Wittgenstein in Cambridge

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Letters and Documents 1911–1951

Edited by Brian McGuinness

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Brian McGuinness
Siena, June 2007

INTRODUCTION

The present volume contains correspondence and documents illustrating the part that Cambridge, his friends there and its institutions, played in the philosophical, professional, and general intellectual life of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Naturally the great events or the private concerns that conditioned those sides of his life must also be touched on – the two wars, the annexation of Austria, his position or need for a position, his health, and the like.

It differs considerably from the previous volume, *Cambridge Letters*, which I edited with the late Georg Henrik von Wright (Blackwell, 1995). That was designed to contain what survived of the correspondence between Wittgenstein and the chief of his Cambridge friends, by which was meant those who could fairly be regarded as his equals or even mentors rather than disciples – Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, J. M. Keynes, and later Frank Ramsey and (represented by a single but important letter) Piero Sraffa. Now the place of Sraffa in the collection has indeed been considerably enlarged, since a large number of letters from Wittgenstein to him and some memoranda written for Wittgenstein by him have come to light (or onto the market). These enable us to form rather more than a speculative idea of the conversations to which Wittgenstein ascribed much of the inspiration of his *Philosophical Investigations.* They also throw much light on the reactions of Wittgenstein to the annexation of his native Austria and the coming of the war, events which, by a concatenation of circumstances, almost constrained him to remain a philosopher.

The Sraffa material by itself would have been an invaluable completion of the earlier volume, but, with the encouragement of the Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge (Dr David McKitterick) and my understanding publisher (I have been with Blackwell now for more than forty years) I decided to change the conception of the book by including letters that show something of Wittgenstein's relations with followers, pupils, friends, or younger colleagues. In principle I confine myself to the intellectual sphere, leaving aside more private and intimate correspondence with Cambridge friends, which indeed hardly exists in bulk and is mostly (entirely in the case of Francis Skinner) written to, not by, Wittgenstein. Even when there is a reply

by Wittgenstein it usually throws light on the problems of the other party. Complete consistency is almost impossible and one or two admonitory letters have escaped this self-denying ordinance. A complete Wittgenstein correspondence (I am one of the editors) is available in the Past Masters series of InteLex on CD-ROM and Internet, which will be brought up to date from time to time. (As yet the notes and surrounding material are solely in German.)

The new material in this book is almost entirely from Wittgenstein's second Cambridge period, beginning in 1929, and, after an initial attempt to convert to seriousness the young scions of Bloomsbury, shows him dealing with more earnest and mature students of philosophy, and then as the thirties went on, the pupils or followers, notably Rush Rhees, Norman Malcolm, and von Wright himself, whose correspondence and friendship accompanied him to his deathbed.[1] The individual letters from Russell, Keynes and Moore are still printed in full, though I now omit notes fixing or requesting an appointment. In other cases I have here allowed myself to excerpt letters to Wittgenstein, leaving out material of ephemeral interest. His own letters are always left in their entirety.

Another major change and addition to the volume is that I have now included minutes of meetings and discussions that Wittgenstein attended or led and also documents concerning his official status from time to time. Will future generations know the joy of archives? It is touching to think of the young secretaries of the Trinity Mathematical Society writing their proceedings and Wittgenstein's words into those leather-bound volumes before going off to calculate the effect of tides off the invasion coast of France. Jacky Cox, Deputy Archivist of Cambridge University, previously Modern Archivist of King's, and Jonathan Smith, Archivist of Trinity, not only procured me access to such treasures but were kind enough to share their enthusiasm with me.

No more than previous collections of their letters is this book meant as a first introduction to Wittgenstein and his circle nor an encyclopaedia of his acquaintance. But its publication will be justified if it conveys a picture of the almost cyclical pattern of his life and work: periods devoted to interchange with others alternating with retirement to condense the ideas he drew from and wanted to contribute to that very interchange. All his development, that is all his life, is characterized by contrast and inner conflict. The evidence of his letters, as of his contemporaries, shows him in turn shy and affectionate, fierce and censorious, happy to collaborate and sure of his own judgement. Many quarrels and nearly as many reconciliations are documented. His struggles to publish the *Tractatus* can be followed, his apparent retreat from the intellectual world, his being wooed back to philosophy by Keynes and Ramsey, later and repeated plans of his to leave philosophy, all in the end reversed. He was often on the point of producing something for publication and then chased some new ideal of perfection or some new topic suggested by others in discussion or by his own

[1] Not represented in the present collection is the correspondence, I think still extant, with M. O'C. (Con) Drury, one of his closest friends for the longest time. Their friendship and exchange of ideas are described in M. O'C. Drury, *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996).

wide-ranging, almost desultory, reading. It was in these ways that he came to certainty (thanks to Moore and Malcolm) and to colours (picking up a book of Goethe's on his last visit to Vienna). In the end many shipwrecks of books in draft were left for his friends to refloat. Events as well as some attraction, despite a distrust often expressed, brought him back repeatedly to Cambridge. It was as important to him as his solitudes.

Wittgenstein first came to see Russell, then a lecturer at Cambridge, on 18 October 1911[2] and seems to have stayed until Christmas, though he was still registered as studying at the University of Manchester for that autumn. He was admitted as a member of Cambridge University and of Trinity College on 1 February 1912. His status was at first that of an undergraduate. At the beginning of June the Degree Committee of the Special Board for Moral Science admitted him as an Advanced Student to a Course of Research and "asked Mr. Bertrand Russell to be kind enough to act as the Director and Supervisor of the Student".[3] Wittgenstein attended lectures by G. E. Moore, not yet Professor, and also had some supervision, which both men found frustrating, from the logician W. E. Johnson. Wittgenstein was in residence during all three terms in the year 1912 and during the Lent and Easter Terms of 1913. The greater part of the academic year 1913–14 he spent in Norway, thinking and writing on his own. In April G. E. Moore visited him there. Wittgenstein had returned to Austria for the summer and in August 1914, immediately after the outbreak of the war, he volunteered for the Austro-Hungarian Army.

Coming to Cambridge had proved one of the great changes in his life. He had to make a choice, agonizing for him, between his gifts as an aircraft engineer and those as a thinker. Russell helped him to make the choice we know of, but largely by bringing him into a group where he could make free use of his intellect. To be surrounded by Moore, Keynes, the Stracheys, and even the younger Apostles (then practically the Cambridge branch of Bloomsbury) was a new experience for him. His family background was one of wealth and high culture but not intellectual to the degree cultivated in this new environment. He brought with him, it is true, a brisk and practical knowledge of science, which made him impatient with vapourings, but it is fair to say that the intellectual discussion of everything, with a pleasure taken in the discussion as well as in the result, was (from all that we know) new to him. He came to Cambridge (like St Augustine to Carthage) and it marked him for life, which indeed he ended there. *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra* is one of that University's mottos: there he found the blend of problems and techniques that suited him. Of course he was Austrian (or, as he and Russell put it, German), and many aspects of English life irritated him, but the construct of the Austro-Hungarian intellectual sits uneasily upon him, if we consider most of his life.

By his happy choice of Russell as a teacher (and Russell's quick perception), Wittgenstein found himself within months of his arrival a member of this elite, a group who took their own social position for granted (as, I think, Wittgenstein too

[2] Letter from Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell of that date.

[3] Letter of 5 June 1912 from J. N. Keynes (father of J. M. Keynes and University Registrar) to Dr W. M. Fletcher, Tutor at Trinity College.

always did) but were very conscious of the superiority of their ideals to those of worldly success, which, they thought, was preached at Oxford. They had their Bible in Moore's *Principia Ethica* (it is interesting that *Principia Mathematica* is named after that, and not the other way round) but now thought (according to Russell) of a life of retirement among fine shades and nice feelings. The younger ones also tended to be in love with one another. We have references to discussions with older members of the circle: Wittgenstein maintaining that mathematics would improve people's taste because taste comes of thinking honestly. They were all against him. And perhaps this was typical. At all events he attempted to resign from the Society itself (the Apostles), thinking that the younger members "had not yet made their toilets. And the process, though necessary was indecent." (He was to resume membership, as a senior member, much later.)

What were his objections to them, apart from the immaturity of the young? He was critical of Moore's *Principia*, of its style for one thing ("Unclear things don't get a bit clearer by being repeated") but also of its content: of its attempt to *describe* the nature of the good. Wittgenstein wanted nothing but honesty, nothing but to be (as Russell forced him to say) a creature of impulse. His impulses being strong but never shameful, principles and such things seemed to him nonsense. The brittle arguments of the Society, where the paradoxical or the scandalous would be defended for sheer love of argument, seemed to him intolerable. And there was another thing: all, even the older members, lacked what he called reverence: even Russell (whom, at that period, he still respected) was so philistine as to appreciate the advantages of their age as opposed to previous ones. D. H. Lawrence, who had a consciously Nietzschean attitude to the world, was to feel uncomfortable with Bloomsbury for similar reasons.

Still, between them the members of this group set him on the way to writing his first and in some ways his greatest work. He was to repair Russell's logic; he was to deal with Keynes's probability in two or three paragraphs; he was to show that ethics, Moore's field, did not consist of propositions at all. And perhaps this is what they wanted from him: they "looked to him for the next big step in philosophy", as Russell told Wittgenstein's sister; and after the war they were happy (as C. D. Broad put it) "to dance to the highly syncopated pipings of Herr Wittgenstein's flute". There were other ways too that they helped him – their very acceptance of him was a boon. And among them "He gained from Heaven, 'twas all he wished, a friend", one in their circle, though not totally of it, to whom he dedicated that same work.

The original *Abhandlung*, whose completion he announced to Russell in 1915, was the product of this Cambridge period, but the additions he made to it in 1916–18 (the passages on God, freedom, and the mystical) issued rather from the next two phases in his life. Tolstoy's religion had taken hold of him in the war and the circle of young disciples of Kraus and Loos whom he met in Olmütz acted as midwives to the utterance of what he had previously and, as he thought, necessarily left unsaid.[4] Russell was shocked by the mysticism that thus entered in, while as for religion the

[4] For the Olmütz circle see Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), and my *Young Ludwig* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 246ff.

least hint of it was enough to exile one from the drawing rooms of Bloomsbury. "We have lost Tom", was Virginia Woolf's comment on T. S. Eliot's conversion.

The book, apart from this, as he thought, extraneous element, ravished Russell. It came from the prison camp at Cassino in Italy, where Wittgenstein spent most of his captivity after the Austro-Hungarian surrender of November 1918, remaining until August 1919. He had with him a completed typescript of what Moore was to call the *Tractatus*. The intermediacy of Keynes brought it safely to England.

In December 1919, and thus not long after his release from captivity, Wittgenstein was able to meet Russell at The Hague (it was evidently necessary to go to a country which had been neutral) where the two friends had an impassioned discussion of the work (letters **65–76**). On his return to England, Russell wrote an introduction to it (of which Wittgenstein did not approve) and was in other ways instrumental in ensuring its publication both in Germany and in England (letters **88–96**). The two met again at Innsbruck in 1922 (see notes to **95**). It turned out to be a somewhat sour encounter, after which their friendship was never restored to what it had been before, though there are at first a couple of amiable letters (**96–7**).

These were the years in which Wittgenstein relinquished his whole fortune to his family and withdrew from philosophy to become a teacher in elementary schools in more or less remote villages in Lower Austria (1920–6), but this did not mean a complete break in his relations with Cambridge. Early in 1923 he wrote to Keynes seeking renewed contact (letter **98**). The letter remained unanswered for a whole year, but in the mean time (in September 1923) a young friend of Keynes's from Cambridge, the brilliant mathematician and philosopher, Frank Ramsey, who had translated the *Tractatus* for C. K. Ogden, came to see Wittgenstein at Puchberg am Schneeberg. He seems to have stayed there for at least two weeks and to have had long discussions daily with Wittgenstein, who explained the *Tractatus* to him. One result of these talks was a number of corrections made both to the German text and to the English version, most of which were incorporated in the second impression of 1933.[5] No doubt Ramsey's reports were what stirred Keynes to generous efforts to secure Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge (see letters **111**, **112**, and **115**). There is evidence that in the autumn of 1923 Wittgenstein himself was contemplating the possibility of giving up his job as a teacher and coming to Cambridge to complete his work for a degree. But a year later he declined Keynes's invitation, explaining his reasons both to Keynes himself and to Ramsey, who was once again on a visit to Austria.

In August 1925, however, Wittgenstein did visit England, stayed with Keynes and met Ramsey and other friends. Keynes helped him to pay for this trip (letters **110–11**). This came about with all the interlacing of intellectual and personal life characteristic of Bloomsbury. Keynes was newly married to the lovable but eccentric Lydia Lopokova: indeed these days were to have been their honeymoon. Ramsey was on the eve of his marriage but had to leave his bride and come down to Sussex so that Wittgenstein would have someone to talk to. Geoffrey Keynes and his wife were

[5] See C. Lewy, "A Note on the Text of the *Tractatus*", *Mind* 76 (1967), 417–23, and letters **99**, **107** and **152**.

invited to make up the party, and Virginia and Leonard Woolf came over from their house nearby. We know the sort of thing that went on from other occasions – Lydia's boutades taken literally by the Bloomsburyites; Wittgenstein discontented when, instead of his being allowed to prevail in an argument, the subject was blithely changed; Wittgenstein's long walks with Ramsey, which gave them an opportunity to quarrel about psychoanalysis. (The quarrel is attested, the subject probable.) At all events a return to Cambridge and philosophy was deferred.

Two more avatars, each worthy of a separate narration, intervened: the building of the Kundmanngasse house (in some sense a return to the preoccupations of the Olmütz circle) interspersed with the modest beginnings of discussion with selected members of the Vienna Circle.[6] But for reasons which we can easily conjecture Vienna was not a place for his work: he would only be a wealthy amateur, except that he had given away all his money; and so might seem a hanger-on in his own family. Cambridge it must be and thither he returned in the first days of 1929, the Cambridge of Frances Cornford and "the men going to lecture with the wind in their gowns". He was welcome there as much because he had been known earlier in his vulnerable youth as because he had now a name in the learned world. This old acquaintance preserved him (particularly at Trinity) from occasional censure.[7]

"God has arrived," wrote Keynes to Lydia, and indeed Wittgenstein dominated their lives at first, staying in a college guest room at King's, and then with Ramsey (their quarrel forgotten), in both cases for longer than was really decent. They parked him with Maurice Dobb, a mentor of the young and left-wing Apostles of the day, where he resumed the life of sixteen years earlier, surprising himself by the ease with which he did so. His quarrel with Moore too was effortlessly overcome – it was a period, of hope perhaps, when Wittgenstein's personal charm was not overshadowed by his demands as much on others as on himself.

Formally speaking he was readmitted to Trinity and the university on 18 January 1929: so soon was the idea that he had come only for a holiday abandoned. He kept residence during the Lent and Easter Terms, proceeding to the PhD degree on 18 June, the *Tractatus* being accepted as a thesis. Ramsey was formally his supervisor and Moore and Russell his examiners. He was in residence (now in the house of Mrs Quiggin in Grantchester Road) for the three terms of 1929–30 and the Michaelmas Term 1930. During the academic year 1929–30 he was paid a small sum in respect of

[6] For first-hand accounts see Herbert Feigl, "The Wiener Kreis in America", in *Perspectives in American History*, vol. II (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 639, and Karl Menger, *Reminiscences of the Vienna Circle*, ed. B. McGuinness, L. Golland, and A. Sklar (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer, 1994), *passim*. *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, conversations recorded by F. Waismann, ed. B. F. McGuinness, trans. with J. Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) (German edition, *Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*, ed. B. McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967)) contains a general account as well as later conversations.

[7] One distinguished classicist wrote to me, "He seemed to ignore that a Fellowship involved as well as privileges some few duties." But Littlewood, Hardy and others close to the Council ("High Trinity") were prepared to make allowances.

lectures on philosophical logic given at the invitation of the Moral Science Faculty Board. This was converted into a Faculty Lecturership in October 1930, and continued on the same basis in the following years. He was elected a Fellow of Trinity College under Title B on 5 December 1930, and at first given rooms in Bishop's Hostel. He was later to return to his old undergraduate rooms at the top of a tower in Whewell's Court.[8] After a prolongation the fellowship eventually expired at the end of the academic year 1935–6, when his Faculty Lecturership also came to an end.

Discussions with Ramsey were a joy – "They're like some energetic sport and are conducted, I think, in a good spirit. There is something erotic and chivalrous about them. They educate me into a degree of courage in thinking." He then reflects on his ability or inability to pursue "science" (*Wissenschaft*, a word he later avoided) on his own.[9] The topics of the discussions (cut short by Ramsey's illness and death within a year) can be surmised – visual space, the foundations, if any, of physics and mathematics, and the like, but they are of a technical nature. It was a rigorous return to philosophy. Not for nothing does he later mention how much he owed to Ramsey's "forcible and unerring criticism",[10] though, as we shall see, he needed something further to set him on a new path.

Another token of his remaining within the Bloomsbury connexion of his earlier Cambridge years was Wittgenstein's formal return to the Society (the Apostles) and his interest in the literary, dramatic, and musical activities of the young, above all the privileged young – "all those Wykehamists", as Leavis scornfully described them ("all those Julian Bells" was Wittgenstein's own phrase). He took Dadie Rylands round the College garden explaining how Shakespeare should be produced. He analysed the symbols in the poems of William Empson's circle. He criticized John Hare's (the later Lord Listowel's) singing and commented on the paintings of Julian Trevelyan.

Something – more than one thing probably – changed him. His views were perhaps not given the attention they deserved. Rylands smiled at the advice that was given, Julian Bell wrote a poetic epistle, addressed to Braithwaite, protesting against the cultural hegemony claimed by Wittgenstein. John Cornford's scorn for his teachers may have been in part directed against, for it was apparently resented by, Wittgenstein.[11] He did not differ from them politically, for he remained resolutely left-wing in his sympathies. He did not oppose his great friend Skinner's idea of going to the Spanish

[8] This seems to have corresponded to a romantic ideal of his: he sought lodgings in the clock tower that was the principal feature of Olmütz and in his observation post as an artillery officer he had felt like a prince in an enchanted castle.

[9] "Ich gehe in der Wissenschaft nur gern [*I believe* nur ungern *was meant*] allein spazieren" (MS 105, p. 4 (15 Feb. 1929)). On this puzzling passage and the influence of Ramsey in general see my "Wittgenstein and Ramsey", in M. C. Galavotti (ed.), *Cambridge and Vienna: Frank P. Ramsey and the Vienna Circle* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), pp. 19–28.

[10] Foreword to *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), p. ix ("dieser stets kraftvollen und sicheren Kritik").

[11] Jaakko Hintikka told me that he heard Wittgenstein (in 1949–50) emphasize how mistaken John Cornford had been in thinking that he had nothing to learn from his teachers.

Civil War: three of the four Cambridge men killed in that war were pupils of his[12] and the fourth was John Cornford, the pupil *manqué* mentioned above. Yet Wittgenstein began to find friends and disciples in less privileged and more earnest circles, who were primarily intent on personal improvement: King, Lee, and Townsend, who have published their notes on his lectures; the circle round Skinner; and particularly Drury, Smythies, and Rhees, who remained close to him till the end. Each group is worthy of description, but none is remotely to be thought of in connexion with Bloomsbury. They were prepared, however, for the difficult task of discipleship: it meant that they had to get the essential things right and yet be prepared to disagree with Wittgenstein, but above all they could not play with ideas, or indeed with much else. A particular part is played in the present volume by a number of maturer students, whose later letters describe their attempts to put into practice the lessons they had learnt from or with Wittgenstein. W. H. Watson, who shared and fed Wittgenstein's taste for the nonsense – the absurdities of would-be philosopher scientists like Jeans and Eddington – perhaps qualifies in his *On Understanding Physics* as one of the best spokesmen Wittgenstein could have had. Later Alister Watson, perhaps the only one of the charmed circle of young Apostles to remain with him, contributed in somewhat the same way presentations of Wittgensteinian ideas on the foundations (or lack of foundations) of mathematics.

In obedience to a social law that I have observed in operation at Oxford (no doubt it is a particular form of a universal tendency) a special group of his friends, with whom he felt most at home, were, like himself, foreigners, who (more than was necessary but not more than was natural) failed to fit easily into the cosy world of the colleges. Piccoli, the Professor of Italian, was one example; Bachtin (Nicholas, brother of Mikhail), a linguist, a poet, and a serial exile, was, slightly later, another. But the chief figure of this kind was undoubtedly Piero Sraffa, a protégé (soon to become an equal) whom Keynes had brought from Mussolini's Italy. Wittgenstein was confronted with willpower equal to his own. Sraffa had already published a groundbreaking article, comparable in some ways to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and was now addressing, according to Amartya Sen, "foundational economic issues of general social and political interest (some of which have been discussed for over two hundred years)".[13] Sen adds that it would be surprising if Sraffa had not had a philosophical position of his own, and one that went beyond "the rather limited boundaries of positivist or representational reasoning commonly invoked in contemporary mainstream economics". What this position was (it was of course not avowed as a philosophical one) can be

[12] Julian Bell himself, David Guest (both of whom had Marxist objections to Wittgenstein's teaching) and Ivor Hickman, whose few letters to Wittgenstein show a healthy independence alongside esteem and affection. In an obituary notice (*Christ's College Magazine*, 1939) C. P. Snow, then a Fellow, describes him as "exuberantly fond of abstract thought" on the meaning of meaning and the like. Probably his death was the occasion of a disagreement with Drury over the nature of a "future life" (R. Rhees, *Recollections of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 132).

[13] Amartya Sen, "Sraffa, Wittgenstein, and Gramsci", *Journal of Economic Literature* 41 (2003), 1240–55.

seen or sensed in the interchanges adumbrated (in some cases spelt out) in the present collection.[14]

And there were many such discussions: the two met, usually weekly, and had almost an agenda, not so much topics to be covered but errors of thinking about the most ordinary matters (political events or whatever suggested itself), to be identified for future avoidance not just popular misconceptions, *pseudodoxia epidemica* so to speak, but errors that they found in their own thinking. Sometimes there was direct discussion of Wittgenstein's philosophy. The anecdote of the Neapolitan gesture has become famous – "What is the grammar of that?" asked Sraffa. Looking back, when he was making a determined effort to write the definitive account of his changed view,[15] Wittgenstein sees this question of Sraffa's as one of two axe strokes against his previous doctrine of the crystal character of logic.[16] Sraffa had shown him that he had to accept as a sign something for which he could not give the rules and grammar.

He associates this immediately with the realization that there was no essence of language, no realm of meaning to be tapped into. We should abandon the pneumatic theory of thought,[17] the idea that behind our understanding and meaning there was some structure (something concrete, a word actually used by Wittgenstein in this context) that we could perhaps only glimpse but on which we depended for our thoughts or utterances to have sense.[18] This substructure or skeleton now vanished. He describes the theory also as one that supposes that sense is something that we give life to, like a child, and it then has a life of its own, which we can only follow and examine. Not so with sense or understanding, for it is only our continued activity that gives life to sense or language. An epigrammatical summary of this appears already in his Brown Book (1934–5).

If Sraffa made him feel like a tree stripped of its branches, Sraffa in the end found their conversations too much – "I won't be bullied by you, Wittgenstein," Smythies (who, you might say, had been bullied by both) heard him say. Sraffa resembled Wittgenstein even in some of the methods and aims of his scientific work. He too could use their common friends Ramsey and Alister Watson to help him with the mathematics he needed, but he took strictly what he needed from them.

About this time (see letters **190–1** and notes) it seems to have been Wittgenstein's general plan, often modified by circumstances, to publish his results, if possible, and

[14] See in particular the exchange of letters and memoranda from 1934 (**169–75**).

[15] In a rough notebook (MS 157b) contemporary with 1936–7 MS 142, which is the basis of the opening part of *Philosophical Investigations.* The notebook is echoed in many of the passages about the nature of philosophy in *Ph. Inv.* §§89–133.

[16] The other was the idea of family resemblance, which he implies he got from Spengler. That too militated against the assumption of essences.

[17] Misrepresented in the English of *Ph. Inv.* §109 as "the conception of thought as a gaseous medium". *Pneuma*, with its connotation of something that gives life is certainly not gas. (Wittgenstein himself says that the word "ethereal" would be better.)

[18] In a recent article Joachim Schulte has brought out well how Wittgenstein's idea of *pneuma* is indebted to that of Spengler, whom he was reading about the time of his first conversations with Sraffa ("The Pneumatic Conception of Thought", *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 71 (2006), 39–55). In Spengler the notion is typical of the *magical* way of thinking.

to leave academic life, at any rate as far as England was concerned. In September 1935 he visited the Soviet Union with the idea of starting a new life there and in early 1938 he thought of taking up the study of medicine, perhaps in Ireland. In between, with no post, he spent the remainder of 1936 (after the expiry of his fellowship) and much of 1937 in his cabin in Norway, preparing his book for publication and meditating on what he saw as his own shortcomings. One upshot of the latter preoccupation was a series of confessions which he made to family and friends at the beginning of 1937, while the former activity did eventually lead to his offering an early version of *Philosophical Investigations* to the Cambridge University Press, though it is not clear that it was complete and he had difficulty finding a good translator. He had not always been whole-hearted about publication, since, for a period at the beginning of 1938, he appears (see letter **215**) to have contemplated placing his papers in Trinity College Library for possible publication after his death (which is more or less what did in the end happen).

The annexation of Austria in March 1938 altered Wittgenstein's preoccupations, perhaps decisively. He had to consider his own situation, whether to change his nationality and if so what new nationality to seek, and, a related problem, what to do to help his family, threatened with racial persecution. He had also to find an occupation. The letters show how he resolved these problems with the help and advice of Keynes and Sraffa. In fact he set in train an application for British naturalization, which took almost exactly a year in coming. Also he resumed his previous teaching activities, to a select group on some occasions in Lent Term 1938, more regularly, though still gratis, in the Easter Term. No position as Faculty Lecturer was now available and, though some payment was made for the academic year 1938–9, he was told that such payments could not be guaranteed beyond that period.

In early 1939 Wittgenstein applied for the Professorship of Philosophy (to be vacated by Moore in October) and was elected, again having sought the help and advice of Keynes, though in truth little assistance was needed. In October he took up the chair and was re-elected at Trinity, this time to a Professorial Fellowship. He remained in office, with leave, at first for war work then for writing, during 1943 and 1944. He resumed his professorial duties in January 1945 and continued to discharge them until the summer of 1947: Michaelmas Term of that year was a period of sabbatical leave and he formally resigned his Fellowship and Professorship at the end of the calendar year. Extracts from the University Archives which give details of all these changes are included in the present volume.

During most of his time at Cambridge (for the qualification, see letter **199**) Wittgenstein was much interested in the activities of the philosophical discussion society there, the Moral Science Club, and it is frequently referred to in the letters. He it was who first proposed, in 1912, the election of a standing Chairman to guide the discussions. This office was distinct from that of President in a way I have been unable to fathom. For a long period the Chairman was Moore, but at the end Wittgenstein largely succeeded him in this role as well as in the Chair of Philosophy. Wittgenstein followed the proceedings of the Club with almost as much intensity as he devoted to the organization of his own lectures or classes. A number of extracts from the minutes are included in the present volume as also (a recent find) minutes

of the of the Trinity Mathematical Society for the two meetings at which Wittgenstein spoke.

After resigning as Professor, Wittgenstein continued to work on philosophy in Ireland and during visits to the United States or even Vienna. He also moved between Oxford and Cambridge. The variety of his reading and interests, and the effect on his work of his illness can be followed in letters to von Wright (now his successor), Rush Rhees, and Norman Malcolm. These often overlap and so have been included selectively. The fatal nature of his illness pronounced itself in the course of 1949 and he died at Cambridge in April 1951, working to the end.

Wittgenstein usually kept letters of any importance or interest that he received. This was probably true even before the First World War, for it is hard to imagine Wittgenstein destroying Russell's letters, for example. But anything from that period is probably irremediably lost. A collection of letters he received from the period of the First World War and the early 1920s was discovered comparatively recently in the house of a dependent of the family. They were saved from destruction only by the quick perceptions of Frau Charlotte Eder of Vienna. For a later part of the 1920s, while he was still living in Austria, he made the house of his friend, Ludwig Hänsel, his centre and left a number of letters there for safe keeping. These two collections are now mostly in the Austrian National Library in Vienna and the Brenner Archive in Innsbruck. Finally, a considerable collection, now somewhat dispersed, of letters that Wittgenstein had received in Cambridge in the 1930s and 1940s was among his papers at the time of his death.

In the case of some friends and perhaps all family members he kept every letter, but in other cases only a letter or two, perhaps a particularly characteristic one as a kind of memento. This was natural in the case of Cambridge friends and colleagues, where the correspondence mostly served to make arrangements to meet, while the relationship was essentially conducted face to face. The two letters from Moore printed here are probably all of his that Wittgenstein kept, and we could include as many as nine from Keynes only because the latter often kept carbon copies of letters dispatched. Sraffa's important letter was a singleton in Wittgenstein's bundles. The other memoranda or notes from Sraffa were preserved in Sraffa's own papers, though obviously written to be read by Wittgenstein.[19]

On the other side, Russell and Keynes kept nearly all papers of any interest. The same was true of Sraffa, though as stated his collection suffered in his last years, and it cannot be safely regarded as restored to completeness. Of Moore it may fairly be said that he hoarded every scrap. Thus as well as all the letters and brief communications printed here, there is a mass of Christmas and Easter cards from Wittgenstein. It is of some interest to note that while from Vienna Wittgenstein would send chaste cards with Biedermeier views of the Josefsplatz or the like – the sort of thing his sisters would order from a Kohlmarkt stationer in boxes – his English cards were chosen especially for the banality of the illustrations and of the accompanying verses, as for example:

[19] They were not known at the time of *Cambridge Letters* (1995).

If wishes count, you'll surely have
Life's blessings rich and true
For I am wishing from my heart
Such good things all for you.

These were not the cards usually exchanged at Cambridge, but (it is legitimate to suppose) the clumsy sincerity of a different level of English life was more acceptable to him; and, as for taste, he was chiefly concerned to avoid the half and half.[20] Other correspondents' letters from Wittgenstein are in various collections, von Wright's and Malcolm's are in Trinity College Library, Rhees's in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Wittgenstein's letters to W. H. Watson were discovered at the last moment (for this publication) in the Library of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Some of the letters to Russell (also one from him) and fragments from letters to Keynes and Ramsey are in German. They are so printed but an English version is provided. I am responsible for these translations and for occasional other ones, including that of the poem referred to in letter **291**.

Wittgenstein's English of the earlier years was not always idiomatic, and his spelling, whether in English or in German, was never entirely sure. My policy as an editor has been not to interfere with grammar and idiom at all. Spelling and occasionally punctuation has been corrected when it was necessary to avoid misunderstanding, but has frequently been left in its idiosyncratic form, to give an impression of the informality of one or another letter. This applies both to Wittgenstein and to his correspondents. It is sometimes interesting that their minor lapses show their unfamiliarity with, or indifference to, the English or German name or concept involved. Wittgenstein departs from English practice more frequently when he is, or has been, away from England or is excited or is writing to Sraffa. Words, parts of words, or numbers in square brackets are editorial insertions or conjectures.

A characteristic of Wittgenstein's style is his use of underlining to give emphasis to words and phrases. Words once underlined are here printed in *italics*; words twice underlined, in SMALL CAPITALS; words thrice underlined, in NORMAL CAPITALS; and words four times underlined in NORMAL CAPITALS UNDERLINED.

Letters and documents are arranged in chronological order, or what is taken to be such, and are numbered accordingly for purposes of reference, using the style **123** in continuous text. The list of correspondents and sources of documents (with letter numbers) at the end of the book permits a particular correspondence or other relationship to be followed.

[20] T. Redpath, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Student's Memoir* (London: Duckworth, 1990), pp. 94–5, in the course of making a similar observation, says that Wittgenstein was avoiding "the aesthetic". In a letter to Malcolm Wittgenstein insists on "soupiness" (see **416**).

LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

LIST OF LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

1912

1913

1914

1915

1919

1920

1921