**Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1889-1951)**

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. As with the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein believed that he had excavated and explicated the root of many other philosophical problems, though he warned that philosophy arose from a ‘bewitchment of language’, dependent on removing language from its ordinary context. The two philosophies represented by the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, alternately deemed contradictory and complementary, are referred to as ‘early Wittgenstein’ and ‘late Wittgenstein’. This dichotomy renders his legacy especially unusual among philosophers.

Another of Wittgenstein’s enduring bequests to modernist culture was the Haus Wittgenstein in Vienna, a house for his sister that he designed in collaboration with architect Paul Engelmann (1891-1965). He engrossed himself in the project from 1926 to 1929, moving it away from the influence of Engelmann’s mentor, Adolf Loos, although maintaining a Loosian rejection of the Viennese penchant for ornament, thereby contributing to modernist architecture while simultaneously diverging from it. According to Bernhard Leitner, a scholar of Wittgenstein’s architecture, ‘There is little connecting Wittgenstein to modern architecture. Glass, transparency, metal. Yet he demands a processing of metal, a millimeter precision in construction, that was almost impossible to attain with the means of his period’ (Leitner vii). Similarly, while early Wittgenstein was influenced to a degree by such philosophers as Bertrand Russell, his mentor at Cambridge, Wittgenstein ultimately forged a break with the thinking of his predecessors and contemporaries. In a sense, this very deviation is an essential element of his philosophical modernism.

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