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Wittgenstein, Philosopher of Cultures

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Well over half a century after his death, Ludwig Wittgenstein remains controversial throughout the philosophical world. Yet the fact that this is primarily on account of his approaches to topics pertaining to logic, language and the philosophy of mathematics has obscured the extent to which he was seriously, if not centrally, engaged with the phenomenon of 'human culture' – on a number of levels and quite possibly in a number of senses of this term. The articles presented here promise to help redress this imbalance in the reception of his thought.

In 1914, Wittgenstein found himself posted for military service to Cracow, long a distinctive intersection point for the cultures of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, and the place where he would begin writing the very first of his surviving philosophical notebooks. A century later, an international conference was organized there (at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow) with the aim of exploring the implications of his thought for our understanding of human culture. Taking this event as its starting point, the present volume has collected contributions from philosophers and researchers specifically engaged with this aspect of his intellectual legacy.

The various aspects of Wittgenstein's thinking highlighted here will serve to broaden and diversify currently existing perspectives on his philosophical intentions, methodology and relevance to contemporary thinking about culture. They also suggest that the adoption of a one-sided approach to his thinking about language, wherein his more analytical claims and the broader cultural background to his philosophical objectives and concerns are isolated from one another, risks depriving us of some of the most fruitful perspectives on his work.

