

## Studies Beyond Silence:

### *Assembling Reminders* by A. Janik

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Janik, Allan, *Assembling Reminders. Studies in the Genesis of Wittgenstein's Concept of Philosophy*. Stockholm: Santerus, 2009. 246 p.

Allan Janik's very first remarks in his preface to the nine studies that comprise his latest book, *Assembling Reminders*, address the silence surrounding Wittgenstein's claim that he was "basically an unoriginal thinker who merely reproduced the ideas of others with a vengeance in his philosophical 'work of clarification'" (p. 11). The first remark Janik makes in reply to this claim emphasises that foes as well as friends of Wittgenstein's way of philosophizing find "this statement simply absurd". Janik's second reply stresses the little one knew, then in 2006, about the "ways his ten precursors might have led him to develop his 'work of clarification' as he did". Neither foes nor friends had "taken his own remarks about himself seriously enough to investigate [these ways] meticulously". Janik thus suggests initiating a systematic study of nine of these figures: Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger and Spengler. (If more had been known about him at the time Janik wrote his book, the tenth figure would have been the economist Piero Sraffa.) We may thank Janik for his initial remarks since they reflect the absurdity or lack of seriousness that Wittgenstein's claim has been charged with as well as help to illustrate the vivid aspect of the difference between showing and saying with which the author opens this collection of essays.

Regarding the concept of showing the title of the chapter on Karl Kraus, "Style as Strategy", could be the motto of the whole book. Style is indeed performed as a strategy, and the very first line of the first chapter – quoting Boltzmann's admission "Philosophy gets on my nerves" – is in itself a good introduction to that stance.

The two questions that give the book its tempo are “How did X have an impact on Wittgenstein’s 1931 understanding of ‘work of clarification?’” and “What is the path from one reminder to the next?” Even though the answers are sometimes predictable, if not obvious, e.g. when the path leads us from Frege to Russell or from Schopenhauer to Frege, the surroundings are never out of sight: although Frege and Russell are in the center of the book, their connections to Boltzmann or Spengler’s are equally addressed. The reason for this is that the path described is more than a mere chain of proper names, since all these names are to remind us of a single proper name. Of how the name of the one who assembled them together, built the path Janik follows.

In exemplifying Brian McGuinness’ statement that for Wittgenstein philosophy was a *craft* whose value consisted in being ‘well done’, the chapter on Loos “Craftsmanship” offers an overview of Wittgenstein’s and Janik’s own craft. Janik’s investigation follows a framework that begins with Loos’ social criticism. Indeed, he proceeds from Loos’ views on architecture as a craft and from there moves on to which architectural education accounts for Loos’ notion of the relationship between architecture and art. Finally, he suggests how such ideas may have had an impact upon Wittgenstein. Yet, this is only part of the craft Janik describes. Within that pattern, the discourse against subordinating functionality to ornamentation – which had forged Loos’ critique of the *Wiener Moderne* as well as of craftsmanship and Wittgenstein’s relation to it – is itself displayed by means of a functional gesture. In referring to Loos’ *Ornament and Crime* and remarking that Loos’ social critique antedates Kraus’, Janik relates Loos’ vengeance, which made him turn the *Wiener Moderne*’s motto against themselves, to Wittgenstein’s claim of vengeance used in the work of clarification. Meanwhile, an analogy to how one can be seen as a follower lurks in this chapter: Loos’ thoughts on crime antedate Weininger’s description of criminal life – similar to how Janik’s previous chapter dealt with Kraus’ social critique before. In stressing Loos’ antedate, Janik ascribes both to the other’s continuity. It is in the craft that makes framework and gesture match, that Janik’s description of Wittgenstein’s discovery of both

a moment of social criticism and the practice of philosophy as a craftsman, that the link between philosophy, aesthetics and ethics Loos supplied Wittgenstein with, as well as the link between the philosopher's craftsmanship and the problem of limits that arises, can both be grasped, and the path to the next reminder, continued.

While making his way on the shown path that brings us from one wittgensteinian reminder to another, Allan Janik says how such a strategy of style can be shared. Among other things, Janik's strategy of style also embeds people like McGuinness, Pears, Kenny, Hamilton, Fann, Sterett, Timms or Zimmermann. With Piero Sraffa's chair left vacant, by assembling the reminders Janik completes the landscape of studies in the genesis of a philosophy that is also *his*. We talk about no less than his personal reminders: the ones that led Janik to develop his own work as he offers it.

Alongside the genuine insight *Assembling Reminders* provides on Wittgenstein's own understanding of his work, the very beauty of this book is also its succession in silently carrying – with absurdity and lack of seriousness as the point of departure – various aspects of the difference between what is shown or said of reminding, throughout the collection of essays it displays.