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| Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein was an Austrian philosopher whose work, largely on the philosophy of language, had far-reaching implications for modernist intellectual history and for enduring scholarly debate. In Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung (1921; *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*), the only book-length work published in his lifetime, Wittgenstein examined logic and ethics, as well as the nature of language and the boundaries of sense. The work earned him significant recognition, particularly among the group of scientists and logicians of the Vienna Circle. Wittgenstein’s early understanding of language was based on its relationship with – and more specifically, representation of – meaning and reality. According to the *Tractatus*, every word is the name of an object and that object is the word’s meaning. He held that complex words and meanings could be condensed to absolutely simple elements with definite meaning. These ‘simple names’ represented similarly fixed and permanent ‘simple objects’, and thus there was for Wittgenstein an eternal world of objects, a fixed substance beneath the changing surface appearances of the world. In his posthumously published *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (1953; *Philosophical Investigations*), Wittgenstein appeared to repudiate many of his prior claims. He placed new emphasis on the context in which words are used, referring to different contexts of language-use as ‘language-games’ that render his previous notions of simple and complex objects relative. |
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| Further reading:  (Gakis)  (Leitner)  (MacFarlane)  (Monk)  (Peters and Marshall)  (Schroeder) |