1

1910–1920

Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in Vienna on 26 April 1889, into one of the wealthiest families in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as the youngest of eight children. Ludwig's father Karl was an authoritarian, for whom the only worthwhile mission in life was business. The family was strongly influenced by Karl's Protestant asceticism, leading Ludwig to develop a strong sense of duty, from which many of his inner conflicts were to originate.

Ludwig was baptized in the Catholic faith of his mother Leopoldine, despite the fact that the majority of his paternal ancestors were Protestants converted from Judaism. This rupture with their original creed was strongly encouraged and continued in the family as, although his mother's parents belonged to well-known Catholic families, they had also had Jewish ancestors on her father's side. However, even though Karl and Leopoldine were married in the Catholic Cathedral of Vienna and Ludwig received a Catholic education, there is no particular evidence that his family attended religious services. What actually exerted influence in Wittgenstein's home was a moral view of life where honesty and consistent fulfilment of obligations played an outstanding role. As B. McGuinness recalls: "Formal religion, in comparison, played little part in their lives. Moral and cultural and material superiority to those that surrounded them (or the consciousness of each of the three) were inextricably interwoven and formed the atmosphere in which they lived."[1] This way of understanding life is exemplified in Karl's attitude – and also in that of the rest of his family – on the death of his son Rudi, who committed suicide. As this kind of death supposedly revealed a cowardly attitude towards life, Rudi was buried without honours. Immediately after the

1 B. McGuinness: *Wittgenstein: A Life. Young Ludwig (1989–1921)*. Duckworth, London 1988, p. 25.

Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Meaning of Life, First Edition. Edited by Joaquín Jareño-Alarcón.
© 2023 John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Published 2023 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

burial, Karl took his family and left the cemetery, forbidding his wife to look back at Rudi's grave. Rudi was never again to be mentioned in his father's presence.

Although Karl Wittgenstein approved of education at home, the young Ludwig attended Realschule Linz (1903–6). At this school, which mainly specialized in technical subjects, he failed to obtain high marks, except on two occasions – both in religious studies.[2] Nevertheless, it appears that he lost his childhood faith relatively early, perhaps as a result of his conversations with his sister Margarethe – suggested by R. Monk, and told to Arvid Sjögren by Wittgenstein himself – or as Elizabeth Anscombe states in her portrait of Wittgenstein, as a result of reflections shared with his brother Paul at the tender age of 9.

Ludwig's struggles with religion, however, did not stop at these discussions with Paul, although they did remain under the surface for some time. It was a particular event in Ludwig's life that seems to have renewed his spiritual concerns, enabling further contemplation of religious issues. This event is mentioned by Norman Malcolm in his *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*. Around 1910 Wittgenstein attended the performance of *Die Kreuzelschreiber*, a play written by Ludwig Anzengruber, not a renowned author. The play's main character, Johann, was a somewhat stoic character imbued with a mysticism that could be summed up in the following words: "You are part of everything, and everything is part of you. Nothing can happen to you!"[3] This idea strongly influenced Wittgenstein provoking a clear change in his behaviour. He became an avid reader of mystic authors and fond of religious psychology and authorities such as Saint Augustine. In a letter, dated as early as 22 June 1912,[4] Wittgenstein informs Russell that he is reading William James's book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Some years later, in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell[5] at the end of 1919, and after commenting on the *Tractatus*, Russell himself wrote:

> I had felt in his book a flavour of mysticism, but was astonished when I found that he has become a complete mystic. He reads people like Kierkegaard and Angelus Silesius, and he seriously contemplates becoming a monk. It all started during the winter he spent alone in Norway before the war, when he was nearly mad.

The First World War proved a crucial experience in Wittgenstein's life and his psychological make-up. Though unfit for active military service owing to his two

2 Cf. R. Monk: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. The Duty of Genius*. Jonathan Cape, London 1991, p. 15.

3 B. McGuinness: op. cit., p. 94.

4 Wittgenstein had been admitted as a member of Trinity College on 1 February 1912.

5 Ottoline Morrell (1873–1938), English aristocrat and patron of the arts. She was a friend and lover of Bertrand Russell.

hernias, he wanted to participate in the Great War and enlisted as a volunteer. He undertook this participation as a personal challenge – a vital test which he had to overcome. Much later he admitted that he had actually volunteered in an attempt to seek death. Wittgenstein was certainly deeply marked by the First World War. It was precisely during those years that he wrote the *Tractatus*, and his notes taken at the time allow us to understand the intensity of his inner life. It was then that he read Tolstoy's work *The Gospel in Brief*, which made a real impression on him. Although, later on, Wittgenstein found Tolstoy's interpretation of the Gospels quite subjective and inaccurate, the Russian writer deeply influenced his attitude at the end of the war. Wittgenstein read Tolstoy's tales with great interest. For him, they clearly showed the ideal of austerity and moral simplicity he strongly praised.

In many texts from this period Wittgenstein clearly expounds his inner dialogue on the meaning of life, as exemplified in a remark of 11 June 1916: "What do I know about God and the purpose of life?" This question is not merely rhetorical; it emerges as a corollary of the personal and intellectual debate he was facing. The vicissitudes of the war probably led him to consider the importance and meaning of life as an ongoing and open question we must face from a moral perspective. In the light of the *Tractatus*, we can coherently interpret the letter he wrote to Ludwig von Ficker on 20 October 1919 (concerning the *Tractatus* itself): "The sense of the book is a work on morals [...] I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: one is what is presented here and the other is what I haven't written. And it's precisely this second part which is the important part."

If it is true, as the *Tractatus* seems to state, that a moral act[6] is something absolute, then we can understand why, after finishing his book, Wittgenstein gave up philosophy in order to teach children in small villages of Lower Austria. At the end of the war he had told his fellow captive, Franz Parak, that, while he liked the idea of becoming a priest, he was attracted to the idea of teaching the Gospels to children.[7] Many years later, at the end of the 1980s, Johann Scheibenbauer, Wittgenstein's pupil in Trattenbach in the year 1921–2, told the compiler that, at school, his professor had spoken a great deal about religion. This is, however, matter for the next chapter.

---

6 Cf. J. Vicente Arregui: *Acción y Sentido en Wittgenstein*. Eunsa, Pamplona 1984, pp. 92–3. See *Movements of Thought*, 06.05.1931: "But an ethical proposition is a personal act. Not a statement of fact."

7 Cf. Franz Parak: "Ludwig Wittgensteins Verhältnis Zum Christentum"; in: H. Berghel *et al.* (eds), *Wittgenstein und sein Einfluss die Gegenwärtige Philosophie*. Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, Vienna 1978, p. 91.

Letter to B. Russell[8]
22.06.1912
Cambridge

Whenever I have time I now read James's[9] "Varieties of religious exp[erience]". This book does me a *lot* of good. I don't mean to say that I will be a saint soon, but I am not sure that it does not improve me a little in a way in which I would like to improve *very much*: namely I think that it helps me to get rid of the *Sorge* (in the sense in which Goethe used the word in the 2nd part of Faust).[10]
WCB

Letter to B. Russell
05.09.1913
Shall I get anything out??! It would be awful if I did not and all my work would be lost.[11] However I am not losing courage and go on thinking. Pray for me! If you see the Whiteheads[12] please remember me to them.
WCB

8 Wittgenstein arrived in England in the spring of 1908 to study aeronautical engineering. There, he began to take an interest in mathematics and his intellectual curiosity took him further into that field. His interest grew on reading Russell's book *The Principles of Mathematics* (*Principia Mathematica*) and Frege's *Grundgesetze*, after which he contacted both authors. Frege encouraged Wittgenstein to study with Russell in Cambridge, and they met for the first time in 1911. Wittgenstein was officially admitted as a member of the university and of Trinity College on 1 February 1912.

9 William James (1842–1910), American psychologist and philosopher in the Pragmatist tradition. His main contribution to psychology was his work *Principles of Psychology* (1890). *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was published in 1902, as a result of a conference previously given. It must be made clear that James himself dedicates a section of the book to Tolstoy – the Russian author about whom more will be said later on – during the conferences dedicated to the idea of the 'sick soul' (VI & VII). In James's eyes, Tolstoy was suffering from what could be termed and attack of 'religious melancholy', from which he derived an anhedonist attitude, losing interest in normal life values. Wittgenstein appears to have discovered in James's book the formula for understanding the varied and multiple character of religious experience, highlighting the importance of religious feeling over the existence of creeds or theoretical developments, something that enhanced the importance and value of mystical experience. By distinguishing between optimistic and pessimistic religions, James opens the way for Wittgenstein to self-identify in some way with the second kind, characterized by 'rebirth' and conversion, and in which a special role is given to the feelings of sin and guilt that were so important for the philosopher.

10 Wittgenstein is referring here to an existential unease that will return again and again during his lifetime.

11 This passage shows the tense relationship between Wittgenstein and his work, given how demanding the philosopher was with himself and his need to find a definitive solution to the problems he was faced with. At this time, he was working with a logical theory of types.

12 Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947). A British mathematician who worked with Russell to write one of the most influential works in the field of logic, *Principia Mathematica*, in which he develops the task of providing a solid mathematical foundation to the discipline.

Letter to B. Russell,
[25.10 or 28.11, November 1913 (?)]
[Skjolden, Sogn, Norway][13]

Would you do me a great favour: I have promised last year to book *two* serial tickets for the C.U.M.S.[14] Chamber Concerts. Would you kindly book them for me, keep one of them for yourself, give the other to somebody else and charge me for both. If you let me know the price I shall send you the money *at once*.

Pray for me and God bless you! (If there is such a thing).

Yours as long as
$(\exists x).x = L.W.$

WCB

Letter to B. Russell,
[February 1914]
[Skjolden, Sogn, Norway]

Dear Russell,

Thank you for your friendly letter. It was very good of you to answer me in such a way. But I can't possibly carry out your request to behave as if nothing had happened: that would go clean contrary to my nature. So FORGIVE *me for this long letter* and remember that I have to follow my nature just as much as you. During the last week I have thought a lot about our relationship and I have come to the conclusion that we really don't suit one another. THIS IS NOT MEANT AS A REPROACH! either for you or for me. But it is a fact. We've often had uncomfortable conversations with one another when certain subjects came up. And the uncomfortableness was not a consequence of ill humour on one side or the other but of enormous differences in our natures. I beg you most earnestly not to think I want to reproach you in any way or to preach you a sermon. I only want to put our relationship in clear terms *in order to draw a conclusion*. – Our latest quarrel, too, was certainly not simply a result of your sensitiveness or my inconsiderateness. It came from deeper – from the fact that my letter must have shown you how totally different our ideas are, E.G. of the value of a scientific work. It was, of course, stupid of me to have written to you at such length about this matter: I ought to have told myself that such

13 Wittgenstein chose Norway as the most suitable place to retire and complete his work on logic. He first chose David H. Pinsent, who has been thought of as Wittgenstein's best friend, to accompany him, but that trip ended on 1 October. On the eleventh of that very same month, however, Wittgenstein chose to return to Norway and was visited by G.E. Moore in March 1914. Out of this two-week stay with Wittgenstein would come the text known as "Notes Dictated to Moore in Norway".

14 Cambridge University Musical Society.

fundamental differences cannot be resolved by a letter. And this is just ONE instance out of *many*. Now, as I'm writing this in complete calm, I can see perfectly well that your value-judgments are just as good and just as deep-seated in you as mine in me, and that I have no right to catechize[15] you. But I see equally clearly, now, that for that very reason there cannot be any real relation of friendship between us. *I shall be grateful to you and devoted to you* WITH ALL MY HEART *for the whole of my life, but I shall not write to you again and you will not see me again either*. Now that I am once again reconciled with you I want to part from you *in peace* so that we shan't sometime get annoyed with one another again and then perhaps part as enemies. I wish you everything of the best and I beg you not to forget me and to think of me often *with friendly feelings*. Goodbye!

Yours *ever*
Ludwig Wittgenstein

WCB

25.08.1914[16]

There is not one[17] single decent chap in the whole unit. How will I behave towards them all in the future? Should I simply endure? And what if I don't want to? I'd be

---

15 Wittgenstein and Russell ended having enormously different points of view on matters concerning morality and values. In a letter dated 3 March of that year, Wittgenstein once more acknowledged to Russell that their differences over value judgments were irreconcilable.

16 The First World War began for Austria on 28 July 1914 after Serbia refused to accept the demands of the Austrian ultimatum following the assassination of the heir to the Hapsburg throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo whilst on an official visit. The declaration of war was accompanied by an intense patriotic fervour amongst the Austrian population. Wittgenstein volunteered to fight. His brothers Kurt and Paul also enlisted, whilst his sisters Hermine and Gretl did their patriotic duty by working on hospital support tasks.

17 All excerpts from manuscripts 101, 102 and 103 are originally in code. They are "War Diaries", where Wittgenstein wrote down everything that happened during his life in the First World War. These are the left-hand pages in the Notebooks that Wittgenstein wrote during the war. In these diaries, Wittgenstein described both personal affairs and purely philosophical questions. He did so, however, in a very special way: on the right-hand pages he worked out all of the logical and philosophical issues and on the left-hand pages he noted down all his personal experiences. The fact that they represented his private reflections meant that he wrote them down in code, although his code was quite simple: the first letter of the alphabet corresponded to the last, and so on. It is therefore enormously interesting to read both diaries (note groups) side by side in order to get to know Wittgenstein's philosophy and personality. The most interesting aspect of all is that the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* will mature in the light of these notes – preliminary annotations used to develop the ideas laid out in the later work. The *Tractatus* is, to a large extent, a "work of the trenches". The philosophical annotations begin almost at the same time as the personal notes on the opposite page. Specifically, the first annotation is made on 22 August 1914: "Logic must take care of itself". In this sense, please refer to statement 5.473 of the *Tractatus*.

living a continuous battle. Which is better? If I choose the second option I would certainly wear myself out. With the first one I might not. This is going to be an immensely difficult time for me because I have landed myself well and truly in the same kind of situation as when I was at school in Linz. Only one thing is necessary: to be able to contemplate everything that happens; stay composed! God help me![18]

MS 101, 10–11v

02.09.1914

Yesterday I started reading Tolstoy's[19] *The Gospels in Brief*. It's a marvellous piece of work but so far it hasn't been what I was expecting.

MS 101, 12v

12.09.1914

The news is getting worse and worse. The unit will be on high alert this evening. I am working more or less every day and relatively confidently. I keep repeating Tolstoy's words to myself: "Man is powerless in the flesh but free through the Spirit."[20] May the Spirit be in me! This afternoon the lieutenant heard shots nearby. I became very agitated. We will probably be called out. How will I react if we have to start shooting? I'm not afraid of being shot. I'm afraid of not having carried out my duties properly. God give me strength! Amen. Amen. Amen.

MS 101, 20v–21v

---

18 References with a religious theme will be very frequent during the war. They highlight the acute internal tension that Wittgenstein was under right at the time he was writing his *Tractatus*.

19 Tolstoy was excommunicated by the Orthodox Church in 1901; such decision was surely influenced by the publication in 1899 of his work *Resurrection*, though he had previously written some other controversial works. As a response to his excommunication, Tolstoy also wrote a pamphlet where he rejected the dogmas of the Orthodox Church as well as the value of sacraments. Although the book on the Gospels impressed Wittgenstein enormously at first, it is also clear that he would end up distancing himself from it on perceiving that Tolstoy had made a very subjective interpretation of the sacred texts, and had eliminated those references which did not fit into his interpretative wishes. Wittgenstein not only read Tolstoy's work but was also a keen reader of Russian literature more generally, and it was Tolstoy's tales that he both most enjoyed and that had the profoundest affect upon him.

20 Ideas which reflect the dispute that St Paul openly talks of in his epistles. The struggle between flesh and spirit is a constant element in Wittgenstein's personal texts during the course of the war. In them, a clearly ascetic concept of the relationship with God is reflected. St Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Romans that flesh and spirit are two antagonistic principles. The 'works of the flesh' are works of human nature, and certainly not 'works of eternal life'. We wrong when we intend not to and do not do as much good as we would wish. In the Gospel of Matthew (26:41) we read: "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak".

15.09.1914
Dreadful scenes two nights ago: almost everyone was drunk. Back on the Goplana[21] again yesterday which was steered into the Dunajec. Didn't work yesterday or the day before. Tried in vain but I couldn't get my head around the whole situation. The Russians are hot on our heels![22] We are extremely close to the enemy. I'm in a good mood as I worked again. I now work best whilst peeling potatoes. I always volunteer willingly. This for me is what grinding lenses was for Spinoza. Things are cooler than before between the lieutenant and me. But courage! "As long as the genius doesn't abandon me –!" God be with me! This is my opportunity to be a decent person because I am face to face with death. May the Spirit enlighten me.
MS 101, 22v–23v

16.09.1914
The night was calm. Heard strong artillery and rifle fire this morning. In all likelihood this will be the end for us. The Spirit is still with me but will he leave me in my greatest hour of need? I hope not! All I need is to keep myself together now and be brave! (9 p.m.). Torrential rain. Man is powerless in the flesh and free through the Spirit. And only through the Spirit. Didn't work at all during the night.
MS 101, 23v–24v

18.09.1914
In post from 1–3. Slept very little. Didn't work yesterday. It is enormously difficult to resist the Devil all the time. It is difficult to serve the Spirit on an empty stomach and when suffering from lack of sleep! But what would be become of me otherwise? The one to be served (with very few exceptions). Travelling to Krakow with galleys. It was a calm and not unpleasant day. Worked a little.
MS 101, 25v–26v

21.09.1914
This evening I received news that upset me terribly. The lieutenant, our former commandant, had been transferred. The news depressed me deeply. I can't explain

21 Wittgenstein had enlisted himself as a volunteer in the First World War on 7 August 1914. The same month, on the 13th, he joined the crew of the *Goplana*, a ship captured from the Russians patrolling the Dunajec, a tributary of the river Vistula. His military tasks began as an artillery soldier in the First Army, on the border between Hapsburg Poland and Russia (in the Galicia region).

22 The Austrians were retreating following a successful Russian attack which had forced a partial defeat on the Central Powers.

exactly why but I feel a deep sense of dejection and have been deeply sad since then. I am free through the Spirit but the Spirit has abandoned me! Was able to work a little in the evening and felt better for it. ----
MS 101, 27v–28v

30.09.1914
Last night I began to feel unwell (stomach and head). Thy Will be done.[23]
MS 101, 31v

05.10.1914
Have been thinking a lot about Russell these last few days.[24] Wonder whether he still thinks of me. Wasn't our meeting indeed quite remarkable? When we feel well externally we don't think of the powerlessness of the flesh; yet we become aware of it when we think of times of need. And we turn to the Spirit.
MS 101, 33v–34v

06.10.1914
Did quite a lot of work yesterday.[25] A person shouldn't depend on chance – whether it is favourable or unfavourable. The new commandant boarded the ship yesterday. ---Now they are sending people from the lighting department onto the ship, and they fiddle around with the reflector. Don't worry!! Have just received the order to leave for Russia. So it's serious again! God be with me.
MS 101, 34v

07.10.1914
Travelled through the night to Russia; hardly slept at all. Was on searchlight duty,[26] etc. We will soon come under fire. May the Spirit be with me. [...] I still haven't understood why I should do my duty merely because it is my duty and preserve my whole being for the spiritual life. I could die in an hour, in two hours.

---

23 A typical expression for a believer. It appears in the Lord's Prayer, a prayer that Wittgenstein would tell his friend M.O'C. Drury was the most beautiful he had known (see R. Rhees, "Personal Recollections").

24 Russell was in favour of England remaining neutral during the war. His firm pacifist posture entailed certain consequences: he spent six months in prison thanks to his anti-military activities and he was removed from his post at Trinity College.

25 Wittgenstein was immersed in his work on the picture theory of language.

26 During this first part of the war, Wittgenstein would man the searchlight at night, a solitary task which allowed him to distance himself for a while from his militia colleagues, with whom he did not exactly get on famously.

I could die in a month or in a few years. I don't know when I will die and can do nothing about it. That's how life is. So how can I live in such a way that I really exist in every moment? By living in what's good and beautiful until life comes to its natural end.
MS 101, 34v–35v

08.10.1914
Unfortunately, when I'm cold and tired, I quickly lose the will to endure life as it is. But I make an effort not to go astray. ---Every hour of physical wellbeing is a grace.
MS 101, 36v

09.10.1914
Order: all line up on deck, armed. God be with me! – Travelled to Sandomierz.[27] We hear the incessant roar of heavy gunfire. We see grenades exploding. I am in a very good mood.
MS 101, 36v–37v

11.10.1914
Calm night. ---Carry Tolstoy's "Gospels in brief" around with me all the time like a Talisman. I overheard a conversation between our commandant and his counterpart on another ship: we are to remain here in Nabzesze and may not travel down until the morning. Have just heard that Antwerp has fallen!![28] And our troops have won a substantial battle somewhere. The grace I enjoy now that I am able to think and write is indescribable. I must become indifferent to the difficulties of the external life. We are to travel to Zawichost[29] this evening to land troops and supplies and have to drive right in front of the Russian positions. May God be with me.---
MS 101, 37v–38v

---

27 Polish city.

28 On 25 August a German zeppelin bombed Antwerp, but the German offensive proper on the city did not begin until October. Resistance continued until 10 October when the city's defences could hold the German onslaught no more, following several days of destruction. One of the soldiers who was able to return to Great Britain, despite the Germans entering the city, was Rupert Brooke, the English poet who had studied at King's College, Cambridge.

29 Polish village in the Sandomierz area.

12.10.1914
I find myself fluctuating between periods of indifference towards external fate and periods of yearning for outer freedom and calm when I am tired of having to blindly carry out any order. Stepping into the complete unknown! In short, there are times when I cannot live purely in the present or only by the spirit. We should be grateful and enjoy the good times in life as a grace and be indifferent to life at other times. [...] It seems we are to shoot with automatic weapons and machine-guns, more to create noise than to fire at anyone. I also gather that the whole situation will be very dangerous. It will surely be the end of me if I have to turn on the searchlight. But that doesn't matter. Only one thing is necessary![30] We set off in an hour. God is with me!
MS 101, 39v–40v

13.10.1914
We are already on the move. I am spirit therefore free. We are near to Lopiza and the grenades are whistling past over our heads.
MS 101, 40v–41v

20.10.1914
Unwell. Worked ever so hard. Felt better this afternoon, but am not really happy; I long to see David:[31] if only I could write to him. But my spirit is speaking within me against the depressions. God be with me.
MS 101, 45v

25.10.1914
Russian gunfire has suddenly ...
God is with me!---It was nothing but a Russian aeroplane.
MS 101, 48v

30 Jesus Christ's answer to Martha in his dialogue with Martha and Mary at Lazarus' house (the Gospel According to Luke): "But the Lord answered: 'Martha, Martha', he said 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her.'" (10:41–2) (*The Jerusalem Bible*. Philippine Bible Society, 1966). A month before, Wittgenstein had expressed the same idea in another entry of his Diary (together with comments on war): "Nur *eines* ist von Nöten!" (17/09/1914, MS 101, 24v).

31 David Hume Pinsent (1891–1918). One of Wittgenstein's best friends (soon after Pinsent's death, Wittgenstein wrote to his friend's mother: "David was my first and my only friend. I have indeed known many young men of my own age and have been on good terms with some, but only in him did I find a real friend, the hours I have spent with him have been the best in my life, he was to me a brother and a friend"). Pinsent died in a plane crash on 8 May 1918. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is dedicated to Pinsent's memory.

28.10.1914
I keep thinking about poor Paul[32] who lost his occupation so suddenly! How terrible. Which philosophy would one need to apply to get over that, if it's even possible to get over something like that with anything other than suicide!![33] – Didn't do much work; but I am working confidently. – Thy Will be done. –.–.
MS 101, 50v

04.11.1914
Calm night. Heading off early. Worked very hard. We are to be in Krakow tomorrow. I hear we can probably expect a siege from Krakow. I'll need a lot of strength to preserve my spirit. –. I just shouldn't be dependent on the outside world. That way you need be afraid of nothing that happens in it. Watch duty last night. It's easier to be detached from things than from people. But the latter must be possible too!
MS 102, 4v–5v

05.11.1914
Have been somewhat tired all day and inclined to depression. Didn't do much work. Am in Krakow. It's too late to visit Trakl[34] today.---May the Spirit give me strength.
MS 102, 5v–6v

32 Paul Wittgenstein (1887–1961). Wittgenstein's brother, a gifted pianist, lost his right arm during the First World War. Josef Labor, Richard Strauss, Maurice Ravel and Sergei Prokofiev wrote works for him.

33 Suicide is a frequent topic in Wittgenstein's life. Two of his brothers, Rudi and Kurt, committed suicide, and the disappearance of his elder brother Hans is believed to be a suicide as well. Wittgenstein himself had suicidal thoughts from time to time, especially in 1920. David Pinsent, in his *Diary (1913–1914)*, tells how from approximately from 1902 to 1911 Wittgenstein had frequently thought of dying due to his strong feeling of loneliness, but that he felt ashamed for not being courageous enough to commit suicide (entry of 1 June 1912). During the First World War, on February 1915, Wittgenstein had suicidal thoughts again. In this compilation there are some texts alluding to such issue. See: MS 103, 1v (28.03.1916 [?]); NB 10.01.1917; LPE 21.06.1920. McGuinness recalls a moment in Wittgenstein's life that reflects his existential tension quite well. It is dated July 1918: "Wittgenstein's uncle Paul came across him unexpectedly at a railway station (Salzburg is the obvious possibility) in a state of great mental anguish. In fact Ludwig was on his way to commit suicide somewhere in the mountains (of the Salzkammergut, one supposes). Paul, the man of the World, frowned on by severer aunts, had a genial liking for his nephew and even his nephew's philosophy, which is perhaps what made it possible for him to persuade Ludwig to come instead to Hallein, where Paul had a house. Useless to ask for the suicide plan. Wittgenstein felt alone in the World" (op. cit., p. 264).

34 Georg Trakl (1887–1914), Austrian Expressionist poet. One of the most renowned poets of his time. Deeply affected by the horrors of war, he committed suicide dying from an overdose of cocaine. However, this particular has been discussed and disputed (McGuinness states that he died after having "taken poison which was available to him as a hospital orderly", op. cit., p. 223). He died on 3 November 1914. Wittgenstein had thought of visiting him on 5 November, but arrived at the hospital to which Trakl had been sent on the following day, and was met with news of the poet's death. In 1913 Trakl had published the book *Der Jüngste Tag*.

06.11.1914
Didn't work. Poor Trakl.---. Thy Will be done.--
MS 102 6v

07.11.1914
We suddenly received orders at nine o'clock in the evening to shine the searchlight[35] for a job on another ship yesterday. So I got out of bed and shone the searchlight until 3½ in the morning. Am consequently very tired. I bought some provisions in town this afternoon. The siege in Krakow is awaited with a great sense of determination. I yearn to leave my ship. Didn't work. I long to meet someone decent for I am surrounded by immorality here. May the Spirit stay with me and remain steadfast in me.
MS 102, 6v–7v

09.11.1914
... I have been so inclined to depression these past few days!! I take no real pleasure in anything and I live in fear of the future because I can no longer find peace within. Every act of indecency that surrounds me – and there are plenty – wounds me deeply, and as soon as one wound heal, another appears! Even when I'm not depressed – like this evening – I still don't feel truly free. Only seldom do I feel like working and when I do, it's only for short periods as I cannot feel any sense of contentment. I feel I am depending on the world and must consequently fear it even if nothing bad is happening to me at the moment. I see myself, the I, in which I was able to find rest, as a distant island, one that I yearn to reach but one that has been snatched from me.---The Russians are rapidly advancing towards Krakow.[36] The civilians must all leave town. The situation here looks very bad! God come to my aid!! Did a little work.
MS 102, 9v–10v

13.11.1914
I think a lot about my life – which is another reason why I can't do any work.[37] Or is it the other way round? [...] On duty this evening. I visit a coffee-house every

35 One of Wittgenstein's tasks during the war was to be in charge of the searchlight. He was sometimes called upon to act in order to light ships as they were being repaired, but in combat the job of searchlight commander was especially dangerous, given how easy a target it represented for enemy action.

36 The Russian Army invaded Silesia by mid-October that year, but the German Army under Ludendorff counter-attacked across the Lodz-Warsaw area (11–25 November 1914) causing the Russian retreat to the Bzura and Rawka rivers.

37 The only thing he had written that day in the right-hand pages of his diary was: "In this work more than any other it is rewarding to keep on looping at questions, which one considers solved, from another quarter, as if they were unsolved."

evening now and drink 2 glasses of coffee and the respectable ambiance does me good. Did very little work!---! God give me good sense and strength!!
MS 102, 14v–15v

24.11.1914
Ficker[38] sent me poems written by poor Trakl today which I thought were brilliant without fully understanding them. They did me good. God is with me!
MS 102, 27v

26.11.1914
It now seems we'll be moving into winter quarters and if we do I may have to sleep with the others; God forbid!! ---Whatever happens, may I not lose the presence of the Spirit. God be with me!
MS 102, 29v–30v

28.11.1914
I believe I will come to a miserable end in the midst of such crude, vulgar people who are unrestrained by any kind of danger, unless by some miracle I am given considerably more strength and wisdom than I currently have. Yes, I will need a miracle if I am to survive!! I am living in fear of my future. Did very little work.[39] A miracle! A miracle!
MS 102, 30v–31v

30.11.1914
I was in the Personnel division this afternoon and spoke to an artificer about whether it would be possible for me to work in the balloon division. He said I should speak about it with artificer Wlcek who works there. I hope to be able to do this. ---Didn't work much, but still had some inspirations. [...] We should live by one's own Spirit alone and leave everything to God!
MS 102, 33v

---

38 Ludwig von Ficker (1880–1967), publisher of *Der Brenner*, received 100,000 crowns from Wittgenstein to help artists in need. A. Loos, G. Trakl or R.M. Rilke were among the beneficiaries.

39 For that day, on the right-hand page of his notebook, where he wrote down his philosophical annotations, there is the following phrase: "Negation combines with the ab-functions of the elementary proposition. And the logical functions of the elementary proposition must mirror their reference, just as much as all the others."

01.12.1914
I went looking for the artificer Wlcek this afternoon but couldn't find him. I was directed to the artillery division and will no doubt go there in two days after watch duty. Did very little work.[40] May the Spirit protect me whatever happens!
MS 102, 34v–35v

02.12.1914
We're going on watch duty this afternoon: thank God our commandant is coming with us so at least there will be one decent person with us. Terrible thunder heard from the work plants last night. And it started again this morning at 8 o'clock. We are to sleep out in the open evening. I probably won't manage to work. I mustn't forget God.
MS 102, 35v

05.12.1914
I'm leaving here tomorrow or the following day. Where I am to live has not yet been decided. I certainly don't want to be attached to such things. Didn't work much; but I'm not standing idle. I think a lot about dear David![41] May God protect him! And me!
MS 102, 37v

06.12.1914
This ship will be on field duty again tomorrow, and if I'm not summoned tomorrow, I'll have to go too which will be very unpleasant for me because my leg still hasn't healed after my fall. It's raining and the loamy paths here are terrible. May the Spirit protect me!
MS 102, 38v

07.12.1914
My leg has got worse. Probably won't go with them on watch duty. I have received no orders regarding my transfer. Heavy thunder nearby. ---. Have just heard that I'll be leaving here tomorrow. Can't go on watch duty because of my foot.

40 Wittgenstein continues to develop his picture theory. That day, the philosophical annotation reads: "The proposition says as it were: This picture cannot (or can) present a situation in this way." Compare this to paragraphs 4.021, 4.023 and 4.024 of the *Tractatus*, for example.

41 David Pinsent.

Didn't work much. Spoke to our commandant; he was very nice. Am tired. Everything is in God's hands.
MS 102, 38v–39v

08.12.1914
Bought and started reading Nietzsche volume 8.[42] Am deeply disturbed by his hatred of Christianity for there is also some truth in his writings. Certainly, Christianity is the only certain path to happiness. But how can this be, if someone rejects this happiness?! Would it not be better to perish unhappy, in a hopeless struggle against the outside world? But this kind of life is pointless. So why not lead a pointless life? Is it undignified? How does it fit in with a strongly solipsistic point of view? What must I do to ensure I don't lose my life? I must always be aware of Him – of the Spirit.
MS 102, 39v–41v

30.12.1914[43]
Didn't work. Mustn't lose my way.
MS 102, 48v

13.01.1915
Worked a little. Still don't work with great enthusiasm. My thoughts are weary. Instead of seeing things clearly I see them as routine and lifeless. It's as if a flame has been extinguished and I have to wait until it reignites itself again. And yet my spirit is active. I think ...
MS 102, 50v–51v

25.01.1915
Worked but without much success. I am completely in the dark as to how my work will go ahead.[44] It will only be successful by way of a miracle. Only by way of a miracle as the veil is lifted from my eyes from outside of me. I must abandon

---

42 This volume, possibly from the Naumann's Leipzig Edition, includes one of Nietzsche's hardest diatribes against Christianity: *The Anti-Christ*. The subtitle is especially violent: *Fluch auf das Christentum (Curse on Christianity)*. Wittgenstein felt really impressed by its hardness.

43 On Christmas Eve, Wittgenstein was promoted to officer rank.

44 We must not forget that Wittgenstein is working systematically on logic by that time. He is also giving shape to what in the end will be the *Tractatus*. The philosophical annotation that day reads: "We can also say: ~p is false, when p is true."

myself fully to my fate. Whatever fate decrees for me, is how it will be. I am living in the hands of fate. (Just don't be small.) And I can't become small like that.
MS 102, 53v–54v

03.02.1915
Didn't work. Was uninspired. I'm to take on the supervision of our forge. How will that be? May the Spirit come to my aid! It will be very difficult. But: courage!
MS 102, 56v

10.02.1915
Didn't work. Had a nice letter from Ficker and a dedication from Rilke.[45] If only I could get back to work again!! Then everything else would fall into place. When will I be inspired again??! It all remains in God's hands. I just have to desire it and hope for it! That way no time is wasted.
MS 102, 57v–58v

11.02.1915
Didn't work. – I'm now on less than friendly terms with one of the officers-cadet Adam. It could easily come to blows between us. That's why one should still live well and according to your conscience, may the spirit be with me! Now and in the future! – !
MS 102, 58v

13.02.1915
I didn't work. May the spirit be with me.
MS 102, 58v–59v

07.03.1915
=. The situation remains unchanged and uncomfortable. Am still completely unclear about a suitable change. A severe frost has descended at a most inopportune moment! Don't feel well. My soul is weary, so weary. What's to be done about it?? I am exhausted by these repulsive circumstances. I am besieged by my whole outer life with all its nastiness. And inside I am full of hatred and am unable to let

---

45 Rainer M. Rilke (1875–1926). Though born in Prague, he was one of the best German writers of the twentieth century. He published his first collection of poems in 1894: *Leben und Lieder* ("Life and Songs"), and in 1922 his most renowned work: *Duino Elegies*, and his *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Amongst his prose works, *Letters to a Young Poet* and *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* were the most notorious of all.

the Spirit enter within me. God is love. –. I am like a burned out oven, full of cinders and rubbish. –
MS 102, 64v–65v

23.05.1915[46]
The limits of my language mean the limits of my world (**TLP** 5.6).

There really is only one world soul, which I for preference call *my* soul and as which alone I conceive what I call the souls of others.

The above remark gives the key for deciding the way in which solipsism is a truth (cf. **TLP** 5.62).

I have long been conscious that it would be possible for me to write a book: "The world I found" (cf. **TLP** 5.631).

(...)

In the book "The world I found" I should also have to report on my body and say which members are subject to my will, etc. For this is a way of isolating the subject, or rather of shewing that in an important sense there is no such a thing as the subject; for it would be the one thing that could *not* come into this book (cf. **TLP** 5.631).
NB

25.05.1915
The urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science. We *feel* that even if all *possible* scientific questions are answered *our problem is still not touched at all*. Of course in that case there are no questions any more; and that is the answer (cf. **TLP** 6.52).
NB

27.05.1915
I can only speak *of* them [the objects], I cannot express them.

"But might there not be something which cannot be expressed by a *proposition* (and which is also not an object)?" In that case this could not be expressed by means of *language*; and it is also impossible for us to *ask* about it.[47]

Suppose there is something outside the *facts*? Which our propositions are impotent to express? But here we do have, e.g., *things and we feel no demand at all* to express them in propositions.

---

46 Remember that the texts known here as *Notebooks 1914–1916* are the right (recto) page of manuscripts 101, 102 and 103. In the case of the *Notebooks* the original text is uncoded German. The left (verso) pages are in code.

47 Here begins what in the *Tractatus* will be known as the "Theory of the inexpressible", in which the mystical problem will finally appear.

What cannot be expressed we do not express-. And how try to *ask* whether THAT can be expressed which cannot be EXPRESSED?

Is there no domain outside the facts?

NB

Letter to Ludwig von Ficker
24.07.1915

Dear Mr. von Ficker!

I received your letter of the 11th a week ago. That same day I suffered an electric shock and a few minor injuries following an explosion in the workshop. I was consequently unable to reply immediately. I am writing this from the hospital.[48] I didn't receive your letter from Brixen. I understand your sad news only too well. You are living in darkness so to speak and have found no words of comfort. It might seem stupid that I offer you advice, I who am so fundamentally different from you. I willtake the risk all the same. Do you know Tolstoy's "Gospel in Brief"? This book has kept me alive during this time. Would you buy this book and read it?! If you haven't heard of it you can't imagine what an effect it has on people. There is so much I'd want to say to you if you were here now. I may be leaving for Vienna in a week's time for 14 days or so. If only we could meet up there! Do write back.

Your devoted
Ludwig Wittgenstein

WTB

28.03.1916(?)
... and should take my own life. I have suffered <u>torments of hell</u>. And yet the image of life was so enticing I wanted to live again. I won't poison myself until I really want to poison myself.

MS 103, 1v

29.03.1916
Am <u>forced</u> to do so much that I am unaccustomed to doing. I need so much to endure them. Often I am so close to dispair. I haven't worked for more than a week. <u>I</u> don't have <u>any time!</u> God! But that's natural of course because I won't have

48 Wittgenstein spent a week in the hospital.

time to work when I am dead either. Inspection now. My soul is shrivelling up. Enlighten me God! Enlighten me God! God, enlighten my soul.[49]
MS 103, 1v

06.04.1916
Life is a
MS 103, 3v

07.04.1916
form of torture from which one is only occasionally finds relief so as to remain receptive to subsequent agonies. What terrible agonies. An exhausting march, coughing all through the night, the company of drunkards, the company of nasty, stupid people. Do good and rejoice in your virtues. Am sick and my life is bad. I am a poor unhappy person. Save me God and grant me peace! Amen.
MS 103, 3v

13.04.1916
I am staggering and still fall in the dark and have not yet returned to life.
MS 103, 4v

18.04.1916
Going to the firing position tomorrow or the following day. Take courage! God will help me.
MS 103, 4v

20.04.1916
Improve me God! And then I will be more content too. Probably going into our firing positions today. God help me.
MS 103, 5v

23.04.1916
Have been in a new post for a few days. Involves heavy manual work all day long; am now unable to think. God help me. I have so much to put up with. I tried to get

---

49 At the end of this month Wittgenstein was sent to the Russian front.

onto the observation post today. Everyone hates me here because they don't understand me. And because I'm no saint![50] God help me!
MS 103, 5v

26.04.1916
The officers from the battery seem to get on very well with me. I am consequently spared much unpleasantness. Thanks be to God. Your will be done! You go your way! May your will be done!
MS 103, 6v

27.04.1916
Almost everyone in the unit hates me volunteering which means I am now almost constantly surrounded by people who hate me. And this is the only thing I haven't yet come to terms with. What evil, heartless people there are here. It is almost impossible for me to find any trace of humanity in them. God help me to live. Had a feeling today that there would be a state of alert this evening. And there really is strict duty this evening. God be with me! Amen.
MS 103, 6v–7v

28.04.1916
It was quiet at night. Wrote to Russell. Had a bad dream last night. May God protect me.
MS 103, 7v

29.04.1916
Stayed with the aircraft this afternoon. We were shot at. I thought of God. May your will be done! God be with me.
MS 103, 7v

30.04.1916
Am returning to the aircraft today during a raid: man needs God alone.
MS 103, 7v

---

50 This statement, as with so many during the war, will highlight the tense ascetic struggle that Wittgenstein is experiencing internally.

03.05.1916
Everything is so hard for me! May God protect me and stay beside me. Amen. May the heaviest chalice be taken from me, but may Your will be done.[51] The work is still turning around in my head.
MS 103, 8v

04.05.1916
At my request I may go out to the aircraft tomorrow. That's when the war really begins for me. And maybe – life too! Perhaps being close to death will bring me the light of life.[52] May God enlighten me. I am a worm but I'll become a man by the grace of God.[53] God be beside me. Amen.
MS 103, 8v–9v

05.05.1916[54]
On the aircraft stand I feel like a prince in a bewitched castle. Now, by day, everything is calm, but it will be terrible tonight! Will I be able to stand it???? Tonight will reveal all. God be beside me!!
MS 103, 9v

06.05.1916
I'm in constant danger of my life. We got through the night by the grace of God. I occasionally feel despondent. That's what is taught at the school of the false concept of life! Understand the people! Every time you want to hate them, try instead to understand them. Live with inner peace! But how can inner peace be attained? Only when I am living in a way that is pleasing to God! Only then is it possible to endure life.
MS 103, 9v–10v

51 Remember that this is the petition Christ makes to the Father in Gethsemane, as told in Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36 and Luke 22:42.

52 Wittgenstein was awarded several war medals for his courageous behaviour at the front: the Silver Medal for Valour and the Band of the Military Service Medal with Swords, though he was initially promoted for the Gold Medal for Valour.

53 Wittgenstein is referring here to Psalm 22, in which the humiliation of Christ and his exaltation of God the Father is foreshadowed: "Ich aber bin ein Wurm und kein Mensch."

54 By 5 June, Wittgenstein had gone into combat on the front line, defending the ground won against Brusilov's forces. In this battle, the philosopher proved his enormous bravery and was later recommended for a medal not normally awarded to soldiers. That same day, his friend Bertrand Russell was tried for publishing a pamphlet in which he supported conscientious objection to the army. The two friends had ended up occupying very different positions during the war, but this would not prevent them from staying in touch, even after the end of the war.

07.05.1916
The night was calm. Thanks be to God. It's only me who's feeling wretched.
MS 103, 11v

08.05.1916
A calm night. God be with me! The people I am with are not so much vulgar as incredibly narrow-minded! This makes any kind of dialogue with them almost impossible because they are forever misunderstanding me. These people are not stupid, just narrow-minded. They are clever enough in their own field. But they lack character and consequently have no desire to broaden their horizons. "The orthodox heart understands everything." Can't do any work now.
MS 103, 11v–12v

09.05.1916
I would have enough time and peace to work now but nothing is happening. My subject matter is far from me. Life only acquires meaning through death.
MS 103, 12v

10.05.1916
I feel very well now by the grace of God. Unfortunately I cannot work. But may Your will be done! Amen. He will not abandon me in moments of danger!!
MS 103, 12v–13v

11.05.1916
I change post in two days' time. Most unpleasant! But Thy will be done.
MS 103, 13v

16.05.1916
I'm in my third post. There is much toil as usual. But also much grace. Am weak as usual! I cannot work. Am sleeping in the infantry today and will probably be destroyed. God be with me! In eternity. Amen. I am a weak person, but He has spared me so far. Praise God for all eternity. Amen. I surrender my soul to the Lord.
MS 103, 13v–14v

21.05.1916
God make me a better person!
MS 103, 14v

25.05.1916
We're being shot at. Whatever God wills!
MS 103, 14v

27.05.1916
I received letters from Mining[55] and mother. There is to be a Russian attack today or tomorrow. Whatever God wills. Have fallen heavily into sin. But God will forgive me.
MS 103, 14v

28.05.1916
Today we'll be on high alert. My commandant is very kind to me. I'm thinking of the meaning of life. That's still the best you can do. I should be happier. Oh, if only my spirit were stronger!!! God be with me now! Amen.
MS 103, 15

29.05.1916
God be with me.
MS 103, 15v

11.06.16[56]

> What do I know about God and the purpose of life?
> I know that this world exists.

55 Hermine Wittgenstein (1874–1950), Wittgenstein's eldest sister.

56 The fearsome Brusilov offensive – the Russians' greatest victory during the war – took place in June 1916. Wittgenstein's work had hitherto focused on logic. In fact, by the end of 1915 a first draft of the *Tractatus* was ready. In this version there were no remarks on ethical or religious issues. On 11.06.1916, the notebooks began abruptly with the comments appearing here. These paragraphs already belong to the right-hand pages of the war notebooks. Here one can start to appreciate the influence of Schopenhauer, and especially of his work *The World as Will and Representation*. Wittgenstein read Schopenhauer interestedly as a young man. Regarding the importance of the influence of this author on Wittgenstein, it has been said – perhaps with a little exaggeration – that the entire conceptual framework of the *Tractatus* is Schopenhauerian. From now until the beginning of July, no new annotations are made. The division Wittgenstein belonged to was in combat incessantly. In fact, they took part in the battle of Kolomea, during which the Russians took more than ten thousand Austrian prisoners. Russian troops entered the city on June 29.

That I am placed in it like my eye in its visual field.
That something about it is problematic, which we call its meaning.
That this meaning does not lie in it but outside it (cf. **TLP** 6.41).
That life is the world (cf. **TLP** 5.621).
That my will penetrates the world.[57]
That my will is good or evil.
Therefore that good and evil are somehow connected with the meaning of the world.
The meaning of life, i.e. the meaning of the world, we can call God. And connect with this the comparison of God to a father.
To pray is to think about the meaning of life.
I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will: I am completely powerless.
I can only make myself independent of the world – and so in a certain sense master it – by renouncing any influence on happenings.

NB

05.07.16
The world is independent of my will (**TLP** 6.373).

Even if everything that we want were to happen, this would still only be, so to speak, a grace of fate, for what would guarantee it is not any logical connexion between will and world, and we could not in turn will the supposed physical connexion (**TLP** 6.374).

If good or evil willing affects the world it can only affect the boundaries of the world, not the facts, what cannot be portrayed by language but can only be shewn[58] in language (cf. **TLP** 6.43).

In short, it must make the world a wholly different one (see **TLP** 6.43).

The world must, so to speak, wax or wane as a whole. As if by accession or loss of meaning (cf. **TLP** 6.43).

As in death, too, the world does not change but stops existing (**TLP** 6.431).
NB

---

57 Wittgenstein begins to discuss the enormously complex issue of the will as an ethical subject from the relationships between the 'self' and the 'world'. Here we have those discussions that will be aphoristically shortened in the *Tractatus*, from paragraph 5.63 onwards: "Ich bin meine Welt (*Der Mikrokosmos*)".

58 Here one can appreciate a taste of what will become the fundamental distinction Wittgenstein proposes in the *Tractatus* between *saying* and *showing*.

06.07.1916
Everything felt enormously difficult last month. I have thought considerably about all kinds of things yet surprisingly am unable to establish a connection with my mathematical thought processes.[59]
MS 103, 15v–16v

06.07.16
And in this sense Dostoievsky is right when he says that the man who is happy is fulfilling the purpose of existence.

Or again we could say that the man is fulfilling the purpose of existence who no longer needs to have any purpose except to live. That is to say, who is content.

The solution of the problem of life is to be seen in the disappearance of this problem (see **TLP** 6.521).

But is it possible for one so to live that life stops being problematic? That one is *living* in eternity and not in time?
NB

07.07.16
Isn't this the reason why men to whom the meaning of life had become clear after long doubting could not say what this meaning consisted in? (see **TLP** 6.521).
NB

08.07.16.[60]
To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life.

To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter.

To believe in God means to see that life has a meaning.

The world is *given* me, i.e. my will enters into the world completely from outside as into something that is already there.

(As for what my will is, I don't know yet.)

That is why we have the feeling of being dependent on an alien will.

However this may be, at any rate we *are* in a certain sense dependent, and what we are dependent on we can call God.

59 Wittgenstein points out here that he had been meditating on the divine and the human, wondering how to establish a connection with his philosophical reflections. The day after making this annotation, he would write that sooner or later he would unveil such a connection.

60 That was the day Russian troops reached Delatyn, close to the Hungarian border.

In this sense God would simply be fate, or, what is the same thing: The world – which is independent of our will.

I can make myself independent of fate.

There are two godheads: the world and my independent I.

I am either happy or unhappy, that is all. It can be said: good or evil do not exist.

A man who is happy must have no fear. Not even in face of death.

Only a man who lives not in time but in the present is happy.

For life in the present there is no death.[61]

Death is not an event in life. It is not a fact of the world (cf. **TLP** 6.4311).

If by eternity is understood not infinite temporal duration but non-temporality, then it can be said that a man lives eternally if he lives in the present (see **TLP** 6.4311).

In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And that is what "being happy" *means*.

I am then, so to speak, in agreement with that alien will on which I appear dependent. That is to say: 'I am doing the will of God'.

Fear in face of death is the best sign of a false, i.e. a bad, life.

When my conscience upsets my equilibrium, then I am not in agreement with Something. But what is this? Is it *the world*?

Certainly it is correct to say: Conscience is the voice of God.

For example: it makes me unhappy to think that I have offended such and such a man. Is that my conscience?

Can one say: "Act according to your conscience whatever it may be"?

Live happy!

NB

14.7.16.

Man cannot make himself happy without more ado.

Whoever lives in the present lives without fear and hope.

NB

16.07.1916

Terrible thunder and lightning. I'm in the rocks, it's bad, am most inadequately protected, it's as cold as ice, raining and foggy. A miserable life. It will be terribly difficult not to lose one's life. For I am indeed weak but the Spirit is helping me. It would be best if I were already ill then I would at least get some rest.

MS 103, 16v

---

61 From paragraph 6.431 onwards, one can read the *Tractatus's* discussion of the meaning of death.

20.07.1916
Work hard to be good.
MS 103, 17v

21.07.16
What really is the situation of the human will? I will call "will" first and foremost the bearer of good and evil.

Let us imagine a man who could use none of his limbs and hence could, in the ordinary sense, not exercise his *will*. He could, however, think and *want* and communicate his thoughts to someone else. Could therefore do good or evil through the other man. Then it is clear that ethics would have validity for him, too, and that he in the *ethical sense* is the bearer of a *will*.

Now is there any difference in principle between this will and that which sets the human body in motion?

Or is the mistake here this: even *wanting* (thinking) is an activity of the will? (And in this sense, indeed, a man *without* will would not be alive.)

But can we conceive a being that isn't capable of Will at all, but only of Idea (of seeing for example)? In some sense this seems impossible. But if it were possible then there could also be a world without ethics.
NB

24.07.16
The World and Life are one [**TLP** 5.621].

Physiological life is of course not "Life". And neither is psychological life. Life is the world.

Ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic.

Ethics and aesthetics are one [see **TLP** 6.421].
NB

26.07.1916
Received a moving letter from David. He writes that his brother has been hit in France. Dreadful! This kind friendly letter has opened my eyes to how I am living in exile here. It might be a salutary exile but it is still exile. I am banished to live amongst scum and have to live with them under the most repugnant conditions. And I am supposed to lead a good life and purify myself in this environment. But it's terribly difficult! I am too weak. I am too weak! God help me.
MS 103, 17v–18v

29.07.1916

Was shot at yesterday. Felt despondent. I was afraid of dying. My wish now is to live! And it is difficult to sacrifice life when you have grown to like it. Even that is a "sin", to live a senseless life, to have a false concept of life. I occasionally behave like an animal where I can think of nothing but eating, drinking and sleeping. Terrible! And then I suffer like an animal, without any hope of inner salvation. I am exposed to my lusts and aversions. And then it becomes impossible to think about living a true life.

MS 103, 18v–19v

29.07.16

For it is a fact of logic that wanting does not stand in any logical connexion with its own fulfilment. And it is also clear that the world of the happy is a *different* world from the world of the unhappy [cf. **TLP** 6.43].

Is seeing an activity?

Is it possible to will good, to will evil, and not to will?

Or is only he happy who does *not* will?

"To love one's neighbour"[62] would mean to will!

But can one want and yet not be unhappy if the want does not attain fulfilment? (And this possibility always exists.)

Is it, according to common conceptions, good to want *nothing* for one's neighbour, neither good nor evil?

And yet in a certain sense it seems that not wanting is the only good.

Here I am still making crude mistakes! No doubt of that!

It is generally assumed that it is evil to want someone else to be unfortunate. Can this be correct? Can it be worse than to want him to be fortunate?

Here everything seems to turn, so to speak, on *how* one wants.

It seems one can't say anything more than: Live happily!

The world of the happy is a different world from that of the unhappy [see **TLP** 6.43].

The world of the happy is *a happy world*.

Then can there be a world that is neither happy nor unhappy?

NB

62 It is a central commandment of Christian faith. In the New Testament it appears in the gospels: Mark: 12:33; Matthew: 22:39; 19:19; Luke: 10:27; John: 13:34; and the epistles: Epistle to Romans: 13:9; Epistle to Galatians: 5:4; Epistle of St. James: 2:8. It is a specific version of the golden rule.

30.07.16

When a general ethical law of the form "Thou shalt..." is set up, the first thought is: Suppose I do not do it?

But it is clear that ethics has nothing to do with punishment and reward. So this question about the consequences of an action must be unimportant. At least these consequences cannot be events. For there must be something right about that question after all. There must be a *kind* of ethical reward and of ethical punishment but these must be involved in the action itself.

And it is also clear that the reward must be something pleasant, the punishment something unpleasant [**TLP** 6.422].

I keep on coming back to this! simply the happy life is good, the unhappy bad. And if I *now* ask myself: But why should I live *happily*, then this of itself seems to me to be a tautological question; the happy life seems to be justified, of itself, it seems that it *is* the only right life.

But this is really in some sense deeply mysterious! *It is clear* that ethics *cannot* be expressed! [cf. **TLP** 6.421].

But we could say: The happy life seems to be in some sense more *harmonious* than the unhappy. But in what sense??

What is the objective mark of the happy, harmonious life? Here it is again clear that there cannot be any such mark, that can be *described*.

This mark cannot be a physical one but only a metaphysical one, a transcendental one.

Ethics is transcendental [see **TLP** 6.421].

NB

01.08.16

How things stand, is God.

God is, how things stand.

Only from the consciousness of the *uniqueness of my life* arises religion – science – and art.

NB

02.08.16

And this consciousness is life itself.

Can there be any ethics if there is no living being but myself?

If ethics is supposed to be something fundamental, there can.

If I am right, then it is not sufficient for the ethical judgment that a world is given.

Then the world in itself is neither good nor evil.

For it must be all one, as far as concerns the existence of ethics, whether there is living matter in the world or not. And it is clear that a world in which there is only dead matter is in itself neither good nor evil, so even the world of living things can in itself be neither good nor evil.

Good and evil only enter through the *subject*. And the subject is not part of the world, but a boundary of the world [cf. **TLP** 5.632].

It would be possible to say (à la Schopenhauer): It is not the world of Idea that is either good or evil; but the willing subject.

I am conscious of the complete unclarity of all these sentences.[63]

Going by the above, then, the willing subject would have to be happy or unhappy, and happiness and unhappiness could not be part of the world.

As the subject is not a part of the world but a presupposition of its existence, so good and evil which are predicates of the subject, are not properties in the world.

Here the nature of the subject is completely veiled.

My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world.

NB

04.08.1916

Isn't the thinking subject in the last resort mere superstition?

Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? [see **TLP** 5.633].

NB

05.08.16

The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists [cf.**TLP** 5.631].

If the will did not exist, neither would there be that centre of the world, which we call the I, and which is the bearer of ethics.

What is good and evil is essentially the I, not the world.

The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious!

NB

06.08.1916

We are now marching toward our firing position after a 3 day train journey. Am not in the best of health and feel mentally exhausted with all the vulgarity and

---

63 This whole discussion will occupy the final part of the *Tractatus*. From paragraph 6.41 onwards.

narrowmindedness that surrounds me. God give me strength, inner strength, to defy mental illness. God keep me in good spirits.
MS 103, 20v–21v

07.08.16[64]
The I is not an object.
NB

11.08.1916
Am living my life in sin, ie unhappy. Am morose and cheerless. Am living in a state of strife because of all that surrounds me.
MS 103, 21v

11.08.16
I objectively confront every object. But not the I.

So there really is a way in which there can and must be mention of the I in a *non-psychological sense* in philosophy [cf. **TLP** 5.641].
NB

12.08.1916
You know what you have to do to be happy; so why don't you do it? Because you are foolish. A bad life is a foolish life. What's important is not to get annoyed.
MS 103, 21v–22v

13.08.1916
Still struggling in vain with my bad nature. God give me strength!
MS 103, 22v

13.08.16
Suppose that man could not exercise his will, but had to suffer all the misery of this world, then what could make him happy?

How can man be happy at all, since he cannot ward off the misery of this world?

Through the life of knowledge.

The good conscience is the happiness that the life of knowledge preserves.

---

64 That day, General Brusilov took Stanislawów, to the east of Galicia, and captured 7,000 Austrian prisoners and around 3,500 Germans. Even so, there was considerable slaughter on both sides.

The life of knowledge is the life that is happy in spite of the misery of the world.

The only life that is happy is the life that can renounce the amenities of the world.

To it the amenities of the world are so many graces of fate.

NB

19.08.1916[65]

Surrounded by vulgarity! I am to leave soon for the cadre in the hinterland. I'm pleased about it. Surrounded by vulgarity. God will help me.

MS 103, 22v

02.09.1916

Here we can see that solipsism coincides with pure realism, if it is strictly thought out.

The I of solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point and what remains is the reality coordinate with it [**TLP** 5.64].

What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!

I want to report how *I* found the world.

What others in the world have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world.

I have to judge the world, to measure things.

The philosophical I is not the human being, not the human body or the human soul with the psychological properties, but the metaphysical subject, the boundary (not a part) of the world. The human body, however, my body in particular, is a part of the world among others, among beasts, plants, stones etc., etc. [cf. **TLP** 5.641].

Whoever realizes this will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body.

He will regard humans and beasts quite naïvely as objects which are similar and which belong together.

NB

12.10.16

A stone, the body of a beast, the body of a man, my body, all stand on the same level.

---

65 On 27 August, Romania declared war on Austria. This is the last annotation that appears on the left-hand page of his war diaries.

That is what happens, whether it comes from a stone or from my body is neither good nor bad.

[...]

It is true: Man *is* the microcosm:

I am my world.

NB

15.10.16

What cannot be imagined cannot even be talked about [cf. **TLP** 5.61].

Things acquire "significance" only through their relation to my will.

For "Everything is what it is and not another thing."

One conception: As I can infer my spirit (character, will) from my physiognomy, so I can infer the spirit (will) of each thing from *its* physiognomy.

But can I *infer* my spirit from my physiognomy?

Isn't this relationship purely empirical?

Does my body really express anything?

Is it itself an internal expression of something?

Is, e.g., an angry face angry in itself or merely because it is empirically connected with bad temper?

But it is clear that the causal nexus is not a nexus at all [cf. **TLP** 5.136].[66]

Now is it true (following the psycho-physical conception) that my character is expressed only in the build of *my* body or brain and not equally in the build of the whole of the rest of the world?

This contains a salient point.

This parallelism, then, really exists between my spirit, i.e. spirit, and the world.

Only remember that the spirit of the snake, of the lion, is *your* spirit. For it is only from yourself that you are acquainted with spirit at all.

Now of course the question is why I have given a snake just this spirit.

And the answer to this can only lie in the psycho-physical parallelism: If I were to look like the snake and to do what it does then I should be such-and-such.

The same with the elephant, with the fly, with the wasp.

But the question arises whether even here, my body is not on the same level with that of the wasp and of the snake (and surely it is so), so that I have neither inferred from that of the wasp to mine nor from mine to that of the wasp.

Is this solution of the puzzle why men always believed that there was *one* spirit common to the whole world?

---

66 This proposition from the *Tractatus* will be broadened with paragraph 5.1361, which ends by saying: "Belief in the causal nexus is superstition."

And in that case it would, of course, also be common to lifeless things too.

This the way I have travelled: Idealism singles men out from the world as unique, solipsism singles me alone out, and at last I see that I too belong with the rest of the world, and so on the one side *nothing* is left over, and on the other side, as unique, *the world*. In this way idealism leads to realism if it is strictly thought of [cf. **TLP** 5.64].

NB

17.10.16

And in this sense I can also speak of a will that is common to the whole world.

But this will is in a higher sense *my* will.

As my idea is the world, in the same way my will is the world-will.

NB

20.10.16

It is clear that my visual space is constituted in length from breadth.

The situation is not simply that I everywhere notice where I see anything, but I also always find myself at a particular point of my visual space, so my visual space has as it were a shape.

In spite of this, however, it is true that I do not see the subject.

It is true that the knowing subject is not in the world, that there is no knowing subject [cf. **TLP** 5.631].

At any rate I can imagine carrying out the act of will for raising my arm, but that my arm does not move (e.g., a sinew is torn). True, but, it will be said, the sinew surely moves and that just shews that the act of will related to the sinew and not to the arm. But let us go farther and suppose that even the sinew did not move, and so on. We should then arrive at the position that the act of will does not relate to a body at all, and so that in the ordinary sense of the word there is no such thing as the act of the will.

Aesthetically, the miracle is that the world exists. That there is what there is.

Is it the essence of the artistic way of looking at things, that it looks at the world with a happy eye?

Life is grave, art is gay.

NB

21.10.16

For there is certainly something in the conception that the end of art is the beautiful.

And the beautiful *is* what makes happy.

NB

04.11.16

Is the will an attitude towards the world?

The will seems always to have to relate to an idea. We cannot imagine, e.g., having carried out an act of will without having detected that we have carried it out.

Otherwise there might arise such a question as whether it had yet been *completely* carried out.

It is clear, so to speak, that we need a foothold for the will in the world.

The will is an attitude of the subject to the world.

The subject is the willing subject.

Have the feelings by which I ascertain that an act of the will takes place any particular characteristic which distinguishes them from other ideas?

It seems not!

In that case, however, I might conceivably get the idea that, e.g., this chair was directly obeying my will.

Is that possible?

In drawing the square ☒ in the mirror one notices that one is only able to manage it if one prescinds completely from the visual datum and relies only on muscular feeling. So here after all there are two quite different acts of the will in question. The one relates to the visual part of the world, the other to the muscular-feeling part.

Have we anything more than empirical evidence that the movement of the same part of the body is in question in both cases?

Then is the situation that I merely accompany my actions with my will?

But in that case how can I predict – as in some sense I surely can – that I shall raise my arm in five minutes' time? That I shall will this?

This is clear: it is impossible to will without already performing the act of the will.

The act of the will is not the cause of the action but is the action itself.

One cannot will without acting.

If the will has to have an object in the world, the object can be the intended action itself.

And the will does have to have an object.

Otherwise we should have no foothold and could not know what we willed.

And could not will different things.

Does not the willed movement of the body happen just like any unwilled movement in the world, but that it is accompanied by the will?

Yet it is not accompanied just by a *wish*! But by will.

We feel, so to speak, responsible for the movement.

My will fastens on to the world somewhere, and does not fasten on to other things.

Wishing is not acting. But willing is acting.

(My wish relates, e.g., to the movement of the chair, my will to a muscular feeling.)

The fact that I will an action consists in my performing the action, not in my doing something else which causes the action.

When I move something I move.

When I perform an action I am in action.

But: I cannot will everything. –

But what does it mean to say: "I cannot will *this*"?

Can I try to will something?

For the consideration of willing makes it looks as if one part of the world were closer to me than another (which would be intolerable).

But, of course, it is undeniable that in a popular sense there are things that I do, and other things not done by me.

In this way then the will would not confront the world as its equivalent, which must be impossible.

The wish precedes the event, the will accompanies it.

Suppose that a process were to accompany my wish. Should I have willed the process?

Would not this accompanying appear accidental in contrast to the compelled accompanying of the will?

NB

09.11.16

Is belief a kind of experience?

Is thought a kind of experience?

All experience is world and does not need the subject.

The act of will is not an experience.

NB

19.11.16

What kind of reason is there for the assumption of a willing subject?

Is not *my world* adequate for individuation?

NB

02.12.16

The correct method in philosophy would really be to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. what belongs to natural science, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy, and then whenever someone else tried to say something metaphysical to shew him that he had not given any reference to certain signs in his sentences [see **TLP** 6.53].

This method would be unsatisfying for the other person (he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy) but it would be the only correct one [see **TLP** 6.53].
NB

10.01.17
If suicide is allowed then everything is allowed.

If anything is not allowed then suicide is not allowed.

This throws a light on the nature of ethics, for suicide is, so to speak, the elementary sin.

And when one investigates it it is like investigating mercury vapour in order to comprehend the nature of vapours.

Or is even suicide in itself neither good nor evil?
NB

Letter to Paul Engelmann
16.01.1918

Dear friend,

Many thanks for your letter of 8.1. If I only understood it! But I do not understand it. It is true there is a difference between myself as I am now and as I was when we met in Olmütz. And, as far as I know, the difference is that I am now *slightly* more decent. By this I only mean that I am slightly clearer in my own mind about my lack of decency. If you tell me now that I have no faith, you are *perfectly right*, only I did not have it before either. It is plain, isn't it, that when a man wants, as it were, to invent a machine for becoming decent, such a man has no faith. But what am I to do? *I am clear about one thing*: I am far too bad to be able to theorize about myself; in fact I shall either remain a swine or else I shall improve, and that's that! Only let's cut out the transcendental twaddle when the whole thing is as plain as a sock on the jaw.

It is not impossible that I may soon be transferred to Olmütz!

I am sure you are quite right in all you say.

Think of
Yours sincerely
L. Wittgenstein

LPE

Letter to Ludwig von Ficker
(after 20.10.1919)
Vienna

Dear Mr Ficker!

I'm sending you the manuscript with this letter. Why didn't I think of you straight away? Yes, you're thinking, I did think of you straight away; but that was at a time when the book[67] couldn't be published because it wasn't ready yet. At that point the war broke out and I couldn't even think about asking for your help. Now however I am hoping for your help. And it might help you if I write a few words about my book: when you read it I don't think you will gain much from it. Because you won't understand it; the material will seem quite strange to you. In reality it isn't strange to you because the sense of the book is a work on morals. At one time I wanted to add a sentence in the foreword which is actually not in it now but I would like to send it to you anyway because it might provide a key to understanding it: I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: one is what is presented here and the other is what I haven't written. And it's precisely this second part which is the important part.[68] The ethical part will be restricted through my book from within so to speak; and I am convinced that strictly speaking it can **only** be limited in that way. In short I believe: everything that is criticised by many today, is set out in my book by me saying nothing about it. And that's why the book, if I am not very mistaken, will say much that you want to say yourself but perhaps you don't see that it has been said in the book. I recommend that you read the foreword and the conclusion as these highlight the sense of the book in the most direct way. –

67 The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

68 This is the well-known letter in which Wittgenstein makes clear the sense in which the *Tractatus* is written; he highlights the point that it must be read from a perspective in which ethics takes absolute first place, although nothing can be *said* about it. Wittgenstein asked von Ficker to publish the Tractatus, but not even the editor of *Der Brenner* would do so. Following several more failed attempts, in 1920, the publishing house Reclam also rejected the book, which caused Wittgenstein to become disinterested in its publication. In the end, it was Russell's valiant efforts that managed to get Wilhelm Ostwald, the publisher of *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, to publish the *Tractatus*, in the 14th issue in 1921. This was the edition that, interestingly, Wittgenstein would come to see as *pirated*, given the errors Ostwald's edition contained, according to him. There were an incomprehensibly large number of difficulties in publishing such a high-level text. At one point of the – up to then – unfruitful search, Wittgenstein wrote to Russell (27.11.1919): "The difficulties with my book have started up again. Nobody wants to publish it. Do you remember how you were always pressing me to publish something? And now when I should like to, it can't be managed. The devil take it!"

The manuscript I'm sending you now is not the actual printed manuscript but one which I've revised in haste and which will suffice for you to orientate yourself. The printed manuscript needs to be carefully revised; it is currently in England with my friend Russell. I sent it to him when I was in prison. He will send it back to me soon. In the meantime I wish myself lots of luck.

I send you warm greetings

Your devoted Ludwig Wittgenstein

WTB

Letter from B. Russell to Lady Ottoline
20.12.1919
The Hague

I have much to tell you that is of interest. I leave here today, after a fortnight's stay, during a week of which Wittgenstein was here, and we discussed his book every day. I came to think even better of it than I had done; I feel sure it is a really great book, though I do not feel sure it is right.[69] I told him I could not refute it, and that I was sure it was either all right or all wrong, which I considered the mark of a good book; but it would take me years to decide this. This of course didn't satisfy him, but I couldn't say more.

I had felt in his book a flavour of mysticism,[70] but was astonished when I found that he has become a complete mystic. He reads people like Kierkegaard and Angelus Silesius, and he seriously contemplates becoming a monk. It all started with William James's Varieties of Religious Experience, and grew (not unnaturally) during the winter he spent alone in Norway before the war, when he was nearly mad. Then during the war a curious thing happened. He went on duty to the town of Tarnov in Galicia, and happened to come upon a bookshop which however seemed to contain nothing but picture postcards. However, he went

---

69 This would not be the only time Russell would express his doubts on Wittgenstein's philosophy. To give another example, when in 1930 Wittgenstein applied for a fellowship from Trinity College to continue with his research, Russell wrote a report on 8 May that year in support of the application. In that supporting report, he wrote: "The theories contained in this new work of Wittgenstein's are novel, very original, and indubitably important. Whether they are true, I don't know." In his work *My Philosophical Development*, he would come to say Wittgenstein had wasted his talent with what came after the *Tractatus*, that the philosophy Wittgenstein developed in his *Philosophical Investigations* was unintelligible and that, in Russell's eyes, Wittgenstein had tired of serious thought.

70 Russell would once again highlight these thoughts in the obituary he published to Wittgenstein in *Mind* journal (239), pp. 297–8, in which he pointed out that during the First World War, Wittgenstein became a mystic, and that could clearly be seen – according to Russell – in the *Tractatus*.

inside and found that it contained just one book: Tolstoy on the Gospels. He bought it merely because there was no other. He read it and re-read it, and thenceforth had it always with him, under fire and at all times. But on the whole he likes Tolstoy less than Dostoewski (especially Karamazov). He has penetrated deep into mystical ways of thought and feeling, but I think (though he wouldn't agree) that what he likes best is mysticism is its power to make him stop thinking. I don't much think he will really become a monk – it is an idea, not an intention. His intention is to be a teacher. He gave all his money to his brothers and sisters,[71] because he found earthly possessions a burden. I wish you had seen him.
WCB

Letter to Paul Engelmann
09.01.1920
XIII. St. Veitgasse 17, c/o Frau Sjögren

D. Mr. E., – Yesterday I got a letter from one Mr. Viktor Lautsch 'Lautsch' may be a slip of the pen (occasioned by the 'Lachs' which follows) for 'Deutsch': there was a family of that name in Olmütz, who gives Mr. Lachs, Groag, and you as references and begs me to support him. Since I have no money myself and do not know the gentleman, I am sending him for the time being only very little money and some underwear I can spare, and I request you urgently to let me have more information about the petitioner. Perhaps my sister Mining could help him. The sooner you answer me, the better!

It just occurs to me that I myself have not yet answered your last kind letter. However, I was in bed with influenza when it arrived. I will deal another time with your remarks on religion.[72] They are still not clear enough, it seems to me. I, too, feel that I am seeing the matter more clearly than a month ago. It must be possible, I believe, to say all these things much more adequately. (Or not at all, which is even more likely.)

Please give my respects and kind regards to your revered mother.

Yours
Ludwig Wittgenstein

LPE
Letter to Paul Engelmann

---

71 At the end of the war, and as a result of his profound spiritual transformation, Wittgenstein decided to distribute his money (his part of the family's heritage) among his brothers and sisters (except Margarethe), insisting on the fact that nothing could be left for him, what made that the notary in charge of the operation exclaimed: "You want to commit financial suicide."

72 Wittgenstein is answering a letter from Engelmann concerning the dispute on the relationships and connections between the figures of God and Christ.

21.06.1920

D. Mr. E., – Many thanks for your kind letter, which has given me much pleasure and thereby perhaps helped me a little, although as far as the merits of my case are concerned I am beyond any outside help. – In fact I am in a state of mind that it is terrible to me. I have been through it several times before: it is the state of *not being able to get over a particular fact*. It is a pitiable state, I know. But there is only one remedy that I can see, and that is of course to come to terms with that fact. But this is just like what happens when a man who can't swim has fallen into the water and flails about it with his hands and feet and feels that he *cannot* keep his head above water. That is the position I am now. I know that to kill oneself is always a dirty thing to do. Surely one *cannot* will one's own destruction, and anybody who has visualized what is in practice involved in the act of suicide knows that suicide is always a *rushing of one's own defences*. But nothing is worse than to be forced to take oneself by surprise.

Of course it all boils down to the fact that I have no faith!

Well, we shall see! –

Please thank your revered mother in my name for her kind letter. I will certainly come to Olmütz, but I don't know when. I do hope I can make it soon.

Yours
Ludwig Wittgenstein

LPE

Letter to B. Russell
20.09.1920

Dear Russell,

Thank you for your kind letter. I have obtained a position: I am to be an elementary-school teacher in a tiny village called Trattenbach. It's in the mountains, about four hours' journey south of Vienna. It must be the first time the schoolmaster at Trattenbach has ever corresponded with a Professor in Pekin. How are you? And what are you lecturing on? Philosophy? If so, I wish I could attend and could argue with you afterwards. A short while ago I was *terribly depressed* and tired of living, but now I am slightly more hopeful, and one of the things I hope is that we'll meet again.

God be with you! Warmest regards from

Your devoted friend
Ludwig Wittgenstein

WCB