This is inevitably a tale of two cities — and it is fitting that (as I understand) a parallel celebration has been held in Cambridge. They were the two cities of Wittgenstein obviously enough, but in a measure of Ramsey too. Later than Wittgenstein (by the interval of their difference in age) he came to Vienna as a pilgrim, just as Wittgenstein had gone to Cambridge. He to learn from Wittgenstein as Wittgenstein to learn from Russell. But they were to find other things also in those cities — Wittgenstein the whole ambience of Bloomsbury, Ramsey the home of psychoanalysis, the family of Wittgenstein (like many visitors — and even later biographers — he seem to have fallen in love with Wittgenstein’s powerful sister) and the seeds of the Vienna Circle. My purpose is to see how the two men interacted intellectually and what that tells us about the two cities as intellectual centres. I would not propose a comparative evaluation of the two, for one obvious reason and for one less so — Ramsey died before developing all his powers, while Wittgenstein could die content that he had made his contribution. So much is obvious, but an overlap in the themes they treated has often obscured the fact that they were trying to do quite different things.

Needless to detail here how before the First War Russell helped Wittgenstein to make the existential choice between being an aviator (in those days also a constructor of planes) and a logician, largely by bringing him into a group where he could make free use of his intellect. To be surrounded by Moore, Keynes, the Stracheys and even the younger Apostles (then practically the Cambridge branch of Bloomsbury) was a new experience for him. His family background was one of wealth and high culture but not intellectual to the degree cultivated in this new environment. Naturally he wanted to change them — for one, he maintained that mathematics would improve people’s taste because taste comes of thinking honestly. They were all against him. He even attempted to resign from their Society (the Apostles), thinking that the younger members “had not yet made their toilets”. The brittle arguments of the Society, where the paradoxical or the scandalous would be defended for sheer love of argument seemed to him intolerable. And there was another thing: all, even the older members, lacked what he called reverence: even Russell (whom, at that period, he still respected) was so Philistine as to appreciate the advantages of their age as opposed to previous ones.

Still between them the members of this group set him on the way to writing his first and in some ways his greatest work. He was to repair Russell’s logic, he was to deal with Keynes’s probability in two or three paragraphs, and he was to...
show that ethics, Moore’s field, did not consist of propositions at all. And perhaps this is what they wanted from him: they “looked to him for the next big step in philosophy”, as Russell told Wittgenstein’s sister.

The original *Abhandlung*, whose completion he announced to Russell in 1915, was the product of this Cambridge period, but the additions he made to it in 1916-18 (the passages on God, freedom and the mystical) issued rather from the next two phases in his life. Tolstoy’s religion had taken hold of him in the war and the circle of young disciples of Kraus and Loos whom he met in Olmütz acted as midwives to the utterance of what he had previously and, as he thought, necessarily left unsaid. Russell was shocked by the mysticism that thus entered in, while as for religion the least hint of it was enough to exile one from the drawing rooms of Bloomsbury. “We have lost Tom”, was Virginia Woolf’s comment on T.S. Eliot’s conversion.

Still, when the manuscript turned up in Cambridge it made an immediate impression at least on one Trinity undergraduate. C.K. Ogden, as Hugh Mellor recounts, had helped Ramsey to learn German (from Ernst Mach’s *Analyse der Empfindungen*) while still at Winchester, for he won the German prize there. Later Ramsey undertook to translate Wittgenstein’s newly arrived manuscript when many, even Moore, doubted that this was possible. The translation he dictated in Miss Pate’s office – the typescript still exists and was then worked on by Ogden in correspondence with Wittgenstein – it gives the atmosphere of the work very well, though for a textbook (as it became) less *Pathos* was needed, as Geach pointed out. Perhaps this atmosphere led to Broad’s quip about his “younger colleagues’ (notice not his own) dancing to the highly syncopated pipings of Herr (if you please) Wittgenstein’s flute” but Ramsey’s review written in the year he graduated as a Wrangler is a model of clarity. Syncopation or complexity where necessary was no barrier to him and it remains one of the best introductions to the *Tractatus*.

The young Apostle then went to see his elder brother, recommended by a host of common acquaintances and by the merit of his own translation. He brought an extraordinary quickness of mind and perhaps equally important a most open manner: I quote Frances Partridge’s diary from a few years later:

As with many great men (and I am sure he is one) Frank is outwardly simple and unselconscious. His tall ungainly frame becomes somewhat thicker at the hips; his broad Slavonic face always seems ready to break into a wide smile and his fine rapidly vanishing hair floats in wayward strands around his impressive cranium. He’s intensely musical etc.¹

The last point we shall return to: it is of some importance. The qualification “outwardly simple” is well chosen. Mrs Partridge will have been aware of the inner tensions that worried an admiring father when Ramsey was an undergraduate and the emotional crisis that led him to want analysis in 1924 (it cured him, he said, at any rate of the wish to talk about himself).