

Friedrich A. Hayek

Remembering My Cousin, Ludwig Wittgenstein

BETWEEN THE RAILS and the building of the railway station of Bad Ischl there used to be ample space where, sixty years ago, in the season, a regular promenade used to develop before the departure of the night train to Vienna.

I believe it was on the last day of August 1918 that here, among a boisterous crowd of young officers returning to the front after visiting their families on furlough in the Salzkammergut district, two artillery ensigns became vaguely aware that they ought to know one another. I am not sure whether it was a resemblance to other members of our families or because we had actually met before that led us to ask the other, "Aren't you a Wittgenstein?" (or, perhaps, "Aren't you a Hayek?"). At any rate it led to our travelling together through the night to Vienna, and even though most of the time we naturally tried to sleep we did manage to converse a little.

Some parts of this conversation made a strong impression on me. He was not only much irritated by the high spirits of the noisy and probably half-drunk party of fellow-officers with which we shared the carriage without in the least concealing his contempt for mankind in general, but he also took it for granted that any relation of his no matter how distantly connected must have the same standards as himself. He was not so very wrong! I was then very young and inexperienced, barely nineteen and the product of what would now be called a puritanical education: the kind in which the ice-cold bath my father took every morning was the much admired (though rarely imitated) standard of discipline for body and mind. And Ludwig Wittgenstein was just ten years my senior.

What struck me most in this conversation was a radical passion for truthfulness in everything (which I came to know as a characteristic vogue among the young Viennese intellectuals of the generation immediately preceding mine only in the following university years). This truthfulness

became almost a fashion in that border group between the purely Jewish and the purely Gentile parts of the intelligentsia in which I came so much to move. It meant much more than truth in speech. One had to "live" truth and not tolerate any pretence in oneself or others. It sometimes produced outright rudeness and, certainly, unpleasantness. Every convention was dissected and every conventional form exposed as fraud. Wittgenstein merely carried this further in applying it to himself. I sometimes felt that he took a perverse pleasure in discovering falsehood in his own feelings and that he was constantly trying to purge himself of all fraud.

THAT HE WAS VERY highly strung even at that time cannot be doubted. Among the remoter relatives he was thought of (though hardly known by them) as the maddest member of a rather extraordinary family, all of whom were exceptionally gifted and both ready and in a position to live for what they most cared for. Before 1914 I had heard much of (though being too young to attend) their famous musical *soirées* at the "Palais Wittgenstein", which ceased to be a social centre after 1914. For many years the name meant to me chiefly the kind old lady who, when I was six years old, had taken me for my first car-ride—in an open electromobile round the Ringstrasse.

Apart from an even earlier memory of being taken to the luxurious apartment of an extremely old lady and being made to understand that she was the sister of my maternal great-grandfather—and, as I now know, Ludwig Wittgenstein's maternal grandmother—I have no direct knowledge of the Wittgenstein family at the height of their social position at Vienna. The tragedy of the three elder sons apparently all ending their lives by suicide had attenuated it even more than the death of the great industrialist at its head would otherwise have done. I am afraid that my

earliest recollection of the name of Wittgenstein is connected with the shocked account of one of my Styrian maiden great-aunts, surely inspired by envy rather than malice, that their grandfather “sold his daughter to a rich Jewish banker. . . .” This was the kind old lady I still remember—just.

I DID NOT MEET Ludwig Wittgenstein again for ten years; but I heard from him from time to time through his eldest sister who was a second cousin, an exact contemporary and a close friend of my mother. The regular visiting had made “Aunt Minning” a familiar figure to me (actually, she spelt her name, which is an abbreviation of Hermine, with a single “n”, but this would sound odd to English ears), and she remained a frequent visitor. Her youngest brother’s problems evidently occupied her much, and though she deprecated all talk about the “*Sonderling*”, the crank, and strongly defended him when occasional and undoubtedly often much-distorted accounts of his doings circulated, we did soon learn of them. The public eye did not take notice of him while his brother Paul Wittgenstein, a one-armed pianist, became a well-known figure.

But I did, through these connections, become probably one of the first readers of *Tractatus* when it appeared in 1922. Since, like most philosophically interested people of our generation I was, like Wittgenstein, much influenced by Ernst Mach, it made a great impression on me.

The next time I met Ludwig Wittgenstein was in the spring of 1928 when the economist Dennis

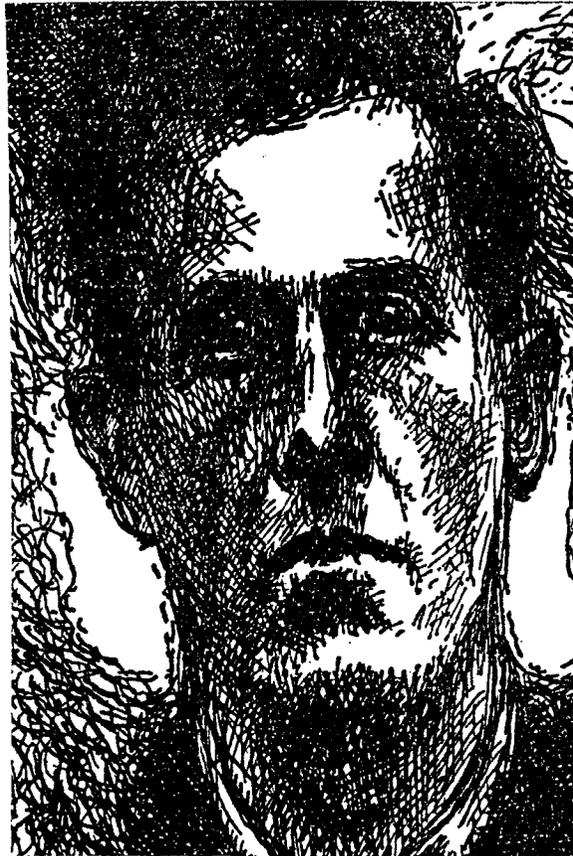
Robertson, who was taking me for a walk through the Fellows’ Gardens of Trinity College, Cambridge, suddenly decided to change course because on the top of a little rise he perceived the form of the philosopher draped over a deck-chair. He evidently stood rather in awe of him, and he did not wish to disturb him. Naturally, I walked up to him, was greeted with surprising friendliness, and we engaged in a pleasant but uninteresting conversation (in German) about home and family to which Robertson soon left

us. Before long Wittgenstein’s interest flagged, and evident signs of his not knowing what to do with me made me leave him after a while.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN almost twelve years later that the first of the only real series of meetings I had with him took place. When I went to Cambridge in 1939 with the London School of Economics I soon learned that he was away working at some war hospital. But a year or two later I encountered him most unexpectedly. John Maynard Keynes had arranged for me to have rooms in the Gibbs building of King’s College, and after a while I was asked by Richard Braithwaite to take

part in the meetings of the Moral Science Club (I think that was the name) which took place in his rooms just below those I occupied.

It was at the end of one of these meetings that Wittgenstein quite suddenly and rather dramatically emerged. It concerned a paper which had not particularly interested me and of the subject of which I have no recollection. Suddenly Wittgenstein leapt to his feet, poker in hand, indignant in the highest degree, and he proceeded to demonstrate with the implement how simple and



obvious *Matter* really was. Seeing this rampant man in the middle of the room swinging a poker was certainly rather alarming, and one felt inclined to escape into a safe corner. Frankly, my impression at that time was that he had gone mad!

It was some time later, probably a year or two, that I took courage to go and see him, after having learnt that he was again in Cambridge. He then lived (as always, I think) in rooms several flights up in a building outside the College. The bare room with the iron stove, to which he had to bring a chair for me from his bedroom, has often been described. We talked pleasantly on a variety of topics outside philosophy and politics (we knew that we disagreed politically), and he seemed to like the very fact that I strictly avoided "talking shop", not unlike one or two other curious figures I have met in Cambridge. But, though these visits were quite pleasant and he seemed to encourage their repetition, they were also rather uninteresting and I went along only two or three times more.

After the end of the War, when I had already returned to London, a new kind of contact by letter began when the possibility arose, first to send food parcels, and later to visit our relatives in Vienna. This involved all kinds of complicated contacts with bureaucratic organisations about which, he rightly assumed, I had found out details before he did. In this he showed a curious combination of impracticability and meticulous attention to detail which must have made all contacts with the ordinary business of life highly unsettling for him. However, he did manage to get to Vienna fairly soon after me (I had succeeded for the first time in 1946), and I believe he went there once or twice again.

I THINK IT WAS in the course of his return from his last visit to Vienna that we met for the last time. He had gone to see his dying sister Minning once more, and he was (though I did not know it) himself already mortally ill. I had interrupted the usual railway journey from Vienna via Switzerland and France at Basel and had boarded there the sleeping-car at midnight the next day. Since my fellow occupant of the compartment seemed to be already asleep I undressed in semi-darkness. As I prepared to mount to the upper berth a tousled head shot out from the lower one and almost shouted at me, "You are Professor Hayek!" Before I had recovered sufficiently to realise that it was Wittgenstein and to register my assent, he had turned to the wall again.

When I woke up next morning he had disappeared, presumably to the restaurant car. When I returned I found him deeply engrossed in a detective story and apparently unwilling to talk. This lasted only until he had finished his paperback. 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. Gradually we were led to more general questions of moral philosophy, but just as it was getting really exciting we arrived at the port (in Boulogne, I believe). Wittgenstein seemed very anxious to continue our discussion, and indeed he said that we must do so on board ship.

But I simply could not find him. Whether he regretted having become so deeply engaged, or had discovered that, after all, I was just another philistine, I do not know. At any rate, I never saw him again.

Karl Heinzen

The Origins of Modern Terrorism—By WALTER LAQUEUR

KARL HEINZEN is no longer remembered today except perhaps by the few experts exploring the highways and by-ways of certain minute German left-wing sects in the 1840s, and by the even smaller number of historians specialising in German-American politics in the third quarter of the last century.

Heinzen figures marginally in most Karl Marx biographies because of his contacts with the founder of “scientific socialism” in the period between 1844 and 1847. (He wrote for Marx’s *Rheinische Zeitung*.) Later on he bitterly quarrelled with Marx and Engels who attacked him in a series of articles and a brochure.¹ These are pieces which (unlike, for instance, the *Anti-Dühring*) are read these days, if at all, by professional Marxologists only. A little book by C. H. Huber on Heinzen’s political thought was published in Switzerland in 1932, and a full-length study in the United States by Carl Wittke (*Against the Current*, 1945) who is also the author of a Weitling biography.² Neither deals with the one aspect of Heinzen’s thought which is, in retrospect, the most interesting by far—that of his role as the first ideologist—and great visionary—of modern terrorism.

My interest in Heinzen arose while engaged in research on guerrilla warfare and terrorism,³ and I soon saw it was a tradition which could, of course, be traced far back into history. But its doctrinal foundations were laid only in the early 19th century. Men like Chranowski and Stolzman, Carlo Bianco and Budini are even less known today than Karl Heinzen, but it is precisely in works of these forgotten Polish and Italian radical democrats of the 1830s and 1840s that guerrilla theory with most of its military and

political implications was first described and analysed in quite surprising detail—one hundred years before Mao Tse-tung. Most of these men were personally known to each other, meeting as they did in one or another of Mazzini’s pan-European “secret societies.” Their writings were forgotten for the simple reason that they were never tried out in practice. Italy was eventually united and Poland became independent, but it was not as the result of guerrilla warfare.

BAKUNIN AND NECHAYEV are commonly regarded nowadays as the pioneers of the concept of systematic terrorism. Bakunin’s pamphlets of 1869 and the famous *Catechism* are reprinted to this day all over the globe. (“I no longer adhere to all of Nechayev’s revolutionary catechism”, George Jackson reported in the 1960s from San Quentin prison about his Black Power doctrines.) Bakunin and Nechayev strongly influenced later generations of Russian terrorists; and since Russian terrorism had its admirers and imitators in America, India, Western Europe, and elsewhere, their fame spread throughout the world. There is no denying that the impact of the writings of Bakunin and Nechayev was greater than that of all other apostles of terrorism. But there is another earlier tradition of terrorist thought, which antedates it by several decades; it was in many respects more detailed and, in retrospect, more prophetic.

Its best known proponent was Johann (John) Most, the German Social Democratic leader who settled in the United States in the early 1880s. Having been converted to anarchism (and violence) in London, he continued to edit *Freiheit*, the most outspoken and radical anarchist newspaper of the day. He had a devoted group of followers among recent immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Johann Most has never been quite forgotten; an *Anarchist Cookbook* published in the militant 1960s is derived from his *Revolutionäre Kriegswissenschaft* of the 1880s, and there has been in recent years in his native Germany a Most revival on a modest

¹ *Die moralisierende Kritik und die kritisierende Moral* (Brussels, 1847).

² See Melvin J. Lasky, “Wilhelm Weitling”, in *ENCOUNTER* (March).

³ See my *Guerrilla and Terrorism* (both published by Weidenfeld and Little Brown, 1977), and *The Guerrilla Reader* (New American Library, 1977).