



WPTC
**Young
Scholar's Day**
July 3, 2020

Faced with Crisis

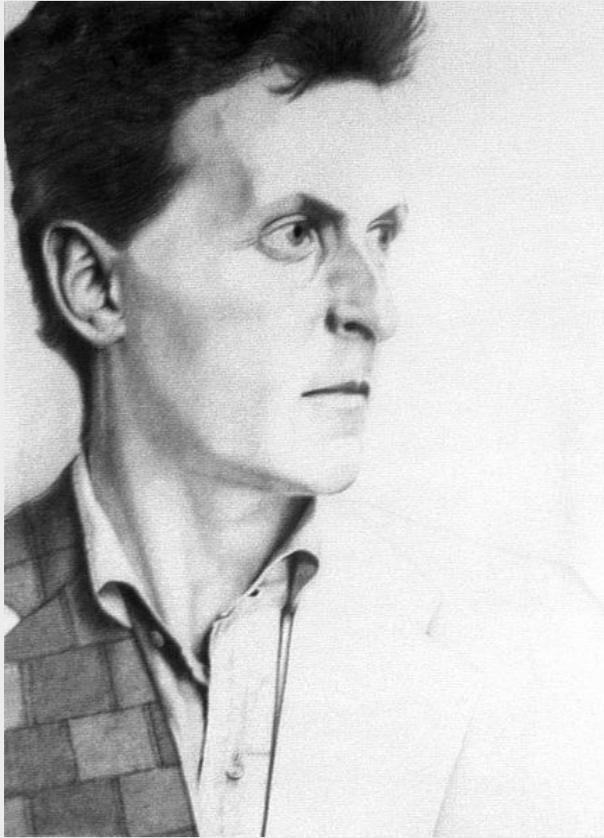
Wittgenstein to Sraffa
on the change of form
of life

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Wittgenstein & Sraffa



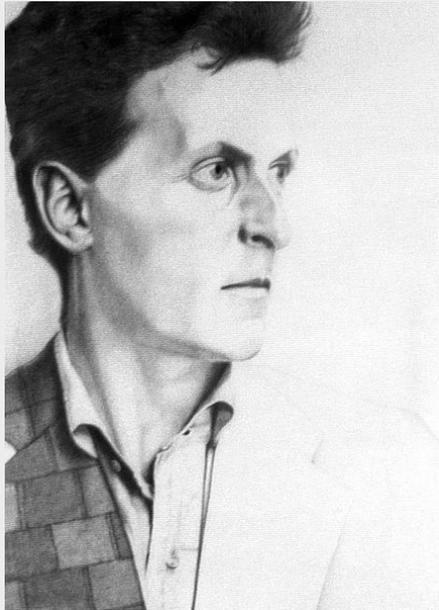
German „Leitkultur“

1. We value **some social habits**, not because their content, but because **they are the expression of a certain mentality**: We say our name. **We shake hands in greeting**. At demonstrations we have a ban on masking. "Show your face" - that is an expression of our democratic coexistence. In everyday life it is important for us whether we look into a friendly or a sad face of our interlocutors. We are an open society. **We show our faces. We are not burqa.**

English translation & emphasis by me
(Die Zeit / 30. April 2017)



The Fallacy



“Now the fallacy which I want to point out is this, – to think every action which people do is *preceded by* a particular state of mind of which the action is the outcome.”

„The fallacy could be described by saying that one presupposes a mental reservoir in which the real causes of our actions are kept. Now this connects up with our first question because one is tempted to think of such a reservoir, i.e. 'the mentality of a people' and when one speaks of changes which the Government of a country might undergo one imagines this thing, the mentality, not to alter.“

(171. Notes for P. Sraffa, [21.2.1934]
in: *Wittgenstein in Cambridge, Letters and Documents 1911-1951*. Edited by Brian McGuinness)

„Mentality of a people“

When I subsequently talked of the mentality of a people I did not speak of that imaginary reservoir which I had just rejected but of **a sum of <[observed]> phenomena** which one observes in the life of a nation.

I mean phenomena of the following kind: How they dress; whether there is a great difference of dress between the higher classes & the middle class or lower middle class. What they eat; whether they take greater or less care to prepare their food. Table manners and their distribution [in] <amongst> the <social> classes. Family life. Politeness of policemen & railway guards etc. Are you liable to be cheated in shops? If you come into a restaurant is it noisy or quiet. Cleanliness, kind of cleanliness. Forms of politeness. etc. etc. etc.

Now if you ask what there is in common between all these phenomena I should answer that they are the kind of things that are [obs] noticed by an unscientific onlooker that they are the things which a man observes <without> studying statistics, counting or measuring anything. And they constitute the physiognomy or mentality of a people. The coal supply is not part of this physiognomy.

(The word physiognomy <here> is [well chosen] a suitable expression because similar to the physiognomy of a human being it refers to something which appears to the common observer).

(Wittgenstein to Sraffa, probably 11.3.1934

Add_ms_a_427_97a, first published by Moira De Iaco in *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 8 (1-2), 2019, pp. 209-223)

Form of life

241. "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?"—It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. **That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.**

238. The rule can only seem to me to produce all its consequences in advance if I draw them as a matter of course [müssen sie mir *selbstverständlich* sein]. As much as it is a matter of course for me to call this colour "blue". (Criteria for the fact that something is 'a matter of course' for me.)

201. [...] What this shews is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases. [...]

202. And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. [...]

(Philosophical Investigations)

„Mentality of a people“

“When I went on to talk about the mentality of a people I meant a particular selection of their actions.”

“What I said wasn’t that nothing could be taken as a pivot round which these changes take place but only that the physiognomy (mentality) wasn’t this pivot; & that on the other hand one was strongly tempted to take it as the pivot because it is the thing that impressed itself strongest on our mind.”

(Wittgenstein to Sraffa, probably 11.3.1934
Add_ms_a_427_97a, first published by Moira De Iaco in *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 8 (1-2), 2019, pp. 209-223)



“The sickness of a time heals itself by a change in the life of people; the sickness of philosophical problems could only be cured through a change in thought and life, not by a medicine invented by an individual.”

“I believe, and hope, that a future generation will laugh at this hocus pocus.”

(Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, part II.22-23, translation)