

Wittgenstein in Exile

“My thoughts are one hundred per cent Hebraic.”
-Wittgenstein to Drury, 1949¹

Wittgenstein was born in 1889 into one of the richest families in Central Europe. He lived and learned at home, in Vienna, until 1903, when he was 14. We have no record of his thoughts about the turn of the last century, but it is unlikely that it seemed very significant to him. The Viennese of the time had little inclination to consider the possibilities of change, and the over-ripe era in which Wittgenstein grew up did not really end until Austria-Hungary's defeat, in World War I, and subsequent dismantling.

But the family in which Wittgenstein grew up apparently felt that European culture had already come to an end in the 1840's. And Wittgenstein himself felt he belonged to an era that had vanished with the death of the composer Robert Schumann (1810-1856).² Somewhere in the middle of the Nineteenth Century there was an important change into the contemporary era, of which Wittgenstein did not feel a part.

Wittgenstein's understanding of history, and his consequent self-understanding in relation to his times, was deeply influenced by Oswald Spengler, who in 1918 published *The Decline of the West* [*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*]. This book, expanded to a second volume in 1922, and revised in 1923, became a best-seller in post-war Europe. Wittgenstein made numerous references to it in 1930-1931, and acknowledged Spengler as one of his ten noteworthy influences.³

According to Spengler, cultures grow, flower, and deteriorate naturally, according to their own internal form, much as a human being does. Spengler studied three cultures, which he termed the Apollonian (Greco-Roman), the Magian (Judaism, Byzantium, Islam), and the Faustian (Western). A culture dies when it has exhausted all of its possibilities. But this sort of internal process does not translate into any sort of over-all progress from era to era:

...the 19th and 20th centuries, hitherto looked on as the highest point of an ascending straight line of world-history, are in reality a stage of life which may be observed in every Culture that has ripened to its limit...The future of the West is not a limitless tending upwards and onwards for all time towards our present ideals, but a single phenomenon of history, strictly limited as to form and duration, which covers a few centuries...⁴

Our own Western era is supposed to have begun around 1000 with the soaring vaults and spires of Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals, reached maturity in the Baroque period of Bach, begun to decline with the Rococo refinements and daring philosophical speculation of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, and plunged into deterioration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. The maturity of an era, which Spengler called “culture” [*Kultur*], was equated with organism and religion. The end of an era, which Spengler called “civilization” [*Zivilisation*], was equated with mechanism and irreligion. Spengler writes:

For every Culture has its own Civilization...The Civilization is the inevitable destiny of the Culture...Civilizations are the most external and artificial states of which a species of developed humanity is capable. They are a conclusion, the thing-become succeeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion...The transition from Culture to Civilization was accomplished for the Classical world in the fourth, for the Western in the nineteenth century.⁵

This period of deterioration, both in the Roman Empire and in the modern West, Spengler saw as characterized by eclectic art, desiccated thought, politics as a façade for the power of money, mobs of people living in large cities, and unending warfare.

This contrast between culture and civilization was fundamental to Wittgenstein’s understanding of his own times. Wittgenstein articulated this contrast most clearly in a draft he wrote for a foreword to a manuscript on which he was working in 1930:

This book is written for those who are in sympathy with the spirit in which it is written. This is not, I believe, the spirit of the main current of European and American civilization. The spirit of this civilization makes itself manifest in the industry, architecture and music of our time, in its fascism and socialism, and it is alien and uncongenial to the author. This is not a value judgement.

It is not, it is true, as though he accepted what nowadays passes for architecture as architecture or did not approach what is called modern music with the greatest suspicion (though without understanding its language), but still, the disappearance of the arts does not justify judging disparagingly the human beings who make up this civilization....

I realize then that the disappearance of a culture does not signify the disappearance of human value, but simply of certain means of expressing this value, yet the fact remains that I have no sympathy for the current of European civilization and do not understand its goals, if it has any.⁶

Clearly Wittgenstein saw the era up through Schumann as the flowering of Western culture, and the time since, his and our own time, as deteriorating Western civilization. This accounts for the numerous disparaging remarks Wittgenstein made about modern arts.⁷ Indeed, the original title of this symposium, “Wittgenstein and Culture,” is misleading, since Wittgenstein did not believe that we or he *had a culture*. Spengler writes:

The present is a civilized, emphatically not a cultured time, and *ipso facto* a great number of life-capacities fall out as impossible.... We are a civilized, not Gothic or Rococo, people; we have to reckon with the hard cold facts of a *late* life, to which the parallel is to be found not in Pericles’ Athens but in Caesar’s Rome. Of great painting or great music there can no longer be, for Western people, any question. Their architectural possibilities have been exhausted these hundred years. Only *extensive* possibilities are left to them.⁸

Since Wittgenstein identified with and felt grounded in this lost culture, he commonly expressed the feeling that few—the remnant—would understand him. He concluded the early draft of his foreword (1930) with:

So I am really writing for friends who are scattered throughout the corners of the globe.

Reflecting on this statement in 1931, Wittgenstein writes:

If I say that my book is meant for only a small circle of people (if it can be called a circle), I do not mean that I believe this circle to be the elite of mankind; but it does comprise those to whom I turn (not because they are better or worse than others but) because they form my cultural milieu, my fellow citizens as it were, in contrast to the rest who are *foreign* to me.⁹

And in the Preface to his *Philosophical Investigations*, written in 1945, he says:

It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty, and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely.

In effect Wittgenstein was an *exile*—not from his home-place so much as from his home-time, his cultural home.¹⁰

What is one to do as an exile? The Northern Kingdom of the Israelites accepted assimilation in Babylonia, as do most exiles, and disappeared from the history books. The Southern Kingdom of the Judaeans sought to retain their identity in exile. Some of them “wept by the rivers of Babylon,”¹¹ while Isaiah prophesied “a voice crying in the wilderness.”¹² This is a problem with which Wittgenstein constantly struggled.

Spengler was ready with advice:

[This] is a time of decline. True. But we have not *chosen* this time. We cannot help it if we are born as men of the early winter of full Civilization, instead of on the golden summit of a ripe Culture. Everything depends on our seeing our own position, our *destiny*, clearly, on our realizing that though we may lie to ourselves about it we cannot evade it. He who does not acknowledge this in his heart, ceases to be counted among the men of his generation, and remains either a simpleton, a charlatan, or a pedant. . . . One must begin by asking oneself...what today is possible and what he must forbid himself.¹³

Wittgenstein took this advice to heart in the draft foreword cited earlier:

For in times like these, genuine strong characters simply leave the arts aside and turn to other things and somehow the worth of the individual man finds expression. Not, to be sure, in the way it would at a time of high culture. A culture is like a big organization which assigns each of its members a place where he can work in the spirit of the whole; and it is perfectly fair for his power to be measured by the contribution he succeeds in making to the whole enterprise. In an age without culture on the other hand forces become fragmented and the power of an individual man is used up in overcoming opposing forces and frictional resistances; it does not show in the distance he travels but perhaps only in the heat he generates in overcoming friction. But energy is still

energy and even if the spectacle which our age affords us is not the formation of a great cultural work, with the best men contributing to the same great end, so much as the unimpressive spectacle of a crowd whose best members work for purely private ends, still we must not forget that the spectacle is not what matters...

And he goes on to write:

It is all one to me whether or not the typical western scientist understands or appreciates my work, since he will not in any case understand the spirit in which I write.

Our civilization is characterized by the word 'progress'. Progress in its form rather than making progress being one of its features. Typically it constructs. It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure. And even clarity is sought only as a means to this end, not as an end in itself.

For me on the contrary clarity, perspicuity are valuable in themselves.

I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible buildings.

So I am not aiming at the same target as the scientists and my way of thinking is different from theirs.¹⁴

Much of Wittgenstein's later work was an attempt to change people's thinking, especially what he took to be their tendency to an idolatry of science. This is explicit in the 1938 lectures on aesthetics, where Wittgenstein claims to be making propaganda for his style of thinking, and persuading his students against the "idol worship" of science.¹⁵ Indeed, Wittgenstein saw this as an instance of his philosophical method: "All that philosophy can do is to destroy idols."¹⁶

Though he also saw that such changes might be more a matter of changing the style of life than of changing just the style of thought.¹⁷

But what did Wittgenstein think that he could accomplish, as the prophet in exile, preaching against the idols? Wittgenstein had no illusions about the difficulty of his task:

Put a man in the wrong atmosphere and nothing will function as it should. He will seem unhealthy in every part. Put him back into his proper element and everything will blossom and look healthy.

But if he is not in his right element, what then? Well, then he just has to make the best of appearing before the world as a cripple.¹⁸

Could we return to the culture of a by-gone era? If anything Wittgenstein seemed to suppose that his thoughts might have value for a future culture. In 1949 he said to Drury:

My thinking is not wanted in this present age, I have to swim so strongly against the tide. Perhaps in a hundred years people will really want what I am writing.¹⁹

But perhaps some genuine or incipient culture existed in the present, only not in the West. It is with this thought that Wittgenstein may have looked to Russia. Spengler clearly viewed Russia as the embryo of a new culture, and considered Dostoyevsky to be its prophet.²⁰ It has never been clear exactly why Wittgenstein was attracted to the idea of moving to Russia,²¹ but it is by now hard to avoid the thought that it was, for him, a possible return from exile. Just as Palestine was the Zionist goal of Jews in Diaspora, Russia could have seemed to be the homeland for the exile Wittgenstein.²²

Wittgenstein took Russian lessons beginning in 1934, and visited Russia for some two weeks in September, 1935, in search of permanent work there. Though things did not go well, and presumably Wittgenstein did not find what he thought he might, he was still contemplating a move as late as 1937.²³ Perhaps he had trouble believing that Dostoyevsky's Russia—the Home-Culture and promised land—did not really exist for him. Indeed, the homeland is rarely what it seems from abroad.²⁴ In any case, Wittgenstein lived out his years in exile.²⁵

While Wittgenstein admired much in the lost culture of the West, there were few aspects of his contemporary “culture” that interested him: some movies, especially American musicals and westerns with happy endings, detective stories, minimalist architecture, basically just amusements and the things one needed to get by—wholly without pretension. Indeed, Wittgenstein tolerated little but the light baggage of an exile, waiting for something—the return ticket home—that he never found.

Seeing Wittgenstein as an Exile

Wittgenstein's extensive discussion of "seeing as" in Section XI of Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations* seems pertinent to our discussion. In particular, we have been "noticing an aspect" (p. 193/p. 165 in 3rd edition) of Wittgenstein's life. How we see Wittgenstein's life depends in part on what surroundings we choose to emphasize. I have tried to arrange pieces of his life in such a way that it is natural to see similarities to the Hebrew concept of an exile. I have been helped in this by Spenglerian ideas that Wittgenstein took seriously. Wittgenstein exhibits many of the characteristics of an exile: He lives outside his own culture involuntarily; he is alienated from his surroundings; and he feels himself to be a voice crying in the wilderness, preaching to the faithful remnant, inveighing against the idols. Not only does he exhibit these characteristics, but he uses the term "exile" (as well as "*exiliert*" and "*Verbannung*" in German) in describing himself.

Once we see Wittgenstein as an exile, I think this enables us to better understand some things about his life and thought. It provides a motivation for his interest in living in Russia—a possible homeland for him. I think it also helps us to better understand his conception of the philosopher and the role of philosophy. And, I think it helps us to better understand his ambivalence about religion in his own life. To these latter issues I now turn.

Exile and the Philosopher

As far as I can tell, Wittgenstein's own thinking about philosophy and philosophers is not in any way influenced by Spengler's ideas about *philosophy*. Spengler sees philosophy as embodying the ideology of an age, and in particular, a mechanistic philosophy will be characteristic of a civilization of the sort in which we now live.²⁶ But the notion of an exile, as generated by Spengler's conceptual-historical scheme, is useful for thinking about Wittgenstein's conception of the philosopher.

To what extent did Wittgenstein's role as an exile fit him to be a philosopher? His comments about philosophy and the nature of philosophy are quite various, but some of them resonate well with the metaphor of exile.

Wittgenstein wrote in 1931:

(The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him a philosopher.)²⁷

This makes it sound as though exile is an appropriate status for a philosopher, discomforting though it may be. Perhaps the separation from a community is what allows the philosopher to gain the sort of synoptic overview of language necessary to see its ditches.

In 1945 Wittgenstein warned his friend Rush Rhees away from joining the Revolutionary Communist (Trotskyist) Party because of the conformity it would require:

Whereas in doing philosophy you have got to be ready *constantly* to change the direction in which you are moving...You must be able to give up those central notions which have seemed to be what you must keep if you are to think at all...And if you are thinking as a philosopher you cannot treat the ideas of communism differently from others.²⁸

In 1931 Wittgenstein had characterized the logician Frank Ramsey as a "bourgeois thinker":

I.e., he thought with the aim of clearing up the affairs of some particular community...The idea that this state might not be the only possible one in part disquieted him and in part bored him. He wanted to get down, as quickly as possible to reflecting on the foundations—of *this* state. This was what he was good at and what really interested him; whereas real philosophical reflection disturbed him until he put its result (if it had one) to one side and declared it trivial.²⁹

Spelling out the implications of this in 1944, Wittgenstein shocked Rhees by declaring that Georg Kreisel was the most able philosopher he had met who was also a mathematician. "More able than Ramsey?" Rhees asked. "Ramsey?!" replied Wittgenstein. "Ramsey was a mathematician!"³⁰ Presumably Ramsey was unable to maintain a sufficient distance from mathematics to be a good philosopher.

Wittgenstein also used geographical imagery in his discussions of philosophy: “A philosophical problem has the form: ‘I don’t know my way about’.”³¹ He sometimes compared himself to a tour guide:

I am trying to conduct you on tours in a certain country. I will try to show that the philosophical difficulties which arise in mathematics as elsewhere arise because we find ourselves in a strange town and do not know our way. So we must learn the topography by going from one place in the town to another, and from there to another, and so on. And one must do this so often that one knows one’s way, either immediately or pretty soon after looking around a bit, wherever one may be set down....This is an extremely good simile....The difficulty of philosophy is to find one’s way about.³²

This tour-guide metaphor fits well with the notion of exile: A philosopher has to be ready to be a guide for any part of the city. One who is too deeply immersed in a single part of the city cannot play this role. Thus one cannot be a resident of any particular neighborhood, but must be able to rise above that, as Ramsey had not. Thus, being an exile is an asset so far as philosophy is concerned.³³

From this perspective it is especially ironic that when Wittgenstein sought employment in Russia, during his visit in 1935, whereas he had hoped for work as a doctor or as a laborer, the only thing he was offered was work as a philosopher—as lecturer at the University of Moscow, or professor at Kazan University.³⁴ It was presumably the very thing in which success could be impeded by a flight from exile.

Philosophy, Culture and Civilization

In addition to comments on the role of the philosopher, Wittgenstein also reflects on the nature of philosophical problems. In keeping with the imagery of language as an ancient city, and the philosopher as a tour guide who can attain and convey a synoptic view of the layout, Wittgenstein suggests that philosophical problems are inherent in our language—they come with

the territory. And by “our” language he not only means his language, but seemingly all language, or at least the languages of the Western tradition. This, he explains, is why there is no “progress” in philosophy, even since the time of the Greeks:

It is because our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions. As long as there continues to be a verb ‘to be’ that looks as if it functions in the same way as ‘to eat’ and ‘to drink’, as long as we still have the adjectives ‘identical’, ‘true’, ‘false’, ‘possible’, as long as we continue to talk of a river of time, of an expanse of space, etc. etc., people will keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up.³⁵

At other points Wittgenstein describes the problems as deriving from a mythology “laid down in our language.”³⁶ One should address them in a calm and business-like manner, but the process “doesn’t have an end”.³⁷ To follow out the metaphor of the ancient city, the streets and ditches are where they are—no urban renewal is in prospect. The job of a tour-guide is never done, because there are always new people who need the tour;³⁸ or, perhaps the tour just never sinks in:

A philosopher says “Look at things like this!”—but in the first place that doesn’t ensure that people will look at things like that, and in the second place his admonition may come altogether too late; it’s possible, moreover, that such an admonition can achieve nothing in any case and that the impetus for such a change in the ways things are perceived has to originate somewhere else entirely.³⁹

Wittgenstein sometimes talks as though there are things that could happen that would finish the need for philosophy:

I am by no means sure that I should prefer a continuation of my work by others to a change in the way people live which would make all these questions superfluous.⁴⁰

And, indeed, this view seems possible from the larger perspective of Wittgenstein’s thought, since language is not a frozen and isolated entity. Language is a part of life, and insofar as life changes, language and meaning change too.

From this perspective it seems at least possible that the evolution from culture to civilization, or the move from one tradition to another could well affect the role of, or need for, philosophy. Though there is nothing in Wittgenstein's or Spengler's comments about culture and civilization to suggest that one of these is less in need of philosophy, the variability of these sorts of epochs makes it quite unlikely that an *a priori* case could be made for the inevitable need for philosophy.⁴¹ Still, short of (what would seem to us to be) significant mental deterioration, it is hard to imagine what changes "would make all these questions superfluous."⁴²

Religion and Exile

Spengler's account of religion is not all that different from his account of philosophy. Both embody the ideology of an era. However, in the case of religion, Wittgenstein is not so anxious to dissent.

For Wittgenstein, philosophy is an activity *sui generis*. One who is separated from the community is well-suited to engaging in philosophy. Religion, however, is not, in this way, something wholly separate. Or rather, religion has two aspects, the inner aspect—one's spiritual relationship to God—and the outer aspect—one's participation in ceremony, obedience and loving behavior. Not surprisingly, Wittgenstein's engagement with religion consisted almost entirely of the former. The latter was lost on, or more difficult for, an exile without a community. Thus, I believe, we get Wittgenstein's ambiguous attitude towards religion in his own life.

Of course, Wittgenstein was ambivalent about being a philosopher, too. But it was not ambivalence about whether he could *be* a philosopher, or be a *good* one, but about whether he *should* be a philosopher at all. His ambivalence concerning religion was whether he could be religious.⁴³ He certainly thought he should be religious, and he wanted to be religious. While he wished for the discovery that could allow him to stop doing philosophy when he wanted to (PI 133), he never sought the discovery that would allow him to stop trying to be religious. It was something that he wanted, and worked at obsessively in certain respects, but was unable to accept

in the forms in which it existed in the civilization in which he lived. Ironically, religion may have been the very thing that could have stopped him thinking, and hence allowed him to stop doing philosophy. As Russell wrote to Ottoline, concerning his meeting with Wittgenstein after World War I:

He has penetrated deep into mystical ways of thought and feeling, but I think (though he wouldn't agree) that what he likes best in mysticism is its power to make him stop thinking.⁴⁴

Whether Wittgenstein could have been (comfortably) religious in a culture to his liking, say in Dostoyevsky's Russia, remains, in my mind, an open question. Religion, then, was not the salvation of the exile, as it had been, for instance, for the Hebrews, but in this case the frustration of the exile, Wittgenstein.⁴⁵

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¹ M. O'C. Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein," in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. R. Rhees, New York: Oxford University Press, revised edition, 1984, p. 161.

² See Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life, Young Ludwig (1889-1921)*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 3 and 8; and also Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, & Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 (with modified translations); p. 2 (in 1980 edition)/p. 4 (in 1998 edition). The 1994 German edition of *Vermischte Bemerkungen* has yet different pagination!

³ According to Drury, in 1930, "Wittgenstein advised me to read Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. It was a book, he said, that might teach me something about the age we were now living in. It might be an antidote to my 'incurable romanticism'" (p. 113). In 1931 Wittgenstein listed Spengler as an important influence (C&V p. 19/16). Wittgenstein very likely read Spengler while he was living in Austria in the 1920's, before he returned to Cambridge in 1929. While Wittgenstein was clearly interested in the outline of Spengler's views, he warned Drury: "I don't trust Spengler about details. He is too often inaccurate. I once wrote that if Spengler had had the courage to write a very short book, it could have been a great one" (p. 113). Wittgenstein's on-going interest in Spengler into 1950 is confirmed by von Wright's editorial comments in "Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein to Georg Henrick von Wright," *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*, ed. Klagge & Nordmann, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993, p. 478. Cf. also Wittgenstein's comments on Spengler in "Movements of Thought: Diaries, 1930-1932, 1936-1937," *Public and Private Occasions*, ed. Klagge & Nordmann, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, pp. 25-7, 37, and 219.

For other discussions of Spengler's influence on Wittgenstein, see J. Peterman, *Philosophy as Therapy*, Buffalo: SUNY Press, 1992, Chapter 4; and Rudolf Haller, "Was Wittgenstein Influenced by Spengler?" in *Questions on Wittgenstein*, Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1988.

⁴ Spengler, *Decline of the West*, New York: Alfred Knopf, vol. 1, 1926, p. 39 (pp. 29-30 in the 1991 Oxford University Press abridged edition).

⁵ Spengler, pp. 31-32 (pp. 24-25).

⁶ C&V p. 6/8-9. When Wittgenstein reached the final draft, this foreword to the *Philosophical Remarks* was significantly shortened and focused:

This book is written for such men as are in sympathy with its spirit. This spirit is different from the one which informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which all of us

stand. *That* spirit expresses itself in an onwards movement, in building ever larger and more complicated structures; the other in striving after clarity and perspicuity in no matter what structure. The first tries to grasp the world by way of its periphery—in its variety; the second at its centre—in its essence. And so the first adds one construction to another, moving on and up, as it were, from one stage to the next, while the other remains where it is and what it tries to grasp is always the same.

A student recalls Wittgenstein, in a 1934 lecture, ejaculating: “Civilisation, or whatever you call the bloody thing!” (Theodore Redpath, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Student’s Memoir*, London: Duckworth, 1990, p. 36).

⁷ Drury recalls Wittgenstein pronouncing, in 1930: “Music came to a full stop with Brahms; and even in Brahms I can begin to hear the sound of machinery” (p. 112). See also his thoughts on the problems with modern music in “Movements of Thought,” PPO, pp. 67-9.

In the discussion of my paper at the conference, in response to comments by Timothy Tessin, I agreed that the phrase “accounts for” is wrong, and I would now change this to “is closely connected with”. It is not that Spengler’s theory caused Wittgenstein to dislike modern art, but rather, Wittgenstein’s dislike of modern art and his feeling that he was living in a civilization rather than a culture are two sides of the same coin.

⁸ Spengler, p. 40 (most of this is in the abridged edition, p. 31).

In light of this distinction between “culture” and “civilization,” “Culture and Value” turns out to be an extremely misleading title for the miscellaneous collection of remarks published originally in German under the title *Vermischte Bemerkungen* [*Miscellaneous Remarks*].

⁹ C&V p. 10/12-13. The notion of the “remnant” is prominent in Isaiah 10: 20-23, 11: 11-16, and 37: 31-32.

The difficulties that Wittgenstein encountered in writing from within a time of civilization for an audience of a culture are explored in my paper “The Puzzle of Goethe’s Influence on Wittgenstein,” in *Goethe and Wittgenstein: Seeing the World’s Unity in Its Variety*, ed. F. Breithaupt, et al., Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003.

¹⁰ “Exile” is a term that Wittgenstein used to describe himself: Upon contemplating a move to Norway in 1913 to continue his research, Wittgenstein was cited by his friend David Pinsent as follows: “he swears he can never do his best except in exile” (October 1st, 1913 diary entry, in *A Portrait of Wittgenstein as a Young Man*, ed. G.H. von Wright, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, p. 85, and cf. p. 89). In his coded wartime notebook Wittgenstein wrote: “This kind, friendly letter [from Pinsent] opens my eyes to the fact that I am living in *exile* [*Verbannung*] here. It may be a healing exile, but I now feel it as an exile all the same” (*Geheime Tagebücher: 1914-1916*, ed. W. Baum, Vienna: Turia & Kant, 1991, 26.7.16, p. 74). And also his comment in his diary: “In my room I feel not alone but exiled [*exiliert*]” (“Movements of Thought,” PPO, 9.10.30, p. 55).

For more on Wittgenstein’s inability to find comfort in any community, see my papers: “When Are Ideologies Irreconcilable? Case Studies in Diachronic Anthropology,” *Philosophical Investigations*, July, 1998; and “Wittgenstein’s Community,” in eds., U. Meixner & P. Simons, *Metaphysics in the Post-Metaphysical Age: Papers of the 22nd International Wittgenstein Symposium*, Vol. VII (1), 1999. The former concerns his experiences during World War I, the latter his experiences in Norway. Though the present paper is primarily about Wittgenstein’s cultural isolation, it is an interesting and relevant fact that he often sought psychological and physical isolation. In addition to his time in Norway, there is also his time, after retirement, in western Ireland.

¹¹ Psalm 137:1. In 1948 Wittgenstein wrote: “Someone lacking a tradition who would like to have one is like a man unhappily in love” (C&V p. 76/86). Wittgenstein was certainly a man unhappily in love...with Marguerite Respinger. His feelings are described extensively in the first year’s worth of entries in “Movements of Thought,” PPO, pp. 9-81.

¹² Septuagint version of Isaiah 40:3, as later quoted in Matthew 3:3 and John 1:23 and applied to John the Baptist.

¹³ Spengler, p. 44 (some of this is on p. 34); and also p. 40 (some on p. 31). Discussing in 1946 an upcoming Joint Session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society meeting, Wittgenstein “railed against professional philosophers, mourned the present state of philosophy in England and asked: ‘What can one man do alone?’ ” (Karl Britten, in *Portraits of Wittgenstein*, vol. 2, ed. F. Flowers, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999, p. 210). And cf. Wittgenstein’s reference to the philosophical “charlatans” in his

19.3.51 letter to Malcolm (*Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, New York: Oxford University Press, revised edition, 1984, p. 133).

¹⁴ In these comments Wittgenstein seems to be taking partly as his target Rudolf Carnap's Preface to *The Logical Structure of the World [Der Logistische Aufbau Der Welt]*, 1928. For a historical account of the concept of *Kultur* as it has functioned in German thought, see Raymond Geuss, "*Kultur, Bildung, Geist*," in *Morality, Culture and History: Essays on German Philosophy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

A propos "the heat he generates in overcoming friction", in his diary ("Movements of Thought," PPO, p. 73) Wittgenstein compares himself to "the one who burnt down the library of Alexandria."

¹⁵ *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972, pp. 27-28. This concern pervaded Wittgenstein's later work, though he rarely said so. Based on a lecture entitled "Wittgenstein as a Viennese" given by Stephen Toulmin in Memphis, Tennessee, on January 23, 1973, Peter Barker reports ("Uncle Ludwig's Book About Science," *Philosophical Topics*, 1981 Supplementary Volume, p. 71) the following:

When Allan Janik interviewed Wittgenstein's family as part of his research for Wittgenstein's Vienna, he discovered that the family had their own names for their celebrated uncle's most celebrated books. They called the *Tractatus* "Uncle Ludwig's book on ethics," and they called the *Philosophical Investigations* "Uncle Ludwig's scientific work."

The ironic titles capture a truth in both cases that was not said but shown by their author.

¹⁶ "Philosophy," in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 171 (and also p. 167=PI 118). And "I destroy, I destroy, I destroy--" in C&V, p. 21/19 (1931). Cf. the systematic destruction of idols commanded by Josiah and carried out in II Kings 23: 1-30; and the most famous destruction of the golden calf by Moses in Exodus 32.

¹⁷ C&V p. 61/70; and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Cambridge: MIT Press, rev. ed., 1978, p. 132.

¹⁸ C&V p. 42/48-9 (1942). There seems almost to be a tradition in the Old Testament of prophets being crippled: Moses has a speech impediment (Exodus 4:10), Isaiah has his lip singed (Isaiah 6:7), and, metaphorically crippled, Hosea is made to marry and beget children with a whore (Hosea 1:2).

Wittgenstein's student, Theodore Redpath, thought of him as a prophet even before he met him.

See p. 16 of Redpath's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Student's Memoir*.

¹⁹ Drury, p. 160. And "Perhaps someday a culture will arise out of this civilization" (C&V p. 64/73, [1947] noticed by Tessin). See also "Movements of Thought," PPO, p. 55. Cf. the preface to Nietzsche's *Will to Power*: "This book is the property of the very few. Perhaps indeed not one of them is yet on earth." In "The Puzzle of Goethe's Influence on Wittgenstein," p. 25, I conjectured that 100 years was significant to Wittgenstein because Spengler had supposed the West would be entering a new era of culture by then.

²⁰ Spengler, *Decline of the West*, New York: Alfred Knopf, vol. 2, 1928, pp. 192-6 (pp. 270-274). That Spengler thought of Russia as clearly outside of the Western tradition is made clear in a footnote on p. 16 (12) of vol. I. Cf. also vol. II, p. 278.

²¹ See the account in Ray Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, New York: Free Press, 1990, pp. 348-354.

²² Monk (pp. 247-8) sees Wittgenstein's attraction to Russia in light of John Maynard Keynes' account, *A Short View of Russia*, Hogarth, 1925, which Wittgenstein read in 1927 and appreciated. But the fact that Wittgenstein and Engelmann already considered a "possible flight [*Flucht*, as in 'escape' or 'exodus'] to Russia" in 1922 (Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1967, p. 53), suggests that his interest was instigated earlier by reading Spengler.

In his discussion with the Vienna Circle on 1 January, 1931, Wittgenstein said: "What should be given to the Americans? Surely not our half-rotten culture. The Americans have no culture yet. From us, however, they have nothing to learn....*Russia*. The passion is promising" (*Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, ed. B. McGuinness, Oxford: Blackwell, 1979, p. 142).

Engelmann himself went on, in 1925, to consider more seriously an escape to the real homeland.

Wittgenstein comments (p. 55):

That you want to go to Palestine is the one piece of good news that makes your letter cheering and hopeful for me. This may be the right thing to do and may have a spiritual effect. I might want to join you. Would you take me with you?"

But when Engelmann finally did emigrate to Tel Aviv in 1934, Wittgenstein said no more about it (Monk, p. 229). By this point, he and Francis Skinner were already taking Russian lessons.

An alternative possible explanation for Wittgenstein's interest and trip to Russia has been raised in a very speculative way by Kimberley Cornish, in his book *The Jew of Linz* (London: Century, 1998), where he proposes that Wittgenstein was a Stalinist sympathizer and recruiter. This would be incompatible with my account here.

²³ See Wittgenstein's diary entry of 4.4.37 ("Movements of Thought," PPO, p. 237) while in Norway: "I sometimes consider whether I should leave here now already. For example: first to Vienna for a month, then to England for a month—or longer—then to Russia. And then return here?—Or to Ireland?"; and his last letter to Engelmann (21.6.37): "I am now in England for a short stay; perhaps I shall go to Russia. God knows what will become of me." And von Hayek's memoir of Wittgenstein, "Remembering My Cousin, Ludwig Wittgenstein," recounts that after World War II Wittgenstein had visited Soviet-occupied Vienna: "He then engaged me in the most lively conversation, beginning with his impressions of the Russians at Vienna, an experience which evidently had shaken him to his depth and destroyed certain long-cherished illusions" (in *Flowers*, v. 1, p. 129).

²⁴ The tension between civilization and culture haunted Wittgenstein's homelife as well. His father, who represented progressive Western civilization, died in 1913. His mother, whose musical talents could have symbolized the lost Western culture, died in 1926. Yet during the thirteen years of her widowhood Wittgenstein was most painfully estranged from his family. See McGuinness, pp. 28 and 22; and Monk, p. 235.

²⁵ The Judaeans in exile, however, were allowed to return home by the Persians after their defeat of the Babylonians. Many, but not all, did. Spengler discusses this in vol. II, p. 207.

²⁶ I believe Spengler's thoughts on the mechanistic philosophy of our times do influence Wittgenstein's thinking about the nature of causality. For more about this, see my papers: "Wittgenstein on Non-Mediative Causality," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, October, 1999; and "The Puzzle of Goethe's Influence on Wittgenstein."

²⁷ *Zettel* 455.

²⁸ R. Rhees, "Postscript," in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, p. 208.

²⁹ C&V, p. 17/24.

³⁰ Monk, p. 498. Wittgenstein's puzzling attitude towards Ramsey is elaborated in his diary entry of 27.4.30 in "Movements of Thought," PPO, pp. 15-7.

³¹ PI 123

³² *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics: Cambridge, 1939*, ed. C. Diamond, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976, p. 44. And similarly, the notes of lectures in Gasking and Jackson, "Wittgenstein as a Teacher," in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and His Philosophy*, ed. K. Fann, New York: Prometheus, 1967, pp. 49-55. Cf. also the comparison of language to the streets of an ancient city (PI 18); and the comparison of philosophical confusions to geographical misconceptions (PO p. 185).

³³ And if being a good philosopher requires being an exile, it is understandable that Wittgenstein encouraged his students to find work outside of philosophy.

³⁴ Monk, p. 351.

³⁵ C&V, p. 15/22 (1931), and PO pp. 185-7.

³⁶ PO p. 199.

³⁷ PO p. 195.

³⁸ According to Desmond Lee (p. 192 in *Flowers*, v. 2) Wittgenstein "said once that one of the great drawbacks to a teacher's life was that he was working always for a future he never saw, and that he was constantly having to deal with a *new* generation of pupils; no enduring visible result, only constantly changing generations."

³⁹ C&V p. 61/70 (1947).

⁴⁰ From the same passage quoted above. And cf. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 132; and "Movements of Thought," PPO, p. 169.

⁴¹ Or for the supposed inevitable irrelevance of science to philosophy—an issue I address in "Wittgenstein and Neuroscience," *Synthese*, March, 1989.

⁴² In discussion after this paper was presented, Cora Diamond suggested that perhaps the illiterate peasant-soldier Platon, in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, would be immune to philosophical problems.

⁴³ Cf. Wittgenstein's feeling, while a teacher in Lower Austria, that he had been "called" but had refused. See Monk's interesting discussion of this and related material at pp. 199-200.

⁴⁴ Letter written December 20, 1919, and quoted by Monk, pp. 182-3. In a different context Wittgenstein wrote: “Only if I were to submerge myself in religion could all these doubts be stilled” (C&V, p. 48/54, 1946).

⁴⁵ The opening chapter of Norman Malcolm’s book *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) gives a helpful summary of Wittgenstein’s actual engagement with religion (rather than his thoughts about religion). Further biographical details have come to light since Malcolm wrote that chapter in 1990 (see Monk, pp. 573-5), but they do not essentially change the picture. Yet it is worth reading the intense account of Wittgenstein’s spiritual struggles in the Lenten period of 1937 leading up to Easter and the reappearance of the sun in the Norway sky in “Movements of Thought,” PPO, pp. 175-237.