except in exile.

After a short stay in Britain where he dictated his Notes on Logic, the first step on the road to the Tractatus, in October 1913 he was back in Norway, this time further north, in the village of Skjolden on the Sognefjord. Skjolden was to become a favoured place of residence at several times throughout his life.

“You must come as soon as Term ends and I shall meet you in Bergen. I am looking forward to your coming more than I can say! I am bothered to death with Logik and other things. But I hope I shan’t die before you come for in that case we couldn’t discuss much.”

Wittgenstein to G.E. Moore, 18.2.1914

I said it would be dark, and he said he hated daylight. I said it would be lonely, and he said he prostituted his mind talking to intelligent people. I said he was mad, and he said God preserve him from sanity. (God certainly will.)

Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell

G.E. Moore visited Wittgenstein in Skjolden in April 1914 and Wittgenstein dictated his thoughts to him. The substance was a development of the Notes on Logic and this dictation was to become Moore Notes. It is a preliminary stage to the Tractatus and directly reproduces Wittgenstein’s thoughts at this time. As a method of work, dictating to friends and colleagues was something he used on several occasions, both in Norway and in Cambridge.

Wittgenstein designed a small house in the spring of 1914, for his next stay in Skjolden. In the meantime, World War I broke out and so he could not visit Skjolden again until the 1920s and use the house himself. He spent there long periods again in the 1930s and in 1950.

“Propositions are themselves facts: that this inkpot is on this table may express that I sit in this chair.”

Notes on Logic

...and directly reproduces Wittgenstein’s thoughts at this time. As a method of reading natural text...
Letter to Ludwig von Ficker, editor of the literary journal Der Brenner in Innsbruck. Wittgenstein knew that Karl Kraus admired von Ficker's work and this gave him confidence to address the publisher, who subsequently became a good friend.

Hochreit Hohenberg, Lower Austria
14 July 1914

Dear Sir:

Forgive me for asking you for a big favor. I should like to transfer a sum of 100,000 crowns to you with the request that you distribute this sum, at your own discretion, among Austrian artists who are without means. I am turning to you in this matter since I assume that you are acquainted with many of our best talents and know which of them are most in need of support. Should you care to fulfill my request, please write to me at the above address, but in any event, please keep this matter secret for the time being.

Very truly yours,

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jr.

Among the recipients chosen by Ludwig von Ficker were Georg Trakl, Rainer-Maria Rilke, Adolf Loos and Oskar Kokoschka.

On 26 July 1914 Ludwig von Ficker mediated the first meeting between Wittgenstein and Adolf Loos, at the Café Imperial in Vienna. Adolf Loos was the only one among the beneficiaries of the donation whose art Wittgenstein really appreciated. At the time Loos was a controversial celebrity in Vienna, due to the house on Michaelerplatz (1912). Much later Wittgenstein listed Loos among the greatest intellectual influences of his life.

1914

BACK TO VIENNA

Wittgenstein Initiative

1914

بازگشت به وین

در اینسبروک، برِنِر نامه به لودویگ فن فیکر، سردبیر مجلهٔ ادبیِ ویتگنشتاین می دانست که کارل کراوس از دوستداران کار فن فیکر است و همین به او قلب داد نامه‌ای به او نویسید. و اندکی که گذشت دوستان خوبی شدند.

14 جولای 1914

سیرکار، با عرض پوزش، درخواست بریگزی از شما دارم، سایم مبلغ 100/000 کرون تحویل شما داده، و شما به صلاح‌دهی خود آن را می‌دانستید که حاجیان کم‌پشت‌های اترش تقسیم کنید. من به شما روی دهارد زیرا کسانی که بهتر از همه با استعدادهای بریک این بودند اشتباه و خود شما دادن چه کسی بشر نبودند این کمک‌نیازی است. ماهیتشاتم به درخواست من، رسسی و همچنین پاسیکی به نشانی بالا ارسال کنید. اگر امکانات هست، این موضوع تا نکته‌ی میان من و شما باشد.

ارادت شما

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jr.

Among the recipients chosen by Ludwig von Ficker were Georg Trakl, Rainer-Maria Rilke, Adolf Loos and Oskar Kokoschka.

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1914

back to Vienna

The architect Adolf Loos.

Loos House on Michaelerplatz in Vienna.

In 1914, Ludwig von Ficker facilitated the first meeting between Wittgenstein and Adolf Loos at the Café Imperial in Vienna. Loos was the only one among the beneficiaries of the donation whose art Wittgenstein truly appreciated. At the time Loos was a controversial figure in Vienna, due to the house on Michaelerplatz (1912). Much later, Wittgenstein listed Loos among the greatest intellectual influences of his life.
On 28 October 1914 Wittgenstein received a letter from the poet Georg Trakl - the connection was established through Wittgenstein's donation to poor artists. Trakl was in the garrison hospital in Krakow and asked Wittgenstein to visit him. But when he reached Krakow on 5.11., he noted:

In the morning in the city to the garrison hospital. There I learned that Trakl died a few days ago! This hit me very hard. How sad, how sad!!! I wrote immediately to Ficker about it. Didn't do any work. Poor Trakl! ––– ! Thy will be done. ––––.

In August 1914 Wittgenstein was assigned to one of the Vistula ships, the Goplana, in Krakow “for the operation of a spotlight”.

In the proposition a situation is, as it were, constructed by way of experiment. (2.1.2)

A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs. (2.1.

I always carry Tolstoy’s “Gospel in Brief” around with me like a talisman.

Wartime Diaries, 11 October 1914

Wittgenstein must have reached the town of Tarnów while the ship was being loaded or unloaded. In any case, he acquires the only German-language book available there in a bookshop: Tolstoy’s Gospel in Brief. It had a great influence on Wittgenstein’s moral self-image during the war and until the end of his life.
**1915**

**SOKAL**

“If I had no paper I would write on sand.”

Wittgenstein to a friend in WWI.

August-September 1915: Beginning of the writing of the *Logical Philosophical Treatise*.

August 1915: Wittgenstein is assigned to an artillery train as a production engineer.

**1916**

**BUKOWINA**

Reward application for the awarding of the Silver Medal of Bravery 2nd class

Three of the decorations Wittgenstein received: Bronze Medal for Bravery, Silver Medal for Bravery 2nd Class, Kaiser Karl Troop Cross.

Artillery observation post on the Bukowina front, one of Wittgenstein’s assignments.

"Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.”

"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”

Wartime Diaries

"اگر کاغذ کی نیازم، روی شن می نویسم.

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Wartime Diaries
On 8 May 1918, David Pinsent died in a plane crash.

David was my first and my only friend... the hours I have spent with him have been the best of my life.

Wittgenstein to David’s mother Ellen Pinsent, August 1918

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I've read your treatise and Russell's preface twice in a row. I had to laugh at myself because I knew from the start that I couldn't understand anything in it and yet I couldn't stop. In the end I only had one certain feeling: that I don't like the second part is the important one. ... In brief, I think: All this insight would make it possible to apply the methods of Russell and Frege to account for ... My work consists of two parts of the one which is here, and of everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one. ... In brief, I think: All of that which many are babbling today, I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it.

Wittgenstein to Ludwig von Ficker, 19 October 1919

D.E., I'm trying the old job again as you can gather from this postcard. However I don't feel so miserable now, as I have decided to come to you if the worst came to the worst; which it certainly will sooner or later. Please remember me to your wife, give my affectionate greetings to your children and give Hugh a sound thrashing in my name. Yours ever, L. Wittgenstein

Postcard from Wittgenstein to William Eccles, 13 September 1925

But I would like to know what Kraus said about [my work]. If you have the opportunity to find out, I would be very happy to hear it. Maybe Loox knows something. Write to me.

Wittgenstein to Paul Engelmann, 25 October 1918

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Wittgenstein with his pupils in Otterhal, 1925

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THE TRACTATUS AND THE VIENNA CIRCLE

The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus exerted a great influence on various philosophical schools, but especially on the Vienna Circle. Among the members of this group were positivist philosophers and mathematicians, including Moritz Schlick, Friedrich Waismann, Rudolf Carnap and Herbert Feigl, who were enthusiastic about Wittgenstein’s Tractatus. What mainly attracted them, it seems, was the ability of the Tractatus to account for the truth of the propositions of logic and mathematics, without allowing for any substantive science other than the natural sciences as they were known. Some members of the circle, such as Carnap, hoped that this insight would make it possible to apply the methods of natural science to the problems of humanity. These members formed the left wing of the movement and were later to be hostile to the influence of Wittgenstein, because he wished to reserve the realm of values as something completely outside the sphere of science. Other members of the movement, such as Schlick himself, were more sympathetic towards the mystical...
Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts. So it is not a textbook. Its purpose would be achieved if it gave pleasure to one person who read and understood it. The book deals with the problems of philosophy, and shows, I believe, that the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. The whole sense of the book might be summed up in these words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to be able to think what we cannot talk about. Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, over in silence.

If this work has any value, it consists in two things: the first is that thoughts are expressed in it, and on this score the better the thoughts are expressed—the more the nail has been hit on the head—the greater will be its value. Here I am conscious of having fallen a long way short of what is possible. Simply because my powers are too slight for the accomplishment of the task. —May others come and do it better.

On the other hand the truth of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved.

L. W.

Vienna, 1918

November 1922

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus is published in a German – English version.

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LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN: AFTER THE TRACTATUS

1923 September
Purburg in Lower Austria, elementary school teacher

1924
Meeting Adolf Loew in Vienna

1925 August
In England as guest of John Mayne Keynes in Lewes

1926 April
Dictionary for Elementary Schools is published

1927 April
Leaves the teaching profession

24 April
Hofbinder in Vienna, at the Barmberiogen Bridge class as gardener

3 June
Death of the mother Leopoldine Wittgenstein

1928 August
Work on the house in the Kondmarrasse

1929 February
First meeting with Moritz Schlick

March
Visits a lecture on the foundations of mathematics given by the Dutch mathematician L. E. J. Brouwer

April
Completion of the work on the house in the Kondmarrasse

1930 June
Cambridge

18 June
Oral examination by Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, submitting the Tractatus as his dissertation

19 June
Scholarship from Trinity College

16 May
Probationary Faculty Lectureship granted

1931 June
Lectures in Cambridge

15 January
Meeting with Francis Skinner in Cambridge

31 January
Probationary Faculty Lectureship granted

1932
Lectures in Cambridge

1933
Lectures in Cambridge

1934
January
Meeting with Francis Skinner in Cambridge

July
Trip together with Skinner

1935 January-May
Lectures in Cambridge

7 Sept.
Departure for Russia

12-24 Sept.
Leningrad, Moscow, Kazan, Leningrad

29 Sept.
London

1936 January-May
Cambridge

June
End of Research Fellowship in Cambridge

Aug.-Dec.
Skjolden, Norway

1937
Summer
Vienna

1938
11 February
Skjolden, with Margarette Reisinger

1939
11 February
Lectures in Cambridge,

14 April
Located in Cambridge

1 October
Takes the Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge

1940
First Aid training

1941
11 October
Death of Francis Skinner

Nov.-Dec.
London, Laboratory Assistant at Guy’s Hospital

1942
27 April
Gall operation

1943
London, Guy’s Hospital

1944
February
Newcastle, Swansea

October
Cambridge

1945
January
Cambridge

Out-Dec.
Lectures in Cambridge

1946
Lectures in Cambridge

1947
Lectures in Cambridge

31 December
Resigns from the Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge

1948
Dublin, Oxford, Vienna

1949
Dublin, Vienna

20 May
Diagnosed with an atypical form of anemia

October
New York, Itaca, as guest to Norman Malcolm

25 November
Diagnosed with prostate cancer by Dr. Bevan

December
Flight to Vienna

1950
Jan.-March
Vienna

11 February
Death of his sister Hermine Wittgenstein

Cambridge, London

Out-Nov.
Skjolden, with Ben Richards

Christmas
Cambridge, guest of Dr. Bevan

1951
19 February
Cambridge, stays in Storeys End, Dr. Bevan’s house

29 April
Dies in Dr. Bevan’s house. Elizabeth Anscombe, Yorick Smythies, Ben Richards and Maurice O’Drury are with him.
Considered to be the most influential philosopher of the 20th century, Ludwig Wittgenstein played a central, if controversial, role over the last 100 years. He continues to influence current thinking in areas as diverse as logic and language, perception and intention, ethics and religion, aesthetics and culture.

In his life, Ludwig Wittgenstein produced two great masterpieces of colossal importance. The early Wittgenstein is epitomized in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. This work addresses the deepest problems in philosophy: the nature of representation in general and of representation by means of language in particular; the nature of logic and logical necessity; the relations between language, thought and reality; the metaphysical structure of the world; the limits of what can be said in language and the character of what cannot be said but can be shown. It also confronted the antecedent tradition in philosophy, in particular the philosophies of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell, his two great predecessors, whose views Wittgenstein radicalized and transformed.

But it is the later Wittgenstein, mostly recognized in the Philosophical Investigations (published posthumously in 1953), who took the more revolutionary step in critiquing all of traditional philosophy. This work addresses much the same problems, but from a totally different perspective - it goes beyond them to examine deep questions concerning knowledge of one’s own experience, language and thought, thinking and imagination, consciousness and self-consciousness, willing and intending, and many others. It undercuts his first philosophy, and moves off in new directions with stunning originality.

Ludwig and Wittgenstein are two great predecessors whose views Wittgenstein radicalized and transformed. He continued in his life, but with a more controversial, role over the last 100 years. He continues to influence current thinking in areas as diverse as logic and language, perception and intention, ethics and religion, aesthetics and culture.

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A WITTGENSTEIN INITIATIVE PROJECT
Curated by Rodolfo Schweizer

Graphic Design by Gut Wien

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