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Otto Weininger: Sex, Science & Self
in Imperial Vienna

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Otto Weininger

SEX, SCIENCE, AND SELF
IN IMPERIAL VIENNA

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ing out its innumerable contextual links and ideological elements. And this is far from a sterile academic exercise. In its time, *Geschlecht und Charakter* was less a book than a weapon: if we see the work only as a catalogue of its author's personal prejudices, then we see it as far less noxious than it was actually meant to be.

Fin-de-siècle Vienna did not solely resound with lofty aesthetic debates: it was a battleground of far less noble ideas and ideologies—many of which were related to the nature of sexual, racial, and cultural identity. In an oft-quoted and characteristically apocalyptic phrase, Karl Kraus called Austria-Hungary the “experimental station for the end of the world.”¹ One could say the same about Weininger's Vienna without much exaggeration. It is almost redundant to emphasize that many (perhaps most) of the ideas galvanizing the Viennese intelligentsia were half-baked, wrong, repellent, or downright inhumane by the criteria of today's liberal scholars. Nevertheless, some of those repugnant preoccupations were more characteristic of Weininger and his era than the comic operettas of Lehar or the lilting strains of the Blue Danube Waltz. Although by no means a mere synopsis of fin-de-siècle Viennese thought, *Geschlecht und Charakter* was so rooted in its times and molded so fundamentally by the currents of Viennese intellectual life and cultural politics that the text simply defies comprehension if examined in isolation from its epoch.

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Immediately after his dramatic suicide—which occurred in the very house in which Beethoven had died and which, at least partly because of that, received wide coverage in the newspapers—Weininger was often portrayed as a tragic genius who had wrested one secret too many from Nature. To take the most famous example, August Strindberg attributed Weininger's suicide to his “rediscovery” of the fact that Man, representing human morality and civilization, was wholly opposed to Woman. While Weininger's personal friends could not deny his lack of mental balance toward the end of his life, even they portrayed him as a genius in the biographies they produced with impressive speed after his suicide.² No less a man than Sigmund Freud, who detested Weininger's views and disapproved of his methods, declared that Weininger's personality had possessed a spark of genius. Some of the finest intellects of the early twentieth century—Franz Kafka, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Kraus, James Joyce—were struck, although not necessarily persuaded, by Weininger's arguments, while others wrote doctoral dissertations on arcane aspects of Weininger's theories, treating them with a hushed reverence that seems almost risible today. The Nazis, in their turn, gave a new twist to the Promethean theme of “Weininger the Tragic Genius,” portraying him as a wise Jew who had killed himself on realizing that he could not eradicate his pernicious Jewishness. Although he had probably never read *Geschlecht und Charakter*, Adolf Hitler himself believed this to be the case.³

Since World War II, how the Genius. Modern analysts work as a convenient shorthand thought. For historian George only a “classic of racist literature” register the importance of William Johnston, in his history, called Weininger “one Gilman has seconded the deing *Geschlecht und Charakter* hatred.”⁶ In a 1997 article, interest in Weininger's work to imagine how such a cartoon maniacally simplifying book anti-Semitic feelings, could and sophisticated audience length biography of Wein psychoanalytic explanations self-hatred, a task that b Munich in his 1904 monog Norwegian psychiatrist Dav *The Mind and Death of a Gen* amplex of the genre: the li Freudian and quasi-psychoa cently, there have been quite within which that psyche wa such studies are still few in nu focus.⁹

The present study argues t the private fears and dislikes o and modulated by some of century intellectual and cultu such attempts? Exactly what task: to analyze the internal st monies and contradictions c alone, of course, is not enou Weininger's is particularly het dependent upon other texts, o plicity of discourses.¹² To be written by a remarkably idios and many of the intellectual

second major task: to establish the heteronomy of his text and the simplistically conceived

argumentary ways by previous scholars. After a glance at the four volumes of *Geschlecht und Charakter*, quite simpler to make full sense of it, many of research on sex glands, consciousness and be as well as feminist movements as in these days of interdisciplinarity that is, I think, well worth

Geschlecht und Charakter follow the project: to analyze the differences—biological, cultural, technique of modern civilization to end while relating its roller-coaster ride through fin-de-siècle science, psychology and through my approach to Weininger with him that we must inscribing them within their world add greatly to our understanding of most profound anxieties—discussed but often misunderstood

psychology, but instead of concentrating on his broad and eclectic education with his participation in the struggle to the most significant of Mach's dismissal of the concept of heteronomy within the academic without sufficient familiarity not then comprehend what that he was advocating and *Geschlecht und Charakter* was to disprove the coherent and unitary self of Mach, Weininger espoused

Immanuel Kant's concept that every human being possessed a hyperempirical self, the existence of which could only be philosophically deduced and never demonstrated in empirical terms. Simultaneously, Weininger criticized the popularity of experimental research in psychology (a trend significantly influenced by the views of Mach), arguing in a Diltheyan vein that the proper task of psychology was not to measure sensations in the laboratory but to explore the totality of human consciousness, experience, and character. Psychology, urged Weininger, must reform itself into "characterology," and in order to do so, psychologists must first rebuild their entire science around the Kantian concept of the indivisible, hyperempirical self. Rejecting empiricism, psychology must renew its older affiliation with philosophy.

This salvage of the self, however, did not apply to all. We are dragged into the tense world of fin-de-siècle cultural politics with Weininger's assertion that only Aryan males possessed the Kantian hyperempirical self. It is common knowledge that women's emancipation was an explosive issue in turn-of-the-century Central Europe, and even moderately careful readers of Weininger's treatise should find it hard to overlook his repeated statements therein that his ultimate aim is to resolve the Woman Question.¹⁴ Given these leads, and the substantive content of *Geschlecht und Charakter*, it is striking that this connection has not been explored by scholars in as much detail as it ought to have been. Two of Weininger's crucial responses to feminist arguments, his redefinition of hysteria and his devaluation of motherhood, have been mentioned often enough in the literature, but their specific links with contemporary debates over feminism have not, to my knowledge, been analyzed in any depth. I show in detail how contemporary feminist demands and beliefs shaped Weininger's arguments and analyze how Weininger resolved the Woman Question by proving—to his own satisfaction—that the typical woman neither desired nor deserved emancipation since she did not possess a truly autonomous, Kantian self. It is this interweaving of intellectual, cultural, and political themes in Weininger's work that I emphasize throughout this study. If one wishes to understand Weininger's project, one cannot focus exclusively on any one context, whether the intellectual, the political, or the cultural. All three are essential and, in the final analysis, inseparable.

Perhaps most crucially, the concept of Woman served, for Weininger and many others of the period, not merely as an uncomplicated symbol of femininity but as a sign whose meanings implicated much of modernity itself, that sweeping process of change which was hard to define but harder to remain neutral toward. Turn-of-the-century intellectual responses to modernity and modernism were ambivalent at best and hysterical at worst, but the nature and meanings of femininity (and indeed, of gender itself) were at the very heart of debates about the nature and future of civilization. To deal with the

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sional, was fundamentally an attempt to construct an autonomous Aryan male subject and to deny autonomy and subjectivity to Woman and the Jew. Neither aim was more important than the other and both need to be analyzed together.

Weininger claimed that in his work, Man, Woman, Jew, or Aryan represented ideal types and not real individuals: every woman was not necessarily a complete embodiment of the ideal type Woman. A closer reading of the text shows, however, that Weininger eventually conflated ideal types with individuals by arguing that the ideal types Man, Aryan, Woman, and Jew were incarnated most frequently among individual men, Aryans, women, and Jews. The Woman and the Jew, of course, played particularly conspicuous roles in Weininger's criticism of contemporary culture. Weininger castigated fin-de-siècle European culture as feminized and Judaized, themes that were, independently of Weininger, common in Central European cultural criticism. What has been appreciated less often is that Weininger was not simply a Cassandra but also, in his own bizarre way, a utopian thinker. His denigration of his epoch represented one crucial aspect of his thought, but there was another side too, where he longed for a new Christianity and a new world where sexuality would be transcended. In that imagined world, Woman would lose her sexuality—which, according to Weininger, was her sole function—and that loss of sexuality would resolve the Woman Question forever. In that sexless utopia, human beings would respect each other as ends in themselves and not as means to sexual pleasure or progeny. Weininger's utopia would lead, of course, to the extinction of the human species, but that, he stated, was not the concern of the moralist. Without ignoring the outlandishness and sheer immaturity of this vision, I show how Weininger's utopia evolved out of his Kantian morality as well as his conviction of woman's inferiority, which, however, was explicitly *opposed* to simple Schopenhauerian or Nietzschean advocacy of the 'Asiatic' subjugation of women.

I then turn to a contextual analysis of Weininger's use of scientific and medical discourse in constructing a masculine identity and deconstructing feminine subjectivity. To examine Weininger's understanding and use of science with seriousness, however, is not to imply that Weininger was a scientific thinker in any sense of the term.²² Nor, however, is it historically useful to dismiss Weininger's use of scientific discourse as pseudoscientific—a term much favored by Jacques Le Rider, who has declared that Weininger "arbitrarily selected from the most disparate realms in order to construct an apparatus of authoritative arguments that is entirely governed by a few fundamental obsessions. . . . Weininger's main 'scientific' talent lay in placing at the service of his *Weltanschauung* a vertiginous compilation of bits of infor-

mation gleaned from different incontestable rhetorical fronts. Rather than debating whether the thinker, however, it seems use of scientific theories as intellectual goals and more Rider's own argument, ultimately of using Weininger's appropriation of scientific ideas serve in Weininger's thing about the ways science solve social and cultural issues.

It is important to note Weininger did aim to be an early ambition lingered in these elements were far from reality in the cells, for instance standards of his era.²⁴ In Weininger's biological native synthesis of Carl Weismann with the latest in determining the nature claimed, along with many things were partly male and individual to individual. There were almost unanimous in sexual intermediacy, and very remarkably successful in the of him as the discoverer of

Although Weininger questioned sexual intermediacy in late biological presuppositions, how Weininger used the intrauterine development of the human embryo, Weininger clearly female in the initial by the gradual differentiation

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determination, this was the temporary embryologists, detail. Weininger used the of Sexual Affinity," which, matches on the basis of partners. While this "Law" of equations seem ludicrous only if one so dismisses of the founding principles of reality.²⁷

Illustration for his "Law": male temporary medical discourse nineteenth century, many physicians the consequence of a degenerative degeneration of the medical theory was intercriminalization of homosexuality. Weininger, like Hirschfeld, that the result of unities, Weininger also rejected pathological connotations, both male and female to vary most as much male as female. complements only among men sex. Homosexuality, then, present any deviation from the inevitable, expected, and intermediary.

states one way in which he described *Geschlecht und Charakter*: critique approach characteristic of his to transcend even before his dissertation and *Geschlecht und Charakter*'s intellectual odyssey from vehement rejection. Even after called a "full-blown mystic," edge of positivistic science: he discourse. Blending biomedical a metaphysical approach to ideas, Weininger now displaced, ideas and recirculated obso-

lescent ones with an insouciance guided only by strategic compulsions. The strategies differed but the overriding ideological purpose—to define the nature of masculinity and femininity and to determine the links between gender and emancipation—remained constant.

In chapters 6 and 7, I illustrate these strategies with detailed analyses of Weininger's theories of hysteria and maternity, which were crucial to his deconstruction of female subjectivity and autonomy. In both cases, Weininger used scientific and medical ideas to deconstruct femininity from psychological, physiological, and metaphysical perspectives, but his approach to scientific discourse on motherhood differed radically from the ways in which he used psychological theories of hysteria. Accepting the structure and transforming the substance of Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud's theory of hysteria, he "showed" that femininity was nothing but pure, undifferentiated sexuality. Woman's demure outward self was a simulacrum constructed in keeping with male expectations and assumed in order to win male esteem. Weininger's theory of hysteria was at the heart of his resolution of the Woman Question, and it was also one of the most fascinating of Viennese responses to early psychoanalysis.²⁸

Equally crucial and equally intriguing were Weininger's views on maternity. It is well known that Central European feminists, in contradistinction to their Anglo-American contemporaries, reformulated maternity from a patriarchal into an emancipationist metaphor: the New Woman was seen as the New Mother. Weininger was virtually unique in his time in denying any moral worth to motherhood, and this denial demands to be analyzed as an intellectual response to contemporary feminist ideology and contextualized within the larger realm of fin-de-siècle antifeminist discourse. Historians of science, in particular, need to pay attention to the substance of Weininger's views on maternity. In a strategic move that was intellectually desperate but politically meaningful and rhetorically fascinating, Weininger resurrected obsolescent biomedical theories of remote impregnation and maternal impressions to argue that even the body of Woman was always impregnable and open to the exterior. Complementing his earlier psychological deconstruction of femininity, his argument regarding maternity attempted to deconstruct Woman somatically. Even physically, Woman was not autonomous and, therefore, could not possibly deserve social and political autonomy. Infinitely porous, infinitely malleable, and infinitely open to external influences, "Woman," concluded Weininger, "is Nothing."

Bizarre and pernicious as his work might be, there are many good reasons to study Weininger today. Some might read *Geschlecht und Charakter* to illuminate the dark underbelly of fin-de-siècle thought and to better understand the history of misogyny and anti-Semitism, others as a significant moment in

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fected" his psyche and eventually destroyed it. Swoboda declined to say any more about the nature of the deviation, commenting that anybody with a knowledge of psychology could deduce it from Weininger's writings. This strange rhetoric immediately suggests that the deviation was sexual, but since Swoboda immediately ruled out homosexuality, it is impossible to identify it more precisely.²⁶ There is no evidence that Weininger ever had a sexual relationship with a woman, and Swoboda's denial notwithstanding, there is some evidence suggesting that Weininger may well have been homosexual and was deeply uncomfortable about it.²⁷ David Abrahamsen, a devout Freudian, speculated in his psychobiography that Weininger may have been sexually abused in childhood and possessed an unusually intense and aggressive sexual urge that repelled his own finer sensibilities.²⁸ Undoubtedly, Weininger's own sexuality may have played an important role in the genesis of his views and his text; the information we possess on the issue, however, is so unclear and fragmentary that we must interpret it with the greatest caution.

It is, in any case, more important to appreciate that while Weininger's personal sexual difficulties may indeed have led him toward the study of sexual questions, other factors might also have been of influence. Viennese artists and intellectuals—Arthur Schnitzler, Karl Kraus, and Egon Schiele, to name just three—were preoccupied with sexual themes. In fin-de-siècle Vienna, Edward Timms suggests, sexuality became a "symbolic territory" for debates on identity, reason, and irrationalism.²⁹ David Luft adds that Viennese intellectuals were distinctive in combining biological approaches to sex with a Schopenhauerian irrationalism, which stressed the internal reality of feelings.³⁰ Weininger's views were firmly rooted in this Viennese tradition while, at the same time, dissenting from it in substantial and significant ways.

Weininger's planned monograph was titled "Eros und Psyche: Eine biologisch-psychologische Studie" (Eros and Psyche: A Bio-Psychological Study), but, in spite of his conviction of its social utility, it was never published.³¹ Instead, he sent a sixty-seven-page outline of the work to the Section of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the Viennese Academy of Sciences in June 1901 for safekeeping.³² (The academy commonly held manuscripts in order to validate later claims of priority, and the outline was recently discovered among its holdings by Hannelore Rodlauer.)³³ In the autumn of 1901, Weininger approached Sigmund Freud with an expanded version of the outline. It included a chapter on hysteria, the purpose of which, Freud suspected, was to flatter him into writing a letter of recommendation to a publisher.³⁴ Unimpressed by Weininger's manuscript, Freud refused to recommend publication, advising Weininger to spend "ten years" gathering empirical evidence for his assertions. "The world," Freud declared, "wants evidence, not

thoughts."³⁵ Retorting that the next ten years Weininger n
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thoughts."³⁵ Retorting that he would prefer to write ten other books in the next ten years, Weininger now submitted the unaltered work to Friedrich Jodl and Laurenz Müllner, and applied for a scholarship.³⁶ Jodl, the leading philosopher at the University of Vienna after the retirement of Ernst Mach, was quite impressed by the outline and expressed his willingness to supervise its expansion into a doctoral dissertation. He also promised to recommend it to a publisher if satisfied with the final product.³⁷

Following his meeting with Jodl in the winter of 1901, however, Weininger sank into depression and became increasingly preoccupied with Henrik Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt* and with the play's portrayal of the human self and its development.³⁸ During this period, Weininger's intellectual allegiance shifted radically, and when he resumed work on the dissertation in March 1902, he announced that he had "completely jettisoned the epistemological views of Mach and Avenarius." Referring to Mach's conviction that the coherent, unified self was a fiction that could not be "salvaged," Weininger averred: "The self is. There is absolutely no need to 'salvage' it."³⁹ He added that he had also grown interested in "the Jewish question" and in ethical issues.⁴⁰ Weininger's interest in "the Jewish question," suggests Hannelore Rodlauer, may have been stimulated by the anti-Semitic writings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, then a resident of Vienna. Chamberlain's influence, according to Rodlauer, is evident from the two works Weininger attempted in 1902: an outline entitled "Zur Theorie des Lebens" (On the Theory of Life) and an article on *Peer Gynt*. He planned the former work as a continuation of "Eros und Psyche," and, like the latter, it was deposited with the Viennese Academy of Sciences for safekeeping in April 1902. In it, Weininger sketched a "vitalistic" theory of sexual difference, criticized Mach's disparagement of the concept of the self, and upheld a Kantian notion of the ego.⁴¹ It is doubtful whether these major shifts can all be attributed to Weininger's depressive bout or to his reading of Ibsen, although both must have contributed not a little. Too little is known about Weininger's life at this point to permit useful speculation about what exactly brought about his shifts in intellectual allegiance. The transformations, however, were genuine and determined the content and style of much of his subsequent work. At one level, the four-hundred-odd pages of *Geschlecht und Charakter* record the metamorphosis of a critical positivist into a hectoring prophet, resulting in serious inconsistencies in perspective and argument between early and later parts of the treatise.

By the end of April 1902, Weininger's dissertation—based largely on the outlines "Eros und Psyche" and "Zur Theorie des Lebens"—was virtually complete. He found it difficult to harmonize his new metaphysical perspective with the predominantly biological outlook of "Eros und Psyche." Weininger wrote to Swoboda that he had divided the work into two parts and

Weininger's Worlds: Identity, Politics, and Philosophy in Central Europe

Some of the most significant intellectual and cultural currents of the age rippled through Otto Weininger's brief life. *Geschlecht und Charakter* is incomprehensible without some appreciation of what Christine Buci-Glucksmann has called the "great crisis cultures of Musil, Weininger or Klee."¹ Conceived amid the political and cultural turmoil of Habsburg Vienna, the book dealt with an enormous variety of philosophical, scientific, and cultural themes: the nature of sex, the worth of femininity, the reality of the self, the poverty of psychological research, the meaning of "Jewishness," and the moral future of the human species. In order to appreciate why Weininger found these themes important and how they were related to his epoch, we must move away from him and immerse ourselves in the murky depths of fin-de-siècle thought, politics, and high culture.

Dual Monarchy and Multiple Identities: Life in Kakania

Describing the Austro-Hungarian Empire as "Kakania, that misunderstood State that has since vanished," Robert Musil provided this celebrated summary of its many contradictions in his novel *The Man without Qualities*:

On paper it called itself the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; in speaking, however, one referred to it as Austria, that is to say, it was known by a name that it had, as a State, solemnly renounced by oath, while preserving it in all matters of sentiment. . . . By its constitution it was liberal, but its system of government was clerical. The system of government was clerical, but the general attitude to life was liberal. Before the law all citizens were equal, but not everyone, of course, was a citizen. There was a parliament, which made such vigorous use of its liberty that it was usually kept shut; but there was also an emergency powers act by means of which it was possible to manage without Parliament.²

At the helm of the Dual Monarchy was the Emperor Franz Joseph, who had ascended to the throne after the revolution of 1848. He was to reign for sixty-eight years, becoming a symbol of the apparent stability of the Habsburg family and of its multinational empire. In reality, however, this unwieldy empire, divided between peoples as different as Germans and Croats, Transylvanian Saxons and Italians, became increasingly torn by linguistic, national,

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and cultural dissensions.³ Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin have emphasized the complex, almost carnivalesque contests of linguistic and national identities in the Habsburg Empire:

The effort to introduce German in place of Latin, so as to streamline Imperial administration, begat Hungarian and Czech cultural nationalism by reaction, and this in due course developed into a political nationalism. Slav nationalism in the politics and economics in turn begat German economic and political nationalism; and this in turn begat anti-Semitism, with Zionism as a natural Jewish reaction. All in all, it is enough to cause one's head to spin.⁴

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The capital of this impossible empire was the city of Vienna: cosmopolitan and opulent at one level, poor, hidebound, and intolerant at others; a city that pioneered modern anti-Semitism, although some of its richest and most cultured residents were Jews. In the 1880s, Georg von Schönerer (1842–1921), the leader of the pan-German movement, regularly disrupted sessions of the Reichsrat with diatribes against Jews, Catholics, Liberals, and the Habsburgs. The Christian Socialist Karl Lueger (1844–1910), elected mayor of Vienna in 1895, was far more suave than Schönerer, but the rhetoric of anti-Semitism was integral to his political platform.⁵

Schönerer and Lueger symbolized a broader political phenomenon: the failure of liberalism in Austria. Liberal elites all over Europe were faced with innumerable predicaments in the late nineteenth century, but Austrian liberals were particularly weak and beleaguered. The liberals running Austria from 1867 to 1879 constituted a smallish group of urban middle-class Germans and German Jews. Elected by a political system in which only six per cent of the adult male population could vote, the Austrian liberals were greatly dependent on the toleration of the monarchy and the aristocracy and represented the interests of commerce, industry, and the professions rather than those of the general populace.⁶ Liberal reforms in the Habsburg government, furthermore, had been induced not by some inevitable, Marxian rise of the bourgeoisie but by the failures of the traditional system, symbolized above all by the military humiliation in 1866 by Prussia. By the 1880s, the ascendancy of German-speaking liberals in Austria was as good as over. The new mass parties, representing the working classes and the lower reaches of the middle class, targeted liberals as their enemies, making the latter ever more dependent on the emperor and the aristocracy.⁷

Overcome by a feeling of doom, younger liberals, who had always been interested in the arts, grew obsessed with it.⁸ The bourgeois liberal artist continued, Carl Schorske points out, to hold fast to individualism and "turned his appropriated aesthetic culture inward to the cultivation of the self, of his personal uniqueness."⁹ The liberal predicament did not simply produce a horde

of narcissistic artists but gave attention of society and its more Schorske has labeled the "miche."¹⁰ The interaction of the led naturally to the critique of gentia excelled. The easygoing life could not, according to the emptiness. Although their malaise differed quite drama were virtually unanimous tha

Karl Kraus, hailed as "the f the most celebrated represent tradition."¹¹ The fundamenta was hypocrisy, and its greatest of his favorite examples was the phrased advertisements for a high moral tone in its editoria but he was not alone in the la the Viennese passion for orna pared the city with the fake v Robert Musil echoed the si acted—sometimes indeed to quences—differently from the from the way one acted. U charm."¹³ Others castigated Weininger, as we shall see, Vi sexual immorality.¹⁴ For Sig When his biographer Ernest live in a town so full of new id years and have never come ac is that this allegedly dishones lectuals and, *pace* Freud, even, ducing some of the pivotal id

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political phenomenon: the Europe were faced with century, but Austrian liberals running Austria urban middle-class German in which only six per cent. Austrian liberals were by and the aristocracy and the professions rather than in the Habsburg government inevitable, Marxian additional system, symbolized by Prussia. By the 1880s, Austria was as good as overthrown and the lower reaches of society, making the latter ever

who had always been in bourgeois liberal artist individualism and "turned his notion of the self, of his person simply produce a horde

of narcissistic artists but gave a new impetus to the study, analysis, and evaluation of society and its mores—a cluster of traditional liberal activities that Schorske has labeled the "moralistic-scientific" component of the liberal psyche.¹⁰ The interaction of the artistic and the moralistic-scientific elements led naturally to the critique of culture, a genre in which the Viennese intelligentsia excelled. The easygoing camaraderie and baroque pomp of Viennese life could not, according to the city's avant garde, conceal its inner, spiritual emptiness. Although their ideas on the causes and consequences of this malaise differed quite dramatically, the younger intellectuals of the capital were virtually unanimous that the current cultural situation was unbearable.

Karl Kraus, hailed as "the first European satirist since Swift," was arguably the most celebrated representative of this quintessentially Viennese critical tradition.¹¹ The fundamental theme of Viennese existence, Kraus believed, was hypocrisy, and its greatest expressions he found in the popular press. One of his favorite examples was the leading newspaper's practice of carrying coyly phrased advertisements for prostitution on its back pages while adopting a high moral tone in its editorials. Newspapers were a personal target for Kraus, but he was not alone in the larger crusade against masquerade. Condemning the Viennese passion for ornate architecture, Kraus's friend Adolf Loos compared the city with the fake villages erected by Count Potemkin of Russia.¹² Robert Musil echoed the same theme. "In this country," he wrote, "one acted—sometimes indeed to the extreme limits of passion and its consequences—differently from the way one thought, or one thought differently from the way one acted. Uninformed observers have mistaken this for charm."¹³ Others castigated Viennese culture for yet other reasons. For Otto Weininger, as we shall see, Viennese culture was pervaded by effeminacy and sexual immorality.¹⁴ For Sigmund Freud, Vienna was intellectually stifling. When his biographer Ernest Jones exclaimed, "How fascinating it must be to live in a town so full of new ideas!," Freud retorted: "I have lived here for fifty years and have never come across a new idea here."¹⁵ The paradox, of course, is that this allegedly dishonest, stultifying city succeeded in holding its intellectuals and, *pace* Freud, even managed to stimulate so many of them into producing some of the pivotal ideas of the twentieth century.

Quite a few of those ideas, predictably enough, were expressed as critiques. "The new culture-makers in the city of Freud," Carl Schorske has observed, "repeatedly defined themselves in terms of a kind of collective oedipal revolt. Yet the young were revolting not so much against their fathers. . . . What they assaulted on a broad front was the value system of classical liberalism—in ascendancy within which they had been reared."¹⁶ Most of their critiques revolved around the theme of identity: the identity of the self, of races, of the sexes. Their crusade, fought in different styles and with diverse weapons, was

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gians proceeded similarly which studied humanity and its origins of neo-Kantianism were biologism, historicism, and beyond all external influ-

Austria followed a different strongly by Johann Friedrich (1781-1848), and Friedrich Heinrich to empiricism, realism, and Kant was the Austrian interest Leibniz, Locke, and Hume were than Kant or Hegel. Kant's knowledge in transcendental going to Rudolf Haller, affected century, "John Stuart Mill on Viennese modernity than empirical and transcendental charismatic Catholic priest and taught an exclusively empirical, Vienna, emphasizing "the application as a means of discovering problems from philosophy."⁵¹ In the natural sciences from the of all knowledge.⁵² In spite influence was reinforced by his University of Vienna, Ernst

glance to Mach and Richard completely with neo-Kantian-ology was transcendental in the ism. Nor did the Austrian tra- from the days of Francis Ba- of language" (176). But how of the University of Vienna, rich Jodl, be drawn so power- Hannelore Rodlauer speculates by Robert Reininger (1869- academic scene, whose habil- by the remarkably broad- of Philosophy at the University

of Vienna.⁵⁵ More importantly, Rodlauer has discovered that Alois Höfler, the chairman of the university's Philosophical Society, had been entrusted in 1901 by the Berlin Academy of Sciences with the task of editing Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Sciences* for their complete edition of the philosopher's works. Höfler had recruited three assistants to read and compare different versions of the text: Otto Weininger was one of them. Rodlauer suggests that even if this exposure to Kant did not by itself cause Weininger's flight from contemporary "scientific" psychology, it was significant in influencing its direction.⁵⁶ While these are obviously important points, one must not overlook that Weininger's espousal of Kantianism was also guided by his own chosen identity as an intellectual representative of a Greater Germany—and therefore that it was at least indirectly a gesture of defiance toward Austrian academic orthodoxy, just as his later adoption of Protestantism symbolized a defiance of Judaism as well as the Catholic culture of Vienna.

The Woman Question: Feminism as Apocalypse

Weininger's Kantian salvage of the self was a political as well as an intellectual act.⁵⁷ He did not simply claim that the self existed but argued that the Kantian intelligible self, the source of human autonomy and subjectivity, existed only in the male Aryan. Females and Jews, he happily conceded, were not autonomous subjects but mere Machian bundles of sensations.

The emergence of feminist movements in the late nineteenth century generated theoretically complex analyses of "the nature of woman" and new justifications for traditional ideas on gender roles. Although few of the feminist demands for equal intellectual, moral, and political rights were fulfilled during the period, the cultural and intellectual impact of early feminism far outstripped its numerical strength or political successes. The very fact that women were demanding equality was seen as apocalyptic. Most male European intellectuals of the late nineteenth century subscribed to norms of gender that were firmly established only at the end of the eighteenth century but that seemed, nevertheless, to be eternal, natural, and obvious.⁵⁸ Even the slightest suggestion for a revision of those apparently immutable codes was taken as a portent of doom, not simply for men but for civilization itself.

We cannot do better than to begin with Immanuel Kant, Otto Weininger's intellectual ideal and the prototypical German thinker of the Enlightenment, who believed that women and men had different "characters" and that this difference was ordained by a higher power. Women, according to Kant, acted on inclination and needed to be governed by men, who acted according to reason. Morally, women could not be their own masters and, therefore, could not be full and active citizens.⁵⁹ Kant's fundamental conviction of women's lower intellectual and moral position was widely shared.⁶⁰ From the

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end of the eighteenth century, however, it was expressed increasingly in biological and psychological terms. The body and mind of woman were now thought to be designed primarily to serve the reproductive needs of the species. The male, on the other hand, was biologically and psychologically designed for intellectual and cultural activity. The social inequality of the sexes, then, had been decreed by nature, and this made it acceptable to liberal political philosophy.⁶¹

Two major thinkers of the nineteenth century, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, evolved a rhetoric of misogyny that, in many ways, foreshadowed Weininger's. Schopenhauer considered women to be childish, frivolous, cunning, and deceitful creatures lacking physical and mental strength, genuine intelligence, memory, and an aesthetic sense. Existing solely to reproduce the species, they were inferior to men in every respect. Ridiculing the European reverence for women as the "highest product of Teutonico-Christian stupidity," Schopenhauer advocated an "Asian" subordination of women in society.⁶² Nietzsche once observed that Schopenhauer taught one how to live against the values of one's age; with regard to women, however, neither philosopher proved particularly iconoclastic.⁶³ Although original in his rejection of the conventional wisdom that women were less sexual than men, Nietzsche was entirely conventional in interpreting female sexuality as no more than the biological urge for pregnancy.⁶⁴ Believing intellectuality to be wholly incompatible with motherhood, Nietzsche argued that emancipation would lead to the degeneration of women, making them incapable of their "first and last profession—to give birth to strong children."⁶⁵ Women, he believed, should be treated as property, and following his master Schopenhauer, he lauded the "Oriental" subjugation of women.⁶⁶

Nineteenth-century feminists did not have to do much, then, to acquire an apocalyptic significance in the eyes of many male intellectuals. The simple expression of the conviction that women were not "naturally" inferior to men and deserved equal social, political, and intellectual rights was enough to cause a full-blown cultural crisis. "By the late nineteenth century," Theodore Roszak observes, "this supposedly marginal curiosity called the 'woman problem' had become one of the most earth-shaking debates in the Western world. . . . One would be hard pressed to find many major figures of the period in any cultural field who did not address themselves passionately to the rights of women."⁶⁷

The voice of science was heard with great respect in this scientific epoch; biologists and physicians were vociferous in their opposition to the "unnatural" and potentially dangerous imposition of sexual equality.⁶⁸ The most memorably titled work in this genre was the German psychiatrist Paul Julius Möbius's *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* (On the Physiologi-

cal Feeble-Mindedness of Woman naturally weak-minded: creative inferiority but of degeneration.⁶⁹) The criminologist Cesare Lombroso's fluent.⁷⁰ Lombroso believed that, than men's, that women were liars, ternal feelings.⁷¹ Numerous cultural thinkers, and politicians of the time and Möbius and expressed their attitude.⁷² Much of this interest in Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* demands for equality and emancipation.

Woman Power: Feminism

In nineteenth-century Germany, the school, the State and the nation each case the role of each sex was were to obey; men were to think, and women were to lead a life of emotion and potential to the interest of the nation.⁷³ By 1900, this cultural Germany by then had no less than members campaigning for women's organizations, albeit few.

Inspired initially by a liberalism represented what some historians term that also serves to separate feminism." Germany's Social Democratic equality, and the socialist leader August Bebel, was an extremely popular historical study of the subjugation of women's emancipation under unified German socialists, it was a "verita-tween the 'bourgeois' and 'social' that women could never be emancipated.⁷⁸ Women's suffrage was a necessity, but it had a somewhat lower

The character of the German movement. Even at the most superficial level into two fairly distinct phases. A movement took on a radical character.

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ical Feeble-Mindedness of Woman, 1900), which claimed that women were naturally weak-minded: creative intelligence in a woman was not a sign of superiority but of degeneration.⁶⁹ The Italian psychiatrist, anthropologist, and criminologist Cesare Lombroso's theories on femininity were even more influential.⁷⁰ Lombroso believed that women's perceptual abilities were duller than men's, that women were liars by nature, and that prostitutes had no maternal feelings.⁷¹ Numerous cultural critics, artists, philosophers, social thinkers, and politicians of the time agreed fundamentally with Lombroso and Möbius and expressed their agreement in volume after antifeminist volume.⁷² Much of this interest in woman's nature, including a lot in Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter*, was a direct response to feminist demands for equality and emancipation.

Woman Power: Feminist Activism in Central Europe

In nineteenth-century Germany, according to Richard Evans, "the family, the school, the State and the nation . . . were analogous institutions. . . . In each case the role of each sex was clearly defined; men were to rule, women were to obey; men were to think, to create, to develop their own personality, women were to lead a life of emotion and feeling, to sacrifice their individuality and potential to the interest of the larger social unit to which they belonged."⁷³ By 1900, this cultural imperative was being questioned, and Germany by then had no less than 850 organizations with close to a million members campaigning for women's rights.⁷⁴ Austria, too, had active women's organizations, albeit fewer in number.⁷⁵

Inspired initially by a liberal individualist ideology, these organizations represented what some historians have described as "bourgeois feminism," a term that also serves to separate them from the rival tradition of "socialist feminism." Germany's Social Democratic Party was committed to women's equality, and the socialist leader August Bebel's 1879 treatise, *Women and Socialism*, was an extremely popular work.⁷⁶ In this book, Bebel provided a historical study of the subjugation of women as well as a visionary account of women's emancipation under universal socialism. For several generations of German socialists, it was a "veritable Bible."⁷⁷ The essential difference between the "bourgeois" and "socialist" feminists was that the latter believed that women could never be emancipated before capitalism had been overthrown.⁷⁸ Women's suffrage was a key demand for Central European feminists, but it had a somewhat lower priority than in the USA and Britain.⁷⁹

The character of the German feminist movements was far from static. Even at the most superficial level of analysis, one must divide their history into two fairly distinct phases. According to Richard Evans, the women's movements took on a radical character between 1894 and 1908, which, in

Modernity had undermined old male "warrior values": men had become passive and feminized, although they still chose to subscribe to archaic myths of virility.¹¹⁶ Mayreder quoted the mid-nineteenth-century literary critic Otto Ludwig's question: "Since men have turned into women . . . do women have any choice but to occupy the ground men have abandoned?"¹¹⁷ Le Rider offered this as the crowning piece of evidence for his thesis that a masculine identity crisis, rather than the impact of feminist movements, produced the Viennese preoccupation with issues of gender. I would argue, however, that instead of reducing Mayreder's fascinating piece of political rhetoric into a report, we should take it as a tactical argument, in which Mayreder depicted a fair accompli so as to imply that antagonism to feminist movements was futile.

The historical evidence does not, of course, rule out a crisis of masculinity completely. All the evidence suggests, however, that neither feminism nor the crisis of male identity was *alone* responsible for the widespread concern over gender issues in turn-of-the-century Vienna and in European cultures in general. Even a superficial glance at the writings of Karl Kraus, Weininger, and comparable figures shows that *both* the crisis of masculine identity *and* the feminist movement simultaneously affected the consciousness of male intellectuals. Kraus, for example, fulminated against the "vaginal age" as well as against suffragettes; Weininger lamented the effeminacy of the times but also condemned feminist activism.¹¹⁸ The fin-de-siècle crisis, in short, was one of gender as a cultural category rather than a crisis of masculinity alone or a crisis related solely to the Woman Question. Feminism, by challenging already weakening conceptions of masculine as well as feminine identity, triggered a dialectical process leading to modifications in both. The New Woman did not simply threaten patriarchy but, directly as well as indirectly, engendered what James Joyce, in a different context (but inspired by Weininger), called the "New Womanly Man."

Enemies of the Volk? German Thinkers and the Question of "Jewishness"

The turn-of-the-century crisis of gender was closely related to a crisis of Jewish identity. The late nineteenth century saw an upsurge in political and cultural anti-Semitism in Central Europe, and Vienna was at the center of this dubious renaissance.¹¹⁹ Viennese anti-Semitism was heterogeneous but omnipresent. Otto Weininger, even if he had not had an anti-Semitic father, would have encountered anti-Semitism among his father's fellow artisans or among his professors and fellow students at the university.

One theme that unites all anti-Semitic discourse across time and space is the conviction that Jews never identify with the nation they live in: considering themselves the “chosen people,” they set themselves off from others and

constitute a "nation within a century Central Europe with tions did not rest content with ally distinct; they also lacked the desire for freedom. The so- in psychological, religious, and references to it were not unique supporters of Jewish emancipation: "Jewishness" in order to becom

In nineteenth-century Central European political lines, spanning, as F. A. Hayek has noted, from the Right.¹²¹ A hatred for Jews as a form of nationalism, a loosely defined position on new moral, philosophical, and political grounds, as Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and later, Arthur Schopenhauer, argued, in their own ways.¹²² All more or less in line with the German national character, which was mutually opposed. Jews themselves, as the journalist Ludwig Börne referred to them, as a heartless capitalist class, as Friedrich Engels as well as by

Among philosophers, Kant's brotherhood co-existed quite comfortably with Judaism and the Jewish "character" lacked reason and needed to be enlightened. They were invincibly alien: they were not Jewish because Judaism was not a true religion, but rather a set of laws than the imperatives of inner, self-love. Kant valued ethical principles that were based on the concept of moral autonomy. Kant was not a Jew because he was immutable. Even without mass conversions, Kant was a Jew as if "purified religious concepts" from the old ones.¹²⁴ Kant's vision of brotherhood was on condition of what Rose called "enlightenment." Other philosophers were even more Jewish. Kant has often been seen as philosophy's Jew that has attached itself to almost everything. It is of the parasite recurs repeatedly in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer, Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein,¹²⁷ Schlegel, and even

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constitute a "nation within a nation." This theme recurred in nineteenth-century Central Europe with a vengeance, but German anti-Semitic traditions did not rest content with that one charge. Jews were not simply ethnically distinct; they also lacked such basic human traits as morality, love, and the desire for freedom. The so-called Jewish "national character" was defined in psychological, religious, and cultural (as opposed to biological) terms, and references to it were not unique to anti-Semites. Even some of the strongest supporters of Jewish emancipation stressed that Jews had to transcend their "Jewishness" in order to become worthy of freedom.¹²⁰

In nineteenth-century Central Europe, anti-Semitism followed no clear political lines, spanning, as Paul Rose has emphasized, the Left and the Right.¹²¹ A hatred for Jews and "Jewishness" was integral to "German revolutionism," a loosely defined political project for the renewal of German life on new moral, philosophical, and cultural principles, to which thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Johann Gottfried von Herder, and later, Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner all subscribed in their own ways.¹²² All more or less anti-Semitic, they considered the Jewish and the German national characters to be ancient, distinct, and in most respects, mutually opposed. Jews themselves often agreed: poet Heinrich Heine and journalist Ludwig Börne refurbished an old stereotype, portraying the modern Jew as a heartless capitalist, an image recirculated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as well as by countless others of diverse political creeds.¹²³

Among philosophers, Kant's faith in the Enlightenment ideal of universal brotherhood co-existed quite comfortably with a clear antipathy toward Judaism and the Jewish "character." (Just as it did with his belief that women lacked reason and needed to be governed by men.) The Jews, Kant thought, were invincibly alien: they were "the Palestinians who live among us." Judaism was not a true religion: Jews obeyed an externally imposed law rather than the imperatives of inner, autonomous morality. Judaism, therefore, followed ethical principles that were diametrically opposed to the Kantian concept of moral autonomy. Kant did not, however, consider "Jewishness" to be immutable. Even without mass conversions, Jews could move closer to Germans if "purified religious conceptions awaken among them and they discard the old ones."¹²⁴ Kant's vision of the German future included Jews but only on condition of what Rose calls their voluntary "euthanasia of Judaism."¹²⁵ Other philosophers were even harsher. Johann Gottfried von Herder, who has often been seen as philo-Semitic, described Jews as "the parasitic plant that has attached itself to almost all the European nations."¹²⁶ This metaphor of the parasite recurs repeatedly in modern European history: one finds it in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer, in Nazi rhetoric, and in the notebooks of Ludwig Wittgenstein.¹²⁷ Schopenhauer saw the Jews as a "foreign, oriental

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people" who lived parasitically on others: Jews belonged everywhere and nowhere.¹²⁸ Jewish solidarity represented patriotism without a fatherland: *Patriotismus sine patria*.¹²⁹

Richard Wagner, arguably the most celebrated artistic figure of nineteenth-century Central Europe and certainly the artist Otto Weininger most admired, was a great devotee of Schopenhauer and far exceeded him in anti-Semitism.¹³⁰ For many, Wagner's musical dramas—conceived as "total works of art" rather than mere operas—embodied a distinctively German philosophy of life. From 1848, when he had been an associate of Mikhail Bakunin, Wagner had aimed to revolutionize German society through his art. The greatest obstacle to that revolution, Wagner believed, was materialism: the "demonic idea of Money," egoism, heartlessness, and greed.¹³¹ The Jews symbolized materialism while the spirit of the German Volk represented all that was pure and holy: the true German, consequently, was "instinctively repelled by any actual, operative contact" with Jews. In the arts in particular, the Jewish presence had been calamitous: "What the heroes of the arts . . . have wrested from . . . two millennia of misery, today the Jew converts into an art-bazaar (*Kunstwaarenwechsel*)."¹³²

Later, in the 1870s, Wagner's cultural anti-Semitism hardened further. He even denied the Jewishness of Jesus and came under the sway of his fervent admirer, Count Arthur Gobineau, whose racial theories Wagner and his devotees helped disseminate in Germany.¹³³ Unlike Gobineau, however, Wagner did not believe that the Teutonic races were in irreversible decline: the leitmotiv of Wagner's later writings was "regeneration."¹³⁴ His last music-drama *Parsifal* can be seen as depicting the redemption of the debilitated race by the chaste, naive, Aryan boy Parsifal.¹³⁵ Simultaneously, Wagner lashed out against the intermarriage of Jews and Gentiles, describing it as "the degenerative mixing of the heroic blood of the noblest races with that of the former eaters of humans, now trained to be the business-agents of society."¹³⁶

Wagner spent his last years in Bayreuth, a small Bavarian city where he erected a Festival Theatre. Wagnerian societies and journals proliferated all over Europe, and, after the master's death in 1883, Wagnerism was transformed almost into a religion by his widow Cosima. At its peak, Wagner and Cosima "were regarded as semi-divine" while the leaders of the cult saw themselves as "Grail knights, guardians of the sacred cup."¹³⁷ One leading member of this innermost "magic circle" was the emigré Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927). Chamberlain's peripatetic childhood had been spent in various parts of continental Europe. In his early youth, he had married a German, and his spiritual love for German culture gradually deepened almost into worship. Once fairly cosmopolitan, he developed into a staunch German nationalist, a transformation catalyzed by the

music of Wagner. In 1889, Chamberlain found Bayreuth as a center of Wagnerism among the intelligentsia, finding it predictable, Chamberlain wrote, that he was prolific on subjects ranging from the

Chamberlain's biographer Geoffery, most successful exemplars of a new world in an age of specialization, dispense an order on the chaos of experience in an easily grasped unified vision comprehensively in Chamberlain's *Nineteenth Century*.¹³⁹ Published in the essential text of German racial theory unrelated lore, Chamberlain argued a history of struggle between different races, culminated in "racial chaos" induced by the Jews and the Teutons. From the beginning had been little more than the story of a race, according to Chamberlain, a whole earth. "By encouraging their by preventing their sons from doing Jewish blood," while ensuring the race, this continued unabated, Europe was the Jews. "All the rest would be a he beyond all doubt degenerate physical less urban Jew was the destroyer of the chaste, and profound Teuton was Christianity of the Roman Catholic ner's Aryan Jesus: Christ's character Aryan and Teutonic."¹⁴³

Although he spoke of race rather than unequivocal on the immutability of nations that "it is pointless to call them succeeded in throwing off the shackles acknowledges the law of Moses in 1 Elsewhere, however, he almost completely cal arguments. This same equivocal as a whole."¹⁴⁴ But despite the Chamberlain provided new intelligence Semitism. The Nazis would honor it predated the Third Reich and was in

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music of Wagner. In 1889, Chamberlain moved to Vienna, second only to Bayreuth as a center of Wagnerism, and quickly made a name for himself among the intelligentsia, finding political friends in the pan-German circles. Predictably, Chamberlain wrote copiously on Wagner’s music, but was also prolific on subjects ranging from the life of Kant to the science of race.

Chamberlain’s biographer Geoffrey Field has described him as “one of the most successful exemplars of a new literary type: the popular synthesizer who, in an age of specialization, dispensed with academic caution and strove to impose an order on the chaos of experience by drawing together all his knowledge in an easily grasped unified vision.”¹³⁸ This vision was expressed most comprehensively in Chamberlain’s magnum opus, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*.¹³⁹ Published in two volumes in 1900, it soon became an essential text of German racial theory. Marshalling a wide array of arcane and unrelated lore, Chamberlain argued that the history of humanity was the history of struggle between different races.¹⁴⁰ After the Roman Empire had collapsed in “racial chaos” induced by miscegenation, there arose two pure races: the Jews and the Teutons. From the sixth century onward, European history had been little more than the story of Teutons fighting Jews.¹⁴¹ The Jewish race, according to Chamberlain, aimed to “be Lord and possessor of the whole earth.” By encouraging their daughters to marry outside the race and by preventing their sons from doing so, they infected “Indo-Europeans with Jewish blood,” while ensuring the racial purity of their principal male line. If this continued unabated, Europe would soon be left with only one pure race: the Jews. “All the rest would be a herd of pseudo-Hebraic mestizos, a people beyond all doubt degenerate physically, mentally, and morally.”¹⁴² The rootless urban Jew was the destroyer of European civilization, while the idealistic, chaste, and profound Teuton was its redeemer. Rejecting the “Judaized” Christianity of the Roman Catholic Church, Chamberlain resurrected Wagner’s Aryan Jesus: Christ’s character traits, he argued, were predominantly Aryan and Teutonic.¹⁴³

Although he spoke of race rather than of religion, Chamberlain was far from unequivocal on the immutability of Jewishness. He wrote in the *Foundations* that “it is pointless to call the purest bred Israelite a Jew, if he has succeeded in throwing off the shackles of Ezra and Nehemiah and no longer acknowledges the law of Moses in his mind or despises others in his heart.” Elsewhere, however, he almost contradicted himself by using quasi-biological arguments. This same equivocation was characteristic of the Bayreuth circle as a whole.¹⁴⁴ But despite their internal contradictions, Wagner and Chamberlain provided new intellectual and cultural credentials for anti-Semitism. The Nazis would honor them as visionaries, but their impact long predated the Third Reich and was not even restricted to gentiles. In Vienna

itself, the Jewish-born Karl Kraus published Chamberlain's articles in his journal and shared his conviction that Jews were the forces of Mammon.¹⁴⁵ The Wagnerian brand of anti-Semitism caught the mood of the century as unerringly as the Wagnerian brand of opera, and nowhere was this more apparent than in Vienna.

Jews and Viennese Culture: Assimilation, Uniqueness, "Self-Hatred"

On arriving in Vienna in 1889, Houston Stewart Chamberlain wrote a joyous letter to a friend. After praising the beauties of the city and "the pretty women of easy morals," he added that the one drawback of Vienna was the "enormous quantity of Jews."¹⁴⁶ The Jewish population of Vienna had indeed been rising since 1848, when the government had revoked older laws barring Jews from residing in the city. Jews from the eastern regions of the Habsburg Empire had then begun to emigrate to Vienna in large numbers, and, until the 1890s, the Jewish population of the capital grew faster than the general population, rising from around 4,000 in 1848 to about 150,000 by the end of the century, which amounted to some nine per cent of the city's total population.¹⁴⁷

Recent emigres from the East apart, many Viennese Jewish families came to be characterized by their assimilation to and admiration for German culture. More than thirty percent of students in the classical Gymnasias, for example, were Jewish. Since the primary aim of the Gymnasia was to train students for higher education and the professions, it was hardly surprising that forty-eight percent of students in the medical faculty of the University of Vienna were Jewish. The law and philosophy faculties had fewer Jewish students, but their numbers were not insignificant. Among professors, the medical faculty, once again, led the rest with more than fifty percent Jews. The Viennese press was preponderantly Jewish, a fact that Karl Kraus repeatedly emphasized.¹⁴⁸

Historian Norman Stone has argued that "most of the twentieth-century intellectual world was invented" in Vienna. This was as sudden in historical terms as it was unexpected. While turn-of-the-century Austria produced leaders in practically every field ranging from music to nuclear physics, the empire had never previously been the leader in any field other than music. Vienna, especially, had been "rather a backward place" by European standards. Stone argued that the rapid intellectual flowering of Vienna in the early twentieth century can be explained only by the preponderance of secularized Jews.¹⁴⁹ His doctoral student Steven Beller developed this suggestion in a comprehensive cultural history of Jewish Vienna, arguing that most cultural innovators in Vienna were of Jewish descent: Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg, Karl Popper, Hans

Kelsen, Arthur Schnitzler.¹⁵⁰ concluded Beller, "but also it

Even the scions of thorough or Hugo von Hofmannsthal cal German culture from ch identity, which did *not* imply one must emphasize, was im ing perceived as a Jew by ot longing to the community.¹⁵¹ "Jewish mind," Beller argue were characterized by two tr and the exploration of issues ish stress on religious learni cultivation (*Bildung*) throu ethics and individual identi with German Protestant cul burg Vienna, but many Jew tianity, chose Protestantism This liberal-Jewish-Protest with inner truth and a Kantil cal perspective that, accord was secondary to ethics anc pressed in its most famous t thetics are one."¹⁵⁶ An ide Kraus, Otto Weininger, and

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igmund Freud, Ludwig
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Kelsen, Arthur Schnitzler.¹⁵⁰ "Not only were the cultural producers Jewish,"
concluded Beller, "but also the consumers, the audience."¹⁵¹

Even the scions of thoroughly assimilated families—such as Wittgenstein
or Hugo von Hofmannstahl, both raised as Christians and steeped in classi-
cal German culture from childhood—were always conscious of their Jewish
identity, which did *not* imply any interest in Judaism. Much of this identity,
one must emphasize, was imposed from without: it was more a product of be-
ing perceived as a Jew by others than due to any spontaneous feeling of be-
longing to the community.¹⁵² Rejecting the racial and essentialist notion of a
"Jewish mind," Beller argued that the work of Jewish intellectuals and artists
were characterized by two traditionally Jewish themes: the study of the Word
and the exploration of issues relating to ethics and personal identity. The Jew-
ish stress on religious learning fused easily with the German interest in self-
cultivation (*Bildung*) through wide learning.¹⁵³ The preoccupation with
ethics and individual identity, again, was Jewish but eminently compatible
with German Protestant culture. Protestantism was a minority faith in Habs-
burg Vienna, but many Jewish intellectuals, when they converted to Chris-
tianity, chose Protestantism rather than the state religion of Catholicism.¹⁵⁴
This liberal-Jewish-Protestant individualism encouraged a preoccupation
with inner truth and a Kantian conviction of moral autonomy. It was this ethi-
cal perspective that, according to Beller, generated the belief that aesthetics
was secondary to ethics and derived from the latter.¹⁵⁵ This belief was ex-
pressed in its most famous form by Ludwig Wittgenstein: "Ethics and aes-
thetics are one."¹⁵⁶ An identical conviction, however, was shared by Karl
Kraus, Otto Weininger, and Arnold Schoenberg.¹⁵⁷

Politically, assimilated Jews were overwhelmingly liberal, although later
generations often turned away from liberalism in reaction to the many fail-
ures of Viennese liberal politics in the late nineteenth century. The Jewish
brand of liberalism, however, entailed an obligation to purge oneself of Jew-
ishness and to become a complete human being, a full citizen, and a German.
Emancipation from the ghetto, many Jewish liberal intellectuals argued, had
to be followed by emancipation from Judaism.¹⁵⁸ One popular path toward
that second emancipation was immersion in German literature, philosophy,
and science. Jews, by and large, ignored the ostentatious Catholic culture
unique to Austria: Rome was seen as the enemy of German *Bildung*, and
Protestant Germany as the promised land of Kant and Goethe. The Habs-
burg monarchy received grudging Jewish support only because the Habs-
burgs were a German family.¹⁵⁹

By the end of the century it was clear, however, that this assimilationist
project had failed. The rapid rise in anti-Semitism and the simultaneous col-
lapse of liberalism evoked diverse responses from Jewish intellectuals: the

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erstwhile assimilationist Theodor Herzl's move to Zionist separatism was only the most dramatic.¹⁶⁰ Most assimilated Jewish intellectuals, however, could not repudiate their affiliation with German culture, and the Zionist project was criticized by many of them, notably by Karl Kraus, as being opposed to the historical evolution of Jewish cosmopolitanism.¹⁶¹ Even the most cosmopolitan Jews of the time, however, felt their world constrict and their identity villainized.¹⁶² Increasingly, many retreated into the self, even if Ernst Mach had argued that the self was a fiction, and even if life had shown there was no free will. The Kantian autonomous self—the locus of moral freedom inaccessible to the world—was a myth one needed in order to live. For Arthur Schnitzler, it was artistic creativity that led inward; for Sigmund Freud, it was the elaboration of psychological theory; and for Otto Weininger, it was the philosophical validation (and cultural utilization) of Kant's concept of the intelligible self.

More than just the self, it was identity itself—and its breakdown—that preoccupied Jewish intellectuals. John Toews's observation on the Jewish characters of Schnitzler's novel, *Der Weg ins Freie* (The Road into the Open), is applicable to Viennese Jewish intellectuals at large: "The Jewish crisis is both exemplary of a general cultural crisis and an extreme form of that crisis. . . . The particular experience of the dilemmas of Jewish emancipation and cultural identification forces an articulation and thinking through of a general cultural crisis of subjective autonomy and communal identity. . . . It is the Jews who theorize, politically and philosophically . . . the ambivalence of 'freedom' in a world without anchors where all are strangers within their own homeland. . . . As outsiders within, as foreigners in their own country, as experiments in self-construction whose emancipation has left them bereft of all natural identities, the Jews articulate the fate of the human."¹⁶³

For some, concerns with identity crystallized into a repugnance for their Jewish identity, a phenomenon described as "self-hatred" by Theodor Lessing in 1930.¹⁶⁴ Weininger occupied a prominent position in Lessing's analysis, and he has continued to do so in virtually every other study of the subject since then.¹⁶⁵ This labeling has been challenged by Allan Janik. Lessing, argued Janik, accused Weininger of self-hatred out of a racism that was much more pathological than Weininger's. Lessing saw Jewish identity as a matter of blood and condemned Weininger for denying that immutable, quasi-biological identity.¹⁶⁶ Now, a biological racist was one thing that Weininger indubitably was not.¹⁶⁷ In the absence of an immutable concept of race in his work, and given the lack of biographical data on Weininger's personal views on Jewishness, one cannot even say that Weininger, although born in a Jewish family, "had a Jewish identity in the first place."¹⁶⁸ If Weininger did not identify himself as Jewish to himself, then, contends Janik, one cannot reproach him

with self-hatred at all. WI are often founded in quas ing's, his argument that W ish is problematic if only t descent" in a footnote earl quite indubitably, identifi

Nevertheless, it is also b Weininger was most emj "Jewishness" and his opini hard to portray Weininger was this an eccentric positi ner and Houston Stewar greedy, dishonest, and sycr tively free of all those chara affairs we may by common the present state of affairs.' socialists such as Victor / capitalists and the bourgee fus and Emile Zola, for i among Jewish financiers a we pay close attention to t we run the risk of identifiy uduce, in short, came in di different consequences: as demn them all, but as histe ferences of origin, intentio

To sum up, any critic of: Semitic rhetoric because o talism and other aspect anti-Semitic politicians or gence in goals. Kraus and their own Jewish origins, v pouse biological theories o sized the nonpolitical natu of their time, were critical : is not a question of separati tion were even possible) bu underlay the anti-Semitism

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the "Secessionist" taste for ships, he expostulated about and homosexuals in recent years (*grösseren Weiblichkeit*) of and belief that evolutionary progress, Weininger quoted biological differentiation was greatest in humans.¹³ There was, then, no program to move further in between males and females and differentiation, when men were feminine. With the con- taminated and true femininity, and assume its proper, servile position at the time, but they an- son to contemporary dis-

However, the tenor of the argu- ment of *Geschlecht und Charakter*, "restriction" of the biological and intermediacy, Weininger ally, was either male or fe- male. After arguing in the first part of the book that men were or feminine, and that mor- tances, Weininger seemed to tion of psychological mono- and second part of *Geschlecht und Charakter* to emphasize his need not be male and female oscillate between the two. The distinction between the two parts is culturally most revealing—

mental and behavioral differ- ences. The greater intensity of the attributes depended upon the fact that women had a weaker distinction between men and women and the component instincts of Moll had suggested that the difference was the primary component

was the urge to "cause a physical change in the genitals"—in the male, to ejaculate. Although human females did not ejaculate, Moll had stressed that they, too, experienced the need to "relieve the tension of the sexual organs." Moll had named this the impulse of detumescence (*Detumescenztrieb*). The second major component of the sex drive was the impulse to "approach, touch, and kiss" another person, which Moll had termed the impulse of contraction (*Kontraktionstrieb*).¹⁵

Weininger accepted this scheme, asserting that Man possessed both drives, while Woman lacked the detumescence drive (109). He cited Moll and the gynecologists Rudolf Chrobak and A. von Rosthorn to this effect, ignoring that Moll had expressed the opposite view on the very page he cited (508).¹⁶ In Weininger's scheme, then, Woman possessed only the contraction drive, and that in a very passive form: she only desired to be touched.¹⁷ In Man, however, the contraction drive was active and more visible, reflected in the motile spermatozoa's journey to the passive and stationary ovum. Woman's contraction drive, although less visible because of its passivity, was, how- ever, tremendously intense (110–11). Women, for instance, did not mastur- bate to satisfy the impulse of detumescence but to induce, intensify, and prolong the state of sexual stimulation (*Erregtheit*), which represented the highest point of female existence. Woman was completely sexual—this would be the central theme and fundamental contention of the second part of *Geschlecht und Charakter*—whereas Man was sexual as well as asexual, inter- ested in a diverse range of activities including war and play, scholarship and discussion, politics, religion, and art (112).¹⁸ This difference was mirrored by morphology. Men had fewer and more sharply localized sexually sensitive zones, whereas women's bodies were diffusely erogenous (114–15). Charles Darwin had observed that female animals "seldom offer remarkable sec- ondary sexual characters" (508).¹⁹ In an astonishing conceptual leap, Wein- inger inferred from Darwin's statement that females must, therefore, be sexual throughout! Extrapolating to the human female, Weininger closed this section with one of his most frequently quoted aphorisms: "Man pos- sesses the penis, but the vagina possesses the Woman" (*Der Mann hat den Pe- nis, aber die Vagina hat die Frau*, 116).

From Woman to Man: The Dialectic of Masculinity and Femininity

The next seven chapters of *Geschlecht und Charakter* addressed lofty themes of no obvious relevance to gender: logic, ethics, genius, and the self. This cluster of chapters, however, played an important role in the overall scheme of the treatise. Since so much of the text concentrated on defining and evaluating femininity, it would be easy to overlook that it did not neglect the comple- mentary task: the construction of the ideal Man. It was in these seven arcane

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chapters that Weininger unveiled his conception of masculinity, while relating it constantly and dialectically to his theory of femininity. Weininger's Woman was constructed largely in biomedical terms, whereas his ideal-typical Man was a psychological and philosophical construct. In his analysis of masculinity, Weininger moved sharply away from biomedical discourse, turning instead to the philosophy of Kant, and he framed his Kantian image of Man within a biting critique of contemporary "soul-less" psychology. As Christine Buci-Glucksmann has remarked, "Weininger called for a 'return to Kant,' via the neo-Kantianism of his times and various Platonist meditations—a return to the theoretically and existentially neuralgic point of the ego, of self-identity. Weininger, then, sought to reconstruct a logic and ethic of identity, a new variant of a metaphysics of the ego centered on a veritable ontology of the masculine. Between Being and Nothingness lay an ontologically grounded inequality of the sexes."²⁰

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Woman, Weininger claimed, was capable only of feeling and could not differentiate between feeling and thought.²¹ Females had vague and unformed thoughts, which Weininger called "henids."²² Acknowledging that every thought, whether in males or in females, began in "a kind of half-thought, a condition in which vague geometrical figures, visual phantasms, nebulous images hover in the mind," Weininger emphasized that in Man such "proto-thoughts" underwent clarification and refinement but that they remained eternally nebulous in Woman (122).²³ Males and females possessed the same psychic material, but in Woman thought remained indistinguishable from feeling.²⁴ The male's clear thought was a sexual attribute: most women wished to marry men who were cleverer (*gescheiter*) than they and were sexually repelled by men who thought and expressed themselves formlessly (129).

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Without deigning to disclose the facts justifying such conceptions of female sexual choice, Weininger proceeded to a meandering discussion of genius. Arguably the most abstruse section of *Geschlecht und Charakter*, it was nonetheless indispensable to the text's project of constructing the ideal-typical absolute male. The principles of logic, the nature of genius, and Kantian ethics were all integral to Weininger's model of Man. For Weininger, the man of genius had "incomparably greater understanding of other beings than the average man."²⁵ Neither the "man of deeds" nor the great scientist but only the great artist or philosopher could be called a genius.²⁶ Men of action created nothing that survived for eternity, and even the modern scientist, unless he was also a philosopher, was not a universal thinker. "The ideal of an artistic genius is to live in all men, to lose himself in all men, to reveal himself in multitudes; and so also the aim of the philosopher is to discover all others in himself, to fuse them into a unit which is his own unit" (178–79).²⁷

The supreme exemplar of such a genius was, of course, Goethe, who,

Weininger remarked, even understood and motivations of every form of foremost, in the union of innumerable: the genius was supremely thought, then, was at the farthest rationally feminine, genius was perfect (*Männlichkeit*). Femininity and gender could never aspire to the transcendence of the genius (141, 144). Switching lamented:

It is only too obvious that an era that dubious words, an era whose philosophy the Unconscious, cannot have a single Consciousness, which disperses the (150)²⁸

The elevated consciousness of the memory. The genius could remember ever thought or heard, seen or done because "did not imply the recollection of life; it applied only to what he had memories were not stored discretely mysterious way one great whole" (151), but Woman lacked it completely; woman recollected only a few isolates—memories of paramours, of her by men (158).³¹

Not even the most complete male his experiences; nor could he forget degrees of genius and "no male is quite to stipulate Weininger's argument, females not really have memories; all males memory than any female; memory with males possessed some genius. What this argument, there is no denying of masculinity.

Having argued that memory was claimed that memory was also the basis of a theory of memory going back to Charles Bonnet (1720–93), which in the 19th century by Ernst Mach and physiologists.

of masculinity, while relating to femininity. Weininger's terms, whereas his ideal construct. In his analysis of the biomedical discourse, he framed his Kantian image as a "soul-less" psychology. As Weininger called for a return to various Platonist meditatively neuralgic point of the construct a logic and ethic centered on a veritable beingness lay an ontologi-

feeling and could not differ. He had vague and unformed knowledge that every kind of half-thought, a phantasm, nebulous that in Man such "prototypes" but that they remained males possessed the same indistinguishable from attribute: most women than they and were sexless themselves formlessly (129). Regarding such conceptions of gender in discussion of *Geist und Charakter*, it was constructing the ideal of genius, and Kantian. For Weininger, the thing of other beings than the great scientist but genius.²⁶ Men of action the modern scientist, unthinker. "The ideal of an I men, to reveal himself is to discover all others out" (178-79).²⁷ Of course, Goethe, who,

Weininger remarked, even understood the mind of criminals and the nature and motivations of every form of crime (135). Genius consisted, first and foremost, in the union of innumerable contrasts and types within one individual: the genius was supremely conscious and infinitely sensible. His thought, then, was at the farthest remove from henids. Since henids were typically feminine, genius was perfected masculinity (*eine ideale, potenzierte Männlichkeit*). Femininity and genius, therefore, were antithetical: females could never aspire to the transcendent clarity and totally conscious existence of the genius (141, 144). Switching to his cultural-critical mode, Weininger lamented:

It is only too obvious that an era that sees its essence expressed best in vague and dubious words, an era whose philosophy, in more than one sense, has become the Unconscious, cannot have a single truly great man. For Greatness consists of Consciousness, which disperses the Unconscious as the sun dissolves a mist. (150)²⁸

The elevated consciousness of the genius, said Weininger, implied perfect memory. The genius could remember "his entire past, everything that he has ever thought or heard, seen or done, perceived or felt."²⁹ "Universal remembrance" did not imply the recollection of all that the person had learned in life; it applied only to what he had actually experienced (145-46).³⁰ These memories were not stored discretely in the psyche: all of them were "in some mysterious way one great whole" (157). Such continuity was rare in most people, but Woman lacked it completely: when she looked back on her life, a woman recollected only a few isolated moments related to her sexual experiences—memories of paramours, of her wedding night, of poems written to her by men (158).³¹

Not even the most complete male, of course, could possibly remember all his experiences; nor could he forget them all. There were, then, different degrees of genius and "no male is quite without a trace of genius" (147). To recapitulate Weininger's argument, females thought in henids and therefore did not really have memories; all males had clearer consciousness and better memory than any female; memory was the *sine qua non* of genius; hence, all males possessed some genius. Whatever might be the logician's verdict on this argument, there is no denying its importance in Weininger's model of masculinity.

Having argued that memory was intimately related to genius, Weininger claimed that memory was also the basis of logical and ethical thought. He rejected a theory of memory going back to the eighteenth-century scientist Charles Bonnet (1720-93), which had been revived in the late nineteenth century by Ernst Mach and physiologist Ewald Hering. It argued that hu-

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man memory was a special instance of the universal quality of all organized matter, whereby reactions to new stimuli occurred more slowly than reactions to familiar stimuli.³² But human memory, Weininger protested, was not comparable to a reflex; in it, the past was actually reproduced with all its individual qualities. Nor was Weininger satisfied with the associationist theory that explained memory by the formation of "mechanical" links between ideas and representations (*Vorstellungsverknüpfungen*). Such a view, Weininger argued, overlooked the fact that memory was fundamentally a function of the will: "I can remember something when I actually wish to" (184–85). It was the will that activated chains of associations: the process was in no way mechanical.³³

1919 | Memory, then, was a higher, specifically human function, related closely to "mankind's most peculiar qualities": logic and ethics. Liars had proverbially bad memories—male liars, Weininger averred, were uncommon while females were legendary for their mendacity. "It is evident that a being whose memory is very slight, and who can recall only in the most imperfect fashion what it has said or done, or suffered, must lie easily if it has the gift of speech" (187). Because of her inadequate memory, the absolute female possessed no sense of her identity at different stages of life. She could not, strictly speaking, remember the entity A for long enough to appreciate that it was still A after the passage of a moment. She could not, therefore, decide on the truth or falsity of the proposition $A = A$, thus failing to satisfy the fundamental requirement of logical thought: ability to discern identity and its contradiction (191). Logic was, at best, a means for Woman, rather than the criterion of all thought. Woman, Weininger declared, suffered from "logical insanity" (192). 1919 | Man's life, on the other hand, was sequential, logical, and ordered in accordance with the laws of cause and effect (188–89).

Moving on to ethics, Weininger asserted that "the source of all error in life is failure of memory." Memory was indissolubly linked with morality because repentance was impossible without memory. A being without memory lied of necessity. This mendacity was not immoral, since there could be no immorality in the absence of a standard of truth. Woman lied because she lacked memory: she was, therefore, not immoral but simply amoral (193–94).³⁴ Yet, the continuous memory that enables Man to be truthful and logical did not directly engender the desire and need for truth. The latter came from a deeper source that was absolutely unchangeable and independent of time (194–95).

Kant had declared that human morality originated in the intelligible self, the existence of which could be philosophically deduced but never empirically verified.³⁵ Weininger agreed with his master that this intelligible self was independent of space, time, and ordinary causal laws. It could not be investigated by scientific methods (195). The Kantian concept of the intelligi-

ble self was pivotal to Weininger's exposition of Kant's concept, how-
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ble self was pivotal to Weininger's analysis of masculinity and femininity. His exposition of Kant's concept, however, was not simply a philosophical translation of his views on gender but also provided a foundation for his deeply-felt critique of empirical psychology, in particular of newer psychological opinions on the nature of the self.

David Hume had argued that the human self was not unitary but a mere "bundle" of constantly shifting sensations and perceptions (197).³⁶ More recently, Ernst Mach had proffered the same theory, claiming that the ego or the self was a fiction beyond salvage.³⁷ It was astonishing, Weininger exclaimed, that a man of Mach's erudition and intelligence could overlook the fact that every organic being was an indivisible monad, different from other monads. The primary difference between the living and the nonliving, in fact, was that living beings were individuals distinct from one another. The human ego, Weininger asserted, was not "simply a waiting-hall for perceptions" (*blosse Wartesaal für Empfindungen*, 198-99). Human individuality was determined by the "intelligible character" of humans, which could not be demonstrated but only deduced philosophically. The intelligible self was noumenal in Kantian terms: it was a "thing in itself," as opposed to the empirical self, which was phenomenal and scientifically demonstrable. The reasons for believing in such an undemonstrable entity as the intelligible self were logical and ethical (199). In logic, the proposition $A = A$ was self-evident and axiomatic, and that simple axiom was the basis of all distinctions between truth and error. To say $A = A$, however, was to posit something that remained constant against a shifting backdrop of changing and swirling perceptions. This permanence of the concept could be asserted only by "something" that was equally constant. To say $A = A$, therefore, was to say "I am" (204). "Were I part of the stream of change," Weininger argued, "I could not recognize that A had remained unchanged." This permanent "something," immune to change and experience and temporality, was Kant's noumenal, intelligible self (205).³⁸ It followed, therefore, that human beings were fully human only when they were completely logical (205).

The intelligible self was equally essential to ethics. All errors were sins. It was the duty of human beings to seek truth: logic and ethics, therefore, were among the duties of the empirical ego toward the intelligible self (205-206). Logic and ethics, in fact, were fundamentally one and the same: "All of ethics is conceivable only along logical lines, and all of logic constitutes an ethical law. Not only virtue, but also insight, not only sanctity but also wisdom, are the duties and tasks of human beings: through the union of the two alone comes perfection" (207).

Weininger then returned to the relationship of the intelligible self to genius. All great men, Weininger stated, had been convinced of possessing "an ego in

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214). What, however, was the nature of the "genius," if he could exist in reality, would be in terms with every entity in the universe—that the comprehender possess himself, therefore, would be nothing less than a *Mikrokosmos*, with his own ego at the center (20).³⁹ This microcosmic psyche, like a mosaic or to a chemical compound, was not constructed by the scientist or the scholar added pieces together forming them into a whole, the genetic totality, all plurality and all singularity—the divine element in man" (222). The passage from the Renaissance humanist *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (237) stated that "man is the only creature whose will is his own free choice; and thus man no longer has a place in the hierarchy of being and of separate world."⁴¹ In the passage Pico says:

God conferred the seeds of all kinds and each man cultivates will grow to what he chooses. If they be vegetative, he will be like a plant. If rational, he will grow into a heaven and son of God. And if, happy in his own unity, he passes them all.⁴²

to highlight the last sentence of the passage between Pico's unified man and his own individuality, it was not only the fictitious absurdity. Even the ordinary man could not be himself since all human beings had the same souls. Lamenting contemporary man's loss of the microcosmic soul, Weininger asserted that no human is a genius. . . . The genius is latent in all is fully developed in the individual for an ordinary man to attain greatness (236).

ethical duty. What, however, of the duty of the man as naturally evil, Weininger asserted that the genius was the true universal spirit, he

was always interested in his fellows, suffered with them, and already had them, as it were, in his own microcosmic self (229–32). The genius could not kill—neither himself nor anybody else—since he knew that to kill himself was to kill the universe—an intriguing statement in the light of Weininger's own suicide—and to kill another was to kill himself in the victim (233). Nor could the genius ever commit the Kantian crime of using other people as means to a goal. The genius respected individuality, considered others as ends in themselves (230), and regarded I and Thou as indissolubly linked entities (233).

Now, since all logical thought and ethical behavior originated in the intelligible ego, Weininger continued, it followed that a consistently unethical or illogical being did not possess an intelligible self. Since Woman was such an amoral and alogical being, he triumphantly concluded that she did not possess an intelligible self (239–40).⁴³ What, however, of individual women? The sexually intermediate nature of individuals notwithstanding, most individual women, Weininger asserted, resembled the absolute female very closely (241).⁴⁴ Men, on the contrary, were distinct individuals and did not necessarily embody every attribute of the absolute male. The absolute male possessed everything, including the potential for femininity; the individual man chose to develop one or more of these qualities. If he chose the lowest traits, the individual male could easily reach the nadir of humanity, which, according to Weininger, explained the existence of feminine men. While the male type could acquire the attributes of the female type, the reverse possibility did not exist. "The woman," Weininger asserted, "could never become a man" (*Aber die Frau kann nie zum Manne werden*, 241).

The impossibility of woman becoming man represented the most important qualification of the notion of universal sexual intermediacy. Weininger's anecdotal, confusing argument for this conviction deserves to be quoted in full:

I know a large number of men who are psychologically almost completely female. . . . I even know many women with masculine traits but not one woman who is not fundamentally female, even when this femininity is hidden by various means not just from others but also from the person herself. One is either man or woman, however many features of both sexes one might possess, and this "Being" (*Sein*) . . . is determined by one's relationship with ethics and logic. While there are individuals who are anatomically men but psychologically women, there is no individual who is physically a woman but psychologically a man, regardless of external masculine traits. (242)

Now armed with complete ideal types of the sexes, Weininger returned to his critique of psychology. The psychology of Woman, he stated, could be represented in purely empirical terms but not that of Man (269). "Scientific psychology" was deterministic, with no room for free will and free thought

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from psychology, leaving only psychology described itself as "psychology" therefore, it was "an eminently (70). It was good enough, no doubt, fragmented, incoherent, and intell of Man, however, was utterly the free, intelligible subject: his dependent of his body (278).

clared, had failed to discover any of masculine thought. Its greatest attempted to reach the depths of the and responses (270). But each of such empirically unverifiable at- If one did not proceed beyond the the atomism of sensations and the psychology into "an annex of physi- approaches to psychology negated parts. But, Weininger concluded a unitary whole negated, in turn,

Morality

moral gulf between the two sexes, and a whole chapter to answer this reasons between human beings were tion one saw among animals: hu- tatively different from sexual at- fact, antithetical to the desire for entirely free of sexual desire. That identical. Hope and fear, too, oc- wined, but they were not for that Sexual attraction increased with est in the absence of the beloved." (particularly a great man) was often ly from the woman he loved (317- allowed, might scoff at the idea of love there was. Sexual desire was as true love was the worship of the strice.

nelobject of this metaphysical and in the mind of the smitten man

into the pure and beautiful Madonna? (318). Addressing physical beauty first, Weininger asserted that the naked female body was far from beautiful: it looked "unfinished" (*Unfertigem*), and this was incompatible with beauty (319). The female genitals, he added, were particularly ugly (320). The female body seemed beautiful only when love was projected on to it, just as all hatefulness in an object was a projection of hate from the subject. Feminine beauty, then, was a creation of male love: the two, in essence, were identical (321). This process of projection did not create beauty alone but also morality. The moral qualities a man saw in his beloved emanated, in fact, from the man himself. "In all love Man loves only himself": not the weak and limited being he actually is, but the man he "wants to be and ought to be, his truest, deepest intelligible essence, free from all fetters of necessity, and from all taints of earth" (322). In love, man found his higher self; many men realized they possessed a soul only when they experienced love (323). Like art, love created form out of chaos (324-25).

Being a projective phenomenon, love could never be a relationship of equals. Obviously, too, it was an exclusively masculine emotion (325). The absolute female was incapable of love; she experienced sexual attraction alone (336-37).⁴⁸ Later, Weininger devoted an entire chapter to the thesis that there were only two fundamental types of woman: the Mother and the Prostitute. Both were completely sexual, the Mother in the reproductive domain and the Prostitute in the purely physical arena. Love for either type of woman was a masculine illusion: "It is a supremely heroic effort to find worth and value where there is none." A man's love for a woman was nothing but self-projection and necessarily doomed to failure (327).

Although fundamentally different, love as well as pure concupiscence entailed using women as means to an end. The sexual use of women, of course, was too well known to need much explanation. But how could the purest, most devoted love be seen as equally exploitative? Lovers, argued Weininger, used women to create "value" (*Wert*), and the artist used them to produce "children of the soul" (330). As soon as a man fell in love with a woman, he ceased to understand her. Since understanding was the sole moral basis for associating with another individual, falling in love with a woman was fundamentally as immoral as using her to gratify one's lust or as a means to produce children of the flesh (330, 332). In Weininger's Kantian universe, it was always wrong to use individuals as means, no matter how noble the end: "The sexual impulse negates the body, and the erotic impulse the mind of the female" (332). Love, apart from being unethical, was illogical since it could arise only on the basis of a denial of the objective nature of the woman (333). Madonna worship could be beautiful, as with Dante, but never logical or moral (334).

* *Also sees the German nation as being essentially feminine - the Madonna would be the perfect selfless being and*

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and from my act of the German people, I will create form out of chaos

the idealization of the Day of Judgment

The Ontological (In)Significance of Woman

"The deeper we have delved in our foregoing analysis of Woman's claim to esteem," Weininger declared, "the more we have had to deny her of what is lofty and noble, great and beautiful" (342). Nevertheless, he emphasized, he did not wish to advocate an "Asiatic" oppression of women. He supported the legal equality of men and women, but could not countenance any demand for intellectual and moral parity. The latter was impossible because the most degraded man still had something ineffable in him that raised him morally and intellectually above the noblest woman (342). Medical writers on the Woman Question such as Paul Julius Möbius had been wrong, Weininger asserted, to consider the average woman as "physiologically weak-minded" and the extraordinary woman as degenerate. Women with talent should be regarded as the reverse of degenerate: they were at least partly masculine, and therefore, had taken at least one step beyond lowly, amoral femininity. As for "physiological weak-mindedness," Woman was neither strong-minded nor weak-minded: she was simply mindless (*un-sinnig*), although she could be far more cunning and calculating than Man (343-44). What, then, was the real nature of Woman and her ontological significance?

Identifying "match-making," of all things, as an invariable propensity among women, Weininger argued that this indicated Woman's constant preoccupation with sexuality—not simply with her own sexual urges but with sexuality in general, and in the most physical sense. "The transcendental function of Woman" was to bring about the physical union of male and female (351). How, then, had women veiled their true nature, acquiring such a pure and saintly image across history? Woman had been able to hide her true nature because she was so completely passive and so impressionable: she acquired and acted out male ideas of female purity. Emphasizing that this camouflage was unconscious, Weininger embarked upon a fascinating analysis of hysteria (352-54). Basically a radical reinterpretation of Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer's theory of hysteria, Weininger's analysis was of fundamental importance to his argument on woman's status. Hysteria, according to Weininger, demonstrated that Woman comprised an inner, completely sexual self, and an outer "false self" constructed in unconscious response to male expectations. The "real self" of Woman was nothing more than pure, undifferentiated sexuality. It could not have any ontological weight since this sexuality was not linked with individual men: female sexuality was a simple, supraindividual craving for coitus, not a desire for union with a specific man. Woman could not comprehend the individuality of a man; she could only comprehend masculinity (397).

Ontologically, the relationship between Man and Woman was the Aristotelian one of form and matter. Woman was pure, unindividualized matter,

on which Man conferred form knowledge women as human beings because they complemented his sole destiny and greatest fulfillment. God, represented Being, where, in a male—was the symbol of Man of Woman was the deepest fear sense of significance (*Sinnlosigkeit*).

This absolute lack of significance of Woman. She represented (*Gegenpol der Gottheit*) while God, of course, there was nothing so Woman existed due to Man's in his demand of the Absolute in his meaning to Woman: "Woman is existence and significance, there Woman, in a very real sense, was femininity itself would disappear."

Gender

Having finished with love, Weininger Judaism. His anti-Semitism has: ours, as the predominant or even *Charakter*. Actually, however, Weininger's subsidiary to and closely entwined with that was far from uncommon: he pointed out that Rabbi Adolf Jellinek Jewish traits, and that a dual anti-work of Arthur Schopenhauer as ever, was drawn most forcefully in

Weininger's discussion of "Jewry" to gender: why did certain races ideal male type only very rarely? longing to those races were biologically. The "psychical peculiarity of the Jew" problem (405). He was not concerned with origins or the physical anthropology of Jewish descent. He denied or constitution, which is a perfect expression among the Jews, were psychologically more Jewish.

Significance of Woman

analysis of Woman's claim to essence had to deny her of what is lofty. Nevertheless, he emphasized, he did not countenance any demand for the impossible because the most demanding of him that raised him morally and (342). Medical writers on the other hand had been wrong, Weininger as "physiologically weak-minded" and "Women with talent should be regarded as at least partly masculine, and not as lowly, amoral femininity. As for Man, he was neither strong-minded nor (343-44). What, then, was the significance?

Man, as an invariable propensity indicated Woman's constant presence in her own sexual urges but with a moral sense. "The transcendental physical union of male and female is the true nature, acquiring such a pure and had been able to hide her true nature and so impressionable: she acquires purity. Emphasizing that this was marked upon a fascinating analytical reinterpretation of Sigmund Freud. Weininger's analysis was of fundamental Man's status. Hysteria, according to him, comprised an inner, completely hidden in unconscious response to Man was nothing more than pure, with any ontological weight since this was female sexuality was a simple, not for union with a specific man. Quality of a man; she could only

Man and Woman was the Aristotelian, pure, unindividualized matter,

on which Man conferred form. The sole reason why it was proper to acknowledge women as human beings (as opposed to animals or plants) was because they complemented men (390). To be formed by Man was Woman's sole destiny and greatest fulfillment (391-96). Man, built in the image of God, represented Being, whereas Woman—including the feminine element in a male—was the symbol of Nothing (*das Symbol des Nichts*, 398). The fear of Woman was the deepest fear in Man: she represented nullity and total absence of significance (*Sinnlosigkeit*, 399).

This absolute lack of significance, according to Weininger, was the cosmic significance of Woman. She represented the polar opposite of Godhood (*den Gegenpol der Gottheit*) while Godhood was the proper goal for Man. Consequently, there was nothing so contemptible as the feminized man (398). Woman existed due to Man's immoral affirmation of his own sexuality and his denial of the Absolute in him. It was male sexuality that created and gave meaning to Woman: "Woman is the sin of man" (401). In order to ensure her existence and significance, therefore, Woman encouraged Man to be sexual. Woman, in a very real sense, was sexuality: if sexuality could be transcended, femininity itself would disappear.

Gender and Jewish Identity

Having finished with love, Weininger turned abruptly to an examination of Judaism. His anti-Semitism has sometimes been seen, in his time as well as in ours, as the predominant or even the fundamental theme of *Geschlecht und Charakter*. Actually, however, Weininger's discussion of Jewishness was subsidiary to and closely entwined with his analysis of femininity, a relationship that was far from uncommon at the time. Jacques Le Rider, for instance, pointed out that Rabbi Adolf Jellinek provided a "feminized" description of Jewish traits, and that a dual antipathy toward Jews and women marked the work of Arthur Schopenhauer and D. H. Lawrence. The connection, however, was drawn most forcefully in *Geschlecht und Charakter*.⁴⁹

Weininger's discussion of "Jewishness" commenced with a problem related to gender: why did certain races approach the transcendent qualities of his ideal male type only very rarely? It was unlikely, after all, that all males belonging to those races were biologically closer to the absolute female (404). The "psychical peculiarity of the Jewish race" posed a particularly intriguing problem (405). He was not concerned, Weininger clarified, with the racial origins or the physical anthropology of Jews, adding in a footnote that he himself was of Jewish descent. He defined Jewishness "only as a psychical tendency or constitution, which is a possibility for all humans but had reached its fullest expression among the Jewish people" (406). Many racial Aryans, he argued, were psychologically more Jewish than many ethnic Jews, and many of

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the latter were mentally more Aryan than some of the former (407). His concern, he explained, was with all humans who, regardless of their racial origin, expressed in themselves "the platonic idea of Jewishness" (409).⁵⁰

Later, after several vitriolic pages on this "platonic idea," Weininger emphasized that in spite of his low opinion on Jewishness, he was wholly opposed to "any practical or theoretical persecution of Jews" (417-18), an attitude that complemented his stance on women. It was, in fact, anti-Semitism that, he contended, proved that Jewishness was not confined to the Jewish race. The true Aryan was seldom an anti-Semite, even though he might be repelled by aspects of Jewish culture. Those Aryans who often wrote philo-Semitic tracts were nevertheless the very people who understood Jews the least. The aggressive anti-Semites, on the other hand, frequently possessed Jewish traits themselves. Emile Zola, says Weininger, was a typical philo-Semite. All geniuses in history, however, had been anti-Semites, because, being microcosmic, they possessed all traits, including Jewish ones.⁵¹ People hated in others what they hated in themselves: "Whoever detests the Jewish disposition detests it first of all in himself" (406-407).

? — What, however, was the Jewish disposition? Here is Weininger's own definition: "The Jewish race [*Judentum*] is pervasively feminine. This femininity comprises those qualities that I have shown to be in total opposition to masculinity. The Jews are much more feminine than Aryans . . . and the manliest Jew may be taken for a female" (409). Although Weininger was unwilling to argue for the complete identification of the Jew with Woman, he argued that the two ideal types shared many attributes. Neither, for instance, understood the notion of personal property and both showed a marked preference for communism—not, however, for socialism, which Weininger identified as Aryan! (410).⁵² Zionism, Weininger conceded somewhat unpredictably, had expressed some of the noblest qualities of Jews but it was an impossible dream. Jewishness necessarily implied the dispersion of Jews all over the world. The Jew could not grasp the idea of the state: as deficient in personality as females, Jews could not associate as free and equal individuals within a larger whole. "Citizenship is an un-Jewish thing," and Zionism, therefore, was a negation of Jewishness itself (411). "To be capable of Zionism," Weininger declared, "Jews must first overcome Jewishness." Each Jew must fight relentlessly against his own Jewishness, and, once that inner battle had been won, he earned the right to be considered by Aryans as an individual and not as the member of a certain race (418-19). Jesus, according to Weininger, evolved Christianity—which was the complete negation of Judaism—by overcoming the Jew within himself (439). Christ was "the greatest man because he conquered the greatest enemy" (440).

Weininger surrounded these lofty statements with a banal set of anti-

Semitic clichés. Examples: "Je
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Semitic clichés. Examples: Jewish men were avid match-makers, and this was
 "the strongest similarity between femininity and Jewishness"; the Jew was
 "always more absorbed by sexual matters than the Aryan, although he is no-
 tably less potent sexually" (417); Jewish acquisitiveness was not the conse-
 quence of centuries of oppression but an inborn tendency (413); and finally,
 Jews were seldom actively immoral: they were feminine in their amorality.
 "Greatness," Weininger pronounced, "is absent from the nature of the
 Woman and the Jew, the greatness of morality, or the greatness of evil" (414-
 15). Admitting that analogies between femininity and Jewishness could not
 wholly fathom the inner mystery of Jewish identity, Weininger turned to an
 examination of Jewish religious and moral codes. The Jew, he asserted, was a
 slave, following a moral code promulgated by an external authority: Yah-
 weh.⁵² The Jewish God was abstract and external to the individual; the Jew
 knew nothing of the divine in every man: "For the God in man is the human
 soul and the absolute Jew is devoid of a soul" (420).

Weininger had to accept, however, that those "slaves of Yahweh" became
 materialists or freethinkers with the greatest ease. "It is merely," he hastily re-
 marked, "the obverse of slavery," and he moved on to identifying Jewish arro-
 gance as one of the driving forces of modern, materialistic science. Jewish
 science was hostile to all transcendentalism because the Jew had no respect or
 fear for the mysteries of life; he reduced the world to banality (421). The Jew
 was the fiercest follower of Darwin's "ridiculous theory of the descent of man
 from apes" and also the staunchest upholder of materialist, economic, or so-
 cial interpretations of history. Lacking an intelligible self, the Jew understood
 only matter and he attempted to drag all of humanity down to his level (422).

"Ours is Not Only the Most Jewish, but also the Most Feminine of Ages":

Weininger as Cultural Pathologist

Weininger's argument now turned overtly toward the criticism of contempo-
 rary mores. Femininity and Jewishness were the two qualities by which he
 judged a culture, and he found plenty of each in the Viennese milieu. From
 the last pages of the chapter on Jewishness until the end of *Geschlecht und*
Charakter, Weininger spoke as a diagnostician of cultural malaise and its ther-
 apist. His criticism of modern culture, rooted in his ideas on femininity and
 Jewishness, was abrasive, anti-Semitic, and misogynistic. Nevertheless,
 venom was not all that he spewed. He also attempted to construct a future
 utopia, in which, he hoped, even women would become fully human.

Not since Herod's time, Weininger announced, had Jews attained such
 power and influence as in contemporary times. "The spirit of modernity," he
 declared, "is Jewish." Sexuality pervaded society, and contemporary ethics af-
 firmed the glories of coitus. This sexualization of life reflected the influence of

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the Jew and the Woman, both obsessed with sex and determined to drag humanity down into the mire of sensuousness. "Ours is not only the most Jewish," Weininger expostulated, "but also the most feminine of ages" (440-41). The purely physical side of sexuality was being celebrated with a brazenness unequalled in history, and, in the name of freedom, women were revolting against motherhood and for prostitution. Contemporary men, influenced by Judaism, had accepted the new order. Male chastity was ridiculed and Woman was no longer regarded as the embodied sin of man. Sexual excess had become a symbol of status. Only the Woman without a lover was a figure of shame. Revolted by this "modern coitus-culture," Weininger lamented: "But this means there are no men left" (443-44).

The Jewishness and femininity of the epoch had led to pervasive cultural degradation. Art had degenerated into "daubs," and, in literature, the cult of the Madonna had been replaced by the cult of the whore. Anarchy was rampant in political and social life, and nobody believed any longer in the state or in the rule of law. Beguiled by historical materialism, that most foolish of concepts, historians believed they could explain the evolution of science, scholarship, and culture with reference to changes in political economy. Psychiatrists saw genius as a form of insanity, and the age had not produced a single great artist or philosopher (441).

A "New Christianity," Weininger hoped, might still emerge from this "New Judaism." Humankind, however, had to choose, as in A.D. 1, between Judaism and Christianity, between female and male, between business and culture, between earthly and heavenly life. There was no third way (441). Cultural regeneration would require chastity, which, contrary to conventional opinion, was a male attribute. Women valued virginity only because men seemed to prize it. Woman did not even understand the pure, projective, Platonic love of man, although she felt flattered by it: she understood sensuality alone.⁵⁴ "In coitus lies woman's greatest humiliation," Weininger elaborated, "in love her supreme exaltation. Since woman desires coitus and not love, she proves that she wishes to be humiliated and not worshipped. The ultimate opponent of the emancipation of women is Woman" (447).

Pleasure, for Weininger, was neither moral nor immoral in itself. Coitus was immoral not because it was pleasurable but because it induced men to use women as means to pleasure or to children. True, added Weininger, it was Woman who wished to be used in this way, but the use of a person as a means remained immoral regardless of who instigated such use (448). If men wished to treat women as they desired to be treated, then there was no way out of the immoral predicament: "He must have intercourse with her, for she wishes it; he must beat her, because she wants to be beaten; hypnotize her, because she desires it" (449).

Kantian morality demanded that and respect her individuality. The principal reason why these people had to be found in their servile disposition as strong as that of the Indo-Germans these groups, Weininger insisted that no matter how worthless and one must respect their humanity (450). Moreover, since there was no possessed at least faint traces of an individual vestige of true humanity, even if one damned Friedrich Nietzsche's assumption women was the most civilized and ethical (454).⁵⁵ "Woman and man," Weininger immediately added, however, that without political power: they must be excluded mentally handicapped, and criminal only be harmful to public welfare (454).

He emphasized, nevertheless, that right to be regarded as free individuals such a lofty view. Moral relations in sexual relations and even of love, since Man must only attempt to understand woman, but practically despise woman, he explained, might denigrate it represented the greatest tribute to Every woman must be encouraged to possess. Since femininity was an "Woman must cease to be Woman as stressed, mean that women should to masculinize their inner selves, deny which, in Weiningerian terms, means "Woman, as Woman, must disappear: negation of femininity, there could Pythagoras, Plato, Christianity, Tertullian called for the emancipation of Women: of femininity itself (455).⁵⁶

This liberation of women from achievement through female effort alone, "is so flickering that it always

influenced the research of lead-
Edward Strasburger, and Albert
istic use; so did August Weis-
ervations about it. Their inde-
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new individual.²¹ This issue had
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contained *latent* characters that
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20). Actually, Weismann did not
but simply—and famously—
regenerate into a complete indi-
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iever in the inheritance of ac-
nmanian ultra-Darwinian either;
concept of idioplasm in order to

establish that every cell of the body was endowed with sex. Although Weininger did try to take issue with Weismann, proffering some unimpressive evidence suggesting linkages between the soma and the germ plasm from the biological literature, he quickly dismissed the whole theme and moved on to an original, elegant, but entirely speculative formulation relating sex and sexual intermediacy to idioplasmic differences between individuals.²⁶

He postulated that the idioplasm could theoretically occur in two ideal-
typical forms: male (arrhenoplasm) and female (thelyplasm). But as with or-
ganisms, so it was with cells and plasmas: absolute masculinity or femininity
was unattainable in reality, and the idioplasm of each cell was partly arrhenop-
lasmic and partly thelyplasmic. The proportions of masculinity and femi-
ninity, Weininger emphasized, were not necessarily identical in all cells in one
individual: each individual was a mosaic of cells, all of them endowed with
varying degrees of sexuality (20–21). In other words, cells, like individual or-
ganisms, were located at different points on the spectrum stretching from ab-
solute masculinity (arrhenoplasm) to absolute femininity (thelyplasm).
"Each cell, each cell-complex, each organ has a certain index, which indicates
its position between arrhenoplasm and thelyplasm" (28). This explained why,
for instance, a very masculine man might have a sparse beard or weak muscu-
lature, why an effeminate man might still have a full beard, and why a man
might have a feminine upper body and a masculine lower body (21–22). Such
localized sexual asymmetries could only be due to local variations. Weininger
emphasized that these variations were primarily idioplasmic and not, as some
scientists were beginning to suggest, primarily determined by the secretions
of the sex glands. Without rejecting contemporary research on the internal
secretions, Weininger refused to recognize them as the *primary* determinants
of sex.

Sexual Chemistry

Weininger's moderate skepticism on this issue was not at all unusual even
among contemporary scientists and physicians, many of whom believed that
the internal secretions of the sex glands could act only on a congenitally de-
termined sexual soma. The role of the sex glands, they argued, was important
but secondary. As late as 1910, physiologist Artur Biedl devoted many para-
graphs to a careful discussion of this very question in his classic textbook of
endocrinology, concluding that the only way to decide upon the question was
to study the development of an organism after extirpating the earliest foetal
rudiment of the sex gland. Such an *experimentum crucis*, however, was still
technically impossible.²⁷ In spite of great scientific interest in the function of
the sex glands, no consensus on the extent, significance, and mechanism of
their influence was reached until long after Weininger's death and the whole

* Decides to keep his conclusions
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who was one-quarter masculine
 complementarity was the in-
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 law of nature," Weininger pro-
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 sources were unknown to him
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 (489).⁶⁷

action probably remained to be
 exact and somewhat dogmatic,
 series of analogies from botany
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 different arrangements of repro-
 the same species. In one typical
 connecting stalk between the
 stamens—the male reproductive
 had short filaments. In another
 This phenomenon had been
 usually been dismissed as an ex-
 however, had been convinced of
 being that pollen from a long-
 stigma of a short-styled flower
 of another long-styled flower.
 to favor cross-fertilization.⁶⁸
 on Darwin's treatise, *Different*
 (1877), and on the Darwinian
 ant physiology.⁶⁹ Flowers with
 Weininger, were more feminine
 (38–39). Darwin had sug-
 of his larger hypothesis that
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 teed. Heterostylous flowers, he
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 all forms of life (38–39). Fertil-
 then pollen from a "masculine"
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 similar to the human mating
 was supported by the fact that

the pollen grains in the plants with longer stamens were larger (and, thus, more "male") than in those with shorter stamens (42).⁷¹

Returning to his Law of Sexual Relations, Weininger refined it to include the *strength* of attraction between the partners. Imagining two hypothetical entities X and Y , whose masculinity was indicated by M and femininity by W , Weininger assumed that X possessed αM and $\alpha' W$, whereas Y had βW and $\beta' M$. Now, if A was the strength of attraction between the two, then

$$A = (k/\alpha - \beta) \cdot f(t)$$

where k was a factor covering all known and unknown laws of sexual affinity, including those related to race, species, and deformity, and $f(t)$ was a tempo-
 ral function, indicating the period during which the two entities were in prox-
 imity to each other. When $\alpha = \beta$, A was infinite. This was the strongest and
 most elemental form of attraction.⁷² The factor " t " was analogous to the "re-
 action time" of chemistry: the time of interaction between partners was so ob-
 viously important in generating or maintaining sexual attraction that
 Weininger speculated that A , the strength of the sexual attraction itself, could
 perhaps depend mathematically on t (49).⁷³ Sexual attraction, according to
 Weininger, was akin to what botanist Wilhelm Friedrich Pfeffer (1845–
 1920) had named "chemotaxis."⁷⁴ Chemotaxis, Weininger argued, need not
 be unique to plants since all sexual attraction was fundamentally—and liter-
 ally—chemical.

In a characteristic discursive switch, Weininger then moved quickly from
 the world of positivistic science to that of imaginative literature. Quoting
 Goethe's portrayal of adultery in *Elective Affinities*, he argued that the forma-
 tion and dissolution of erotic bonds followed the same principles as chemical
 bonds.⁷⁵ When FeSO_4 (ferrous sulphate) reacted with KOH (potassium hy-
 droxide), the sulphate ion (SO_4) left the ferrous ion (Fe) to combine with the
 potassium ion (K). This was exactly analogous to adultery: A marriage might
 be contracted for diverse reasons, but it was doomed from the moment one of
 the partners encountered a more complementary sexual partner than the pres-
 ent spouse. Moral injunctions were impotent against such an elemental nat-
 ural phenomenon (47–48). Marriage, therefore, should be based on the
 degree of sexual attraction, not on other (such as monetary) considerations—
 the Jews, remarked Weininger, had degenerated physically because their
 marriages were arranged by parents for pragmatic reasons having nothing to
 do with the elemental logic of sexual affinity (50–51).

Inheriting Sex

Instead of following up with a more comprehensive analysis of what was good
 breeding practice, Weininger, in his grasshopperish manner, turned then to

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gh Gregor Mendel's work had
all the sex chromosome had
ed a consensus on the origin
of the century.⁷⁶ Jane Maien-
the issue competed with one an-
strictly to inheritance, began
lacking around the time when
nheritance of sex was the sub-
not clearly differentiate the
theories, those of Charles
edly the most important, and
ussion.

every male possessed the sec-
forms, which could manifest
ed germ, he had written in a fa-
cters, proper to both sexes . . .
with invisible ink, lie ready to
shed by certain known or un-
Darwin to explain the precise
as, argued in identical terms.⁸⁰
with similar issues. The po-
latent presence of the charac-
tistics in most discussions of the
embryology to validate his the-
nineteenth century, numerous
to become male or female, but
on remained elusive.⁸¹ Even
ital system is recognized to be
internal and external genitals
such as the Wolffian or Mül-
the advent of advanced mi-
creantly in their interpretations
ader biological significance.
of embryonic sexual develop-
Tiedemann (1781-1861), Mar-
Müller (1801-58), Gabriel
Waldeyer (1836-1921).⁸² He
tion of Oscar Hertwig's text-
understanding of the sequence of
ons and homologous parts of

Friedrich Tiedemann, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Heidel-
berg, had achieved great renown for his research on fetal neurology, the phys-
iology of digestion, and physical anthropology. In 1813, he had published a
treatise on malformed and aborted human fetuses. Examining nineteen em-
bryos aborted between five and twenty weeks of gestation (that is, long before
full development), Tiedemann had noticed that all of these embryos had fe-
male external genitals. He had concluded from this observation that *all* em-
bryos passed through an initial female state, and only some subsequently
developed male genitals. Until the fifth week of gestation, said Tiedemann,
the human embryo had no external genitals at all. By the seventh or eighth
week, the embryo developed a small, clitoris-like organ, which grew further
by the end of the ninth week. The labia majora also began to develop at this
point. Only at the end of the fifteenth or sixteenth week were the labia majora
converted in some embryos into the scrotum and the clitoris-like organ into
the penis. In females, the genitals grew merely in size after the ninth week:
there was no significant change in their form.⁸⁴

In the mid-nineteenth century, a new generation of German biologists, led
by Karl Ernst von Baer (1792-1876), radically revised the aims, scope, and
methods of embryological research. Martin Heinrich Rathke and Johannes
Müller were two of the most celebrated members of this group.⁸⁵ Rathke, ed-
ucated at Göttingen and Berlin, was chief physician at the city hospital in
Danzig (now Gdansk) when he conducted the important embryological in-
vestigations cited by Weininger. Embryos at their earliest stages, said Rathke,
were sexually so undifferentiated that Tiedemann's theory of universal pri-
mordial femininity was meaningless. One could, if one wished, make an
equally strong case for a primordial condition of universal masculinity. The
actual condition in the earliest stages of embryonic life, Rathke argued, was
one of complete sexual neutrality.⁸⁶ This interpretation was accepted and ex-
perimentally confirmed by Johannes Müller and Gabriel Valentin, both of
whom Weininger quoted. Wilhelm Waldeyer (1836-1921), Director of the
Institute of Anatomy at the University of Berlin, added a new twist to the is-
sue in 1870 by arguing that the embryo, in its earliest stages, was not sexually
neutral but rather hermaphroditic, since it possessed precursors of both testes
and ovaries, not simply a "neutral" rudiment that could develop into either.
This dual sexual potential was resolved with the development of the testes or
the ovaries. Each individual, therefore, was "a true hermaphrodite at a certain
stage of development."⁸⁷ This notion that the internal genitals were initially
hermaphroditic was widely accepted by the turn of the century.⁸⁸ Most im-
portantly for our purposes, Waldeyer's conception was adopted by Oscar
Hertwig, whose textbook of embryology was Weininger's main source for
current information on the subject.⁸⁹

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Nineteenth-century embryological literature on sexual development was far from ideologically neutral. Tiedemann believed, for example, that female genitals represented a failure of development, whereas male genitals signified full development.⁹⁰ Masculinity was not a simple developmental alternative but a higher stage in a genital hierarchy that could be reached only by some. Rathke spoke eloquently against Tiedemann's conception that all embryos were initially female but did not essentially disagree on the developmental status of femininity. Males, he declared, were equipped with sexual apparatus that went beyond the requirements of procreation. Even where the organs were similar in the two sexes, the male versions were always more complexly structured and, therefore, better developed.⁹¹ Oscar Hertwig, Weininger's source for current knowledge, expressed himself with greater sobriety. A careful examination of his dry prose reveals, however, that he, too, regarded genital development as reflecting a hierarchy of nature. Until the fourth month of intrauterine life, the male and female external genitals, wrote Hertwig, were indistinguishable from each other. With genital differentiation, however, changes in females were "only of a trivial kind" (*nur geringfügiger Art*). The development of the clitoris was "slow" (*nur noch langsam*) while that of the penis involved an "extraordinarily marked growth in length" of the common precursor (*ein ausserordentlich starkes Längenwachstum*). The words Hertwig chose to describe the processes of differentiation indicate his underlying convictions: *Umbildung* (reorganization) for females, and *Umwandlung* (transformation) for males.⁹² Tiedemann, Rathke, and Hertwig were among the leading scientists of their generations, but their concepts of gender, even if not identical to those of the philosopher Weininger, were eminently compatible with the latter.

Weininger's discussion of ontogeny and sexual affinity served his project in two fundamental ways. First, they established that universal bisexuality was more than an ancient poetic metaphor: it was a crucial biological fact. The concept explained why individuals mated most successfully only with particular individuals, and it suggested that one could use the degree of sexual intermediacy to predict one's actual choice of mate. Weininger's Law of Sexual Affinity, which might be dismissed today as a piece of baroque pseudomathematics, was in fact firmly grounded in the idea of universal bisexuality, which was, in his time, impeccably scientific. Second, the sections on ontogeny helped extend the focus of Weininger's analysis from the morphology of the adult individual to the dynamic realms of development and behavior. A focused ideological analysis of his scientific sources suggests, furthermore, that at least the kernels of some of Weininger's notorious ideas on femininity were also to be found in them.

Normali:

After establishing that all individuals are bisexual and that this sexual intermediality occurs to different degrees, it was statistically inevitable that humans who possess almost exclusively male characteristics (Homosexuals, Weininger claimed) would be considered abnormal. Although his argument on this point, of course, he rejected both the idea that homosexuality was a disease as well as the idea that it was the result of a congenital defect. He adopted a populational perspective on the inevitable consequence of universal mating demonstrated the

Homosexuality was an important part of the German-speaking world. In the German-speaking world, homosexuality gathered strength around the turn of the century, as prominent as the field of contemporary cultural politics. It played a major role in this movement; turn influenced the medical discourse on homosexuality, when analyzed in social contexts, illuminate much of

Weininger's sources on homosexuality were almost entirely devoted to the study of female homosexuality was a new era, male homosexuality receded into the background.⁴ Following this conventional view, homosexuality was neither a vice nor a virtue. Bisexuality of the human species was the norm; the partners in a fully compatible relationship were one ideal male and one ideal female. The ideal of masculinity would, therefore,

Normalizing the Homosexual

After establishing that all individuals were morphologically androgynous and that this sexual intermediacy governed the entire life cycle, Weininger turned from the individual to the species. Since humans were androgynous to different degrees, it was statistically probable that there would be a group of humans who possess almost equal amounts of masculinity and femininity. Homosexuals, Weininger claimed, constituted that middle group (53–62). Although his argument on homosexuality was anchored in medical discourse, he rejected both the traditional medical opinion that homosexuality was a disease as well as the conviction of a younger generation of physicians that it was the result of a developmental anomaly. Instead, Weininger adopted a populational perspective, arguing that homosexuality represented the inevitable consequence of human sexual intermediacy, and that homosexual mating demonstrated the truth of his own Law of Sexual Relations.

Homosexuality was an important cultural issue in fin-de-siècle Europe.¹ In the German-speaking areas, a homosexual emancipation movement had gathered strength around the turn of the century; and, although not by any means as prominent as the feminist movement, it was a prominent feature of contemporary cultural politics.² Physicians and medical discourse played a major role in this movement; the political program of the emancipationists in turn influenced the medical discourse on homosexuality.³ Weininger's views on homosexuality, when analyzed in the light of their medical and political contexts, illuminate much of this complex history.

Weininger's sources on homosexuality were almost exclusively biomedical and almost entirely devoted to male homosexuality. Although the existence of female homosexuality was universally recognized by the physicians of the era, male homosexuality received much greater attention in medical discourse.⁴ Following this convention, Weininger sought to prove that male homosexuality was neither a vice nor a disease but a natural consequence of the bisexuality of the human species. According to his Law of Sexual Relations, the partners in a fully compatible couple must together amount to one ideal male and one ideal female. The perfect partner for a man with 48 percent of masculinity would, therefore, need to be 52 percent male. Such a mate could

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be found most easily only among men (55–61). A homosexual, then, was a markedly feminine male but not qualitatively different from the average human being, who, too, was neither completely male nor completely female. The homosexual was situated in the middle of the spectrum of sexually intermediate forms extending between the two imaginary poles of absolute masculinity and femininity. Since all human beings were androgynous to different degrees, everybody was both homosexual and heterosexual in different proportions. Those near the middle of the spectrum of intermediacy were predominantly (but not necessarily exclusively) homosexual, while those near either end of the spectrum were predominantly (but again, not exclusively) heterosexual (57). The homosexual, therefore, was simply a natural variant.

In order to make this claim, Weininger had to take a stand on two of the most contentious issues in the history of medical theories of homosexuality. First, he had to establish that homosexuality was always innate, because if it could be acquired in response to environmental conditions, then one could not claim that homosexuality was an expression of biological sexual intermediacy. Second, Weininger needed to establish that although inborn, homosexuality was not a pathological phenomenon. Both of these topics had fuelled years of medical debate, and an examination of the related discourse reveals a highly complex history.

Innate or Acquired?

It was absurd, said Weininger, to argue that homosexuality could be acquired through seduction or heterosexual abstinence. There was, of course, always an occasion that first “released” homosexuality, but such occasions were concerned only with the *expression* of an inborn trait. It was, after all, no different with heterosexuals. There was always one particular occasion when a heterosexual first experienced attraction toward a member of the other sex without anybody ever doubting that the person had been heterosexually inclined before that event (53–55). Like all late-nineteenth-century theorists, Weininger presented the issue of innate/acquired as an either/or question, ignoring, as they did, the many ambiguities involved, and he named Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862–1929), Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926), and, mistakenly, Charles Féré (1852–1907) as prominent physicians who wrongly believed that homosexuality was an acquired preference.⁵ A closer examination of the professional discourse on the subject reveals that the question was far more complex than Weininger or his sources admitted.⁶

Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, a Munich physician, claimed that since hypnotic suggestion could change a homosexual into a heterosexual, it was logical to assume that the cause of homosexuality was environmental rather

than innate. He acknowledged only in the presence which reduced the individual to accidental circumstances.⁷ thought no differently.⁸ Al not completely exclude con sexuality, they became known because they emphasized that homosexual behavior in the euphemistic phrase that used

Other physicians of the time, without denying that it to in exceptional circumstances.⁹ For the Berlin sexologist sexual acts (such as sexual relations with women) signified “pseudo-inborn, lasting, and integral” physician and leading homosexual (1868–1935).¹⁰

Another way to exclude was to acknowledge the “mental stage. The psychologists Havelock Ellis and I desire was directed merely toward members of a specific sex.¹¹ interfere with the development of people, the sexual urge “differs on the other sex. In some, leading to bisexual behavior, abnormal homosexual behavior the notion that adults could with the theory of “latent” homosexuality behavior occurring release of a congenital but Havelock Ellis accepted this concept but could lie dormant for years impossible to establish any required.¹⁴

The “innate/acquired” debate on the nature and place of an acquired condition or

Peuchtersleben (1806–49), echo-
ally unappeased women were the
Wilhelm Griesinger had consid-
ed one: a sequel to pathologi-
cal.³⁷ For British physician Robert
was brought about by the conflict
to conceal it: unmarried and chaste
were the salacious. "The greater the
tendency to hysteria" (*Salacitas major*,
for the obvious similarities between
do seem to have been familiar with
more surprisingly, he ignored the
Moritz Benedikt (1835–1920), who
secret "second life" that was sexu-
al.³⁹

the most prominent workers on hys-
teria, however, consider hysteria to be
Pierre Briquet, who had pointed out
and rife among the prostitutes of
or frustrations played any serious
ological role to sexuality; however,
the symptoms of hysteria (hallucina-
traumas) were sexual in nature.⁴¹
note of Charcot's overt rhetoric, the
ded and portrayed hysterical women
elate recounted by Freud suggests
might have been more intentional
published views. At a party, Freud had
to the cause of the hysteria in one
always a question of the genitals—
Freud had wondered, "Well, but if

qual quality of hysterical symptoms
the widely disseminated writings of
these traditional beliefs on the sexual
oped, however, in the work of Breuer
disciple of Charcot and, in his very
the role of sexuality in the etiology of
With increasing clinical experience,
the cause of hysteria was always sex-
in *Hysteria* (1895), the supposedly

puritanical Breuer asserted: "The unsophisticated observations of our prede-
cessors, the residue of which is preserved in the term 'hysteria,' came nearer the
truth than the more recent view which puts sexuality almost last."⁴⁶ In healthy
young males, the sexual instinct was outgoing and aggressive, whereas young
women's sexual thoughts were always strongly colored by apprehension.⁴⁷
Hysterical women tended to fend off sexual ideas to a pathological degree:
"[Hysterics] fall ill . . . owing to their *defence* against sexuality."⁴⁸

Otto Weininger praised Pierre Janet, Oskar Vogt (1870–1959), Breuer,
and Freud for trying to reconstruct the psychological process that led to hys-
teria (357–58). In presenting his own theory, Weininger referred frequently
to these four authors, but it was to Breuer and Freud that his theory was most
profoundly indebted.

Inverting Breuer and Freud: Appropriation and Transformation

Freud and Breuer believed that hysteria resulted from psychic trauma, which
itself was often trivial but which acquired pathological significance due to the
emotions associated with it, most commonly fright or shame. The memory of
this trauma and its associated emotions were not dissipated in the usual ways
but formed a "foreign body" (*Fremdkörper*) within the psyche, remaining ac-
tive for a long time.⁴⁹ The "foreign body" (equivalent to a second conscious-
ness) was not accessible to normal consciousness but emerged "with the
undiminished vividness of a recent event" under hypnosis. This vividness was
due to the original emotions, which, instead of being dispersed through an
adequate, immediate reaction, had been retained with the memory of the
trauma.⁵⁰

For Weininger, hysteria was a conflict between innate feminine sexuality
and a false, superficial personality that women acquired under masculine in-
fluence. He linked this contention with the notion of the "foreign body" but
inverted the Breuer-Freud concept. According to Weininger, the "foreign
body" was not a second consciousness but the genuine feminine self, which
was repressed in normal life by a false, outer self. The latter was wrongly
identified by most people (including Breuer and Freud) as the normal female
consciousness. In hysteria, Weininger proclaimed, Woman's genuine self re-
belled against repression and impinged on her consciousness. Breuer's pa-
tient Anna O. had used the term "bad self" (*das schlimme Ich*) for her second
consciousness.⁵¹ This "bad" self, according to Weininger, was the real self of
woman (358, 361).

Freud had spoken of a hysterical counter-will (*Gegenwille*), which induced
hysterics to act in ways opposed to their conscious intentions.⁵² Every idea or
intention, according to Freud, had its unconscious antithesis, even in health.
In hysteria, however, the antithetic ideas entered the consciousness "like bad

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characterologically, intellectual women were often Prostitutes, and even when not themselves intellectually gifted, many Prostitutes served as muses to creative men. The Mother, however, was almost always intellectually negligible and concerned solely with caring for her children and for their father. Only men lacking in spiritual productivity—men who could only father children of the flesh—could love a woman of the maternal type. Great and creative men, however, had always loved biologically sterile Prostitutes, because the creative man found biological fatherhood worthless compared to fathering great creations of the spirit. The Prostitute often catalyzed the latter, the Mother never. For the moral philosopher, therefore, the Prostitute was a worthier being than the Mother (297–98). But this was a minor difference in cosmic terms. Whether Mother or Prostitute, Woman was completely and pervasively sexual and consequently had no ontological importance.

Did all women belong unequivocally to one type or the other? No, said Weininger: Mother and Prostitute were ideal types like Man and Woman. Just as real individuals were partly male and partly female, all women were Mother as well as Prostitute to different degrees. One predisposition (*Veranlagung*) might be predominant in one individual, but the other predisposition was never completely absent. No woman was completely without an instinct for prostitution or a maternal instinct. Nevertheless, Weininger added characteristically, more women came close to being absolute Prostitutes than absolute Mothers: nobody who had seen how modern women moved around on the streets in clinging, form-revealing clothes could, he avers, disagree with his contention (286–87, 312). The motherly woman, then, could be partly a Prostitute, and the Prostitute partly a Mother: the only thing Woman could never be was an asexual, innocent maiden (*Jungfrau*).

This last assertion was a vital point in Weininger's critique of motherhood, but he did not supply any information on the rich literary and cultural seams he was mining here. By the end of the nineteenth century, the literary types of *femme fragile* and *femme fatale* had become well entrenched in Germanic cultures. The average bourgeois woman was expected to be an innocent, asexual, weak, and ethereal creature in need of male protection. At the same time, active, erotic, and independent women found their own admirers among men who were not exclusively bourgeois in their inclinations. Artists and writers celebrated both types, but the *femme fragile* was the specific cult-object of such eminent Austrian literati as Hugo von Hofmannstahl, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Peter Altenberg. It was their idealization of the fragile, asexual *Jungfrau* that Weininger opposed, and, without avowing it explicitly, he equated the *Jungfrau* with his characterological type, the Mother.¹² It was not an illogical conflation, since maternity as well as maidenhood were regarded in contemporary cultures almost as asexual and sacred.

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Historians have demonstrated in moral terms during the eighteenth century under no cultural compulsion until the end of the eighteenth century been of major moral and pedagogical, however, changed quite coming to be regarded and, even themselves as the natural guardians of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, and physical importance of the Friedrich Froebel, who introduced posed that only women could sustain, too, emphasized that in German feminist politics, mother with great moral and political significance family from a center of productive emotional intimacy created a missive wife. The other was of this was emphasized by German few subjects on which women's metaphors were of great rhetoric. Most German femininities as extensions of the maternal as well as a biological phenomenon logical and socialist tropes, and argued that the mother-child bond and altruistic traits driving human

The theory of primeval mother Bachofen (1815–87), intersected who taught Roman law at the University of Zurich in his treatise *Das Mutterrecht* influential philologist and his form of human society had become much later. Bachofen had extolled did not believe that matriarchal triarchy.¹⁶ Feminist thinkers without endorsing his general love, many feminists suggested, women, since female sexuality was defined by men.¹⁷ In Vienna, Gre

as a "vaginal epoch" (*vaginales Zeitalter*), a phrase that Weininger would surely have appreciated. Nike Wagner has demonstrated that the journal was ideologically antimodern and "masculine," and that it equated the feminine with the sexual. The *Fackel* writers blamed the effeminacy of modern culture for a multitude of sins, but especially for encouraging formlessness in art, language, and character. Their crusade was for a masculine reorientation of civilization, an impeccably Weiningerian goal.²⁷ Equally Weiningerian was their opposition to granting any intellectual role to women. Culture and civilization, argued a typical essay in the journal, had been created by males. Women had advanced or impeded cultural development solely by stimulating or inhibiting male efforts; their role in society was exclusively erotic and aesthetic.²⁸ Kraus agreed with Weininger that the male was intermittently sexual while the female was perpetually so.²⁹ Realizing, however, that Weininger would never have concurred with his own view that female sexuality revitalized the male intellect (Kraus might have not have paid adequate attention to Weininger's discussion of the Prostitute!), Kraus penned this epigram to Weininger's memory: "An admirer of women agrees enthusiastically with your arguments for misogyny."³⁰ Kraus's admiration for Weininger remained constant over the years. *Geschlecht und Charakter* became a "great classic" of the Viennese avant-garde, asserts Jacques Le Rider, only because it had been championed by Kraus. Kraus mentioned Weininger even in his love letters, and when Weininger's father wanted to protest against psychiatrist Ferdinand Probst's pathography of his son, Kraus printed Leopold Weininger's statement in *Die Fackel*, adding a caustic, antipsychiatric commentary in footnotes.³¹

August Strindberg contributed twice to *Die Fackel's* engagement with Weininger. The first was a letter of July 1903 from Strindberg to his German translator Emil Schering, in which Strindberg informed Schering that Weininger had sent him a copy of *Geschlecht und Charakter*, which Strindberg had found to be a "frightening" (*furchtbare*) book that had "probably solved the hardest of all problems." To Weininger himself, Strindberg sent a postcard offering heartfelt thanks for at last solving the "Woman Problem."³² Soon, however, it was time to write Weininger's obituary, and, in his deeply felt tribute, Strindberg declared that only the mentally retarded would doubt the superiority of the male sex over the female. All the spiritual and material riches of humanity had been created by males; woman was negative and passive, whereas man was positive and active. Woman's love for man, Strindberg opined, was "50% animal heat (*Brunst*) and 50% hate." Otto Weininger had rediscovered and reported this "well-known secret" in his "virile" book, and it was this discovery of the "essence and nature of woman" that, Strindberg surmised, had cost Weininger his life.³³ Strindberg did not, however, explain

how the novelty of this "discovery" of woman found in his

Weininger as Source: The Weininger has long had an their responses have been as Kraus or Strindberg.³⁴ Many ideas from *Geschlecht und C*, while others have satirized: ferent ways. Collectively, t source and stimulus instead ineffable genius.

Let us begin with Franz K cency would seem to forbid one breath, but historical i Kafka's biographer Heinz P of the Absolute Female "re: Trial." Politzer detected W usher's wife in the novel, w Weiningerian character in trayed, Politzer argues, in a excelled at nursing because t individual suffering.³⁶ M Weininger "share a radicaln them by angst: they are afraid

Geschlecht und Charakter: ers affiliated with the literar and edited by Ludwig von F Kraus, the *Brenner* was ofte *fackel*).³⁸ Kraus introduced produced an even greater in of Gerald Stieg, "nearly al Weininger."⁴⁰ Among these Lanz von Liebenfels and t jected his "effeminate" relig Protestantism. At a more s poet Georg Trakl recirculat belief that civilization was in duced into types, that mate and that one must try to trar Other Brennerites, such

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