PREFACE

A volume of essays on Wittgenstein, arguably this century's greatest philosopher, certainly would require no apology. However, one which combines him with Otto Weininger, often taken to be Austria's most notorious crank, warrants comment. The simple fact is that Weininger's reputation as a crank is badly in need of revision. Yet, the caliber of writing about Weininger seems to vary inversely with growing awareness of his huge impact upon, not simply the troglodytes of the age like Dietrich Eckhart and Arthur Trebitsch, but its geniuses, witness Wittgenstein and Kraus, as well. Thus one of the aims in collecting the essays below is to make a small step in the direction of a just, contextual evaluation of Weininger.

Since much of what lies below is "negative dialectics", I ought to begin by criticizing my own opening sentence. In view of the existence of a burgeoning 'Wittgenstein industry' within and outside of professional philosophical circles it does in fact require some justification for yet more 'Wittgensteiniana'. Surprisingly, there is a good deal yet to be said about Wittgenstein, especially about the implications of his thought for politics and social science. In this area my aim has been to clear ground for profitable discussion by directing debate away from what I take to be dead ends.

The essays below were written over a period of six years with the expection of "Schopenhauer and the Early Wittgenstein", whose origin is described in "Writing Wittgenstein's Vienna". In one sense they represent the way to Wittgenstein's Vienna and the way beyond it. "Writing Wittgenstein's Vienna" was originally my contribution to the Nordiska Forskarkurs Seminar on the historiography of the Geisteswissenschaften in Bergen, Norway in 1978. It has been described by one close friend as an "ego trip" and by another as a piece written by an eighty year old (which presumably was not a compliment to the wisdom of age). So, I have no doubts that less sympathetic readers will have yet other intuitions about it. In defense I can only draw attention to the well-recognized difficulty of describing how a work of such a complicated nature comes into
existence when one has in fact oneself produced that work. In this situation frank autobiography with all the tedium that can entail for a reader seemed preferable to autobiography disguised as methodology. "Schopenhauer and the Early Wittgenstein" was originally my M.A. thesis. It appeared as an article in the Irish periodical, *Philosophical Studies*, in 1966. I am particularly happy to see it reprinted here, since numerous people have complained of its inaccessibility. Reading it twenty years later I have a better understanding of why Arthur Koestler could have termed the author of the first part of *Wittgenstein's Vienna* an "abominable stylist". "Wittgenstein and Weininger" was a paper delivered to the Second International Wittgenstein Symposium at Kirchberg am Wechsel, Austria in 1977. "Philosophical Sources of Wittgenstein's Ethics" appeared in *Telos* in 1980 as my contribution to a multi-sided debate about the proper mode of explaining the curiosities of the mysticism of the *Tractatus*. My criticisms of Nyíri's conservative interpretation of the *Philosophical Investigations* was originally presented at a meeting of Barry Smith's Austro-German Seminar in London in 1980. "Wittgenstein, Marx and Sociology" is an expanded version of a paper delivered to the Wittgenstein session of the University of Picardy's Centre d'Histoire et d'Epistemologie in 1983. Part of "Writing About Weininger" appeared as "Comment écrire sur Weininger" in *Austriaca* in 1983.

The thread that runs through these essays is a particular view of the relationship between philosophy, history and social science which is articulated in the previously unpublished essay "How Not To Write Austrian Intellectual History — Again". My peculiar way of getting at that unity has been through the critique of interpretations of Wittgenstein and Weininger. The point of including an essay which is not on Wittgenstein or Weininger, then, has been to make explicit how precisely these "negative dialectics" are inter alia directed to establishing a link between philosophy and the place where it is carried on, which link is itself philosophical. In short, it is concerned with the question of how an environment generates philosophy.

Rudolf Haller's merit in the inaugural volume of this series was to demonstrate how the nineteenth century cultural milieu influenced the development of institutional philosophy. The account which I suggest below of the way philosophical problems are rooted in social environments compliments rather than contradicts his analyses by drawing attention to another aspect of the interplay between cultural
context and philosophy in Austria. It is precisely Weininger’s importance to have channeled a widespread discontent with liberalism and the growing concern with the role of sexuality in human life into philosophical form. Weininger initiates a transformation of the role of philosophy which found its most profound development in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. Weininger’s importance, then, is less a matter of the positions he advocated than it is of the problems he posed. His moral earnestness set the scene for a whole range of developments in Austrian cultural life culminating in Wittgenstein’s “ethical deed” of drawing limits to the sayable.

In the subtitle of his contribution to this series Haller described his essays as “variations on a theme”. The philosophical unity of my essays could be described with a musical metaphor as well, that of the leitmotiv. Despite the diverse subject explicitly addressed in them these essays develop themes about the relationship of a thinker’s life to his thought, reflections about the nature of contextualism and the way in which philosophical problems intrude into cultural history, which unify the book beneath the surface.

A glance at the references will make it abundantly clear that my debts are many. There are, however some people who merit special thanks. Richard Weininger encouraged me to set the record straight about his brother’s work, which he considered wholly misunderstood by friends and foes alike. It is a pity that he did not live to see and evaluate this volume. Owen Flanagan convinced me that it was important not to ignore Levi’s views about Wittgenstein’s ethics and was generally a stimulating interlocutor. To Linda Gardiner’s erudition and analytic acuteness I owe my first inklings of the complexities of Wittgenstein’s notion of “form of life”. Rudolf Haller’s interest and hospitality no less than his learning and unfailing good humor have been a continual source of encouragement. My disagreements with J.C. Nyíri should not obscure the fact that I have benefited greatly from his scholarship. Our exchanges demonstrate that good will and mutual respect have more to do with providing grounds for communication than intellectual disagreement does with its lack. A grant from the Norway America Foundation gave me the opportunity to collect these essays at leisure in the extremely stimulating surroundings of the Philosophy Department of the University of Bergen. Britt Lund produced the typescript with a diligence and cheerfulness that was above and beyond the call of duty.

Finally, this volume was conceived while I was visiting professor at
the University of Graz in 1982-83. It is one of several pleasant surprises which awaited me there. Fifty years ago J.N. Findlay prefaced his study of Meinong with a description worthy of that stunning city which merits citation here:

Graz is one of those rare places, in the furthermost corner of one world and on the edge of another where everything seems set in fixed perfection: its river, its plain, its town, its castle, its not too high and not too distant mountains with their many exquisite vantage points, are all wholly beautiful, whether in sunshine or snow.

He was no less accurate in his description of the residents of Graz: “The inhabitants share in the grace of the landscape and the architecture, and like these they stay, and do not alter”. It is to the most gracious resident of Graz that I dedicate this volume.

Allan JANIK

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