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**WITTGENSTEIN AND HIS IMPACT
ON CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL WITTGENSTEIN SYMPOSIUM
29th AUGUST TO 4th SEPTEMBER 1977 KIRCHBERG (AUSTRIA)

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AUF DIE GEGENWÄRTIGE PHILOSOPHIE**

AKTEN DES 2. INTERNATIONALEN WITTGENSTEIN SYMPOSIUMS
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WITTGENSTEIN AND THE BACKGROUND OF AUSTRIAN PHILOSOPHY

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The influence of Russell, Moore and Frege upon some of the central themes of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* has long been recognised in the literature. More recently we have begun to understand the relation of Wittgenstein's early thought to Kant, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard on the one hand, and to the ethical and intellectual climate of his native Vienna on the other. But the background of Austrian *philosophy* in the decades leading up to the writing of the *Tractatus* has been virtually ignored. In the present essay we are going to seek to fill this gap, but first it seems necessary that we make some exercise in demarcation: "Austria" in this context is to include, of course, not only the area of the present-day Austria, Republic, but also Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Northern Italy and much of Yugoslavia and Poland. And Austrian *philosophy* is to include not only those philosophers, such as Bolzano and Meinong, who lived out their lives within these frontiers, but also those *German* philosophers who exerted a major influence in the lands of the *Doppelmonarchie* – most notably Leibniz and Herbart – and then also German philosophers who were themselves largely influenced by and intellectually close to Austria, especially the Husserl of the *Logische Untersuchungen* (LU). For this reason it might be more appropriate to coin a more technical designation, say: "Austro-German philosophy", understood not in any geographical sense but according to what it includes (and excludes) philosophically.

Unfortunately the characteristic theses of this tradition, with its quite peculiar blend of detailed ontological and psychological analyses within a wider, more general framework of anti-psychologistic logical realism, are so poorly understood, the richness of the tradition so little appreciated, that present-day analytic philosophers are still largely unaware of the extent to which it has points of contact not only with Wittgenstein but also with, say, Frege (and through Frege, Burkamp), Gödel, and the Carnap of the *Logische Aufbau der Welt*. (1)

For the purposes of our present investigations Austro-German philosophers divide into two groups. The first and earlier group consists of thinkers who were instrumental in shaping the semi-official framework of ideas – pedagogical, religious, even political and economic – which was characteristic of the later days of the Empire. These were, most centrally, Herbart and Bolzano; (2) indeed, there was a time when Herbart's thought had come to achieve a position in (Catholic) Austria comparable to the State Hegelianism which held sway in Germany. (3) More crucially still, Herbartian pedagogy had been instituted in places of learning throughout the Empire, and philosophy (Herbart's philosophy) played no small part in the curricula which resulted. Yet there have, as yet, been no investigations of the possibility of an influence upon Wittgenstein of Herbart's thought (e.g. of the latter's conception of the universe as consisting of a manifold of absolutely simple entities (*Realen*), each without parts or qualities, always immutably identical with itself, entities of which the mind can only form *Bilder*).

In particular, Toulmin and Janik (who, for reasons of their own, deliberately undervalue the importance and the quality of technical philosophy in Austria in the period in question) mention Herbart only once in their study of *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (London 1973). Ironically this occurs in the context of a remark concerning the effect of Herbart's thought upon Mach and of Mach's sensationalism upon the early Einstein; for what is not mentioned is the much deeper influence which Herbart exercised upon Einstein through *Riemann*, whose ground-breaking paper "Ueber die Hypothesen, welche der Geometrie zu Grunde liegen" (1854) – dedicated to Herbart and Gauss – was written after a period of immersion in

Herbart's philosophical writings. It is this paper in which Riemann, borrowing the notion of *Mannigfaltigkeit* (manifold) from Herbart's work, presents for the first time the possibility of a mathematical theory of manifolds, without which Einsteinian relativity theory – and Husserlian philosophy of logic and mathematics – would have been inconceivable. Even today Herbart's importance is readily acknowledged amongst Central European philosophers of science, but not since Russell's *Foundations of Geometry* (1897) – a work which Wittgenstein, coming to Cambridge as a young engineering student, may well have read – has this importance been recognised in the Anglo-Saxon philosophical community.

The second group of philosophers which we must consider consists of contemporaries or near-contemporaries of Wittgenstein himself, who formed part of the wider "Austrian" background against which the work of thinkers such as Mach, Avenarius and Boltzmann was produced. The central figure in this group was Franz Brentano, whose students and followers were to be found throughout the Empire: Twardowski and, eventually, Ingarden in Lemberg (Lwów); Ehrenfels and Marty in Prague; Meinong and his followers in Graz, Italy and Yugoslavia; the orthodox Brentanians in Innsbruck; and Brentano himself (for a time) in Vienna, where Masaryk and Freud were among those who attended his courses. (4) And it will be important for our purposes to note that, through Husserl and Stumpf, Brentano-influenced philosophers were to be found also in many of the major German universities.

This group of thinkers has hardly been considered at all in the literature on the *Tractatus*. (5) This is partly to be explained through sheer lack of knowledge of the relevant works – and not least of those which deal with logical and ontological problems in a technical manner where illuminating parallels might be expected to be found. But this lack of knowledge (and also of translations) has itself a much more deep-seated explanation. Indeed, I would argue that, given the dominance of the reductivist approach within Anglo-Saxon philosophy, and given the tacit identification of logic with formal (mathematical) logic, the *Tractatus* could be seen *only* in one or other reductivist philosophical light, as a result of the fact that the dominant group has almost completely succeeded in *rewriting the history of their discipline* – à la Kuhn/Lakatos – in order to prop up their own perspectives; and this process can only have been aided by the political events in Europe of the last 65 years. Nevertheless, if we are to come to an adequate understanding either of Wittgenstein or of, e.g., Frege, we shall have to shed our unwillingness to come to grips with what we may think of as 'teutonic' metaphysical systems, with the insights which lie at the root of 'traditional' logic, and with the subtleties of the German language itself.

Within the limits of the present paper it will be impossible to give more than a brief sketch of the sort of results which may be expected when we attempt to see how far the Brentano-Husserl-Meinong tradition and the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* may throw light on each other. It must be noted, first of all, that it is not crucial to the value of such an attempt that there be any direct influences from the one to the other. Any parallels or anticipations which we discover might still prove to be philosophically explicable: either by reference to Herbart, who served as a common *Urgroßvater* not only of Wittgenstein and, say, the *Grazer Schule*, but also, as we have seen, of Mach and Riemann, and even of Husserl and Frege (cf. the latter's *Grundlagen*, p. iii); or by reference to the common issues which were faced by Brentano, Husserl and Meinong on the one hand, and by Frege, Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein on the other. These were, most centrally, the issues of idealism and psychologism: Husserl's task in the 1st volume of *LU* of combatting the psychologism of Mill, Sigwart, Erdmann, Wundt and even Mach and Avenarius is almost exactly paralleled in the opposition discernible in Wittgenstein's early thought to the linguistic psychologism of the type which was propounded by Mauthner. And as with Husserl, so with Wittgenstein, the first phase in the battle against psychologism took the form of an overweening, overcompensating *ontologism*. (6) This ontologism is discernible, too, in the writings of Meinong and the early Russell, but it achieved some of its most sophisticated expressions in the works of that group of phenomenologists – largely assembled in Munich – who remained most faithful to

Husserl's realist position of the LU, and it is not accidental that, as we shall see, it is in certain logical and ontological writings of the Munich phenomenologists that the most significant parallels with the *Tractatus* are to be found.

Direct influences, then, are not essential to the value of comparisons of the type here defended. But that there are such influences is not, I think, capable of being denied. Indeed there are conceptual and terminological parallels which are so close as to be hardly explicable except on the hypothesis that Wittgenstein had some access to the material involved. And nor can this hypothesis be ruled out *a priori* on the basis of our knowledge of Wittgenstein's character. For internal evidence in the *Tractatus* itself reveals that this period, at least, was a time when Wittgenstein was prepared to make a detailed study of technical philosophical texts (most notably, but not exclusively, the works of Frege und Russell). Further, the extent to which the group of Brentano-Husserl-Meinong influenced philosophers had contacts with those philosophers now acknowledged as forbears of the analytic movement was much greater than the analysts themselves tend to admit. (7) We know also that Wittgenstein himself not only knew of but expressed an interest in the Brentano school during his time in England. This is evidenced by his question to the young Stephan Körner on learning that the latter had just arrived from Prague: "Ah! Es gibt Brentanoschüler dort. Haben Sie an ihren Vorlesungen teilgenommen?"

But it is, ironically, through his contacts in Cambridge that the most substantial lines of connection to "Austrian" philosophy are to be sought. Moore, for example, had characterised Brentano's work on ethics as amongst the most significant contributions to the subject. The broad outlines of Brentanian descriptive psychology would have been familiar to at least some in Cambridge through the works of Stout. And finally Russell, of course, had not only spent some of his most crucial years in controversy with Meinong, he had also made a study of Husserl's LU during his time in Brixton Prison.

What, now, is the relevance of all this to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*? First of all it must be pointed out that much of the terminology of the latter work has to be regarded as the result of back-translation from Russell's own Meinongian English. This applies, e.g., to terms such as "Gegenstand", "bestehen" and "Tatsache". But such an explanation hardly seems adequate for terms such as "So-Sein" (TLP 6.41) and "Farbenraum" (TLP 2.0131; cf. Meinong's *Ueber die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Philosophie* (1907), p. 11). And nor is it adequate to explain – on the conceptual level – the shamefacedly Meinongian character of the static ontology which Wittgenstein defends in the *Tractatus*. Ryle, for one, seems to have taken it for granted, in his annotations to the *Tractatus*, that Wittgenstein had read Meinong in the original (8), and it is interesting to note that it had been by way of Bolzano, Brentano and Meinong, in his lectures on the Austrian logical realists, that Ryle had introduced the *Tractatus* to his students in Oxford.

What I want to claim, however, is that even when we have fully taken account of the strictly Meinongian aspects of Wittgenstein's work, we shall still not have gained an adequate understanding of the relations which this work bears to the Austro-German tradition demarcated above. The justice of this claim turns on a consideration of Wittgenstein's term "Sachverhalt" and of the central importance of the underlying concept to the whole project of Tractarian ontology. One may wish to assume that it was for quite incidental reasons that Wittgenstein chose this term as his translation of Russell's "objective" (Meinong's "Objektiv"). The term was, after all, a perfectly admissible German word-construction, though one which, as my investigations suggest, was then less frequently encountered than is the case today. But what is crucial is that "Sachverhalt" was *not* – as, e.g., Shwayder would have it – a word which had "been fairly common currency in the speculations of German philosophers". (9) In fact the word had been very recently introduced as a technical term in philosophy – by Brentano's pupil Stumpf – and its first appearance in philosophical print had been in 1900 in Husserl's LU, published only 14 years before Wittgenstein is first known to have employed the term.

What is philosophically crucial in all this, however, is that the handful of works in which the term was used in a deliberate manner during these years – all of them written by philosophers connected to the Munich school of realist phenomenologists – share a common core conception of *Sachverhalte* which represents a conscious philosophical advance upon Meinong's notion of *Objektiv*, almost exactly paralleling that which was effected by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. This difference between the developed notion of *Sachverhalt* and Meinong's *Objektive*, and the connections of both to the *Tractatus*, have been wholly ignored by philosophers outside the immediate circle of Munich phenomenology (as is evidenced by, e.g., the philosophical lexica). Indeed only Habel's book on *Die Sachverhaltsproblematik in der Phänomenologie und bei Thomas von Aquin* (Regensburg 1960) contains anything like an adequate survey of the subtle differences between the various statal ontologies developed by Meinong and Husserl, and by Reinach, Pfänder and Conrad-Martius in the Munich school, but Habel's book is somewhat marred by the absence of any reference to Wittgenstein.

Perhaps the most significant of the early phenomenological statal ontologies was that which was presented by Reinach in his 1911 monograph "Zur Theorie des negativen Urteils". (10) (I have presented a sketch of Reinach's ontology and of the criticisms levied by Ingarden in his *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt* in my "Essay in Formal Ontology", *Grazer Philosophische Studien* IV (1978). I hope to publish a full account of the parallels between this work and the *Tractatus*, together with accompanying biographical and bibliographical material and an extensive survey of the whole *Sachverhalt* tradition, side by side with a forthcoming English translation of Reinach's monograph.) Let it suffice here to point out that Reinach alone among the Brentano-Husserl inspired ontologists awarded just that same kind of central position to *Sachverhalte* in his ontology which we find in the *Tractatus*; indeed, in the material which survives of Reinach's *Nachlaß* – much of it destroyed on Reinach's own instructions – we find discussions of ontology, ethics, psychology, logic (especially the logic of negation), and even a criticism of Frege's philosophy of mathematics, all of them couched within the framework of a highly sophisticated ontology of *Sachverhalte*.

That Reinach's philosophical achievements have been so largely ignored is due, first of all, to his tragically early death in 1916 on the Eastern Front. But it is due also to the fact that the Munich school as a whole is so little known, even among self-confessed phenomenologists (not always noted for their concern for the logical and ontological rigour which characterises the work of, say, Reinach, Pfänder and Ingarden). Thus perhaps the most immediate consequence of the present arguments is that one should seek to restore the bridges which once existed between continental thinkers of this quality and Anglo-Saxon philosophy.

My debt to Brian McGuinness, Edgar Morscher, and Christof Nyíri in the present work will, I hope, be obvious. I should like also to thank Profs. Avé-Lallemant, Körner, Spiegelberg and Young, and Dr. Dachs of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (where the *Nachlässe* of the Munich phenomenologists are to be found).

ENDNOTES

- 1) Cf. R. Haller's "Ludwig Wittgenstein und die österreichische Philosophie". *Wissenschaft und Weltbild* 21 (1968), pp. 77-87. Also E. Morscher's excellent survey, "Von Bolzano zu Meinong: Zur Geschichte des logischen Realismus". In R. Haller (ed.), *Jenseits von Sein und Nichtsein*. Graz 1972, pp. 69-102.
- 2) Zimmermann and Lotze may also deserve to be mentioned here.
- 3) Even the Austrian political opposition would frequently appeal to selected Herbartisms in religio-political argument, since the works of Bolzano, their own philosophical mentor, had fallen under the hands of the censor.
- 4) Toulmin and Janik's book contains, on p. 92, an inexplicable statement to the effect that Austria at that time possessed "only one real university".
- 5) Even Toulmin and Janik ignore the wider Austrian philosophical background, failing to recognise, for example, the extent to which Leibnizian rather than Kantian ideas formed the background of Austrian philosophical speculation. Thus the force of the charge which they have levied against the orthodox picture of the author of the *Tractatus* – as someone who had existed in what was, in effect, an intellectual vacuum filled only by Russell and Frege – is significantly weakened, since they themselves present an equally inadequate picture of Mach, Boltzmann, *et frères*.
- 6) See J.C. Nyíri, "Beim Sternenlicht der Nichtexistierenden: Zur ideologiekritischen Interpretation des platonisierenden Antipsychologismus". *Inquiry* 17 (1974), pp. 399-443. Note that both the later Husserl and the later Wittgenstein saw the need for a more critical alternative to the psychologistic position.
- 7) We may give some idea of the intricacies involved in such contacts by consideration of the special case of the Brentanian philosopher-psychologist Carl Stumpf. Stumpf was, like Frege, a former pupil of Lotze, and it is to Stumpf that Husserl's LU is dedicated. The dissertation of the novelist Robert Musil on Mach's sensationalism was supervised by Stumpf – though given the critical nature of the work it is difficult to see how one could support Toulmin and Janik's designation of Musil as a 'Machian' thinker (*op.cit.*, p. 118). Further, Stumpf was, with Meinong, instrumental in the Central European development of experimental psychology – especially the experimental psychology of music – and it is inconceivable that his classic works in this field should have been unknown e.g. in the Cambridge laboratories of C.S. Myers where Wittgenstein was to carry out his own experiments in this area.
- 8) The second of Ryle's two copies of the *Tractatus* (both now deposited in the library of Lineacre College, Oxford) contains the following list on the endleaf: Frege, Russell, Moore, Meinong, Hertz, Mauthner, ?Husserl, ?Schopenhauer, ?Kant. (And here the question marks are of course significant.) Note also that both copies are peppered with references not only to Frege, Russell and Meinong, but also to Husserl's LU.
- 9) In his *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Historical and Critical Commentary* (Dissertation). Bodleian Library, Oxford 1954, 982 pp. (supervised by Ryle). Cf. p. 537.
- 10) This was published three years before the term "*Sachverhalt*" first appears in the Wittgensteinian corpus, in a *Festschrift* for Theodor Lipps entitled *Münchener Philosophische Abhandlungen*; one is tempted to make the not wholly unserious suggestion that Wittgenstein conceived his own work as a (*Logisch-*)*Philosophische Abhandlung*. It seems that the conclusion that Wittgenstein knew of Reinach's work can be avoided – given the assumption that "*Sachverhalt*" as it occurs in the *Tractatus* is a Stumpfian term – only if we assume a knowledge on Wittgenstein's part either of Husserl's LU or of Meinong's *Ueber Annahmen*, the second edition of which (1910) contains a discussion of Stumpfian and Husserlian *Sachverhalte* as these relate to Meinong's own *Objektive*.

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