



Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles

Otto Weininger

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Otto Weininger's controversial book *Sex and Character*, first published in Vienna in 1903, is a prime example of the conflicting discourses central to its time: antisemitism, scientific racism and biologism, misogyny, the cult and crisis of masculinity, psychological introspection versus empiricism, German idealism, the women's movement and the idea of human emancipation, the quest for sexual liberation, and the debates about homosexuality. Combining rational reasoning with irrational outbursts, in the context of today's scholarship, *Sex and Character* speaks to issues of gender, race, cultural identity, the roots of Nazism, and the intellectual history of modernism and modern European culture. This new translation presents, for the first time, the entire text, including Weininger's extensive appendix with amplifications of the text and bibliographical references, in a reliable English translation, together with a substantial introduction that places the book in its cultural and historical context.

Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles Details

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From Reader Review Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles for online ebook

Michael Lackey says

If you like books that are bat-shit crazy, and I certainly do, then this one should be at the top of your list. It rivals Martin Luther's *On the Jews and their Lies*, Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, Charles Carroll's *The Negro as Beast*, and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* for its bizarre twists and turns in logic and for the absurdity of its content. More significant is its popularity: published in 1903, it went into its seventeen printing by 1918, which tells you something about the way people were thinking in Austria and Germany in the early part of the twentieth century. For those who want to understand what made Hitler and the Nazis possible, this book is a must read. But if you also want to understand the gnarled inner life of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, then you should also read this book, for Wittgenstein loved it and was heavily influenced by it--and somehow, this doesn't surprise me.

Greg says

I can't believe I never really reviewed this book, only gave some really long quotes from it. Possibly one of the more interesting cultural phenomenas of the 20th century. The book is at times idiotic on its misogyny, but yet its also erudite on the anxiety of living a life amongst decadence and the need for genius amongst the general depravity of society (kind of in the way we as an American Idol voting, Joel Olsteen and *The Shack* reading, text messaging at all times society are decadent and deprave). This book is kind of an attempt to justify the authors reason to go on in a scientific manner, to go on though he needs to make very many wild and outlandish statements of opinion and call them facts. The guy was a walking cesspool of hatred in all likelihood, and most of it was probably inner conflicts and self-loathing that he tried to vent out on to the world. An anti-semitic Jew and a homophobic Homosexual who lived out of step with the world around him he was really quite something. Fortunately for the world he produced this book, which ranks up there with Klaus Kinski's memoirs as possibly the most enjoyably absurd literature of all time (I hope to dethrone them eventually with finding something equally or even more absurd than these two cracked Germans, suggestions are welcome), before deciding to shoot himself at the age of 23, an act that ironically he bungled, so instead of dying a heroic death his death sort of dragged on like the whining Werther, probably a character he held in disdain.

And now for the original collection of quotes:

Before reading this book I had no idea of what depraved creatures women are. I'm glad I didn't have to go through more of my life without knowing what I now know. For your enlightenment:

"People have either not seen or not wanted to say, or indeed not pictured quite correctly, what Man's penis psychologically means to Woman, whether as an adult or even a young virgin, and how it dominates her whole life, although she is often totally unconscious of this. I do not mean to say that a woman thinks a man's penis beautiful, or even just pretty. Rather, it has the same effect on her as the head of Medusa on human beings, or a snake on a bird: it hypnotizes, entrances, fascinates her. She perceives it as the thing for which she does not even have a name: *it is her destiny*, it is what she cannot escape from. The reason why she is so afraid to see Man in the nude, and why she never shows him any desire to do so, is because she feels that she would be lost straightaway. *The phallus is what enslaves Woman absolutely and forever.*

"Thus it is the *very* part which thoroughly spoils the look of a man's body, which alone makes a naked man ugly--and which sculptors therefore often cover with an acanthus or fig leaf--that excites women most profoundly and rouses them most powerfully, in particular when it represents the most unpleasant thing of all, in its erect state."

"Only women are happy. No man feels happy, because every man has a relationship with freedom and yet is always to some extent in bondage while on earth."

"There has never been a moment when I have not longed, *among other things*, for non-existence"

"...whether seen in this light, women are in fact human beings, or whether, according to the author's theory, the author's theory, they would not really have to be classified as animals or plants."

"Woman is not a microcosm, she was not created in the image of God. Is she, then, still a human being? Or is she an animal? Or a plant?"

Blaž says

One of the most controversial, most influential (although very few thinkers had the courage to pay their due) and most insightful works of the early 20th century.

An indisputable genius, perhaps the last of his kind, captures the zeitgeist of the declining European civilization through the lens of his own psychosexual pathology. Rejecting both plebeian empiricism and lotsofbigwords(tm) approach of modern quasi-philosophy, Weininger may be the last representative of the classical Western thought, which held the Truth, not reason, above all else.

The saddening dismissing and hostile attitude of other reviewers reveals both extreme spritual shallowness and high levels of anti-intellectualism of our age.

Call him wrong all you want, he was more wrong than you'll ever be.

Intery says

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[illegible][illegible]

James Eardley says

In regards to gender egalitarianism, feminism, Mgtow and the battle of the sexes. This book is a must read, this is the ultimate Mgtow book it annihilates the aids known as feminism at the root. Man must be indifferent to feminism and women in general in this day and age. The Suffragettes and Second Wave Feminist's are mere imitators of Males, and could never see their efforts bear fruit. Equality between the sexes is a lie. A genius like Weininger is very rare, he is one of the few writers of European Culture i regard as genius. I know this book has an infamous reputation thanks to the feminist slags who can't look in the mirror and are incapable of self reflection and analysis. I read this book because it is a good antidote to modern women who embrace feminism and gynocentrism. This book to the Mgtow Movement is exactly what Mein Kampf is to the National Socialist Movement in Germany. To be fair I'm not as misogynistic as Weininger because Modern Women are slaves and prostitutes to Zionist Elites and Marxist Professors in the Universities, Weininger understands the dangers that Zionism, Communism, Liberalism and Feminism pose to the human race, and this is one hundred and fifteen years ago. Despite Otto Weininger being Jewish he certainly has defeated the negative stereotype so prominent throughout World History. I went to Vienna last year and visited his Gravestone in the Protestant Cemetery. Overall Mgtow men should read this book.

vi macdonald says

....it's a no from me.

Ali Reda says

In attempting to demonstrate the metaphysical connection between genius, masculinity, logic, memory and ethics, he sought to solve the "woman question".

He showed a proposed relation between genius and masculinity and the moral and intellectual inferiority of women and Jews and other minorities. Additionally, his writings on the subject of Protestantism and Judaism have been seen as reflective of both his own personal self loathing of his Jewish identity and his rebellion against the Catholic culture of Vienna. It should be read as an autobiography of a deeply insecure, anti-semitic Jew a homophobic Homosexual, student with many inner conflicts and much self-loathing who would shortly thereafter tragically take his own life.

Wittgenstein wrote to G.E. Moore to explain his views on this book saying: "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".

Connor says

Possibly, my most hated book in my library that has had some significant influence on my own belief system. *Otto Weininger* was a brilliant, depressed, cult figure who committed suicide at the young age of 23 in the previous household of the German composer Ludwig van Beethoven. Disregard his brief life span. There has been an immense amount of literary acknowledgements of influence from different artists, writers and philosophers. According to one source some of these people are said to be, "Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Karl Kraus, Charlotte Perkins-Gilman, Gertrude Stein, and August Strindberg" (source: <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24270/?id=1861>). It can be projected that for a lot of people here, myself included, would have discovered Weininger through at least one of these persons. My own discovery has been through the Viennese philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein.

His influence is more noticeable in the writings of some authors than others. However, a lot of those who were mentioned above are also Jewish. Weininger, Wittgenstein and myself as well, all come from a Jewish heritage. It can be favoured that we are all in fact extremely passive and maybe have some philosophical derivative of Stockholm syndrome, due to our rather long history of persecution. That we garnered this natural intuition to conceal our 'true' self. Even according to Wittgenstein, Jews tend to conceal their psychological nature, which according to him as being both, "secretive and cunning." Manifested in history as the Jew's practical intellect, spiritual flexibility and concealing nature that allowed them to persevere their malignant historical background. Weininger argued that the Jews are effeminate and in his (mis)attempt to solve the 'woman question,' on the basis that all women and Jews are in fact inferior, both morally and intellectually to men. Men tend to think on a higher rational level, whereas women rely heavily on their lower emotions and sexual organs. Weininger put forth in his book two Platonic essentialist forms, the male and female, and the infinite gradient between them. Would it be *that* in this book that I coincide to believe? Is it that *what* makes this book so influential to me? No. Wittgenstein routinely recommend this book to his colleagues and, despite this great influence it's doubted that those that the book impacted wholly agreed with his conclusions. Metaphorically, Weininger's ladder has been thrown away to transcend his thought.

In a letter to G.E. Moore, Wittgenstein wrote, "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." Moreover, Wittgenstein said that if a negation sign (~) had been placed before the entirety of the book, it would be correct in every aspect. To be frank, I couldn't care less about the actual content of the book, so disregard the blatant sexism and antisemitism. It is not *what* the book is about that makes it so wrong and influential. Therefore, if it is not *what* is wrong and certainly not *why* it is wrong, it is *how* it is wrong.

Throughout the book it is *how* the book presents its arguments and *how* it misappropriates 20th c. empiricism and Neo-Kantian metaphysics to facade the appearance of a logical argument, that makes it wrong. Many of his ideas hint a Schopenhauerian influence, the idea of the microcosm/macrocism, misogyny, differences, the ideal character and so on. Schopenhauer influenced Weininger, alongside him he influenced Wittgenstein as well. While arguing against the inductive means of the sciences as being insufficient in attempting to solve deductive goals it aims to examine. His arguments are resided in airy conjectures rather than empirical data. An attempt at applying Neo-Kantian intuition to something that includes obvious worldly presuppositions, that being the actual Jewish people and Women themselves that he wishes to examine. Moreover, the 'scientific' arguments made before are made to serve as a basis for further examination of the essentialist forms of the ideal Platonic man and woman. His 'science' was a shaky foundation of scientific positivism that relied heavily misconstrued Neo-Kantian *a priori* propositions for his following ontology on Platonic ideals.

Throughout the book, when Weininger speaks about 'man' or of 'woman,' he does not particularly speak about any specific woman or man, nor does he speak about a general conception of neither man or woman. He speaks about the Platonic ideal man and woman. The ideal Platonic woman that includes every aspect of femininity in that woman, which could not be included in the instant representation of any specific woman let alone every woman. Hence following, Weininger is not entirely sexist, only meagerly sexist. Women and Jews therein having a greater amount of femininity than men is what makes them inferior. It is in that argument, that makes this book so wrong. From proposition to conclusion, that from misconstrued Neo-Kantian intuitions as replacements for actual data, makes his arguments being misappropriated and wrong. Wittgenstein throughout his Philosophical Investigations argues the importance of differences in philosophy, however. Unlike Weininger, he merely argues *just* differences, not the differences between good or bad, better or worse. These differences being such as family likeness and graduations. Philosophy henceforth does not prescribe, but describe, "only describe don't explain." Therein there does not exist a moral-philosophical graduation between sexes or races, and whose essences are neither prescribed as being essentially higher or lower than another. In reference back to Wittgenstein's letter to Moore, his 'enormous mistake' is not his apparently bigoted conclusions but as to how he came about to said conclusions.

Minäpäminä says

Näin lyhyen käännösvalikoiman ja tunnustuksellisen "vapaan" suomennoksen jälkeen on paha sanoa oikein mitään. Herkullinen kuriositeetti, ehdottomasti. Weininger on vuoroin progressiivinen jopa 2000-luvulle, vuoroin taantumuksellinen 1900-luvulle. Kummallinen kirja. Ehdottoman omalaatuinen ajattelijä tämä Weininger. Jätti kutisemaan himon lukea koko opus. Toisaalta, jos tähän Simolan valikoimaan ja käännökseen voi luottaa kuvaavana muustakin sisällöstä, en sittenkään tiedä.

Johan Dinger says

este es un libro extremadamente polémico por su "antisemitismo" y "misoginia". Me parece que puedes reclamarle a Weininger, en todo caso (que no es mi opinión) de tener opiniones erradas, de hacer malas observaciones de la realidad y generalizarlas, de idolatrar valores insípidos, en general de ser un imbécil. Sin embargo, lo que no encontré en este libro fue una pizca de odio, por el contrario, me pareció un autor extremadamente ético y consistente al menos en su lógica interna, libre de cualquier arrebato pasional que lo pudiese llevar a formar conclusiones arbitrarias. Todo lo que nos dice sigue a sus observaciones, y a una lógica. De nuevo, ya podrá estar en desacuerdo con él quien así lo pondere (yo mismo no estoy de acuerdo con él al 100%), pero calificarlo de un antisemita y misógino para descalificar su trabajo sin seguir su línea de pensamiento y refutarla directamente, se me hace sencillamente infantil.

Eric K. says

Give early 20th century Austrian Jew Otto Weininger credit for intellectual consistency. After penning the anti-Semitic, violently misogynistic, proto-Nazi screed "Geschlecht und Charakter" he followed his own theories to their logical conclusion and killed himself at age 23. The book, published after his death, was something of a hit throughout Europe.

We wizened postmodernists want to dismiss Weininger out of hand, but what's so cringe-worthy about his text is once you spend ten pages on it you cannot dismiss its genius, even as you shrivel from its monstrous conclusions. Namely: That only the male of the species is truly sentient, capable of good, evil, or art. Women are empty vessels which exist purely to perpetuate the species. Jews (by which Weininger means "the Platonic ideal of Jews" and not Jews themselves, only to repeatedly contradict himself by employing the logic of racial/bloodline anti-Semitism) are effete subhumans doomed to an existence of stunted obsequious passivity before Aryan supermen. And the worst of the worst are the damnable double-whammy: Jewesses, who he goes off on at some length.

I blame his mother.

A train wreck of a treatise, god-awful yet perversely mesmerizing. A worthwhile read for any scholar of the Hapsburg Empire or the intellectual foundations of the Holocaust.

Arjun Ravichandran says

Otto Weininger's 'Sex and Character' appeared in the early years of the 20th century, conceived and written in an intellectually riled up Vienna. It was the atmosphere that gave birth to Freud, Wittgenstein, Kafka, and Jung, and it the book in question profoundly influenced at least 2 of the mentioned luminaries.

On first glance, the book seems an unlikely candidate for having such a reputation. It is, without doubt, one of the most violent books that I have read ; I do not mind violence in the base sense of the word, but rather, I have in mind a kind of elemental corrosiveness that is ultimately philosophical, which pushes aside all comforting illusions and calls the masculine element firmly, urgently, and mercilessly to its task of being moral. It is violent in the sublime way that only untrammelled profundity can be violent.

The reference to 'masculine' in the last few lines is sure to make more than a few modern readers cringe, and is probably the cause for a lot of the notoriety that the book has been considered with, ever since its publication. Before I can address that perception, we should, with the soundest philosophical etiquette, define our terms. For Weininger, the male and the female are not used with reference to any biology, but are used in the sense of Platonic Ideas. In other words, male and female refer to Forms, to super-empirical structures of which the worldly males and females are approximations. Thus, every human being is a mixture of the male and female element. For Weininger, the female is sexuality. The male is sexuality and something more. The female is unconsciousness. The male has the possibility of consciousness. The female is non-rational (not irrational). The male has the possibility of being rational. Consequently, (and Weininger here follows Kant's ethics), the female is non-moral (not immoral), while the male has the possibility of morality. The female is nothing. The male has the possibility of being something.

Once the modern reader bears in mind that Weininger is talking about things which are, in a sense, beyond our crude notions of gender, we realize that he is in fact talking about the sources of our subjectivity, the fundamentally dichotomous nature of our perception, and connecting this analysis with a investigation into the 'good life' ; this is based on the rejection of the lower and a progression to the higher, and as such, is it only possible for the masculine element, for morality is only possible with consciousness, and only the male element has the possibility of consciousness.

There are, thus, two things to be noted with regards to people who engage in knee-jerk criticism of this book. The first point is, simply tossing around words such as 'misogyny' and 'racism' does not constitute a valid critique. Weininger's book has serious problems, (which I will address at the end of this review), but he is not writing at such a simplistic level that similarly simplistic criticism can be hurled. To put it simply, he is not engaging in cheap propaganda, but is engaged in a sustained philosophical investigation. As the subtitle suggests, it is truly an investigation of fundamental principles. The second point I wish to make follows from the first, and which I have already addressed. Masculine and feminine refers to qualities. Not individuals. Once this is borne in mind, the simplistic taunt of misogyny should be easily dismissed.

Another tip for the modern reader, especially someone who has familiarity with evolutionary psychology, is to approach the text from the perspective of this modern science. Weininger quite amazingly anticipates many of the paradigms that have come to be associated with this field.

The last quarter of the text, where Weininger analyzes the nature of the Jewish race and draws parallels between them and the feminine psychology, has drawn criticism for its supposed anti-semitism. Read in the cold and clear light of modernity, this portion of the text does indeed strike one as uncomfortable and, in light of the ungainly resurgence of many old chauvinistic and racist attitudes in our still young century, as indefensible. But once again, I would urge the reader to approach the whole text with an open mind, and to once again realize that the author is not talking on the level of biology, but is investigating certain fundamental psychological frameworks that characterize the human species. 'Jewishness' does not refer, in Weininger's usage, to a quality of a particular group of people, but, is instead an archetype that can be inhabited by anyone.

Now for the conclusion.

What I liked : The book is literally overflowing with great quotes, subtle in their penetrating understanding of human psychology. Weininger seems to me to be spot on with his fundamental philosophical assertion regarding the division of human nature into masculine and feminine, and his analysis of the different modes of functioning peculiar to these two sensibilities seems to me to be largely correct as well. In addition, I think his characterization of the nature of genius (which he reserves for the masculine element), is uncompromising but spot on.

What I didn't like : There are no two ways about it. Weininger's vision of the universe is dark, dreary, absolute, and despairing. He is what Nietzsche would rudely but effectively characterize as a 'life-denier'. His profound nihilism seeps through the pores of every word in this book, and he seems to take as

incontrovertibly true that disgust for existence is an absolutely natural state for any thinking man. This disgust for life, this 'resentment' (to borrow from Nietzsche once again) almost functions as his basic philosophical assumption, so to speak. It is a tricky situation for the reader, for if you do not share Weininger's assumption (more uncharitable reviewers have called it his 'pathology'), then the entire book does begin to seem like the seductively articulate ravings of a diseased soul. In addition, and this could be related to his essentially life-denying worldview, the book is surprisingly religious. There is no crude proselytizing ; Weininger is too subtle for that. But he is fanatically obsessive about his faith, and his philosophical framework leads almost inevitably to the tenets of his Christian faith ; i.e. man is born in sin, woman is bad, pleasure is immoral, this world is a vale of tears. His interpretation of his faith is harsh, and can almost make him seem like a fanatic at times. Last, but not least, there are a few pages in the middle and towards the end of the book in which Weininger takes on some of his contemporaries ; these sections are understandably dated and can comfortably be skipped.

So, where do we end up? This is one of the few books that I've been profoundly affected by, which I enjoyed tremendously, which I've learnt a great deal from, but nonetheless, which I cannot recommend wholeheartedly. Why? Because while there are many passages that are so profoundly right as to be blindingly self-obvious, there are quite a few that are so appallingly, terribly, fantastically wrong. But Weininger is such a genius, his arguments so seductive, and his basic 'heart' seems to be right, that it is easy to get sucked into the whirlpool of his nihilistic, genius-affirming, frenzy. But that is not really my call to make. Read the book with an open mind, be impressed with the depth of one young man's blinding passion for truth, but take it with a huge grain of salt. With these provisos, I think one can learn a great deal from the product of poor Otto Weininger's tormented brain.

Valerie Baber says

I remember, when I was in my late teens, I had finally worked my way into the bedroom of a schoolmate I had a crush on since my pre-teen years. He was a brown skinned, confident athlete with an air of cool and an incredible body that I couldn't wait to discover. Everything was going swimmingly in our newfound courtship, until I unzipped his pants for the first time. After a fair amount of eager fumbling and foolish adolescent foreplay, I took off his pants, only to find attached this tiny, almost inconceivably small resemblance of a raisin - a miniscule currant from the most malnourished Saxifragaceae bush. I had taken my previous boyfriend from flaccid to firm before, so it wasn't the mere fact that my beau nouveau wasn't yet erect that was disappointing. It was the brutal reality that there wasn't even enough flesh to be noticeable when fully hard. At his most erect point, he couldn't possibly have been more than a baby thumb length's long or wide. That was one of the most disappointing days of my life. The second most disappointing day was when I actually wasted a whole two hours reading Otto Weininger's "Sex And Character". To avoid posttraumatic depression, I have to try hard not to think about those valuable minutes of my life that I will never be able to replace.

What I was hoping to be intelligent, philosophical observations of human behavior and sexuality turned out to be a hatred filled diatribe about the evil brought into the world, by women, Jews and other "minorities". I suppose this incredible let down was my own fault for not having looked more closely into Mr. Weininger's biography as a woman hating anti-Semite (he would argue that point), but the simple fact that this book has been held in such high esteem and that this guy actually earned himself the title of 'genius,' hinted that perhaps he actually did have something to offer besides a slew of hostility and contempt towards any creature on this earth that is not an Aryan male. Whatever was I thinking? Perhaps my misguidance came

from the fact that the first chapter I read from this book was actually somewhat unique and forward-thinking. At several points, the chapter entitled "Motherhood and Prostitution" noted a very underdog concept of the professional companion. Weininger gave praise to the courtesan for being like a great politician, for being an elevated sort of woman, offering more beauty and education to the world than average female (whose only concern, he claims, is to procreate). While, at points, he contradicted himself, in other points, he stood up for women who are often looked down on. "This is a man who embraces alternative perspectives," I thought, "a socially-educated, open-minded and interesting man". I was wrong.

Allow me to offer you a small slice of the absurdity and dullness of this so-called "genius" with a few quotes taken from his "masterpiece":

Himself a Jew who converted to Protestantism, Weininger comments on the materialistic, unintelligent, effeminate, egotistical, sexually impotent Jew:

"The true conception of the State is foreign to the Jew, because he, like the woman, is wanting in personality; his failure to grasp the idea of true society is due to his lack of free intelligible ego. Like women, Jews tend to adhere together, but they do not associate as free independent individuals mutually respecting each other's individuality. "

"As there is no real dignity in women, so what is meant by the word "gentleman" does not exist amongst the Jews."

"The Jew is always more absorbed by sexual matters than the Aryan, although he is notably less potent sexually and less liable to be enmeshed in a great passion. The Jews are habitual matchmakers, and in no race does it so often happen that marriages for love are so rare. The organic disposition of the Jews towards matchmaking is associated with their racial failure to comprehend asceticism."

"We have now reached the fundamental difference between the Jew and the woman. Neither believe in themselves; but the woman believes in others, in her husband, her lover, or her children, or in love itself; she has a centre of gravity, although it is outside her own being. The Jew believes in nothing, within him or without him. His want of desire for permanent landed property and his attachment to movable goods are more than symbolical. "

"Just as Jews and women are without extreme good and extreme evil, so they never show either genius or the depth of stupidity of which mankind is capable. The specific kind of intelligence for which Jews and women alike are notorious is due simply to the alertness of an exaggerated egotism; it is due, moreover, to the boundless capacity shown by both for pursuing any object with equal zeal, because they have no intrinsic standard of value - nothing in their own soul by which to judge of the worthiness of any particular object. And so they have unhampered natural instincts, such as are not present to help the Aryan man when his transcendental standard fails him. "

"Although the humanity of Jews, negroes, and still more of women, is weighed down by many immoral impulses..."

The inferiority and soullessness of the physically revolting woman:

“The phenomena of courtesy and chivalry are simply additional proofs that women have no souls.”

“Woman has no faculty for the affairs of State or politics, as she has no social inclinations...”

“The imagination of women is composed of lies and errors.”

“It is inconceivable why women can be considered good as doctors...”

“But even in the details of her body a woman is not wholly beautiful, not even if she is a flawless, perfect type of her sex. The genitalia are the chief difficulty in the way of regarding her as theoretically beautiful.”

“A woman’s nude body is distasteful to man because it offends his sense of shame. “

“The female, therefore, is credulous, uncritical, and quite unable to understand Protestantism.”

“And, therefore, I must again assert that the woman of the highest standard is immeasurably beneath the man of lowest standard.”

Weininger on the shame and lowliness of love and eroticism:

“Love is murder. The sexual impulse destroys the body and mind of the woman, and the psychical eroticism destroys her psychical existence. Ordinary sexuality regards the woman only as a means of gratifying passion or of begetting children. The higher eroticism is merciless to the woman, requiring her to be merely the vehicle of a projected personality, or the mother of psychical children. Love is not only anti-logical, as it denies the objective truth of the woman and requires only an illusory image of her, but it is anti-ethical with regard to her. “

Weininger on male and female interaction:

“But the man who is not superficial, who has depth of thought as well as of purpose, the depth which not only makes him desire right but endows him with determination and strength to do right, must always look on woman from the oriental standpoint:- as a possession, as private property, as something born to serve and be dependent on him - he must see the marvellous reasonableness of the Asiatic instinct of superiority over women, as the Greeks of old saw it, those worthy successors and disciples of the Eastern school.“

Speculation that Weininger developed his misogyny due to his secret love for men, is not all that far fetched. He had nothing negative to say about sexual attraction between two people of the same gender and actually suggested that it is natural for men to love men:

“There is no friendship between men that has not an element of sexuality in it, however little accentuated it may be in the nature of the friendship, and however painful the idea of the sexual element would be. But it is enough to remember that there can be no friendship unless there has been some attraction to draw the men together. Much of the affection, protection, and nepotism between men is due to the presence of unsuspected sexual compatibility. “

“Sexual inverts must be brought to sexual inverts, from homo-sexualists to Sapphists, each in their grades. Knowledge of such a solution should lead to repeal of the ridiculous laws of England, Germany and Austria directed against homo-sexuality, so far at least as to make the punishments the lightest possible. In the second part of this book it will be made clear why both the active and the passive parts in male homo-sexuality appear disgraceful, although the desire is greater than in the case of the normal relation of a man and woman. “

Apparently, while it's immoral and inferior for women and men to have sexual attraction to each other, a man having sexual attraction to other men is completely pure and perfectly understandable.

His displeasure with the human race extends beyond this. Weininger also has plenty of contempt and distaste for the “incapable, effeminate Chinaman”, the “immoral and uneducated Negroes” and “the unproductive English”.

Of course one would expect a person born in 1880 to have thoughts and opinions that don't necessarily reflect what is socially accepted in modern days, but to have written such a talked about and long-standing philosophical bible on the human condition, one would also expect this “genius” to have been much more of the superior being that this incredible narcissist considered himself to be.

Weininger committed suicide at the age of 23 by shooting himself in the heart; a loss of life, yes, but no loss of genius. Unless you particularly enjoy squandering your time reading ignorant claims from youthful bombastic egoists, you may want to skip this one.

David M says

This book is really terrible, just unimaginably trashy, but it does have an intriguing backstory, and there's the odd fact that Wittgenstein apparently counted Weininger as one of his influences. I'm slightly annoyed by some of the reviews here that say things along the lines, Whether or not you agree with him, you must admit he was brilliant... Because no actually this book is an embarrassing morass of mysogyny, racism, bad science, romantic cliches, and it's all very badly written. I once made a good faith effort to read it but couldn't do more than a few chapters.

Bjørn says

This book really made an impression on me. More than I thought it would. It is difficult to rate this book, since there are so many interesting ideas and new angles of looking at the psyche of Man (and Woman) and at the same time it contains quite a few, almost vulgar, statements that one struggles to take seriously. Some parts of this book also seemed unfinished. I really wished he wrote this book when he was a older, since this book is the ground work of something really great. This book should probably be read more than once to grasp his ideas fully. I will read it again in a couple of years for sure.
