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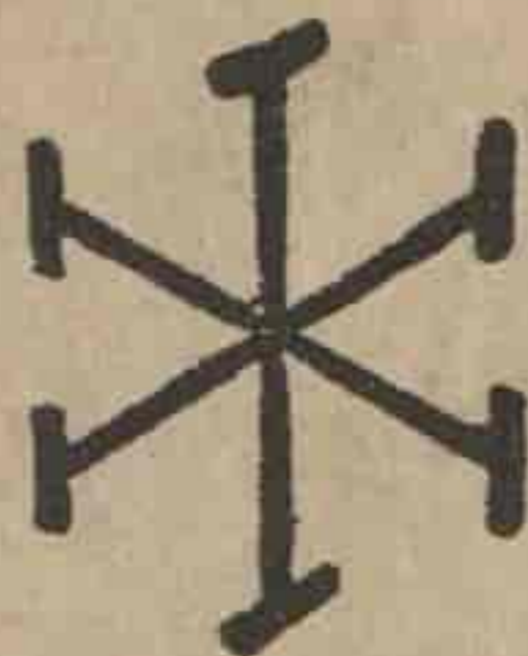
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OTTO WEININGER

ON THE

CHARACTER OF MAN

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OTTO WEININGER ON THE CHARACTER OF MAN

Otto Weininger wrote only one book that claimed much attention. He lived between 1880 and 1903, and his book *Sex and Character* was translated into English and published in this country in 1906. His parents were Jewish. The families of both mother and father originated in Hungary and Czechoslovakia: his father worked as a foreign correspondent in a banking house but in later life became a craftsman and a goldsmith of some distinction. There were seven children in the family, Otto being the second, but he was the eldest son. Although the family roots were Jewish, the father did not side with other Jews in a conventional way, and Otto, on the day that he received his doctorate from the University, became a Protestant Christian.

Otto was a brilliant linguist, but he would not follow his father's instructions and study at the Consular Academy for languages, but went to the University in Vienna where he at first studied medicine and later philosophy. He must have been quick to feel the importance of the growing activity in psychological studies, as we hear of him as a very young man attending an international conference of psychologists in Paris and making his own contribution to it.

It is unfortunate that a modern encyclopaedia entry about him states that his work was used as a text book of anti-semitism. In fact the text makes quite clear that Otto Weininger would have nothing to do with active hostility to anyone because they were Jewish. It is true that he had been brought up in a family atmo-

sphere which was not sympathetic to Jews as such and which seemed to lead away from close association with other Jewish people. Otto's dramatic death by his own hand at the age of 23 made people curious about him. His book gained a reputation at that time, though it was much misunderstood because of what he had to say about the character of woman. Within three years of his death it went into eight German editions and had been translated into English. By 1920 it had reached nineteen German editions.

Many casual or superficial readers of Otto Weininger's book *Sex and Character* will think of it as a book about women, accusing them of many serious defects. This was not the intention of the author, nor, as the title indicates, is it the view taken in this lecture. In his preface Weininger calls the book 'an attempt to refer to a single principle the whole contrast between man and woman', and it was on this principle that he laid emphasis, saying that it contained the germ of a world scheme closely allied with the conceptions of Plato, Kant and Christianity. It is the nature of this principle that any serious reader of the book must first investigate, and with which this lecture is primarily concerned. Weininger himself wrote, 'I attach more importance to appreciation of what I have tried to say about the deepest and more general problems than to the interest which will certainly be aroused by my special investigation of the problem of woman'. And he warns that the book 'deals not with women but with woman'.

The word 'man' in the English language is ambiguous. And unfortunately in the present phase of the relationship between the sexes a great deal of stupidity is involved in the attempt to avoid using it. 'Man' may refer to humanity in general or to the male in particular. Weininger maintains that the defining character of mankind as opposed to the rest of nature is a specifically male character, and therefore the word 'man' in the title of this lecture can equally well be taken in either sense. All that Weininger says about woman is derived from a consideration of her in relation to this male character.

In considering how man is distinguished from the rest of nature it is easy to go through a list of many qualities in which man differs from animals, but we have to try to focus our attention on

a central defining principle from which all these differences can be derived. We cannot do better than start from the ancient wisdom which tells us that whereas the consciousness of plants is equivalent to that of deep sleep and that of animals to dreaming consciousness, only man has true waking consciousness. Or to put this in another way, animals are conscious, but only man is self-conscious.

Self-consciousness means to be conscious of oneself as a self; to be conscious of one's own identity. Most of us take this for granted without giving it much thought. We forget that self-consciousness has had to be achieved with great effort. Very young children are hardly aware of their identity. They develop quite a long way in speech before they refer to themselves as 'I'. At first they refer to themselves only by their proper name, that is the name by which everyone else calls them. To others, and to itself, the child is, as it were, an 'object'. The true awareness of identity is not born until the child realises itself as a 'subject', calling itself by the name which no one else can use in reference to it, but which every other 'subject' uses in reference to himself or herself.

It is when we try to enquire what identity really is that we realise how great a mystery it is. For it exists only in idea, not in actuality. The notion identity is most precisely expressed in the logical proposition that A is A. To most people this proposition says nothing. It is merely a glimpse of the obvious. It does not tell us anything about what we call the real world. We have learnt nothing new as a result of it. We are not told what A stands for, and whatever it stands for, the proposition 'A is A' does not assert that it actually exists. It tells you nothing about the world of our experience. But this does not mean that it says nothing. It affirms the reality of the concept identity. And, as Weininger points, out, since it does not affirm the identity of any object, for it does not even assert the existence of any object, it can affirm only the identity of the subject. The only possible meaning of the proposition 'A is A' is the affirmation that 'I am'.

This looks rather like trickery or sleight of hand. How can we turn 'A is A' into 'I am'? Identity means that something is what it is and that it stays the same—absolutely the same—through all the changes of a continuously changing world. In our experience

we know that everything is in continuous motion; everything is changing the whole time. In the material world even the most apparently durable substance is in fact always subject to growth or decay or change of some sort. There exists no absolute identity in the material world. We think of a table, a river or a mountain as a 'thing', and we think of plants and animals as living 'things' or 'creatures'. But in all these cases it is a relative identity which we confer on them by thinking of them as 'things' or 'creatures' and using words to identify them. The table is just bits of wood joined together, which can as easily be pulled or fall apart. The water in the river is continuously changing as it flows down, so that, as Heraclitus said, 'you cannot step into the same stream twice'. The mountain is only a very big heap of rocks and earth. It is we who call it a mountain. The plant dies and is dissolved again into nature. The animal also is subject to death and decay. It is indeed a conscious being, but it has no identity for itself, for it is not conscious of itself as a self.

In our inner consciousness we find the same continuous change. Our moods change, our ideas change. The stream of our consciousness is in perpetual motion. The clearest evidence of this can be found if one tries to concentrate on a single idea even for a few seconds. And yet I am conscious of being the same 'I' through all these changes of my thoughts and feelings. If I were not continuously the same 'I', I could not assert that 'A is A', for unless I remained the same person during the time it takes me to say 'A is A', I would not be able to compare the second A with the first A and declare their identity. In this way the proposition 'A is A', which is not in fact true of anything I can experience, is affirming only my own identity.

But what is this 'I', this identity which does not change? It is beyond my experience. I experience my physical body and the sensations I get through it. I experience feelings and desires. I am aware of my thoughts. Both my physical body and my inner consciousness are in continual change. In order to know that they change 'I' must be unchanging. If it were not so, I could not know that the sensations, feelings or thoughts which I have now are different from those I had a few minutes ago, nor could I know that they belonged to the same 'I'. So 'I' cannot possibly be an object of experience to me, since 'I' is the subject of all my

experience. Nor can 'I' be an object of experience to anyone else, since I am the subject only of my own experience. So what is 'I', if 'I' is beyond my experience? It is an idea. It is real only as idea. And it is real only insofar as I think it. The reality of 'I' is my affirmation of 'I'.

From this primal identity of the subject is derived every other identity. We have observed that we do not experience any actual identity existing anywhere, either in the material world or in our consciousness. But to communicate with one another we have to use language. And for any meaningful communication to be possible we have to suppose that we all mean the same thing by the same word and that the same word always has the same meaning. This is of course not true in fact, but it is a fiction which is necessary to all our thinking and to all communication between us which uses language. Every word we use represents a concept, and all our thinking depends on concepts. The essence of a concept is that it is an idea which always stays the same. The word or concept 'green' always means the same, however many shades of green may actually exist, or however many scientific, philosophic or aesthetic explanations may be given to account for greenness. The concept 'horse' always applies to every existing horse throughout all the changes of its life cycle, and also to all the horses that have ever lived or will ever live—and even to those mythical ones that have never lived and never will.

Words therefore, unless they are used as proper names, do not directly represent things in the actual world. For not only do these change, while the word which denotes them remains the same, but a great variety of things can be denoted by the same word. The word represents a concept which is invariable. It is true, as Weininger points out, that we humans are not able to form pure concepts. We could do this only with perfect intuition of reality and pure logical thought. Pure concepts would be a divine prerogative! We humans can only make generalisations, which psychologically represent concepts and which we treat as concepts. But the standard or ideal of the concept remains, as expressed in the proposition 'A is A'; and this is what is important. Without this standard or ideal we would live in the world of Alice's Humpty Dumpty, who made words mean what he wanted them to mean. Without concepts no reasoning would

be possible, or even any consecutive thinking. It would, to go back to Alice, be like playing a game of chess in which the pieces did not wait to be moved but insisted not only on moving of their own accord, but even on continually changing their shape. Because concepts are not subject to time and change as things in the actual world are, it is only through them that we can think consecutively or experience the world as an ordered world. Otherwise it would be a mass of indeterminate floating images. It would not be the world which we experience. The concept is thus, as Weininger says, 'the creator of reality'.

The world of experience and the language we use to speak about it thus depend on the notion of the concept. And the concept depends on the identity of the ego, and so on my self-consciousness. In this way the whole of our real world, which means the world as we experience it, depends on an idea. For the notion identity, which is at the root of all existence, is itself real only as idea. It is also beyond time. In order that I can assert that 'A is A', I must have the concept A clearly in mind and preserve the memory of it during the time in which I affirm its identity with the second A. In order that I may affirm my own identity as an ego which does not change with time—that is, not my empirical ego which I experience as 'me', but my intelligible ego which is 'I'—I must have a continuous memory of my experiences. Memory is the necessary condition for the affirmation of my identity, and thus it is necessary for my self-consciousness. So memory is a distinguishing mark of mankind. The stronger my identity the clearer and more continuous is my memory.

In order to appreciate fully the standpoint from which Weininger is speaking it is necessary to describe what he affirms as the ideal or goal of mankind, which is an intensification to perfection of self-consciousness. This he calls genius. Unfortunately the word is misused nowadays by calling a very talented person a genius. Weininger distinguishes genius from talent as being not merely different in degree, but altogether of a different order. Talent is proficiency in a particular sphere of human endeavour. It can be inherited, as for instance the musical talent of the Bach or the Strauss families. Genius is essentially individual. It is a quality of character and is not dependent on any particular ability. A genius need not have any special talent.

Genius is the intensification of the self-consciousness which is the distinguishing character of mankind. The distinguishing mark of a genius is his universality. The genius is the man who is so intensely aware of his own inner experience that he is conscious of containing within himself a far greater variety of opposite qualities than the average person. He therefore understands the nature—the virtues, the vices and the inner conflicts—of a far wider diversity of different types of person and different characters, because he is aware of containing all these within himself.

Every human being contains potentially within himself the whole of humanity. But most of us are conscious only of certain aspects which are derived from our race, nationality, sex, age, social class, family and other influences from our heredity or environment. To the extent that we emancipate ourselves from our unconscious dependence on these particular characteristics our true individuality is enhanced. And to the extent that we become aware in ourselves of other characteristics which we share with those of other races, nationalities, ages, social classes or the other sex, our individuality is further enhanced. We become more individual by becoming more universal. 'The highest possibility of man' is affirmed by Weininger as being 'the possibility of Christ', who was actively conscious of containing within himself the whole of mankind, and who was therefore the perfection of genius.

One of the features by which we judge works of genius is their quality of timelessness. Those works which are more universal in their significance, which belong to humanity altogether rather than to any particular race, nation or age, are those which are more enduring. Those which are subject to fashion, which bear the mark of belonging to a particular time in history or to a particular nation, are less significant as works of genius. For this reason Weininger considered that philosophers and artists can be men of genius, but not scientists or men of action. The works of the great philosophers and artists of the world are of universal significance and do not belong to a particular age. Scientists, unless like Aristotle or Leibniz they were also philosophers, not only deal with a special branch of knowledge which is not of universal human significance, but their work is continually superseded by the work of later scientists. Men of action, like great



generals and politicians, live essentially in the present. They are determined in their action by the circumstances which surround them at the time and by their own personal ambition, neither of which are of universal human significance.

We have already seen that memory is a distinguishing mark of mankind, since it is only through memory that I am aware of my identity through all my changing experiences. And also it is only through memory that we can hold a concept, since the concept is beyond time. The timeless quality of genius is in no way accidental. A person remembers best that in which he takes a real interest, because he relates it to other experiences and holds it more clearly in his consciousness. The genius, who has the widest span of interest, is able to relate a greater variety of things to his own experience. He sees nature and all existence as a whole, and so he is able to experience them more intensely and articulate them more clearly and in greater detail. Since his concepts are more clearly defined than those of ordinary people and his identity is both stronger and more all-embracing, his memory is correspondingly more enduring. Discrimination, the making of comparisons, detecting resemblances and differences, depends on memory, for it is most acute in those whose present is permeated by remembrance of the past. And imagination, which is another quality remarkably strong in genius, also depends on the degree of consciousness with which the past and present are united into one whole.

To Weininger there is one respect in which the qualities of talent and genius are opposite to those usually attributed to them. It is usually assumed that whereas everyone has some sort of talent, if it can be discovered, genius is a gift from the gods which is given only to rare individuals. Weininger, on the other hand, considered talent as a gift from the gods or from one's parents, but maintains that some degree of genius can be acquired by anyone who truly desires it. He believed that there is probably some degree of genius in most men and that the separation between the ordinary man and genius is one of degree rather than kind. 'Genius' he wrote, 'is, in its essence nothing but the full completion of the idea of man, and therefore every man ought to have some quality of it.' Since genius resides in the fullest consciousness, the strongest memory and the widest span

of interest—in being able to relate oneself in some way to a wide a range of characters, experience and things in the world, and as far as possible to identify oneself with the whole—it is in some degree within the reach of everyone.

For Weininger human ethics are directly derived from his view of the logical character of man. Since the essence of man is self-consciousness, and since self-consciousness is the personal affirmation of the law of identity, duty is essentially duty to oneself. Weininger called this 'the duty of the empirical ego to the intelligible ego', meaning by this the duty of the self of everyday experience to the self-conscious identity which is the subject of experience. He affirmed, following Immanuel Kant, that the supreme ethical commandment is to be responsible not to any power or being outside the self-conscious subject, whether it be God or society, but only to oneself. This does not mean that one should always act according to one's inclinations. The self is a logical identity, and therefore duty to oneself is duty to act by principles which are freely chosen and self-imposed. In effect this means that having made a promise to oneself it is a moral obligation to keep it. The same principle makes inner truth, sincerity and the avoidance of self-deception equally a moral duty, and the highest moral duty known to man.

This identity, however, to which duty is owed is not the empty isolated self about which so many young people nowadays agonise. It is the same identity that lives in every other self-conscious being, from which follows Immanuel Kant's maxim—to treat every person as an end and never as a means only. Therefore the observance of promises and the maintenance of inner truth, which one owes to oneself, is owed equally to other self-conscious beings. But it is not owed to them as if imposed by some law outside oneself. It is owed because one's own self-respect demands an equal respect for other self-conscious beings. The duty to oneself involves the enhancement of identity and the widening of consciousness to include within oneself as great a diversity as possible of humanity and of human experience and qualities. Responsibility to oneself, if fully understood, is universal human responsibility.

Weininger's account of the essential character of man, of genius as the fullest development of man's character, and of the

ethical principles which follow from this are the central subject of this lecture, and they were to Weininger himself the most significant part of his book. But since he called his book *Sex and Character*, and since he maintained that the specifically human character that has been outlined is also specifically male, it is necessary to enquire whether there is any rational justification for such a view. But it is also particularly necessary to embark on this enquiry with an open mind. Anyone, man or woman, who immediately rejects Weininger's proposition without further thought as being absurd or, to use modern jargon, as mere male chauvinism is protesting against a case that Weininger himself did not make. It is true that he said things about women which would not nowadays be generally acceptable, but equally he anticipated many of the demands which are now being put forward by feminists. We will return to these later, although none of them have any relevance to Weininger's main argument.

He is not talking about men and women, but about man and woman. He is trying to define the concept or the Platonic idea of maleness and of femaleness. And to make this quite clear he often refers not even to man and woman, but to M and W, as if they were algebraic symbols. It is unfortunate that the original English translation did not follow Weininger in this, for it might have avoided some misunderstanding. M and W, or the absolute male and the absolute female, do not exist anywhere. Everyone, Weininger insists, whether physically man or woman, has a combination of male and female characteristics in different mixtures and in different proportions in each person. Weininger does indeed refer to certain characteristics which he notes as belonging more particularly to men or women, but these are for illustration; they do not form his basic thesis, which concerns only the concepts male and female. He does, however, assert that men have in general more M in them and women more W.

The first thing to observe about those concepts is that they are opposite and complementary. That is to say that the qualities which make up the essential character of one are wholly lacking in the other. Taken all together they would make up a complete human person, but every actual individual is an incomplete mixture. That male and female are physically complementary does not require further argument, but there are some who main-

tain that though they are physically different, the characters of man and women are basically the same; that there are no specifically male or specifically female qualities. Those who put forward this argument must have rejected the idea that there is any real correspondence between the psychic and the physical nature of human beings. For if there is such a correspondence, it is reasonable to suppose that the difference between the male and female function in the process of human reproduction is reflected in quite different psychic qualities and characteristics. It would be possible to go into this at greater length than time allows, but as a significant contrast, whereas the male ejects the sperm in a single brief action and can then forget about it, the female has to nourish and protect the embryo for nine months; and even after birth it is natural for her to continue to nourish and protect the child for some time. It is very difficult to suppose that such a radical difference in physical function is not matched by an equally radical difference in character.

It is at this stage that I have to ask you to fasten your seat belts, by which I mean do not let prejudice take over and cause you to reject without rational consideration assertions which may appear to some at first sight outrageous. If M and W are opposite and complementary, they must have opposite and complementary characters, and it must be possible to define these characters by reference to other pairs of opposites. The two pairs which will be most appropriate to our enquiry are those of idea and actuality, and of individual and community. Weininger attributes identity, logic, principle to M. These, as we have seen, are all idea. They have no material existence. Identity is the essence of individuality, which in its fullest sense is also only idea. Man in the state of tribal consciousness was not fully conscious of his distinct identity, as we have noted also in the case of the child. He was physically a separate entity, but we do not think of him as yet fully individual. Weininger maintained that 'woman has a meaning and function in the universe as the opposite of man', and he went on to contrast man and woman as 'unlimited being and unlimited negation'. 'And so' he wrote, 'male and female make up humanity. The meaning of woman is to be meaningless.'

This negative judgement about woman should not prevent us from giving rational consideration to his characterology of



man. If one takes one's stand from the point of view of idea or consciousness, regarding that as absolute reality, then the opposite is 'unlimited negation'. Plato, as Weininger noted, took this view when he called matter 'not-being'. For him matter was the negation of being because he regarded idea or concept as the only reality. Such a view may to a superficial judgement seem absurd. To most people matter, which has actual tangible existence, is more real than concepts, which have their being only in consciousness. But it may be easier to understand if we consider the contrast of form and matter. Without form matter is mere chaos; it is meaningless. But what is form? It is mere idea. And without matter, without what is given in sense perception, that is exactly what form is—mere idea. It is obvious that form and matter, idea and actuality, are equally necessary aspects of reality; but if we look upon the one as wholly positive, then the other is wholly negative. From the point of view of actuality or sense experience, idea is unreal. It has no actual and perceptible existence. But from the point of view of idea, actuality, mere formless sense experience, would be equally unreal. It is meaningless and is thus the negation of being. Weininger equates man with form and woman with matter.

He does not support this with any close argument, but it is possible to outline his general case. It will be seen to correspond to the difference in physical function in human reproduction, though Weininger himself does not make this point. On the whole the male character is disruptive, divisive, explosive; the essential female character is cohesive, continuous, protective. It is in the male rather than the female character to do things for their own sakes whatever the consequences, or to rebel against nature, as did Prometheus who stole the fire from heaven. Individual greed, ambition, aggressiveness are male rather than female characteristics. The conviction that life must go on, and the will to protect the family, to preserve society, is more a female attitude. Individuality and community are equally important aspects of human life, but on the whole man's will goes more towards individuality and woman's more towards community. Individuality depends on the idea of identity. The logic which has as its first law the Law of Identity has as its second the Law of Contradiction. Individuality arises from the opposing of self to

not-self. It arises from and increases confrontation. Male valuation has dominated mankind for the last two or three millenia not just because men were physically more forceful, but because male disruptiveness was necessary for the development of individual consciousness from the close community of a tribal society.

This view, which regards the male principle as active and the female as passive, man as mental and woman as emotional, is borne out by tradition in myth and in literature. That the sun as the active principle and the moon as the passive principle are regarded as male and female respectively is the most permanent evidence of this tradition and is not without reason. In the book of Genesis Eve was formed from one of Adam's ribs, as we can see graphically portrayed in Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Mars represents war and strife, Venus love. The mythologies of Rama and Sita in the Ramayana, of Odysseus and Penelope in the Odyssey, and the fairy tale of the Sleeping Beauty are all essentially the same story, the whole of which is enacted in the individual soul. In it woman represents the higher emotions of hope, courage and love. The sleeping princess has been bewitched or captured by the lower emotions of malice, vanity and sensual desire. She cannot awake until the prince, who represents the self, after many trials and dangers re-awakens in her the higher emotions, to be in the end united with her in final self-attainment.

It is man who has produced human culture, which is the work of individual genius. Culture is an artificial creation and is not natural. Woman supports and preserves nature. The original creative philosophic and artistic geniuses of European culture have all been men. So have the great mathematicians and scientists. It is not valid to argue that this has been only on account of male dominance in our civilisation. We have the writings of women saints and women novelists. Women have not been denied access to the arts of music, painting or writing, and they have been educated in philosophy, but they have not produced great original creative work in these fields. The free spirit of man has never yet bowed to physical force or adverse circumstances. Genius has often defied conditions of birth, social class or poverty, and it could have defied male domination if the impulse to do so

had been there. It is therefore fair to assume that original creative genius has arisen from qualities in the male character which are not present in the female character.

The whole of Weininger's critique of woman stems from her being the negative counterpart of man. To the old-fashioned moralist or to the modern feminist this critique may sound like a damning and wholly unwarranted slur on the female character. There are many vague sentimentalists who have come to take discrimination as meaning only unfair prejudice against some group or category of persons, and who disregard its original meaning as a value judgment about the qualities that are properly applicable to them. Such persons will have little understanding of Weininger's sincere attempt to define the real distinction between the idea male and the idea female. But I must ask you, and particularly my fellow women, not to fall into the very trap which Weininger might appear to have set by taking what he says purely personally and subjectively. For this could tend to demonstrate the inability of woman to value truth more highly than her personal vanity.

Weininger says that so far from woman being less sexual than man, as is so often affirmed and as she herself often tries to pretend, she is sexuality itself. In man sexual desire is periodical, physically localised and eruptive, and so when it is aroused it appears with greater urgency. In woman it is continuous and diffused over her whole being, and so may even appear to be absent. What justification is there for saying that the female principle is sexuality, and how does it follow from taking woman as opposite and complementary to man? The fundamental purpose of sexuality is the procreation of children, but it has become more connected in many people's minds with sensual pleasure, and this may give Weininger's assertion about woman's sexuality a certain derogatory moral meaning which is not essential to it.

If identity, individuality, logic, intellect are the distinguishing characteristics of maleness, then the opposite and complementary characteristics will be those of femaleness, namely fusion, community, emotion and instinct. In our modern civilisation the former set are valued more highly and are therefore claimed more eagerly. But if humanity were condemned only to posses-

sion of those male faculties, the world would be totally disrupted and humanity destroyed. The opposite of individual identity is the continuity of mankind, both continuity in time in the preservation of the race and continuity in the sense of the feeling of community with others. Sexuality is the physical and psychic expression of this continuity and is exactly opposed to the solitude of individual identity, or to the unproductive dryness of logic and intellect. That is why Weininger ascribes to woman a love of match-making and pairing. It is not just a desire for her sensual pleasure, for, he says, although her wish for her own sexual union may be the strongest impulse in her, that is only a special case of the desire that sexual union should take place and that children should be born. 'The idea of pairing' wrote Weininger, 'is the only conception which has positive worth for woman. Woman is the bearer of the thought of the continuity of the species. The high value she attaches to the idea of pairing is not selfish and individual, it is super-individual. It is the transcendental function of woman. . . . Her own personal sexuality is only a special case of this universal, generalised, impersonal instinct. . . . The object of her love is that of her sympathy—the community, the blending of everything . . . She is always in relation to the general idea of the race as a whole of which she is an inseparable part, and she follows the instinct that most of all makes for community.'

From this view of the function of woman as opposite and complementary to man follows all the rest of Weininger's critique. The being of man (M) depends only on his identity; woman (W) has no being. She has only existence. The translator of the 'Authorised translation from the sixth German edition', first published in 1906, seems to have misunderstood Weininger badly by translating the German word 'Sein' as 'existence' instead of 'being' and the words 'ist nicht' as 'does not exist' instead of 'is not'. The difference is significant. Being means inner being—being for oneself, existence means outer being—being for another. Identity is being because it is being only for itself. It is true inner being. 'All being' wrote Weininger, 'is moral and logical being.' But because woman has no relation to idea, she *is* not. But she exists, because the human race exists; and her reality is bound up with her dependence on others. Notions of logic, of

truth, of principle are all idea. They *are* but they do not exist. The human race lived for a long time without them. They may be necessary for the development of culture, and now even for that of civilisation, but they are not necessary for the bare existence of the race. For that only food, shelter, clothing and human reproduction are necessary.

'Man's religion' says Weininger, 'consists in a supreme belief in himself, woman's in a supreme belief in other people.' In herself she has no knowledge of identity, and so, wrote Weininger, 'the absolute female knows neither the logical nor the moral imperative'. The logical imperative implies the commitment to inner truth. For from the proposition of identity is derived the concept, and the clarity and firmness of the concept is a logical imperative. Inner truth, the truth of one's own inner being, and outer truth, the truth of one's speech, go indissolubly together. 'Untruthfulness, organic untruthfulness' wrote Weininger, 'characterises all women . . . so woman always lies, even if factually she speaks the truth.' It is plain from this last statement that Weininger is not speaking of truth in the superficial manner of the law-courts, where one swears to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He does not deny that woman may do this.

Similarly with the moral imperative. The moral imperative is duty. But, as we have seen, Weininger means by duty only duty to oneself, one's own inner adherence to principle. This possibility he denies to woman. But he makes it quite clear that he is not calling her immoral. He calls her a-moral. She may profess duty to others, or what she may conceive as a higher duty to the human race, but neither of these are moral imperatives unless they are derived from the highest duty of all—that to oneself. In Weininger's view woman values happiness and the continuity of the race more highly than her own individual identity. Indeed she has no inner identity, for if she had, there would be to her no higher value. He attaches no moral value to mere utilitarianism, to the search for happiness or to the desire that all should turn out for the best. He does not even allow it to the continuity of the race, for, he asserts, 'that the human race should persist is of no interest whatever to reason'.

This conflict between principle and advantage is well brought

out in Sophocles' *Oedipous Tyrannos* when Oedipous is persistently questioning to find out whose child he really is. Jocasta already sees to what disaster it is leading and tells Oedipous that no good can come of his quest. She begs him not to continue, to which his answer, though he too senses disaster, is, 'I must. I cannot leave the truth unknown'. It should be plain to everyone by now that just as in the Oedipous myth it was not particular individuals that were being portrayed, but representative archetypes, so too are Weininger's 'man' and 'woman' only representative archetypes. He has many other anecdotal criticisms of women—how they like copying other people, fashions in clothes and hair-styles, feminine duplicity and so on—but they should be taken as being for illustration only. They do not constitute proof of anything, nor do they affect Weininger's main definition of the distinguishing characteristics of M and W, to which they are not essential.

These criticisms of woman should not lead anyone to the false conclusion that Weininger was a misogynist. He made similar criticisms about the Jews, though he was himself a Jew and was by no means anti-semitic. He said of his book *Sex and Character*, 'What I have found here will hurt nobody so much as myself'. It may be that his passionate pursuit of truth led him to envisage a standard of maleness which he felt he could not sustain, and that this was what led to his suicide.

It cannot be emphasised too much that Weininger is talking about the ideas M and W and not about men and women. Even writing as he was at the beginning of the century he stands up for the rights of women in a way which might surprise some modern feminists. He wrote, 'The present system (of education) stamps out much that is original, uproots much that is truly natural, and distorts much into artificial and unnatural forms. From time immemorial there have been only two systems of education; one for those who come into the world designated by one set of characters as males, another for those who are similarly assumed to be females. Almost at once the "boys" and "girls" are dressed differently, learn to play different games, go through different courses of instruction, the girls being put to stitching and so forth.' And towards the end of the book he wrote, 'men will have to overcome their dislike of masculine women, for that is

no more than mean egoism'; and he deprecates what he calls 'the present method of tying women down to the needs of her husband and children and forbidding her certain things because they are masculine'.

It is on the question of what used to be called the emancipation of women that Weininger's position becomes most clear. The possession of a free intelligible ego is a male characteristic and does not belong to woman as such. But because there is no such thing as an absolute woman, women must be treated as free individuals and given equal rights with men. 'No one' he wrote, 'has a right to forbid things to a woman because they are "unwomanly"', and he goes so far as to add, 'neither should any man be so mean as to talk of his unfaithful wife's doings as if they were his affair'. Nevertheless he warns against the danger of woman merely trying to liken herself outwardly to man, 'for such a course' he says, 'would simply plunge her more deeply into womanliness'. It would not give her real freedom, but merely enlarge the range of her caprices. Real emancipation he defined as 'the deep-seated craving to acquire man's character, to attain his mental and moral freedom, to reach his interests and his creative power'. He maintained that it is only the male element in women that desires emancipation, for which he says the real female element has neither the desire nor the capacity. He concluded that woman 'misconstrues her own character and the motives that actuate her when she formulates her demands *in the name of woman*'.

So far we have dealt only with the positive aspect of man and the negative aspect of woman. It is not in his portrayal of these that Weininger should be criticised. Rather it is that having described so penetratingly the essential character of man and having given his critique of woman as the negation of this, he failed to see that opposites must be complementary. Therefore it is wrong to consider one of any pair of opposites to be unconditionally positive and the other unconditionally negative. Each has both its positive and its negative aspect, but the positive aspect of each, if not properly balanced with the positive aspect of its opposite, becomes exaggerated and turns negative.

The positive aspect of woman can be found in the myths of which we have spoken earlier. Woman represents in these the

higher emotions of which man has a vision when he falls in love, seeking that which is lacking in his maleness. In the wider sphere she represents community. To our unimaginative modern minds it may seem far-fetched when in the wedding service marriage is said to signify the mystical union between Christ and his Church. But this means the same as the uniting of the prince and the sleeping princess. Vladimir Solovyov, about whom I spoke in an earlier lecture, envisaged Sophia, the divine Wisdom, as the perfect Community of Mankind, which is what the Church is meant to represent. The wedding ceremony thus symbolises the union of Christ and Sophia, the individual and the community, the mind and the emotions, in perfect attainment. Those who cavil at Christ's being male fail to realise that the Holy Spirit as Sophia is feminine. And perhaps they forget the assertion in the Athanasian Creed concerning the three Persons of the Holy Trinity that 'none is afore or after the other: none is greater or less than another'.

The negative aspect of man is all too plain to see in the world around us. It exists in intellect and individualism run riot, in idea which has taken off so far that it defies all commonsense. As Weininger wrote, 'A woman is never so stupid as a man can be'. It needed men to invent our present financial system, which may be well designed to give power to a few individuals and enable a lot of men to play esoteric games with numbers, but bears no significant relationship at all to the real economy and serves only to hinder the free and equitable distribution of wealth. No one but men would use science to enable them to pile up enough lethal weapons to destroy half the world several times over, instead of using the same resources to feed hungry millions and allow them to live in comfort. Individual greed and ambition are the negative male qualities which need to be neutralised by a sense of community. Weininger denied that sympathy and compassion, which are concerned with community, are ethical qualities, because they are mere feelings, and not acts of individual freewill. But if the balance between intellect and feelings, between freedom of the individual and the well-being of the community, is ignored, then war and poverty are the inevitable results.

The so-called feminist movement in the Western world today bears out Weininger's claim that it is only the maleness in women

which makes them demand to be the same as men. It unfortunately also confirms his assertion that if women merely ape men outwardly they will do no more than project their femininity in a more forcible way. For the more vociferous members of the feminist movement merely aspire to compete with men in their most negative and anti-social qualities of individualistic pride, greed and ambition. They want to demonstrate that they are as good as men in intellectual pursuits, in competing for material gain and in wielding individual power. It does not seem to occur to them that what has gone wrong after so many millenia of male domination is that the unbalanced exaggeration of certain male values has distorted them towards their most negative manifestation.

What is needed today is not that women should all crowd with the men on to the heavy side of the heeling ship, but that they should try to restore the balance by affirming the equal significance of those true feminine values which have been ignored in our present civilisation. If the world is left to men alone, they will destroy it; and if women merely try to imitate men, they will only help to hasten the destruction. There will be no world order, no peace or prosperity, unless women join together to demand that community and co-operation should become the ruling values in society rather than competition and confrontation. The guiding light of women should be Sophia rather than the image of the film star, the model or the successful executive. And they should demand of men that Christ and genius should be their goal rather than lavishing their admiration on the tycoon and the autocrat. And both men and women in that part of them which is truly male would do well to regard the high standard which Weininger has set for man.

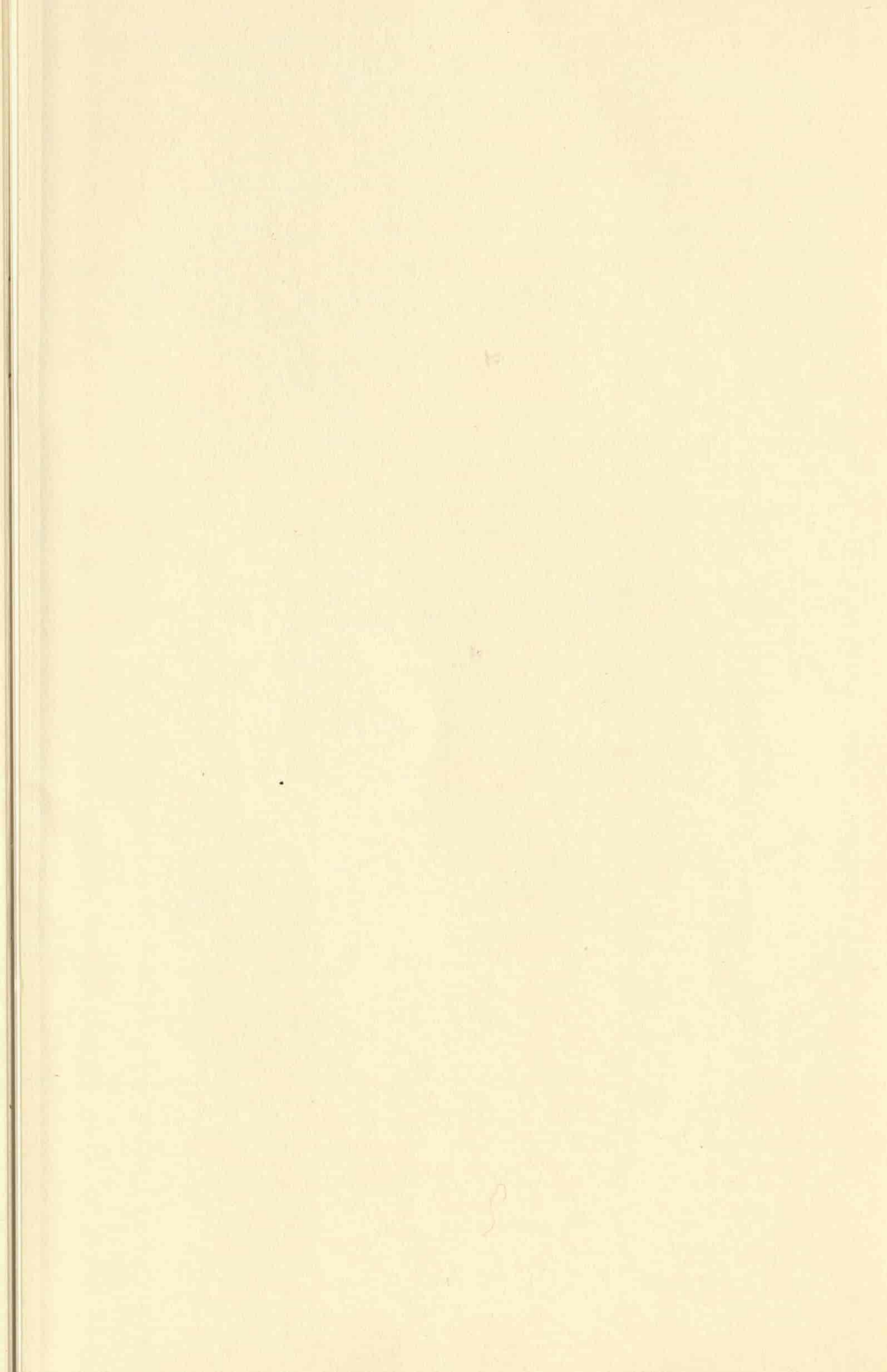
Though Weininger wrote only about the positive aspect of the male principle and the negative aspect of the female principle, it would be wrong to underrate his work on that account. In Mitrinović's notion of Three Revelations, which has been described in several earlier lectures, he called Weininger, Nietzsche and Stirner three commentaries on the third revelation, of which he took Erich Gutkind to be the prophet. All three of them rejected the idea that morality consists in doing or not doing specific actions and that it is dictated to man by God or by any

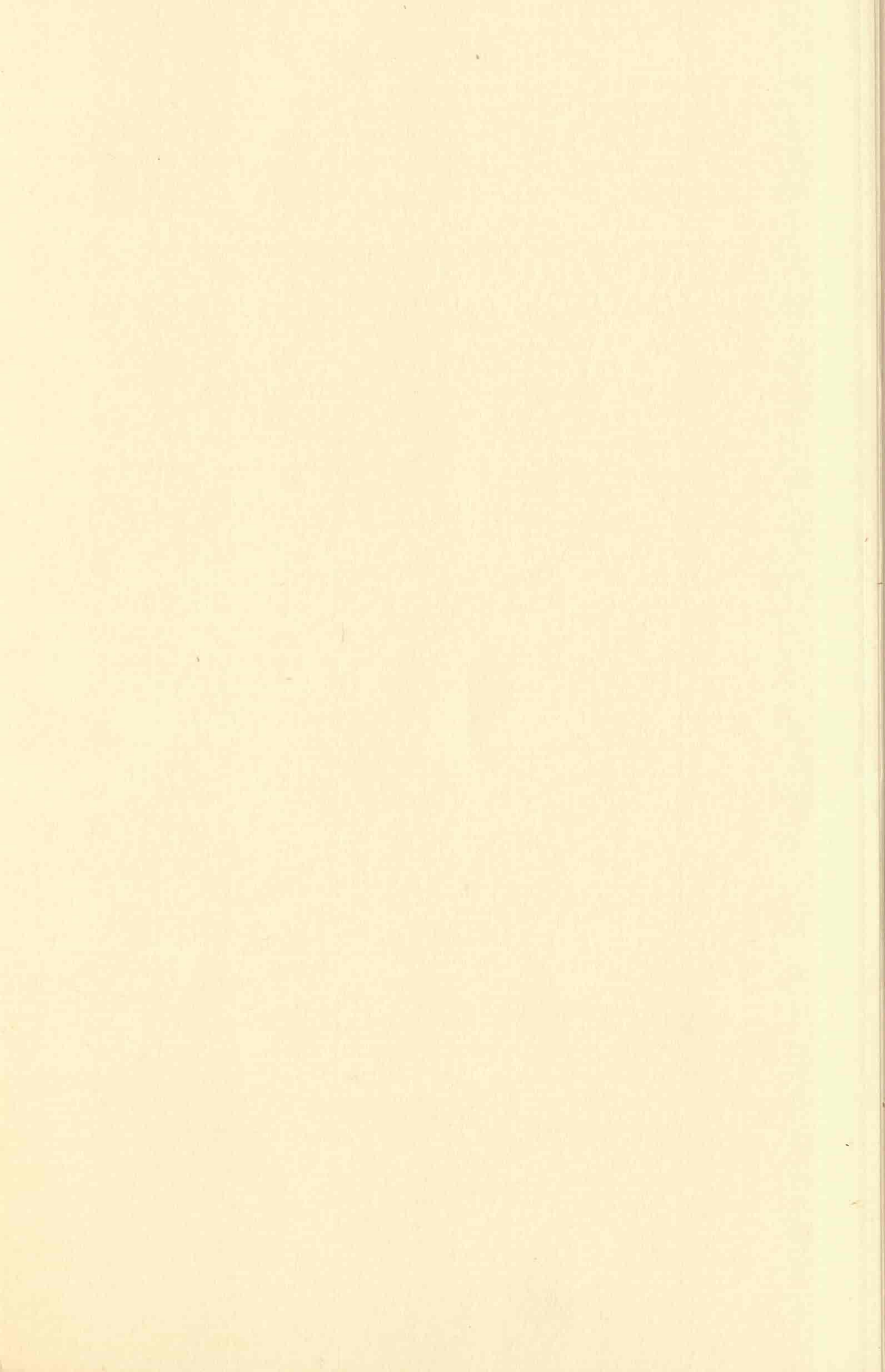
power above or outside the individual human being. They proclaimed a new morality based on the sovereignty of the individual free will. Nietzsche differed from the other two in maintaining that man has to be surpassed, and that whatever tends in the direction of man's achieving a higher state of being is good. Both Weininger and Stirner accepted man as he now is. But while Stirner maintained that any action was good that was freely done and true to one's own real self, Weininger based his ethics on logic and reason.

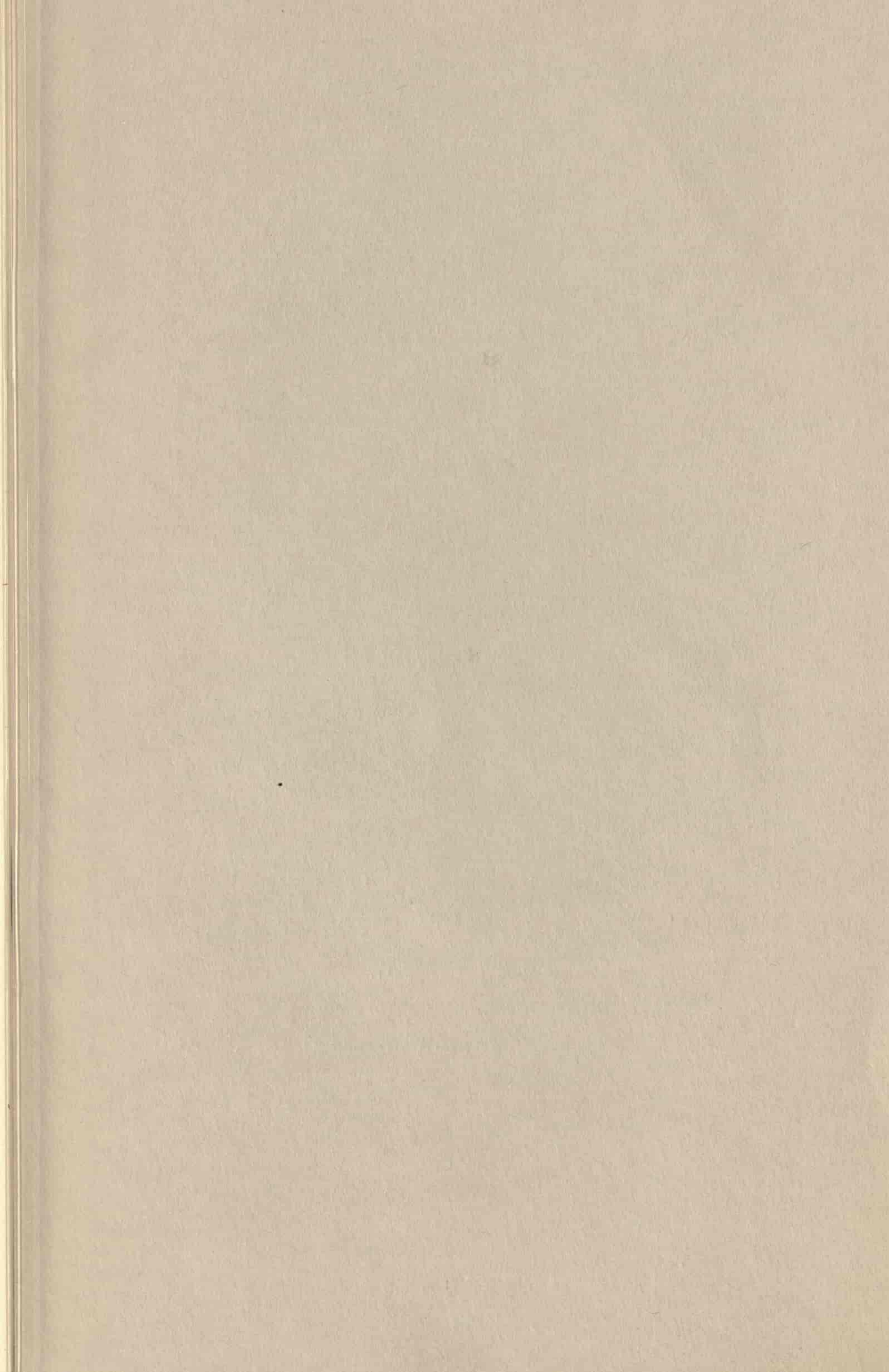
For Weininger the criterion of a moral action was that it should be done in accordance with a principle which has been freely and consciously accepted as one's own, that one should stand by this principle and accept full responsibility for the consequences of one's action. This conviction of the autonomy and unconditional responsibility of the individual free will is Weininger's great contribution to modern thought.



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