

Was Wittgenstein a Jew?*

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In my mind's eye, I can already hear posterity talking about me, instead of listening to me, those, who if they knew me, would certainly be a much more ungrateful public.

And I must do this: not hear the other in my imagination, but rather myself. I.e., not watch the other, as he watches me – for that is what I do – rather, watch myself. What a trick, and how unending the constant temptation to look to the other, and away from myself.

– (Wittgenstein, *Denkbewegungen: Tagebücher 1930–1932/1936–1937*,
15 November or 15 December, 1931)

1. Was Wittgenstein Jewish?

Did Ludwig Wittgenstein consider himself a Jew? Should we? Wittgenstein repeatedly wrote about Jews and Judaism in the 1930s (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 1997) and the biographical studies of Wittgenstein by Brian McGuinness (1988), Ray Monk (1990), and Béla Szabados (1992, 1995, 1997, 1999) make it clear that this writing about Jewishness was a way in which he thought about the kind of person he was and the nature of his philosophical work. On the other hand, many philosophers regard Wittgenstein's thoughts about the Jews as relatively unimportant. Many studies of Wittgenstein's philosophy as a whole do not even mention the matter, and those that do usually give it little attention. For instance, Joachim Schulte recognizes that "Jewishness was an important theme for Wittgenstein" (1992, 16–17) but says very little more, except that the available evidence makes precise statements difficult. Rudolf Haller's approach in his paper, "What do Wittgenstein and Weininger have in Common?," is probably more representative of the received wisdom among Wittgenstein experts. In the very first paragraph, he

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makes it clear that the sole concern of his paper is the question of "deeper philosophical common ground" between Wittgenstein and Weininger, and not "attitudes on femininity or Jewishness" (Haller 1988, 90). Those who have written about Wittgenstein on the Jews have drawn very different conclusions. He has been lauded as a "rabbinical" thinker (Nieli 1987) and a far-sighted critic of anti-Semitism (Szabados 1999), and criticized as a self-hating anti-Semite (Lurie 1989), as well as condemned for uncritically accepting the worst racist prejudices (Wasserman 1990). Monk (1990) provides a rather more nuanced reading of the evidence. He presents Wittgenstein as briefly attracted to using anti-Semitic expressions in the early 1930s, but only as a way of thinking about his own failings. Most discussions of the topic take it for granted that Wittgenstein was a Jew, but recently McGuinness (1999/2001) has contended that even this is a mistake.

In this essay, I argue that much of this debate is confused, because the notion of being a Jew, of Jewishness, is itself ambiguous and problematic. Instead, we would do better to start by asking in what senses Wittgenstein was, or was not, a Jew. Another way of putting this is to say that we should first consider different ways of seeing Wittgenstein as a Jew. Before rushing to judgment, we need to consider what it could mean to say that Wittgenstein was, or was not, a Jew, or an anti-Semite. This is not just a matter of tabulating various possible definitions of these expressions, but of considering the different contexts – cultural, social, personal – in which those terms can be used, and their significance in those contexts. In doing so, we need to give critical attention not only to the various criteria for being a Jew that Wittgenstein would have been acquainted with, and the presuppositions he might have taken for granted about Jews and Judaism, but also the ones that we use in our discussion of Wittgenstein as a Jew, and our motives for doing so. One of the great dangers in writing philosophical biography is the risk of turning the study of a philosopher's life and work into vicarious autobiography, wishful thinking, or worse.

I begin my discussion of the question of Wittgenstein's Jewishness by looking at two passages by Brian McGuinness that offer very different answers. The first, from the first volume of his biography of Wittgenstein, subtitled "*Young Ludwig (1889–1921)*," takes it for granted that Wittgenstein did think of himself as a Jew, at least during the first half of his life, and gives some indication of how important that fact was to him. The passage begins with a reference to Otto Weininger, who Wittgenstein identified, in a passage written in 1931 (1980/1998, 18–19/16–17), as an important influence. In the same piece of writing, Wittgenstein also discussed the connection between his Jewishness, his character, and his way of doing philosophy. Wittgenstein repeatedly recommended Weininger's pseudoscientific and anti-Semitic *Sex and Character* (1903) to friends, including G. E. Moore in the

early 1930s and G. E. M. Anscombe in the late 1940s. As we shall see, Monk's biography also emphasizes Wittgenstein's indebtedness to Weininger's ideas about talent and genius, and their close connection to his views about Jewishness and femininity.

Weininger had yet two important features in common with the young Ludwig. First he was Jewish. He suffered from the consciousness of that fact. He identified the Jewish with all that was (on his theory) feminine and negative. . . . The theme of the stamp put on a man's life and thought by his Jewishness often recurs in Ludwig's later notes, though, to be sure, he saw it more as an intellectual than as a moral limitation. Already in childhood he was preoccupied on a more practical level with dissociating himself for social and even moral reasons from all the different strata of Judaism in Austria. We shall see what remorse that cost him and can measure in that way how compelling the need for dissociation was. (McGuinness 1988, 42)

In the passage quoted above, McGuinness puts his finger on two leading themes that must be addressed by anyone interested in the question of whether Wittgenstein was a Jew, or his views about the Jews: the nature of the Weininger connection, and the nature of Wittgenstein's "dissociation" from Judaism. First, Wittgenstein did, on occasion, speak of himself as a Jew, and the understanding of what it means to be a Jew we find in his writings – his conception of Jewishness, so to speak – makes use of ideas of Weininger's. Most of his surviving writing on this topic dates from the early 1930s, and much of it has been published in *Culture and Value*: these are the "later notes" McGuinness (1988, 42) refers to above in passing, and discusses in some detail in (1999/2001). (I examine this material in §§ 4 f. below.)

The second important point McGuinness touches on in the passage above is that Wittgenstein did, on occasion, deny his Jewishness, and this was a charged matter for him. In his last sentence, McGuinness alludes to Wittgenstein's confessions to friends and family in 1936 and 1937 that he had misrepresented his Jewish ancestry. In 1935, the German government enacted the Nuremberg Laws, which specified that only those people with three or more Jewish grandparents were to be classified as Jews; those with one or two Jewish grandparents were classified as different grades of mixed race. In 1936 and 1937, while at work on what would become the first 180 sections of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein confessed to friends and family that he had misrepresented the extent of his Jewish descent, claiming that one grandparent had been a Jew, when actually three of them were. In 1938, as a result of the *Anschluss* with Austria, the Nuremberg Laws became applicable to the Wittgenstein family. Wittgenstein, who was living in Britain at the time, took British citizenship. His brother Paul fled to Switzerland in July 1938. Meanwhile his sisters stayed in Austria, eventually making a deal with the Berlin authorities, under which they repatriated very substantial foreign assets in exchange for classifying them as non-Jewish, an arrangement

Wittgenstein actively supported. (McGuinness 1999, 74–75; 2001, 231; Monk 1990, 396–400.)

The discussion of Wittgenstein's views about the Jews and his own Jewishness in McGuinness' *Young Ludwig* (1988) does not address the ways in which these terms have been used. In "Wittgenstein and the Idea of Jewishness," McGuinness (1999/2001) touches on this issue. He distinguishes various religious, scientific, and racial criteria for Jewishness and reviews the biographical evidence that he considers most relevant, including passages from *Culture and Value*. The second passage from McGuinness that I want to take as a point of departure, the final paragraph of that paper, takes a sharply different position to the first. There he concludes that:

In the end, then, Wittgenstein did not think of himself as Jewish, nor need we do so. The concept is an attractive, although, or because, a confused one. It is possible to think that it would have been well if all "Jews" had felt solidarity, or to think that they now ought to do so – it is also possible to think the contradictory or even the opposite of these things. In any case these are aspirations, not realities (McGuinness 1999, 76; 2001, 231).

At first sight, the two passages seem to offer diametrically opposed answers to the question of whether Wittgenstein thought of himself as a Jew: the first says that he did, the second, that he didn't. Taking a cue from the words "in the end," which can be used to sum up a person's overall outlook, or their view at the end of their life, the apparent contradiction could be resolved if the passages referred to different phases of Wittgenstein's life. The first is taken from a chapter on Wittgenstein's childhood and schooldays, while the second sums up a piece about his life as a whole. The first passage mentions "later writings," written when Wittgenstein was in his early forties, and alludes to confessions made in his late forties, and these are topics in the more recent piece, too. The second passage certainly suggests that when McGuinness had earlier talked of Wittgenstein's Jewishness, he, too, had fallen prey to a certain kind of muddled thinking, taking Wittgenstein to have thought of himself as a Jew because it cast him in a sympathetic light, and had mistaken an attractive interpretation for the truth.

McGuinness does not say who he has in mind when he speaks of the "attractions" of thinking of Wittgenstein as a Jew, but in a note to the paper he speaks disparagingly of others who have made this error, not his own earlier work. In that note, at the end of the paragraph quoted above, he writes:

Having arrived so far, I have the impression that the polemical part of what I have said has in essence, been said before. . . . It seems always necessary to repeat it, and yet by airing the topic one risks nourishing it. This is part of the fascination I speak of. (McGuinness 1999, 76, n. 40; 2001, n. 44).

He gives, however, very little indication of the principal targets of his polemic; the only writings he explicitly mentions are an unpublished paper by J. J. Ross and a piece published in Hebrew by Yuval Lurie. Nor does he include references to those he is criticizing in his bibliography. This is, on the face of it, odd, for the scholarly literature on Wittgenstein's Jewishness is, for the most part, not well known. Perhaps this is because of McGuinness's concern that "by airing the topic one risks nourishing it," an obscure object of fascination that he apparently considers best left unnamed. Cornish's (1998) speculative and imaginative account of Wittgenstein's Jewishness as the driving force behind Hitler's anti-Semitism is a good example of the dangers of applying the conspiracy theory approach to Wittgenstein, but it seems unlikely that it was the focus of McGuinness's attention. Perhaps his principal target here is Ray Monk's biography of Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, which takes the Weiningerian conception of the "duty of genius" as its leading theme in interpreting Wittgenstein's life and work, even though Monk's excellent biography, which rightly gives Wittgenstein's Jewishness and his relationship to Weininger a central place, is never cited or mentioned in McGuinness's paper.

Wittgenstein's favorite passage, which he quoted frequently, came from the introduction to Hertz's *Principles of Mechanics*. There, Hertz summed up his answer to debates over the meaning of terms such as 'force' or 'electricity': because the term has accumulated contradictory meanings, the only solution is to give some of them up. "When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease to ask illegitimate questions" (1899, 8). Wittgenstein thought of his philosophy as analogous: a matter of uncovering inconsistencies in our use of everyday terms that lead us to talk nonsense yet think we make sense. In "Wittgenstein and the Idea of Jewishness," McGuinness rightly observes that 'Jewishness' is just such a term. Yet instead of developing a Hertzian critique of 'Jewishness,' he tries to show that Jews and Jewishness in any sense were of very little significance for Wittgenstein. As part of his discussion of this issue, he gives a list of meanings of 'Jewishness' that reads as follows:

We have here at least five different sets of phenomena, or supposed phenomena: [1] the religion; [2] descent from persons professing it; [3] the culture of assimilated Jews who still formed something of a community; [4] the common genetic heritage of Jews (thought to exist); [5] and (distinct from this) the supposition of such a heritage, typically the assumption by the anti-Semitic that it did exist and was an excrescence on European culture, with which we may class the mirror-image of this assumption, which finds in Jewish consciousness the origins of the modern world view. Of these five, only the first and the last are reasonably clearly definable and certainly existed,

though they are by no means identical or very closely related. Jewishness, "*das Judentum*", is surely one of those words of which Heinrich Hertz spoke in a favorite passage of Wittgenstein's. (McGuinness 1999, 70; 2001, 228. I have added the bracketed numbering).

This list not only omits some important senses of the term; the answers it offers raise more problems than they solve. McGuinness gives no reason for thinking that either "the religion" or the suppositions of the anti-Semitic can be clearly defined. The Jewish religion has a history spanning several millennia, and has comprised many competing sects and splinter groups, each of which have argued both among themselves and with their rivals about what it means to be a Jew. Anti-semitism is also an extremely variable phenomenon, and has taken very different forms. Oddly, the definitions of being Jewish that most Jews would offer, if asked – either being born of a Jewish mother, or having converted to Judaism – are not on McGuinness's list. Nor does he mention the idea that anyone with a Jewish ancestor is a Jew – akin to the "one-drop" rule favored by white American racists – or the 1935 Nuremberg Laws' definition of a Jew: having at least three Jewish grandparents. Finally, in talking about anti-Semitism, he only mentions a hereditary conception of Jewishness, passing over the Weiningerian idea of Jewishness as a personality syndrome, akin to effeminacy, a connection of traits that could equally well be manifested by those with little or no Jewish ancestry – for instance, both Wittgenstein and Weininger were prepared to extend the concept of Jewishness to other groups, such as the English (cf. Monk 1990, 313). The drawing of distinctions between races, and the principles on which racial boundaries are demarcated, are among the most charged questions one can ask about race, not only for those who apply them, and to whom they are applied, but also for those who study race. No list of definitions could do justice to the historical and genealogical dimension of this issue.

Unfortunately, much of the rest of McGuinness's recent discussion of Wittgenstein's Jewishness (1999/2001), leading up to his conclusion that Wittgenstein was not a Jew, loses sight of the rich possibilities suggested by Wittgenstein's favorite passage from Hertz, and is highly selective and tendentious: he seems determined to cut through this Gordian knot by doing the best he can to show that Jews and Jewishness in any sense were of very little significance for Wittgenstein. In particular, McGuinness seems to lay considerable stress on the claim that the Wittgenstein family would not have identified themselves as Jews, and neither would their immediate circle have done so. For instance, in the first paragraph of that paper, McGuinness emphasizes that no one at the turn of the century would have thought of describing Wittgenstein's relatives as a Jewish family (1999, 57; 2001, 221). Yet his insistence on the Hertzian – and Wittgensteinian – insight that the concept of a "Jew" is ambiguous and inconsistent suggests that "Was Wittgenstein a

Jew?" is a question that stands in need of philosophical treatment, rather than a direct answer.

Indeed, the rapid and insistent move from the descriptive – "Wittgenstein was not a Jew" – to the prescriptive – "we don't need to do so" – suggests that we need to look more closely at his motivation for this overly insistent conclusion. Comparing McGuinness's two accounts, one gets the impression that he has followed the path of dissociation from Jewishness that he originally saw in Wittgenstein; he begins by insisting on Wittgenstein's need to deny that he was a Jew, and ends up denying that Wittgenstein was a Jew. Contradictions between different conceptions of Jewishness are not so much the subject of McGuinness's discussion as enacted in its development. Indeed, we might well ask what could have motivated someone as well-informed as McGuinness to make such an injudicious claim. Why is McGuinness so eager to silence those he disagrees with that he does not even name them? To answer these questions, we must look more closely at the connections between what Wittgenstein had to say about the Jews, his life, and his philosophical work. The principal biographical reasons for rejecting the claim that Wittgenstein was not a Jew can be summarized quickly, however. Wittgenstein was certainly not, in any sense, a practicing Jew; he, his parents, and three of his grandparents, were baptized by the Catholic Church. On the other hand, he, and his brothers and sisters, knew that three of their four grandparents were of Jewish descent, and this fact was known to others. For instance, both Monk (1990, 14) and McGuinness (1988, 49) tell the story of how the young Wittgenstein wanted to lie about his Jewish background in order to join a Viennese gymnastic club, and had to be dissuaded by his brother Paul. Both biographers make it clear that while the Wittgenstein family presented themselves in public as Christians, it was widely known that they were of Jewish descent. In a diary entry written after the German-Austrian *Anschluss*, he described the prospect of holding a German *Judenpass*, Jewish identity papers, as an "extraordinarily difficult situation" and compared it to "hot iron" that would burn in his pocket (MS 120, 14.3.1938; cf. Monk 1990, 389 f.) To simply say that Wittgenstein was not a Jew, and didn't think of himself as a Jew, hardly does justice to this complex state of affairs. It is Wittgenstein's response to this predicament that is the principal concern of this essay.

After looking at the relationship between biography and philosophy (§ 2) and Wittgenstein's own thoughts on the topic (§ 3), the remainder of the essay considers two periods from the 1930s in which Wittgenstein's Jewishness occupied center-stage. First, in the early 1930s, his Jewishness was a recurrent theme in his writing and in his dreams. In 1931, he discussed the Jews and Jewishness at some length, connecting his character as a "Jewish thinker" with the nature of his philosophical work (§ 4; cf. Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 12, 13, 16, 18–21, 22/14, 15, 16–19, 23). In 1929 and 1932, he wrote down

dreams about his Jewish descent and racial identity (§ 5; cf. MS 107, 219, 1.12.29; MS 183, 137, 28.1.32.) Second, in the latter half of the 1930s, Wittgenstein's Jewishness once again became a problem for him. In 1936 and 1937 he made a point of confessing to family and friends that he had misled others about the extent of his Jewish descent (Monk 1990, 367 f.) and in 1938 and 1939, he had to confront the implications of the German invasion of his homeland, both for himself and his immediate family (§ 6).

2. Life and Work, Biography and Philosophy

As these passages already make clear, asking whether Wittgenstein saw himself as a Jew, and whether we should, are questions of considerable interest in their own right. They also raise more general problems both for the writing of biography in general, and philosophical biography in particular. Any biography turns the chaotic and conflicting events of a person's life into a coherent story. Biographers usually aim at a balanced and comprehensive account of the life of their subject, but that has proved to be an extremely elusive goal. Lives are rarely consistent, and are colored by changing motives and conflicting concerns. Those who write about them are tempted to give them greater coherence than they had when they were lived, a coherence that may be as much a product of the biographer as the life in question. There is a further problem in the case of philosophical biography. Biographers are constitutionally inclined to explain the principal features of a person's philosophical writing in terms of the person's life – his or her character, or formative experience, or social circumstances. Most philosophers, on the other hand, regard any such explanation as a particularly egregious form of the naturalistic fallacy, holding that the values, or reasons, expressed in a philosopher's work cannot be understood in causal terms.

The question of the relationship between a philosopher's life and philosophy rarely receives the careful attention it deserves. Usually, the answers that are offered favor one extreme or the other – either the work is to be explained by the life, or the life and work are independent – and these diametrically opposed answers are usually taken for granted by their supporters. Many nonphilosophers, and some biographically minded philosophers, find it attractive to explain the philosopher's work in terms of the philosopher's life. A very wide range of positions fit under this broad heading, but they all maintain that some aspect of the person's life determines, explains, or is important for an understanding of the content of the work. Psychoanalytic accounts of the origins of philosophical views in the unconscious, or the claim that a philosopher's unreasoned convictions, class, or social interests underpin his or her arguments, are leading examples of this kind of approach.

If asked, most philosophers would sharply separate the arguments a philos-

opher gave from a discussion of his or her biography. In particular, they would insist that a philosopher's arguments stand or fall quite independently of what we know about his or her life. Life and work must be kept apart, at least when it comes to assessing the content and significance of the philosopher's work. While a philosopher's life undoubtedly plays a part in the causal processes that lead to the production of his or her writings, such matters are not relevant to the reasoned evaluation of the resultant philosophical position. Mixing one's account of a philosopher's life experience, convictions, and influences, on the one hand, and his or her philosophy, on the other, is a category mistake.

Insofar as this view, on which there is a sharp distinction between a philosopher's life and arguments, is usually taken for granted by most analytic philosophers and historians of philosophy, it is rarely defended or even discussed explicitly in the current philosophical literature. For the most part, those who accept this position do so by refraining from drawing connections between life and work, without explicitly arguing against them. Thus, most books and journal articles on Wittgenstein's philosophy either do not discuss his life, or keep it entirely separate from discussion of his philosophy. Most of those who do discuss the relationship between life and work do so because they reject the separation of biography and philosophy, and hold that a philosopher's biography can be fruitfully connected with his or her philosophy (proponents would include Engelmann, McGuinness, Monk, Szabados, Nevo, Nyiri, Lurie, Cornish, Nieli, Sass, Scharfstein).

Popper is perhaps the best-known defender of the view that the philosopher's life is irrelevant to the appraisal of his or her arguments, but his views are seldom mentioned in the literature on the relationship between Wittgenstein's life and work, perhaps because Popper and Wittgenstein were enemies, and represent approaches to philosophy that have often been contrasted with each other (cf. Munz 1985). There are wildly conflicting stories over how their confrontation at the Cambridge Moral Science Club, where Popper was a visiting speaker in 1946, ended, but what is most interesting for our purposes is that Popper was there to defend the view that there are substantive philosophical problems, and this was the point over which they fell out. The only Wittgenstein interpreter who appeals to Popper's views on the independence of biography and philosophy is Bartley (1973/1985), who maintains that Wittgenstein's character helps to explain his personal influence, but is irrelevant to his philosophy.

One of the rare exceptions to this rule is Hans-Johann Glock (2001), who maintains that any attempt to understand philosophical writing in general, and Wittgenstein's writing in particular, in biographical terms fails to do justice to its reasoned and argumentative character. (Another exception is Conant [1991], discussed in § 3.) Glock's argument proceeds from the prem-

ise that Wittgenstein's writing, early and late, includes many passages that must be read as philosophical arguments, arguments that must be taken seriously. Due to the central role of argument in Wittgenstein's writing, Glock classifies him as a "rationalist." Rationalists, in his sense of the term, provide an argumentative and reasoned defense of their position. "Irrationalists" appeal to something unreasoned, such as religious or existential commitment, or the idea that different philosophies are different ways of seeing things.

Glock is certainly right that Wittgenstein wrote arguments, and took them very seriously, but this is only a problem for an extreme irrationalist reading of Wittgenstein, one that denies that arguments have any real significance in Wittgenstein's philosophy. This does nothing to undermine a quietist irrationalism, in which the point of the arguments in Wittgenstein's writing is to make problematic, and so subvert, the power of philosophical argument. It is possible that Wittgenstein's use of argument should be interpreted as defending a positive philosophical position, and that it is unconnected with the way he lived his life. If it is to be a plausible claim about Wittgenstein's own views, it must be backed up not just with philosophical argument, but with evidence that Wittgenstein accepted that argument, and this is not provided in Glock's argument.

My own reading of Wittgenstein, and the position I defend in this paper, is a quietist irrationalism, a position that draws on both the rationalist and irrationalist approaches to philosophy as characterized by Glock. Like the rationalist, I read Wittgenstein's writing argumentatively, as giving a reasoned defense of certain philosophical positions. Like the irrationalist, I read Wittgenstein's writing as trying to show that the unreasoned, the outer limits of philosophical argument, play a much greater part in philosophy than the rationalist thinks. Philosophical argument rarely gets the last word in Wittgenstein's writing. Philosophy for Wittgenstein, when it is not criticizing the argumentative hubris of the rationalist, is a matter of description, not explanation. A philosopher who wishes to show the limitations of argument can hardly help making use of arguments – the works of the ancient skeptics, or Plato's early dialogues, perhaps the principal source of Glock's "irrationalist" tradition, are full of arguments. For someone who thinks that differences in philosophy come down to different ways of looking at things, or world views, or matters of temperament and character, may still depend on argument to defend the view that argument is not, ultimately, what matters in philosophy.

In a conversation with Oets Bouwsma about the difficulties involved in writing a completely honest autobiography, Wittgenstein argued that the author's motives will inevitably get in the way of the autobiographical project of giving an account of oneself and maintaining "a consistent attitude towards that account" (Bouwsma 1986, 70). The autobiographer aims to give a balanced survey of what happened to him or her, how he or she acted, and the

motives for those actions. But no one can maintain an impartial attitude towards him or herself, for no one can be indifferent to one's own weaknesses or failings, and so any account one gives of oneself will inevitably be unstable:

No one can write objectively about himself and this is because there will always be some motive for doing so. And the motives will change as you write. And this becomes complicated, for the more intent one is on being "objective" the more one will notice the varying motives that enter in (Bouwsma 1986, 71).

Wittgenstein was not just suggesting that self-serving motives will lead the autobiographer who tries to tell the truth to put the best possible light on whatever he or she is impelled to relate. He was also casting doubt on the very idea that telling the truth about oneself can ever be a matter of simply providing accurate information about one's past, for the reason that whatever story one tells will always be colored by one's current preoccupations and concerns, which will, in turn, be affected by the telling of that story. Objectivity, which at first sight might seem to be a matter of impartially separating oneself from one's involvement in what one did, turns out, on closer inspection, to be a particularly charged stance, precisely because of its claim to stand above the fray. The very effort to give a balanced and consistent account of the difficult questions about oneself will inevitably be marked by a certain instability and inconsistency in what one says, because no one can be indifferent about such charged matters.

In "Autobiography after Wittgenstein," a perceptive discussion of these concerns, Béla Szabados contends that

what Wittgenstein brings to our attention is that the very attempt to maintain such a consistent and coherent attitude, as if time had stopped and the writer is dead, involves the autobiographer in some form of myopia or self-deception. Such an aim fuels omissions, rationalizations, inventions: suppressions of salient, raw, stubborn memories which confound this imperial attitude of pretended wholeness or single-mindedness. It also masks the present concerns of the writer. So the traditional autobiographical project appears to contain inherently its seeds of self-destruction. Its aim, disengaged self-knowledge, objective stock-taking and cataloguing of truths about oneself is turned on its head; its goal ends up in self-deceit; its primary intention is frustrated (Szabados 1992, 7).

Szabados' essay explores the strategies of confession, self-acceptance, and self-transformation with which Wittgenstein attempted to overcome these difficulties, and closes by bringing out some of the similarities between Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy and his ideas about autobiography. Traditionally, both autobiography and philosophy aim at objectivity, detachment, and self-understanding, and for this reason, both are fraught with the risk of self-deception. Like philosophy, autobiography is "a working on

oneself, on one's own way of seeing things, on one's own interpretation and what one expects of it" (Szabados 1992, 10, paraphrasing Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 16/24).

At the very end of his discussion, Szabados uneasily brings up the topic of his own role in the essay he has just written about Wittgenstein's reflections on autobiography: he points out that he has, in effect, been impersonating Wittgenstein, claiming Wittgenstein's voice as his own, with the aim of evoking the reader's interest in his own concerns about autobiography as a kind of writing (Szabados 1992, 11). These final remarks touch on a point that is a central concern in this paper, for they make it clear that Szabados' problem is only a special case of a problem that arises for anyone writing about Wittgenstein's life or thought, regardless of whether that writing is autobiographical, biographical, or philosophical in character. For any attempt to write about Wittgenstein's life and thought – and for that matter, anyone else's life and thought – must face the very issues that make autobiography particularly problematic. While it is true that the biographer writes about someone else's life, rather than his or her own, this is no guarantee that he or she will be any more capable of Olympian impartiality than the autobiographer. Indeed, if Wittgenstein's train of thought about the impossibility of giving a consistent account of one's own motivations is correct, then anyone who aims at a coherent account of the life of another will have to confront that hermeneutic pitfall twice over. The biographer will not only have to come to terms with the inconsistencies and tensions in the subject's life, but will also have his or her own vested interests in the project – interests that may well be just as complex as the conflicting motivations that pull at the autobiographer.

In "Philosophical Biography: The Very Idea," Ray Monk (2001) draws a contrast between two ideal types of philosophical biography, which one might call "explanatory" and "descriptive." An explanatory biography takes the life of its subject as grist for the author's mill, setting the events of the subject's life within the context of the author's pet theories about the nature of life. Monk gives the example of Sartre's biography of Baudelaire, and Sartre's use of Baudelaire's abandonment by his mother as an opportunity to advance his existentialist thesis that we all choose our fate – a thesis that is argued at length, but not supported by quotations from Baudelaire, or other evidence that he believed the views Sartre attributes to him. Such a biography is not really a biography at all, Monk argues, but rather a covert and self-aggrandizing argument for the author's own views. A descriptive biography, on the other hand, presents the events of the subject's life in rich detail, carefully choosing the most telling stories and drawing connections between them, but self-effacingly avoids moralizing or drawing conclusions from the material it presents. The author of such a biography aims to be "part of the

frame," rather than "part of the picture." Such a biography does not have its form imposed on it by the biographer, as the "frame" simile initially suggests, but is rather due to the interconnected character of the life that is being described.

Monk cites Boswell's life of Johnson as his paradigmatic instance of a good descriptive biography, and said this was the method he had followed in his life of Wittgenstein. He notes, however, that he had found it much harder to follow this method successfully in the case of his Russell biography. In part, this was because Wittgenstein's was an unusually unified life. He never married, had few close friends, almost no possessions, and preferred to live alone. Monk's life of Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, takes as its leading theme the notion of the "duty of genius," an ethical imperative inspired by Wittgenstein's reading of Otto Weininger, an Austrian fin de siècle popular psychologist and philosopher.

Perhaps Wittgenstein's unusual sensitivity to the paradoxes and inconsistencies involved in trying to tell a coherent and consistent life story was partly due to the intensity with which he strove to lead such a life. Monk's self-effacing approach to Wittgenstein's biography is particularly appropriate to the life that Wittgenstein led, or wished to lead. Yet to attempt to tell the story of someone's life in such a unified way runs the danger that it will pass over, or smooth over, the cracks and fissures that signal the inconsistencies and incoherences in even the most single-minded of lives. Indeed, it may well be the case that the impossibility of arriving at an entirely settled perspective on a life emerges most clearly precisely when one attempts to fit the whole life into a single frame.

3. Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Biography

There were times when Wittgenstein gave forceful expression to the irrationalist views that a person's philosophy is a matter of temperament, or a person's ethics a product of circumstance:

If it is said on occasion that (*someone's*) philosophy is a matter of temperament, there is some truth in this. A preference for certain comparisons [*Gleichnisse*] is something we call a matter of temperament & far more disagreements rest on this than appears at first sight // could be called a matter of temperament & a much larger proportion of disagreements rest on this than may appear// (Wittgenstein, 1980/1998, 20/17–18, 1931).

It is not unheard of that someone's character may be influenced by the external world (Weininger). For that only means that, as we know from experience, people change with circumstances. If someone asks: How *could* the environment coerce someone, the ethical in someone? – the answer is that he may indeed say "No human being has to give way to coercion," but all the same under such circumstances someone *will* do such & such.

"You don't HAVE to, I can show you a (different) way out, – but you won't take it" (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 84/95, 30.3.50).

The first of these two quotations is from 1931, a time when he was particularly preoccupied with Weiningerian questions about the relationship between originality and influence. Thus this paragraph immediately precedes a passage on how the Jews are "experienced as a sort of disease" within European history. This passage is quoted and discussed toward the end of section 4. Comparisons [*Gleichnisse*] play an important role in Wittgenstein's philosophical writing, and in his understanding of the particular character of his approach to philosophy, another topic discussed further in section 4. The second quotation, which includes an explicit parenthetical reference to Weininger, is an example of how the topic of influence still attracted Wittgenstein's attention many years later. The reference to Weininger is by way of contrast, not agreement: Weininger did regard character as necessarily inner, and so did think it outrageous to say that character is a product of circumstance.

Yet, on other occasions, Wittgenstein gave voice to the rationalist conviction that philosophy and life are separate, and philosophy primary. Perhaps this is because it is much easier to think of philosophy, or character, as a product of temperament, or external circumstances, when one is thinking about others' convictions – and naturally adopts an external perspective – than in one's own case. In a manuscript written in 1948, he expressed his conviction that he should not publish a philosophical autobiography in which the specific difficulties he had felt were "chewed over." The real importance of his work, he thought, lay in the "remedies" he had developed, not the particular causes that had occasioned them:

These difficulties are interesting for me, who am caught up in them, but not necessarily for other people. They are difficulties of *my* thinking, brought about by *my* development. They belong, so to speak, in a diary, not in a book. And even if this diary might be interesting for someone some day, I cannot publish it. My stomach-aches are not what is interesting but the remedies – if any – that I've found for them (Wittgenstein, MS 136, 144, 24.1.48).

Notice that Wittgenstein's autobiographical difficulties are figured in vivid bodily terms, both as something that should not be "chewed over," and as the cause of his "stomach-aches." Perhaps Wittgenstein thought that overly close attention to his personal predicament would detract from the dignity and seriousness of the work he had written. As a result, he claims that his specific difficulties are really only of interest to himself, but not to others, and so should not be published.

Despite his inability to publish them – or any of the other writing that he did after 1929 – he did leave the corpus of his writing for his literary trustees to publish "as they see fit." (The words quoted are from Wittgenstein's will.)

As a result, it was his literary heirs who had to distinguish between his "philosophical" work on the one hand and the "nonphilosophical" work on the other, as though these dismembered limbs could be surgically separated from the corpus of typescripts and manuscripts that Wittgenstein left to posterity. As a matter of fact, the majority of that material does take the form of a diary, a dated sequence of notes, first drafts, and revisions that provides an intimate record of his struggle with the difficulties that occasioned his more polished philosophical writing. If one turns to this (still mostly unpublished) source material, one can see that Wittgenstein's writing arises out of a struggle between opposing intuitions and his attempts to resolve that struggle. One of the strongest currents of thought in his later philosophy is the idea that one cannot dissociate the first impulses toward a philosophical train of thought from its most finished expression, an idea that motivates the fragmentary arguments one finds in the opening sections of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The debate that animates so much of his writing is a conversation with interlocutory voices that express intuitions and instinctive convictions, not polished philosophical theories.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein says that what he does is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use (1953, § 116): but what is the everyday use of a word that we are led back to, the "language which is its original home"? (Ibid., my translation) Most biographically based accounts of Wittgenstein's thought find an esoteric doctrine at this point, a concealed view that supposedly animates his philosophical writing, a view that is extracted from one aspect or another of his life. Leading candidates have included his religious convictions, which have been variously construed as mysticism, rabbinicism, Catholic, Tolstoyan or Kierkegaardian Christianity, or his ascetic and self-denying ethical outlook. (There is a substantial literature along these lines. Representative examples include Chatterjee 1996, Cornish 1998, Edwards 1982, Engelmann 1967, McGuinness 1988, Janik and Toulmin 1973, and Nieli 1987.) Such biographically motivated readings depend on the premise that the real philosophy lies outside of the texts that Wittgenstein wrote, and that Wittgenstein's writing is to be decoded by attributing to him views that can be found in the books he read and admired.

James Conant's "Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder" (1991), a critical review of McGuinness (1988) and Duffy (1987), argues that approaching Wittgenstein's philosophy in terms of his biography does not do justice to his views about the nature of his writing. In other words, he maintains that the answers McGuinness and Duffy look for in their reading of Wittgenstein's life are to be found in the books he wrote, and the quite unusual way in which they are written. Conant charges them with using "the philosopher's life to decipher the ethical teaching that they know on independent grounds

must be buried somewhere in his work" (1991, 351). Their claim, he replies, that Wittgenstein's values were those of the authors he read or admired mistakenly presupposes that influence must take the form of accepting, or adapting, another's views. They overlook the possibility that Wittgenstein criticized the ideas he took from his reading. By prioritizing biography over philosophy in this way they deny that Wittgenstein's own writing could itself provide an answer to our questions about the point of his work. With regard to the *Tractatus*, Conant argues that the ethical point of the book is not be found in any particular doctrine, either within the text or in one of the philosophers who influenced its author, but rather in the overall project of the book, which is a matter of helping its reader "to achieve genuine clarity":

The achievement of such clarity inevitably requires learning how to overcome one's own innermost tendencies to evade such clarity, and this presupposes the attainment of an understanding of the sources and natures of these tendencies themselves. It is a kind of self-knowledge that exacts a high standard of honesty. In this sense of *ethical*, if any of the *Tractatus* is engaged in an ethical activity, then all of it is. The reason the ethical teaching of the work has eluded its commentators is that they have looked for it somewhere in the text rather than everywhere. They evade the pervasiveness of the ethical demand by attempting to locate it in some particular region of the text. When their externally imposed requirement for a discrete ethical doctrine is frustrated by the text itself, they are forced to flee outside the text into biographical detail (Conant 1991, 353–4).

Yet if Conant is right that an ethical imperative permeates Wittgenstein's work, one should also expect to find it expressed in his life, too; not as an esoteric doctrine, but rather as an activity, a way of being in the world, that Wittgenstein regarded as being of a piece with the point of his philosophical work. Norman Malcolm's memoir of Wittgenstein provides testimony that he did see his teaching and ordinary life as continuous in just this way. He tells the story of how he and Wittgenstein had a serious break in their friendship as the result of a disagreement over the German accusation, shortly after the start of World War II, that the British government had been behind a recent attempt to assassinate Hitler. Wittgenstein said that it would not surprise him at all if it were true, while Malcolm believed the British were "too civilized and decent to attempt anything so underhand" and that "such an act was incompatible with the British 'national character'." Malcolm's remark "made Wittgenstein extremely angry. He considered it to be a great stupidity and also an indication that I was not learning anything from the philosophical training he was trying to give me" (1984, 30).

Until this event, Wittgenstein had regularly gone for a short walk with Malcolm before giving his lectures; afterward he gave up the practice and the friendship cooled. In a letter written from Trinity College, Cambridge, in November 1944, Wittgenstein wrote that he:

couldn't help thinking of a particular incident which seemed to me very important. You & I were walking along the river towards the railway bridge & we had a heated discussion in which you made a remark about "national character" that shocked me by its primitiveness. I then thought: what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any journalist in the use of the DANGEROUS phrases such people use for their own ends. You see, I know that it's difficult to think *well* about "certainty," "probability," "perception," etc. But it is, if possible, still more difficult to think, or *try* to think, really honestly about your life & other peoples lives. And the trouble is that thinking about these things is *not thrilling*, but often downright nasty. And when it's nasty then it's *most* important (Malcolm 1984, 93–4).

Much of Wittgenstein's work in the early 1930s takes the form of a struggle with traditional philosophical conceptions of the essence of language. When he wrote the *Tractatus*, he was convinced that everyday language must have an underlying logical structure, and that philosophy had the task of clarifying that structure. The *Tractatus*, however, does very little to actually analyze our ordinary language. After he returned to philosophical work in 1929, Wittgenstein came to see that the notion of an underlying essential structure was a demand imposed by a certain way of seeing things, rather than something given to us by the nature of things. In the early 1930s, he applied this critique not only to his own earlier work, but also to the work of figures such as Spengler and Freud, arguing that they betrayed their own insights into particular cultural formations by transforming them into ahistorical claims about human nature (cf. Wittgenstein 1980/1998; Monk 1990; Bouveresse 1995; Szabados 1999).

One aspect of the later Wittgenstein's legacy that is of particular value here arises out of his critique of the traditional philosophical search for clear-cut, ahistorical essences: he offers a positive characterization of our language as a loosely interrelated network of activities, that are not unified by any one essence, and that have to be located within a particular practical context. This critique of essentialism is, in turn, the product of an attraction to essentialism, and it would be a mistake to assume that Wittgenstein easily overcame the traditional ways of thinking that preoccupied him. These developments in Wittgenstein's work emerge at a time when he was rereading, and recommending to his friends, Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*. In this connection, Monk aptly observes that

What is perhaps most ironic is that, just as Wittgenstein was beginning to develop an entirely new method for tackling philosophical problems – a method that has no precedent in the entire tradition of Western philosophy (unless one finds a place for Goethe and Spengler in that tradition) – he should be inclined to assess his own

philosophical contribution within the framework of the absurd charge that the Jew was incapable of original thought (Monk 1990, 316).

4. Wittgenstein and Weininger

In 1931, Wittgenstein included Weininger on a short list of writers who had influenced him, in the context of a discussion of the relationship between originality and influence, a discussion which clearly echoes Weininger's own views about the relationship between merely reproductive talent and genuinely creative genius. The Wittgenstein-Weininger connection thus not only provides an opportunity for examining the influence of one philosopher on another, but also has the topic of originality and influence as one of its foci. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein never specified the nature of his debt to Weininger. The topic has become a matter of considerable speculation in recent years, especially following the publication of Ray Monk's biography, with its emphasis on the Weiningerian theme of the "duty of genius" as a key to understanding Wittgenstein's life and work.

Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1903/1906), an extraordinarily popular and much-discussed book, contains an extremely misogynistic, anti-Semitic, and homophobic theory of human nature. Weininger held that everyone is bisexual, by which he meant that we all are partially feminine and partially masculine. Masculinity and femininity are, in turn, to be understood as ideal types that are only partially instantiated in any given person. This provided the basis for an "explanation" of homosexuality and heterosexuality as products of the mathematical combination of these components. Each person seeks out a partner within the complementary amount of masculinity and femininity; homosexuals, having less than the usual amount of masculinity, if male, or femininity, if female, find the complementary balance in another person of the same sex.

In the opening chapters of *Sex and Character*, Weininger elaborates his fundamental law of sexual attraction, in the form of a pseudoscientific equation, complete with Greek letters and mathematical formalism. Weininger contrasted masculine originality with feminine reproductiveness, and held that the latter traits are particularly exemplified by Jews; race, sexuality, and gender are all closely aligned in the Weiningerian economy. Women, according to Weininger, are governed by the imperative to reproduce, and are constitutionally incapable of thinking clearly. Only the rare genius can overcome his feminine component and avoid the snares of physical sexuality; the only honorable alternative is suicide. Weininger, like Spengler and Kraus, was preoccupied with the decay of modern times, and took an aristocratic view of the rise of science and business and the decline of art and music, a

time without originality. The worst aspects of modernity are identified in terms of their Jewishness and femininity.

Little of this was new, but it did set out a synthesis of contemporary prejudices that captured the attention of a huge readership. Shortly after the publication of his book, at the age of 23, Weininger killed himself in the room in Beethoven's house where Beethoven died, thus assuring himself of the fame that eluded him during his lifetime. Later, Hitler was to refer to him as the only good Jew, because he killed himself when he realized that the Jew lives upon the decay of peoples (Hitler 1980, 148, cited by Janik 1985, 101). Wittgenstein was well-acquainted with both *Sex and Character* and *On The Last Things*, and discussed them with friends and family.

Most of the Weininger literature is polarized, and constrained, by the dispute between those who find it necessary to condemn, and those who find it necessary to excuse, Weininger's use of such stereotypes (see Hyams and Harrowitz 1995). Those who read Weininger sympathetically – let us call them Weininger's apologists – emphasize his observation that no human being is a pure instantiation of masculinity or femininity, heterosexuality or homosexuality, Jew or non-Jew. Rather, these are to be understood as ideal types that we all exemplify to varying degrees; it would, on this construal, be a grave misunderstanding to take Weininger to be setting out crudely racist, sexist, or homophobic views. Thus, according to Allan Janik: "Weininger goes out of his way to insist that he does not identify the Jew as a member of a race. Judaism is a possibility for all men in his eyes" (1985, 101. Cf. 1985 87 f., 98 f., and 1995).

Those who read Weininger unsympathetically – let us call them Weininger's critics – argue that his writings implicitly invite and encourage such bigoted uses, even as they explicitly reject them. On this approach, defending his stereotypes as heuristic devices is comparable to the familiar defense that "some of my best friends are Jews," when it is used to set out prejudiced views while ostensibly denying that the speaker is prejudiced.

There is a striking congruence between Wittgenstein's remarks about the Jews, and the significance of his Jewishness, and Weininger's views on the topic. In a note written in 1931, Wittgenstein discusses his own reproductiveness and lack of originality, describing it as a characteristically Jewish trait. After distinguishing creative genius from mere talent, which is only reproductive, he wrote:

The saint is the only Jewish "genius." Even the greatest Jewish thinker is no more than talented. (Myself for instance.)

I think there is some truth in my idea that I am really only reproductive in my thinking. I think I have never *invented* a line of thinking but that it was always provided for me by someone else & I have done no more than passionately take it up

for my work of clarification. That is how Boltzmann Hertz Schopenhauer Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos Weininger Spengler, Sraffa have influenced me. Can one take Breuer & Freud as an example of Jewish reproductive thinking? – What I invent are new *comparisons*.

... It might be said (rightly or wrongly) that the Jewish mind is not in a position to produce even so much as a tiny blade of grass or flower but that its way is to make a drawing of the blade of grass or the flower that has grown in the mind of another & then use it to sketch a comprehensive picture. This is not to *allege* a vice & everything is all right as long as what is being done is quite clear. Danger only arises when someone confuses the nature of a Jewish work with that of a non-Jewish work & especially when the author of the former does so himself, as he so easily may. (Doesn't he look as proud as though he were being milked himself?)

It is typical of the Jewish mind to understand someone else's work better than he understands it himself (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 19/16–17, 1931).

In an apologetic reading, Wittgenstein's talk of 'Jewishness' here, and in similar passages, should not be taken literally as a claim about all and only those people who are Jews – however one ultimately understands that term – but rather as a metaphor that Wittgenstein uses to think about issues of creativity and originality, and different kinds of intellectual activity, a topic to which he repeatedly returned. In this reading, he is really talking about his particular way of approaching philosophical problems, which he connects with his temperament. Certainly, the four paragraphs that immediately follow the passage just quoted explore further his conviction that he is constitutionally incapable of producing anything fundamentally new, that his talent rather consists in rearranging and making good use of materials provided by others. We shall see that at the end of the 1930s he expressed much the same ideas without making explicit use of the image of the Jew (§ 6).

McGuinness (1999, 71; 2001, 229) tries to minimize the role of Jewishness in the earlier passages by drawing on Kienzler's observation that in such places "one can replace 'Jew' by 'philosopher' without essentially changing the sense [*Sinn*]" (Kienzler 1997, 43). Given a narrowly Fregean notion of sense, this may be strictly true, but it all depends on what one takes to be essential. Wittgenstein's talk of "Jewish reproductiveness" here contributes a metaphorical dimension to this passage that would be missing if he had instead chosen to speak of "philosophical reproductiveness." Even McGuinness does acknowledge that there are prejudicial pictures of the Jews in a few places in Wittgenstein's writing – for instance, where he speaks of "the Jews' secretive & cunning nature" as innate, rather than a result of persecution (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 22/19).

On a critical reading, what is most troubling about the lengthy passage quoted above, and a number of others written in 1931, is that they take Weininger's prototypically anti-Semitic ideas about the Jewish mind so much

for granted. As Monk puts it, "what is most shocking about Wittgenstein's remarks on Jewishness is his use of the language – indeed, the slogans – of racial anti-Semitism. The echo that really disturbs is not that of *Sex and Character*, but that of *Mein Kampf*" (1990, 313).

Around the same time, Wittgenstein recommended Weininger's book to several friends, including G. E. Moore. According to Ray Monk, "Their response was understandably cool. The work that had excited the imagination of pre-war Vienna looked, in the cold light of post-war Cambridge, simply bizarre. Wittgenstein was forced to explain" (1990, 312). In response to Moore's lack of sympathy for the book, Wittgenstein wrote:

I can quite imagine that you don't admire Weininger very much what with that beastly translation and the fact that W. must feel very foreign to you. It is true that he is fantastic but he is *great* and fantastic. It isn't necessary or rather not possible to agree with him but the greatness lies in that with which we disagree. It is his enormous mistake which is great. I.e. roughly speaking if you just add a "–" to the whole book it says an important truth (Wittgenstein 1995, 250; letter dated 23.8.31).

Unfortunately, Wittgenstein's letter does not further explain what he means by negating the whole book, or identify what he takes to be the "important truth" that emerges. Monk pointedly sets out the questions raised by this silence:

But why did Wittgenstein admire the book so much? What did he learn from it? Indeed, given that its claims to scientific biology are transparently spurious, its epistemology obviously nonsense, its psychology primitive, and its ethical prescriptions odious, what could he *possibly* have learnt from it? (Monk 1990, 23)

Monk's own answer to this question is contained in the subtitle of his biography of Wittgenstein, namely "the duty of genius"; he argues that Wittgenstein identified with Weininger's valorization of the figure of the male genius. Monk is right to stress that the later Wittgenstein rejected Weininger's view of Woman; on one occasion, he said of Weininger's views on this topic: "How wrong he was, my God he was wrong" (Drury, in Rhees 1984, 91). Consequently, Monk emphasizes the affinities between Wittgenstein's and Weininger's positive views about love and self-knowledge: man can choose between the masculine and the feminine, love and sexuality; to find oneself is to find one's higher self, and escape the empirical self. The only love that is of value in the end is love of the divine in oneself, of the idea of God.

Another suggestion as to how to understand Wittgenstein's response to Weininger can be found in a recent article by Béla Szabados. He finds it implausible that what Wittgenstein meant by negating Weininger was simply a matter of replacing his prejudicial attack on Woman with an equally one-sided denigration of Man, for that would amount to retaining Weininger's Platonism, with the proviso that he charged the wrong suspect:

That the mature Wittgenstein would give the nod to stipulative, evaluatively loaded definitions of Man and Woman strains credulity. The suggestion is completely out of alignment with the resolute anti-essentialism of the late philosophy. So "Man and masculinity are the sources of all evil" is not the important truth that we are supposed to get out of negating Weininger's book. For this is as much of an absurdity as his central theme, and between two absurdities there is nothing to choose. It rests on a kind of essentialism that the later Wittgenstein rejects simply in virtue of its prejudicial nature. The author of the *Investigations* is devoted to a method of *looking and seeing* how things are rather than saying and prejudging how things are. Both absurdities reveal a deep prejudice and distort the particularity and individuality of people. (Szabados 1997, 492-3; the closely parallel passage in "Was Wittgenstein an Anti-Semite?" (1999, 16-17) indicates how important this claim is for his reading.)

I want to agree with this reading of the text of the *Philosophical Investigations*, but there is no guarantee that the views of the person who wrote the book are as congenial. This is an attractive reading, but it is "attractive" in just the sense that McGuinness (1999/2001, 76/236; cited above, 240) warns against: it would have been good if Wittgenstein had freed himself of the deeply prejudicial, evaluatively loaded definitions of Man and Woman, Jew and non-Jew, that one finds in Weininger, but we should be wary of arguing from what we think our philosophical heroes should have believed to what they actually believed.

Furthermore, Monk's sanitized attempt to recuperate a positive vision from the Weiningerian cesspool, and Szabados's suggestion that it is just a matter of two "absurdities," both involve a failure to see how much Wittgenstein identified with the complementary image of the abjectly feminine – both as Jew and homosexual (cf. Cavell 1990). Part of Weininger's achievement in Wittgenstein's eyes, I believe, was to clearly and honestly set out the prejudices of his age. In the late 1940s, Wittgenstein explained his admiration for Weininger to G. E. M. Anscombe by contrasting him with Kafka: Kafka, he said, "gave himself a great deal of trouble *not* writing about his trouble," while Weininger, whatever his faults, was a man who really did write about his. Anscombe had lent Wittgenstein some of Kafka's novels; Wittgenstein, on returning them, compared Kafka unfavorably to Weininger, and recommended "Weininger's *Sex and Character* and *The Four Last Things*" (Monk 1990, 498). The latter is presumably a mistranslation, or misplaced memory of Weininger's *Über Die Letzte Dinge* [*On the Last Things*], a posthumous miscellany of his other writings. Weininger's pronouncements about Jews, gender, national character and sexuality are the kind of stereotypes about how people and culture "must be" that Wittgenstein criticized in his attacks on "dogmatism" and the use of "prototypes" in the early 1930s (cf. Wittgenstein's "Notes on Frazer's *Golden Bough*" and his discussions of Schopenhauer, Freud, and Spengler in *Culture and Value*; Lurie; Szabados). Another

aspect of Wittgenstein's debt to Weininger was the central role Weininger accorded to what Freud called "projection" in the construction of stereotypes: Weininger contends that the conception of women as either virgins or whores he sets out is a product of male needs, not of women's nature.

Monk and Szabados read Wittgenstein's image of negating Weininger's book as a matter of denying its odious components. It is hard, however, to avoid the conclusion that the negation we are discussing here is not the notion of Fregean logic, but rather the Freudian notion of denying that with which one cannot help identifying. One can see this in the ambiguous reference to "W." in the first sentence of Wittgenstein's letter – "I can quite imagine that you don't admire Weininger very much, what with that beastly translation and the fact that W. must feel very foreign to you" – a "W." that both names and does not name its author. Wittgenstein saw in Weininger, and Weininger's anti-Semitism, a mirror of his own self-hatred, a way of figuring a relationship of identification and denial that he both had to and could not confront. During the question period after the presentation of this paper at the Virginia Tech conference on Wittgenstein, Monk challenged this reading, pointing out that Wittgenstein explicitly used a "¬", the Fregean negation sign, not the word "not." Certainly, there is no evidence that his conscious intention was to make use of the Freudian notion of denial; equally, there is good reason to think that Wittgenstein's fascination with Weininger at this time arose out of an uneasy identification with that famously Jewish, homosexual philosopher who was himself deeply troubled by his own identity.

One can see the same tension between identification and denial in a problematic discussion of anti-Semitism from the same period, where he explores the idea of comparing the Jews to a disease in the body of Europe.

"Look on this wart //swelling// [Warze // Beule//] as a regular limb of your body!"
Can one do that, to order?

Do I have the power to decide *at will* to have, or not to have, a certain ideal conception of my body?

Within the history of the peoples of Europe the history of the Jews is not treated so circumstantially as their intervention in European affairs would actually merit, because within this history they are experienced as a sort of disease, anomaly, & nobody wants to put a disease on the same level as normal life //& nobody wants to speak of a disease as though it had the same rights as healthy bodily processes (even painful ones.)//

We may say: this bump [Beule] can be regarded as a limb of one's body only if our whole feeling for the body changes (if the whole national feeling for the body changes.) Otherwise the best we can do is *put up with* it.

You may expect an individual to display this sort of tolerance or even to disregard such things; but you cannot expect this of a nation since it is only a nation by virtue of not disregarding such things. I.e. there is a contradiction in expecting someone to

retain the original aesthetic feeling for his body & also to make the swelling [*Beule*] welcome (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 20/18, 1931).

Peter Winch's 1980 translation for the German *Beule* was "tumor." Presumably the change was made because "tumor" is not supported by current German dictionaries or usage: in contemporary German, a *Beule* is a bump or swelling, with no implication of malignancy. There is a clear etymological connection with the English "boil" – a "hard inflamed suppurating tumor" (Little et al. 1973, vol. I, 212). Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's historic dictionary makes it clear that the principal senses of the term in the nineteenth century were far from benign: their two leading definitions of the term both characterize it as a tumor (Grimm and Grimm 1854, 1745–6). That sense was still alive in the 1960s, although by then it was no longer the leading meaning. The entry for "*Beule*" in a German-English dictionary first published in the 1960s begins as follows: "bump, lump, swelling; (*Geschwür*) boil, tumo(u)r; . . ." (Messinger and Rüdtenberg 1964, 114.) This strongly suggests that Wittgenstein must have been aware of the negative connotations of the term, and that "tumor" is the correct translation. The context in which Wittgenstein used the word does provide additional support for the original translation: he first wrote "wart," an unhealthy growth, and compares the *Beule* with a disease. This passage has attracted attention in the secondary literature, and several English readers have been quick to condemn it for its noxious racist similes. Thus Monk reads this, and related material, as "anti-Semitic paranoia in its most undiluted form" (1990 314, 315). Isaac Nevo's reading of this passage stresses that the anti-Semitism is primarily self-directed, but also part of an intolerant nationalism:

The genocidal fantasy with respect to the Jewish tumour, which in the period this was written was being acted out on the European scene, is articulated by Wittgenstein from within. The analogies and judgments here are his own. The Jewish anomaly could, after all, be portrayed as a curable, rather than incurable, disease. . . . But the nationalism Wittgenstein displays in this passage is defined by intolerance (Nevo 1987–8, 238).

Szabados, on the other hand, working from Winch's first translation, takes the passage to be laying bare, in a philosophically critical spirit, racist ideas that Wittgenstein most certainly does not accept. He lays great stress on Wittgenstein's use of certain distancing devices in setting out these dangerous ideas. The opening sentence is an instruction to see things in a certain way, placed within quotation marks; the second asks us whether it is possible to carry out the instruction. This is followed by a further question, an outline of a way of looking at European history that is about to be rejected, then a "we may say" and a "you may expect." On Szabados' reading, Wittgenstein is bringing up racist ideas to help us see how they hang together with some of

the most dangerous problems that liberal democracies currently face, and proposing philosophical therapy for the idea of the nation-state.

What we have here is an attempt at a precise description and diagnosis of the conceptual and political roots of the problem the liberal democracies found themselves in, in the wake of the Holocaust: how to restructure and reinscribe the nation-state and what it is to belong to it, so that the conditions leading to intolerance of difference and subsequent genocide do not recur (Szabados 1999, 7–8).

Szabados is right that Wittgenstein does not straightforwardly endorse the anti-Semitic ideas he explores in this passage, and Wittgenstein's critics have been far too ready to assume that he accepted the prejudicial views he discusses. Also, one must remember that these were private notes, not intended for publication; however, while it is possible to imagine that Wittgenstein might have expanded the proposals and questions just quoted with the sensitive exploration of nationalism and racism Szabados sketches, he did not, as far as we know, ever do so. Instead he follows it up in his manuscript with Weiningerian reflections on how Jews supposedly are only interested in money as a form of power, not in possessions for their own sake.

Power & possession are not the *same* thing. Even though possession also gives us power. If Jews are said not to have any sense for possession that is presumably compatible with their liking to be rich; for money is for them a particular sort of power not possession. (I should for instance not like my people to be poor, since I wish them to have a certain power. Naturally I wish them to use this power properly too.) (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 21/18, 1931)

The use of "people" in this translation is potentially misleading, for at first sight it suggests that Wittgenstein is talking about the Jewish people as a whole, but the German word in question is *Leute*, and so the people in question are rather Wittgenstein's own family. In this connection, it is important to note that this remark is not only a reflection of his conception of Jewishness, power, and possession, but also a matter of thinking over his feelings about his extraordinarily wealthy family. As we have already seen, seven years later his sense of the proper use of power would lead him to side with his sisters in their dispute with his brother over how best to respond to the German annexation of Austria, in favor of his sisters' paying for non-Jewish identity papers.

Another passage about the Jews, also from 1931, makes it clear how little Wittgenstein was able to transcend the stereotypes about Jews and nation that were current at the time.

"Fatherlandless rabble" (applied to the Jews) is on the same level as "crooked-nosed rabble," for giving yourself a fatherland is just as little in your power, as it is to give yourself a particular nose (Wittgenstein 1997, 59, 2.11.31).

This passage takes certain prevalent negative stereotypes about the Jews – that they are a rabble, lack a fatherland, are crooked-nosed – as a point of departure, and does nothing to challenge them. These are hardly the words one would expect of the critic of “intolerance of difference” Szabados describes. A critique of intolerance of difference may well draw on Wittgenstein’s writings, but that critique is not articulated there.

5. Wittgenstein’s Peculiar Dreams

There is reason to think that Wittgenstein’s uneasy relationship to his own racial identity, a relationship framed in terms of the prevalent anti-Semitic discourse of his times, also figures in his relationship to his sexuality. First, Weininger’s racial and sexual theories are themselves mutually congruent, and both depend on drawing a binary contrast between a valorized and a denigrated term, a contrast that is drawn in strikingly similar ways in each case. Recent work on the anti-Semitism of this period by Nancy Stepan (1986) and Sander Gilman (1986, 1993) has made clear the ways in which racial and gender theories draw on each other, so that the racial other, the feminine, and the homosexual are all constructed in terms of the same set of distinctions. Second, Wittgenstein’s virulent racial self-hatred, recorded in 1931, occurs at the same time that he was considering marrying Marguerite Respinger, a friend of his family. Her visit to him in Norway in 1931 was conducted on strikingly Weiningerian lines. He found her a room of her own at a neighbor’s house, and proposed that they prepare for a new spiritual life by reading the Bible together. Even Monk, who minimizes the links between Wittgenstein’s attraction to the darker side of Weininger’s thought and his own self-hatred, notes the connection between Wittgenstein’s anti-Semitic writing in 1931 and his proposed marriage:

Wittgenstein’s remarks on Jewishness, like his projected autobiography, were essentially confessional, and both seem in some way linked to the “sacred” union he planned for himself and Marguerite. They coincide with the year in which his intention to marry Marguerite was pursued with its greatest earnestness (Monk 1990, 317–8).

Monk, presumably relying on Marguerite’s testimony, presents the “union” as an idea of Wittgenstein’s that she never took very seriously.

The themes of race, gender, guilt, and identity all converge in a “strange dream” of Wittgenstein’s, which he wrote down, in code, in one of his manuscript volumes, on 1 December 1929. The dream concerns a character named “Vertsaagt” or “Vertsaag”; the name is the only word *not* written in code.

A peculiar dream. Today toward morning I dreamt: I see in an illustrated newspaper a photograph of Vertsaagt, who is a much discussed hero of the day. The picture shows him in his car. There is talk of his disgraceful deeds; Hänsel is standing next to me and also someone else, similar to my brother Kurt. The latter says that Vertsaag is a Jew but has enjoyed the upbringing of a rich Scottish lord; now he is a workers’ leader. He has not changed his name because it is not the custom there. It is new to me that Vertsaagt, which I pronounce with the stress on the first syllable, is a Jew, and I see that his name simply means “vertsaagt” [German for “faint-hearted.”] It doesn’t strike me that it is written with “ts” which I see printed a little bolder than the other letters. I think: must there be a Jew behind every indecency? Now Hänsel and I are on the terrace of a house, perhaps the big log-cabin on the Hochreit, and along the street comes Vertsaag in his motor-car; he has an angry face, slightly reddish fair hair and a similar moustache (he does not look Jewish.) He opens fire with a machine-gun at a cyclist behind him who writhes with pain and is mercilessly gunned to death with many shots. Vertsaag has driven past, and now comes a young poor-looking girl on a cycle and she too receives Vertsaag’s fire as he drives on. And these shots, when they hit her breast make a bubbling sound like an almost-empty kettle over a flame. I felt sympathy for the girl and thought: only in Austria could it happen that this girl would find no helpful sympathy and people watch as she suffers and is killed. I myself am afraid to help her because I fear Vertsaag’s shots. I go towards her, but look for cover behind a plant. Then I wake up. I must add that in the conversation with Hänsel, first in the presence of the other person and then after he had left us, I am embarrassed and do not want to say that I myself am descended from Jews or that Vertsaag’s case is my own case too. . . . I wrote the dream down immediately after waking up (MS 107, 219, 1.12.29. The passage is also translated in Monk 1990, 279–80, and the German text is provided on pp. 612–3. See also the transcription of the text in Wittgenstein 1993–, vol. 2, 127).

Hänsel was a close friend, the first person he wrote to in 1936 to confess he had concealed his Jewishness, asking Hänsel to pass on his confession to his family (see the correspondence between Wittgenstein and Hänsel, recently published in Somavilla 1994). In his notes on the dream, Wittgenstein tries, three times, to interpret the significance of Vertsaag’s name. In the dream, he thought he saw “that his name simply means ‘vertsaagt,’” which is German for “faint-hearted.” After waking, he came to think that it was really written “Pferzaagt,” which means nothing at all. His closing attempt suggests that “the name as I pronounced it in the dream, ‘Vert-saagt’ is Hungarian. The name had for me something evil, spiteful and very masculine about it.”

Clearly, the dream is connected with Wittgenstein’s pervasive sense of guilt, and its connection with his discomfort with his sexuality and racial origins. Monk takes the dream to be about Wittgenstein’s sense that he was “hiding something . . . allowing people to think of him as an aristocrat when in fact he was a Jew” (1990, 279). Consequently, he treats the trail of associ-

ations as a distraction from the manifest content of the dream, and the initial thought that the case of *Vertlagt* is his own case, the case of a man who hides his origins, and is too faint-hearted to admit it (1990, 280). It is surely right to take Wittgenstein's attempts to make sense of the name as themselves faint-hearted, and a distraction from thinking about the fact that the predicament of the protagonist is his predicament. Yet the search for the meaning of the name is not just a screen: looked at one way, the names are nonsensical; looked at in another way, they all have similar and connected sounds and meanings. Christoph Nyíri has pointed out that, despite Wittgenstein's repeated attempts to decode the name, he fails to consider a striking alternative: that the word is "*versagt*", from *versagen*, the German word not only for "failed," "denied," – an obvious construal under the circumstances – but also "betrothed." The usage in the sense of "betrothed" is no longer common – it is not in the current *Duden* – but it is in the 1967 *Langenscheidt*, and it would have been familiar to Wittgenstein (Nyíri 1992, 22).

Nyíri's piece, written before he had seen Monk's biography, takes it for granted that Wittgenstein was not betrothed. Monk's account, presumably based on his conversations with Marguerite Respinger – specific sources for such matters are not given in his biography – gives the impression that while Wittgenstein might have desired a celibate marriage with her, this was never a realistic possibility. Wittgenstein's diary from this period presents a rather different picture, which is that Marguerite needed him at a time of personal crisis, but that this could not be a permanent relationship. Another complicated dream, a few weeks earlier, is interpreted by Wittgenstein as being about how he imagines he is bound to Marguerite by a thousand ties, but as a matter of fact, it is easy for him to walk away from her (Wittgenstein 1997, 63–4). In any case, it seems fair to say that the *Vertlagt* dream epitomizes Wittgenstein's sense of failure at the time, and particularly the failure of their proposed "union."

The theme of struggling to make sense of nonsense, and in particular of a name containing consonants with similar sounds, recurs in another dream that Wittgenstein wrote down early in 1932:

Today I dreamt the following strange dream. Someone (was it Lettice? [Ramsey]) said to me that someone was called Hobbson "with mixed b"; which meant, that one pronounced it "Hobpson." I woke and remembered that Gilbert [Pattison] once told me about the pronunciation of a word that it was "pronounced with mixed b," which I had understood as "mixed beef" [in English] and didn't know what he meant, but it sounded as if he meant that one would have to have a dish called "mixed beef" in one's mouth when saying the word, and I had understood Gilbert to have said it as a joke. I remembered all that immediately on waking. Then it sounded less and less plausible to me, and by the time I'd got dressed it seemed obvious nonsense. (By the

way, if one went into this dream, it leads to thoughts about racial mixing, and what that means to me.) (Wittgenstein 1997, 67; MS 183, 137–8; 28.1.32)

Lettice Ramsey was a close friend and confidante of Wittgenstein's, with whom he could discuss his feelings for Marguerite (Monk 1990, 258); Pattison, a friend with whom he joked and played with nonsensical language (Monk 1990, 265 f.). Wittgenstein does not explain the connection he sees between this dream and his thoughts about mixed race, but both dreams give great significance to almost imperceptible differences in pronouncing a name that is difficult to say correctly, a name whose meaning seems clear during the dream, then elusive, and ultimately nonsensical. In each dream, racial difference, and differences in meaning between nonsense words, play a central part. A name takes on a racially charged significance, but the significance resists his analytic efforts. One further connection here is that both nonsense and racial mixing arise out of combinations that are not permitted; both are offenses against the normal ways of going on. Both seem to make sense within Wittgenstein's "strange" (1.12.29) and "peculiar" (28.1.32) dreams, but turn into nonsense when he tries to reconstruct their meaning. Wittgenstein's unsuccessful struggle to make sense of the nonsense names in the *Vertlagt* and *Hobbson* dreams is an uncanny parody of the traditional philosophical quest to explain a name's meaning in terms of what it stands for.

6. Jewishness, Anti-Semitism and Philosophy

Is there a connection between Wittgenstein's writing on Jews and his philosophy? What did he mean when he spoke of himself as a "Jewish thinker" in 1931? Monk takes Wittgenstein to be engaging in a form of self-directed anti-Semitism, humbling himself by describing his own work as nothing more than clarifying the ideas he had taken from others, or reminding himself of "his limitations, of his 'Jewishness'" (1990, 317).

It is as though, for a brief time (after 1931 there are, thankfully, no more remarks about Jewishness in his notebooks), he was attracted to using the then current language of anti-Semitism as a kind of metaphor for himself (just as, in the dream of *Vertlagt*, the image of the Jew that was propagated by the Nazis – an image of a cunning and deceptive scoundrel who hides behind a cloak of respectability while committing the most dreadful crimes – found a ready response in his fears about his own 'real' nature.) . . . So long as he lived, Wittgenstein never ceased to struggle against his own pride, and to express doubts about his philosophical achievement and his own moral decency. After 1931, however, he dropped the language of anti-Semitism as a means of expressing those doubts. (Monk 1990, 316–17)

Yuval Lurie sees a direct connection between developments in Wittgenstein's views about meaning and his giving up talk of Jewishness in this way.

For it was around this time that Wittgenstein began to talk about family resemblances, the similarities that things of certain kinds have in common with each other without sharing a common essence.

Is this simultaneity coincidental? I think not. It seems to me that he found he could no longer hide behind the claim that he was merely conducting a metaphysical discussion about the ideal Jew when he spoke of Jews as he did (Lurie 1989, 340).

Lurie, like Szabados (1999), supports this reading by connecting Wittgenstein's particular use of the concept of Jewishness with the Weiningerian notion of a prototype, a conception of an idealized instance of the concept in question that can be used to organize empirical evidence, a notion that Wittgenstein rejected shortly after these discussions of the Jews in 1931. Lurie also goes on to show that many of Wittgenstein's subsequent and closely related discussions of talent and genius, creativity and originality, make use of other metaphors, such as talk of how seeds grown in different soils will produce different plants.

Strictly speaking, Monk is correct in saying that there are no more remarks about Jewishness, *per se*, after 1931 in Wittgenstein's surviving notebooks, and that he no longer used the language of anti-Semitism as a means of doubting his own decency; and Lurie is right that Wittgenstein did develop other ways of thinking about reproductiveness and originality. Yet there are remarks about Jews and the bible, dating from a series of notebooks from 1939 or 1940, that show that the anti-Semitic metaphors and connections that he had made in the early 1930s were still alive for him. In these passages, Wittgenstein returned to the themes of the difference between genius and talent, and how courage and character distinguish genius from talent. Thus we find him asking himself the question, "What does Mendelssohn's music lack? A 'courageous' melody?" (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 35/40, 1939–1940). In 1929, Mendelssohn is introduced as an exemplar of Wittgenstein's idea of Jewishness, and used as a way of thinking about Wittgenstein's own ideals, which he thinks of as akin to Mendelssohn's. Wittgenstein compares the Jew to a tree that avoids tragedy by bending, rather than breaking: "Tragedy is something unjewish. Mendelssohn is perhaps the most untragic of composers" (1980/1998, 1/3). Wittgenstein takes it for granted that the Jew lacks the courage, or resistance, that is required for tragedy. Indeed, he identifies his own ideal in these terms, for the passage, which up till now has been in ordinary German, continues in code: "Tragically holding on, defiantly holding on to a tragic situation in love always seems quite alien to my ideal. Does that mean my ideal is feeble? I cannot & *should not judge*" (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 3–4; the passage is not included in the pre-1994 editions).

In another notebook from the same period, he writes:

The Old Testament seen as the body without its head; the New T[estament]: the head; the Epistles of the Apostles: the crown on the head.

If I think of the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament on its own, I should like to say: the head is (*still*) missing from this body. The solution to these problems is missing. The fulfilment of these hopes is missing. But I do not necessarily think of a head as having a *crown*.

The measure of genius is character, – even if character on its own does *not* amount to genius

Genius is not 'talent *and* character', but character manifesting itself in the form of a special talent. Where one man will show courage by jumping into the water, another will show courage by writing a symphony. (This is a weak example.)

There is no more light in a genius than in any other honest human being – but the genius concentrates this light into a burning point by means of a particular lens (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 35/40–1. 1939–1940).

My originality (if that is the right word) is, I believe, an originality that belongs to the soil, not the seed. (Perhaps I have no seed of my own.) Sow a seed in my soil, & it will grow differently than it would in any other soil.

Freud's originality too was like this, I think. I have always believed – without knowing why – that the original seed of psychoanalysis was due to Breuer, not Freud. Of course, Breuer's seed-grain can only have been quite tiny.

(*Courage* is always original.) (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 36/42, 1939–40)

Although he does not explicitly make any of the claims about "the Jews" that one finds in the earlier remarks, he continues to talk in terms that take those earlier ideas for granted. The biblical analogy makes it clear that Wittgenstein cannot entirely let go of using the Jews as a way of thinking about his identity: his Bible, the Jew's, and the Catholic's are compared to a body, a headless body, and a crowned body. Apparently, it is integral to Wittgenstein's conception of his Christianity that it be seen as contrasted with the supposed shortcomings of Judaism. Isaac Nevo reads this passage as a figure of the Jewish faith as "a living death":

The essential point is that variation, or even schism within Christianity does not constitute an anomaly, or a disturbance. . . . The "Jewish Bible," on the other hand, constitutes a real disturbance: a (living?) body without a head (1987–8, 236).

While the passage as a whole is not as strikingly anti-Semitic as the earlier writing on the Jews, the fact remains that he is still writing about the difference between genius and talent in terms of a stock example of a Jewish composer who lacks the un-Jewish virtue of courage, interspersing it with a biblical analogy that cannot help but suggest the image of the Jews who lost their heads, and worse, as the result of the Shoah.

7. Conclusion

Wittgenstein's later philosophy, with its far-reaching criticism of essentialism and Platonism about meaning, certainly lends itself to a critique of anti-Semitic stereotypes, and his falling-out with Malcolm makes it clear that he saw a close connection between his more technically philosophical work and a critical attitude toward nationalistic stereotypes. On the other hand, his continued uncritical use of Jewish stereotypes in material from the same time as his dispute with Malcolm show that he was far from being fully successful in applying his own methods to his use of anti-Semitic discourse. Indeed, his final recorded reflection on anti-Semitism, written three years after the Second World War, begins by comparing anti-Semitism to a tangle, a knot he was unable to untie:

If you cannot unravel a tangle, the most sensible thing you can do is to recognize this; & the most decent thing, to admit it. [Antisemitism.]

What you should do to cure the evil is *not* clear. What is *not* permissible is clear from one case to another (Wittgenstein 1980/1998, 74/95, 4.11.48).

It is hard to know what to make of this passage. Nevo reads it as Wittgenstein's confession that he could not unravel the tangle of anti-Semitism, that he was still entangled in it, and suggests that he was contemplating suicide, the "honourable" Weiningerian way out (1987–8, 242). Yet, given the available evidence, such a reading is extremely speculative. Wittgenstein neither says what unravelling the tangle would be, nor specifies what one "must *not* do." The reference to unravelling a tangle evokes an image that Wittgenstein repeatedly used in talking about the nature of philosophy. In section 2 of the *Philosophical Remarks*, written in 1930, he writes:

Why is philosophy so complicated? It ought, after all, to be *completely* simple. – Philosophy unties the knots in our thinking, which we have tangled up in an absurd way; but to do that, it must make movements which are just as complicated as the knots. Although the *result* of philosophy is simple, its methods for arriving there cannot be so.

The complexity of philosophy is not in its matter, but in our tangled understanding.

This passage is the basis for Big Typescript, § 90 (pp. 183–9 in Wittgenstein 1993), and can also be found in the company of much post-1945 writing in *Zettel*, § 452. This suggests that the talk of a tangle one cannot unravel was a way of acknowledging that anti-Semitism was a philosophical problem that Wittgenstein was not able to resolve, or cure. Wittgenstein's confidence that it was clear what *not* to do in particular cases is hardly reassuring, in view of what we have seen of his own actions. Anti-Semitism is strikingly akin to a Wittgensteinian philosophical problem: it arises from taken-for-granted prejudices and the misuse of language, and can only be resolved by a

change in the way people lead their lives. The philosophical significance of Jewishness for Wittgenstein is not primarily that he thought of his philosophy as Jewish, but that Jewishness was not a problem that he was able to write about philosophically.

Finally, we can briefly return to the question: was Wittgenstein a Jew? My Hertzian answer is that we would be better off distinguishing different senses of the term, and reflecting on their role in his life and in our own. Wittgenstein's problematic Jewishness is as much a product of our problematic concerns as his. There is no doubt that Wittgenstein was of Jewish descent; it is equally clear that he was not a practicing Jew. Insofar as he thought of himself as Jewish, he did so in terms of the anti-Semitic prejudices of his time. It would have been good if he could have untangled those prejudices, but he did not do so.¹

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