50 Years After Wittgenstein's Vienna – *On Wittgenstein, Toulmin and Philosophy*

Tomasz Zarębski in Conversation with Allan Janik

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Abstract
In this interview, Tomasz Zarębski speaks with Allan Janik, co-author of *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (1973, with Stephen Toulmin), on the occasion of the 50th anniversary the publication of this pathbreaking book. The conversation concerns the circumstances, motivations and reasons for his undertaking the work on the book, as well as its reception and place in Wittgenstein scholarship. A large part of the discussion refers to his perspective of Wittgenstein, Toulmin's philosophical writings, and Janik's own vision of philosophy.

ZARĘBSKI: Dear Professor, it is already 50 years ago that the book *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, by you and Stephen Edelston Toulmin, appeared (1973), and it is 20 years ago that your further exploration of it appeared under the title *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited* (2003). For many scholars, including me, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* remains one of the prominent landmarks in the studies on Wittgenstein, one that presents the detailed and unique cultural anthropology of the setting in which the author of *Tractatus* was shaping his thought. Looking back, how do you see that book today, from half a century's perspective?

JANIK: Well, this is a very difficult question because we were trying to do so many things in that book. Some of the things we've done better than others. But the nature of the explanation in the book, which was very important for Stephen Toulmin, was not particularly influential in its reception. People picked up what they wanted from that, and there

were a lot of such people: some were critics of technology and they picked up the critique of technology; others were Wittgenstein scholars… and there are a whole lot of problems for me about that book. Some people find a lot of good things in it, and I am very happy about that, but I look at it now and I tend to see that there are problematic areas and areas where we didn't get it right. I mean there was a German reviewer that was being very tough, and he couldn't understand that a book that was published in 1973 drew on such a small number of sources of Wittgenstein. But we must remember that the book was written two years before, in 1971, at a time when there were very, very few sources directly connected to, or actually written by, Wittgenstein. Naturally, all this stuff came into vigorous discussion later but that was after publishing our work. *Culture and Value* wasn't available. When it did appear it was a kind of testing ground for how well we had covered hitherto undiscussed themes in the great philosopher's work. When Stephen read it he was confident that we had done a reasonable job. The idea was to get people away from the conviction that Wittgenstein was a Cambridge philosopher (point, dot, finished), and to provide a European background, specifically around Vienna.

It was the most difficult part of that, a very difficult chore, because what had to be explained, I mean what influenced Wittgenstein, were figures like Karl Kraus and Otto Weininger. I concentrated on Kraus because I didn't know what to do with Weininger.

ZARĘBSKI: In 2021, you published a book called *Hitler's Favorite Jew: The Enigma of Otto Weininger.*

JANIK: It took a long time to get straight about. But as for Kraus, you couldn't explain Kraus without explaining Vienna and its place in the monarchy, and you had to bring in all of the things that we did. That gave plenty of material for many people to latch onto starting with the idea that our book was just a panoply of arbitrary facts and anecdotes about Vienna. The challenge was to understand how Karl Kraus and his concern with the morality of language, the morality embedded in language, is something that was not atypical – I employ a double negative intentionally – not atypical in Vienna, in 1900. And so, you had

someone like Hofmannsthal, very, very different, from Kraus, whom Kraus didn't respect at all, and someone who might basically disagree with almost everything he did – while, nevertheless, being concerned with very similar kinds of issues. Making a picture of all of that was a good job, a hard job, and an impossible job. I mean, whenever I thought about it, I was a little bit embarrassed. I knew how much I didn't know, especially about political matters in the monarchy that we had to discuss as essential background.

You mentioned *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited*. I'd like to mention that here. There were two things that I wanted to have in *Wittgenstein's Vienna* that were not there. They're mentioned, but they're not discussed. One I mentioned already: Weininger. And the other: Georg Trakl, the poet. *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited* was an attempt to add to *Wittgenstein's Vienna* these two perspectives and issues around them. Because they were so important and I still felt that these two figures were missing in the original book. But once again, an important factor in the background of the book was that it had to be written quickly. And that was against everything I was trying to do because what I wanted to do would take time. Stephen, as always, pressured me mildly, but the publisher *Simon & Shuster* was pressing enormously. They threatened to sue us and ask for our advance money back, because the money that I used to go to Vienna to do the research on the book, which Stephen had organized, came from the publisher. Nothing of the sort happened, but it is an example of the sort of pressure there was to get that done as quickly as possible. And I have to say, in the crucial moment, there was nobody around with sufficient knowledge to proofread what I wrote. And I didn't have the opportunity really to evaluate these corrections. So, a number of silly, really silly mistakes were there. That is, the people who didn't like what we were claiming, they jumped on all of that. But when I corrected those errors years later when *Ivan R. Dee* agreed to make a second edition, it could only involve small changes. Dee said, "You can correct this if you keep the same number of letters in a line." A tremendous challenge but I did it. I did it. Most of the corrections were simple facts, dates etc. So 1905 instead of 1903, or something similar, really not terribly important. There was a point where I trusted Stephen for having more knowledge on Frege than he did. And there was a mistake, a bad mistake, a real howler, about Frege,

that Anthony Kenny picked up in his review of the book, which is one of the very first ones, by the way…

ZARĘBSKI: Did you have a feeling that your work was a pioneering task? You must have been somehow aware that you were about to open a new approach to reading Wittgenstein.

JANIK: Stephen and I were a community of two, and we were not just happy: we were high. And Steven loved all the seemingly arcane stuff I was coming up with. And he knew the book would show it… When I sent him the first chapter, June Goodfield, his second wife, read it before Steven did. And she was usually very, very critical. She praised it to the heavens to Stephen. Stephen called me up saying June is wild about it, the first chapter of the book. And, I mean, clearly, we both wrote out of enthusiasm. That's the thing I'm proudest of in that book that enthusiasm got transmitted. And a lot of readers got excited.

ZARĘBSKI: Definitely I can feel it as a reader.

JANIK: Thanks. That's not something you can turn on and turn off, that's got to be there. And it's got to go out of the schema of things. But there was frustration at the same time from the very beginning, because the people we wanted to reach were philosophers. And the philosophers more or less ignored the book for a very long time. And there's an anecdote by William James that fits the situation perfectly; it says that with regard to any important innovation people first say it's absurd and should be ignored, then say later: "Well, it's true but trivial", and at the end, when it's really a unique part of the woodwork, the original opponents will say they invented it. And that's not quite the case, but it's very close to what happened to *Wittgenstein's Vienna*. So, I mean, Stephen was very happy that the successful book was produced. He had the responsibility for it, he made all the connections, and he had all the obligations… And, in the end, I was disappointed that the philosophers didn't pick it up. Most of the people who reacted to the book were people from music, or from art history. The synoptic picture we were offering didn't exist in either of these fields and so we filled up gaps in the literature. And it seems to, to my delight. Maybe 5-6 years ago, I got in touch with a musicologist, who was more or less from the beginning

part of all that – I found him, since what he was discussing looked interesting to me – and I said: "I wrote this, here's the book." "Are you still alive? I'm happy. I love your book." Now, that was about five years ago and this happens regularly. That book has had a fantastic life. Toulmin once mentioned – and I think it's also in the preface to *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited* – that books are like children: you make them and they grow up and some go away, you never see them again, others stay very close to you. *Wittgenstein's Vienna* changed everything. The book had so many aspects. I mean there were three streams of thought, yeah: there was all the question of using biography to illuminate the thought of an analytic philosopher which was new in 1971, i.e. taking Wittgenstein's biography and reading his philosophy through his biography. The first point that was new. Looking at Wittgenstein's texts, I mean, we were among the first to look at things like the notebooks, take the notebooks seriously. I had done that already in my master's thesis, *Notebooks* were crucial for my work on Wittgenstein and Schopenhauer – in a time in which *Tractatus* had scarcely been read this way. So a part of this was all about Wittgenstein, how to read Wittgenstein the philosopher, how to read these texts, *et cetera*. And then that will spill over to the question of Vienna, which was an enormously big block. And it happened! Interest in Vienna was bubbling underground, was about to explode. But we happened to be the first ones to write about this.

And now, Carl Schorske, who became the most famous historian of Vienna in the 20th century, he and his students, but the students especially, were furious at me that I could "steal" this topic, but I wasn't interested in doing anything of the kind, it never occurred to me, I had a great debt to him, which I always pronounced loudly and clearly in public. Unfortunately, we never had a real discussion. Schorske and I met several times, but we only said "hello". But the vast scope of a sort of comprehensive account of Vienna 1900 leaves so much room for mistakes, so complex and obscure are the problems that need to be tackled: for example, there's the whole question of technology, which emerges in the Viennese context in the work of Karl Kraus, and inspired Toulmin in the last couple of chapters of the book, especially last chapter of the postscript. Well, so there are three different discussions surrounding the book, and it's funny that the reception of the book, more or less, went along those lines. I mean, Wittgenstein the

philosopher – the Norwegians picked up on that, Jakob Meløe, Kjell S. Johannessen and Tore Nordenstam, and a couple of others in Bergen and in Tromsø. The critique of technology – the Swedes picked up on, starting in 1985, so very late, but nevertheless people had read the book very, very vividly… I was a celebrity when I came to Sweden in 1986. My lectures were sold out. It was quite exciting.

There are many questions about Vienna which were not really discussed here for many, many years, on which I worked together with Emil Brix, and others in the context of the *Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft*. There are a number of books we produced together, trying to deepen and extend perspectives on Vienna. And that was all picked up by different groups that put the emphasis on that one aspect of the work that seemed to them especially important. So to have produced something so stimulating to so many people made Stephen and me proud. Unfortunately, Stephen and I, I don't think we were ever actually in a serious public discussion on that book together. We both discussed it on innumerable occasions but…

ZARĘBSKI: … not together?

JANIK: Right, not together. Looking back, that might have helped other people to understand better what we were both trying together in that book. But it was one of those things that simply was so much fun to do. As I said earlier, it made us high. I mean, I just zipped through my dissertation. The book started there. And what became about the first third to half of *Wittgenstein's Vienna* was one chapter in my dissertation, one chapter of about 35 pages. While my ex-wife was typing all this stuff up, I began reading Schoenberg. I had never read Schoenberg, although Schoenberg turns up at various places in my original account. And Schoenberg fascinated me. I couldn't read fast enough. I thought that we could show the parallels between Wittgenstein and Schoenberg, the parallels which are enormous, for example, the need for rigor… And so it went… until we had to stop.

ZARĘBSKI: Well, so was it Toulmin who came across the idea of writing the book, I mean *Wittgenstein's Vienna*?

JANIK: No, not exactly, it was Georg Henrik von Wright who gave me the original idea when I first met him in 1966 in Philadelphia before I ever set my eyes on Toulmin. I met Toulmin a year later – after I published my work on Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein, of which von Wright had said "This is right", and I was happy… because I had sent it to everybody working on Wittgenstein. Only Brian McGuinness wrote back: "Thank you."… I think I sent about 25 copies and, besides McGuinness, the only real answer I got was from von Wright: "I'm coming to Philadelphia in two months, we'll see each other there." In the event, I went to this hotel room and we talked and he said: "This is right, this is the right way to go. Wittgenstein was indeed interested in Schopenhauer and German thought but he was, above all, a Viennese and an engineer. And if you want to go on with your research, you should follow this up." Well, I didn't have a clue as to what to do with the fact that Wittgenstein was an engineer because I had nothing, no qualifications to do anything in that direction – his scientific background made Toulmin a very, very welcome collaborator for me. Even then, he was far from perfect in that role. His education in physics wasn't the same as Wittgenstein's, which was that of a mechanical engineer. But the two were similar enough. Above all, Stephen believed that was important. So I had actually found my way to Vienna and had begun collaborating with a philosopher with a background in physics. There's an anecdote by Bruno Walter about Brahms that was helpful in approaching Vienna at the turn of the 20th century. Brahms, who was a very good friend of Wittgenstein's family, upon being asked for an autograph by none other than Mr. Johann Strauss, took out his pen and wrote down the first four bars of *On the Beautiful Blue Danube*, adding "unfortunately not by Johannes Brahms". The anecdote demonstrates two aspects of that culture at one go: the love of a *bon mot* and the way that seeming contradictions – so highbrow and middlebrow music – did not necessarily have to contradict one another. I was becoming quite happy to work on Vienna. What we needed was to have first-hand reminiscences of Wittgenstein from his equals, his family and his friends, not pious reflections from his students, who tended to talk about this person as if he was like a magician. I mean, I read all of the existing memoirs of Wittgenstein, which K. T. Fann had conveniently collected, *Wittgenstein: The Man and his Philosophy*. Fann had a good overview of the earliest biographical literature then and it's still worth

reading to see how Wittgenstein's image was originally formed and shaped, who was at the center, who was on the periphery? But, as I said, I needed the first-hand reminiscence. So Stephen got the idea that I should make a research trip to Vienna.

ZARĘBSKI: Let me ask some questions about Stephen Toulmin's philosophy and the place *Wittgenstein's Vienna* occupies in it.

JANIK: I am happy that you asked that. *Wittgenstein's Vienna* was ignored by Stephen's fans and followers at the time of his death. I presume because they hadn't a clue of how it fits with the philosophy of science, practical logic and leftist American political philosophy. I would tend to say that the project of *Wittgenstein's Vienna* was really important for him for two reasons: the figure of Wittgenstein himself, and for Toulmin's own philosophical account of what we were up to in writing such a book in the first place.

ZARĘBSKI: Starting with the latter: in the ending section of *The Uses of Argument* (1958), he sketches – referring mainly to Collingwood – the idea of showing how logic works in the actual, historical contexts, of how concepts are built, employed, and developed against the background of profound cultural, social, also religious presuppositions (Collingwood's absolute presuppositions). In *Foresight and Understanding*, a shorter collection of Gifford Lectures issued in 1963, he tries to stipulate that idea by exploring, for example, the concept of force in Aristotle and Newton, etc. Finally, in *Human Understanding* (1972) he developed a vast theoretical account of concepts forming and developing, drawing mainly on the Darwinian idea of evolution, in which the shape and functioning of an organism depend on the environment it lives in; in a similar vein, ideas and concepts evolve and adapt to their proper context: social, cultural, institutional, etc. Now, would you agree that *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, which appeared in 1973, a year after *Human Understanding* was brought out, can be seen as the thorough embodiment of Toulmin's vision by the example of Wittgenstein in the context of Hapsburg Vienna? I guess the two books were being created more or less at the same time.

JANIK: They were. It's very hard to know what preceded what. The date of publication is more or less accidental. Toulmin had been working on *Human Understanding* for a very long time. And it didn't come out right – and never would. Look at Stephen's style from the late forties to his death, you see it changes after *Human Understanding* and later again after *Cosmopolis*. The second phase is difficult to read in stark contrast to the classical eloquence and lightness of the early works, including *Uses*. In the middle it's very hard to read. Later it's readable but (in my view) verbose and tiresome at its worst. Not that there are no lucidly trenchant parts of his last works but they have a way of being smothered in repetition. He had never been hard to read before, and that's what we come up to in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*: it is not hard to read. The problems in the middle really had to do with the fact that he had bitten more off than he could chew in undertaking the mammoth project of reforming the philosophy of science, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of history and even the sociology of knowledge as he once described the project to me. Instead of a great intellectual triumph, it became a cross for him to bear.

What was certainly important was to celebrate history and the role that history can play in the explanation of philosophical development. I remember that this was the thorn of contention between him and…

ZARĘBSKI: Nelson Goodman…

JANIK.: But that was the situation in every philosophy department in America. I mean, where one side or the other didn't have the upper hand there was bitter fighting for a long, long time after that about how and what people should learn when they learn philosophy. Should they learn history? Goodman said "No". Toulmin was on the other side, he was passionately on the other side, and *Wittgenstein's Vienna* now gave him a chance to show a subtle way to do that. So, in a way, it's the result of the thinking that went into *Foresight and Understanding*, but which was even earlier than that – earlier he gave these lectures at Columbia – and which came out in his work in philosophy of science. There, the historical background is so important. If you don't see it so clearly in Toulmin, look at his friend Hanson and his book *Patterns of Discovery*. And by the way, Toulmin said of Hanson's book: "The only thing I didn't like about that was the title. I want him to call it *Patterns of*

Explanation." Explanation – that's where he was, that's what he was concentrating upon as a philosopher, and, in that respect, even criticizing his friends. From beginning to end all of his work is in aid of equipping us to deal with the question of what is an adequate explanation for the matter under discussion.

ZARĘBSKI: You talk a lot about the general framework of the book. Was it outlined by you or by Toulmin? Or both of you?

JANIK: Let me explain this. After I left Vienna, I didn't go back to the United States. I went to visit Toulmin in Oxford. I spent a week at St. Catherine's College there with him. We spent the whole day, every day fighting about what we wanted to have in the book and more importantly how we wanted to present it. But I still until today don't understand why he was so fixed on the idea that there must be a long discussion of the problem of representation in the nineteenth century. Of course, representation was such a major issue in 19th-century philosophy. It was his baby but I had to do the groundwork… All day long for five days we talked about that and several other issues that were to be discussed in my dissertation, which was to be written as quickly as possible because we had signed a contract and were under the gun.

ZARĘBSKI: I guess it was a really special issue for Toulmin… His second book, *The Philosophy of Science* is devoted mostly to the question of the methods of representation in science. And I think there are some links between the problem of how language represents reality, which was, for Toulmin, the leading theme in *Tractatus*, and the problem of how science represents.

JANIK.: He was very keen on reviewing the books which were coming out from Wittgenstein; they only began coming out in the mid-60s, and one of the important ones was *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, which was a strange book because it seems to go all over the place. But he was very keen on the discussion there, all kinds of controversies with people about interpreting Wittgenstein's relation to the Vienna Circle, and that was the crucial thing there. If you want to understand Wittgenstein, you have to detach him from the Vienna Circle, because he was not part of it; he was doing something quite different, even though they look the same sometimes.

ZARĘBSKI: As to Wittgenstein as Toulmin's teacher, it seems that until 1969, when Toulmin published an extensive article on Wittgenstein in the journal *Encounter* he did not fully see the need to contribute to *Wittgensteinlehre*, although he probably realized that the author of *Tractatus* had been a unique and influential figure in contemporary philosophy. Toulmin only mentions or thanks him in his early books, which is scarcely different from the case in his later works. Would you call Toulmin a Wittgenstein scholar or researcher?

JANIK: I wouldn't call him a scholar or a researcher because, I mean, he had an interest in Wittgenstein research and Wittgenstein scholarship, but he was not the kind of guy who would go down and dig in the archives to get straight about Wittgenstein's *verba ipsissima* for their own sake. He would very happily meet with people, who did this kind of work, people like Alois Pichler. But it was not in his nature. He was a philosopher and he wanted to use the results of this kind of work. And he was very, very good at talking to people and stimulating them to do theirs.

ZARĘBSKI: In the article from *Encounter*, as well as in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, Toulmin suggests that some links between *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* would allow us to see the two books as closer than it may seem at first sight. Did Toulmin often distinguish between the first and the second Wittgenstein? Was this distinction vital for him?

JANIK: He wasn't particularly interested in that issue. He called attention to the fact that Wittgenstein hoped that his two works would be read together for a maximum of understanding. Well, we may say there is Wittgenstein number one and Wittgenstein number two, it was clear, and the second one didn't come out of nowhere; even von Wright wrote something similar about the later Wittgenstein in 1953 in his biographical sketch of Wittgenstein. But there was another problem: that looked like work without precedent in the history of philosophy since nobody was capable of looking at language the way that Wittgenstein did. That's why he had to fight to get his students simply to see. Well, in the meantime, we got to know a lot more history and may look to have been naïve then. Stephen was convinced that all of this came from the same author, the same person, the same mind in

which there could well have been various strains of thought in tensions with one another. But Stephen talked about such things in discussion with me, I never knew where many of these ideas came from, although they sounded as if they were true. For example, Toulmin maintained that Wittgenstein had a sort of positivistic phase around 1929 when he was about to come back to philosophy. And I don't know where he got that information, but he spoke about that with a great deal of certainty, at a time when there were no documents available; he must have picked that up in Cambridge. We never talked about where he got that thing, maybe I should have, but I was always puzzled about the way he talked about it. It's absolutely true that Wittgenstein had a positivistic phase, while there is very little evidence of the fact.

ZARĘBSKI: Right, I noticed that, in many of his books, Toulmin refers to Wittgenstein, he acknowledges him, and admits Wittgenstein's influence on him, though he rather rarely quotes his books. Yet, he uses some concepts that seem to be taken from Wittgenstein (such as 'modes of life' in *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, 1950, which resembles the concept of 'forms of life'); he recalls some of Wittgenstein's comments as well as drawings from his lectures (like the ones in *The Philosophy of Science*, 1953, that can also be found in the book edited in 1975 by Cora Diamond, *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics, Cambridge, 1939*, to which Toulmin contributed with his notes from the lectures he attended (despite the fact that he did not actually attend them in 1939, but in 1941 and later in 1946–1947); and he sometimes, it seems, analyses problems in a Wittgensteinian spirit, not referring to him at all, see the critique of theoretical philosophy and logical formalism in *The Uses of Argument*. Which of Wittgenstein's ideas influenced Toulmin's thought most, according to you?

JANIK: I wouldn't like to have to answer that question definitively. It was certainly less a matter of what Wittgenstein wrote than of what he said in Toulmin's presence. Toulmin wrote down much of what he *heard* from Wittgenstein directly into a large copybook that he would pull out and quote in philosophical discussion later in Oxford. Toulmin certainly understood what Wittgenstein was saying – because his writings are filled with substantial points from Wittgenstein but are not based on any other sources. And what was to come fairly early on,

certainly later than 1954–1955, is his discovering of Collingwood. And Collingwood for all these guys like Toulmin, MacIntyre (Toulmin gave MacIntyre his first job, they were colleagues at New York University, in the 1950s), right, Collingwood was an eye opener. And Collingwood was really esoteric in those days. But Toulmin read Collingwood and Wittgenstein together. And with Collingwood, it's easier to trace where the ideas come from because Collingwood was systematic in a way that Wittgenstein couldn't be. And then later, irrelevant to our discussion here, Toulmin came all of the way to Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose book on the nature of reasoning in common law inspired Toulmin as it had John Dewey earlier. Holmes was the grandfather of the Dewey-Toulmin Model of Reasoning. Pragmatism became increasingly important as Stephen became more American and associated himself more with American traditions, and also his family tradition – he never talked about it earlier, but later he was fond of reminding people, as he fondly put it, his great great great, etc. uncle, Harry Toulmin, had founded the first university west of the Appalachians in the 18th century. Thus he got more and more involved in American culture.

ZARĘBSKI: Well, but did Toulmin talk much about his encounters and relations with Wittgenstein? What were his more personal impressions and recollections of him?

JANIK: He said he was terrified at Wittgenstein. He didn't want to answer his questions. He didn't want Wittgenstein to know he was there. He wanted to hear Wittgenstein, but he didn't want to be seen by him. Because Wittgenstein asked people incredible questions that they could not answer, it was terribly embarrassing, often hurtful. I mean Wittgenstein had no idea of tact, he was brutal in his relationships with people around him. Because that's what he expected from himself, and that they should also submit themselves to the same kind of rigorous discipline that he had for himself, I mean to be a philosopher. And that's what it was all about for him. And the questions nobody else understood. How could they possibly take it over? But yeah, Stephen, he recognized this guy was the brilliant one, being on the right track, but he didn't want to be close to him. Because otherwise, on the other hand, he said, you would have to give up your own views. Wittgenstein, he would be so strong and press his views on you, so you would have

to become part of a kind of Wittgenstein group. He didn't like that. He was too individualistic to do it.

ZARĘBSKI: May I now ask something about pragmatism and Toulmin? Dewey appears first, in Toulmin, in *The Uses of Argument* (1958), and only once in this book, but later Toulmin was getting more and more enthusiastic about, and more involved in pragmatism. Are there any links between Wittgenstein and pragmatism in Toulmin's view?

JANIK: I mean he talked about being a pragmatist himself in a very, very loose sense. Not connected with anybody. And he never talked about Dewey when I was a student, that came after he wrote a preface to a new edition, a reprint of one of Dewey's books, *The Quest for Certainty*, but he might have had something to do with another of his books as well. But asked "Are you a pragmatist?" he said "yes", but, I mean, he was his own thinker and he didn't associate. He learnt from Wittgenstein but wouldn't consider himself a Wittgensteinian. I mean, only Collingwood is a different case: it's like a confession of faith. Because Collingwood…, well people had all kinds of stupid ideas about Collingwood. They were reading his views about the idea of history in a psychologistic sense, as though historians had to recreate the thoughts of historical figures. By the way, the thing that's been going through my head is that the first article that Toulmin ever gave me of his to read, which would be a preliminary text for working together – I mention it not because of the content, I didn't find anything terribly profound in it, but because of the wonderful title – was *From logical analysis to conceptual history*. He must have written it around 1966, it was a lecture he gave somewhere. And the title is good because that's how he saw the development of philosophy from Bertrand Russell to him. I mean he was committed by the mid-60s to conceptual history as a mode of doing philosophy. And what was good about Toulmin, what was wonderful about Toulmin, was that he didn't want what he was doing to be confused with what other people were doing in other fields. This was philosophy. This is a way of doing philosophy and you know, it's connected to logical positivism. Well, the connection's negative, but there is no alternative to philosophy. You know, I was very unhappy with Stephen, when the whole discussion around postmodernism came up. And he counted himself up with the postmodernists. Probably

there's something there, but my view was: "This is a mistake." That's another way of being modern. It's not post-anything but Stephen, by that time, he wasn't so critical of things like this as he might have been earlier. These are my views. Maybe, for example, Dick Schmitt, who could have talked about these things with Toulmin at great length, has different ones.

ZARĘBSKI: I'd like to ask about your professional relationship with Toulmin. You've already said a lot about it, but… You cooperated for many years, also working on *Introduction to Reasoning*. What was the characteristic of working with Toulmin? In what way did you influence each other?

JANIK: Well, I am a gatherer. I kind of collect, I gather all sorts of information and overwhelm people who disagree with me without the knowledge of facts. And Toulmin, again, was obsessed with the explanation: I mean, with how you use your data, how you put your data together, how you made it effective. And the idea was to make your data as effective as possible, as convincing as possible. And in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, I would go and collect forever. Somebody had to say: you better stop. And it had to be arbitrary and frustrating for me. But OK, if that had to be the case, that's all. When you're doing your dissertation, or something else, sometimes you have to stop. That means that if you don't stop, you'll never get a degree. So, that could be what I got from him. That's what I got from him in the sense of how to find the most efficient way of saying what I want to say, in terms of structures of reasoning. What he got from me, I'm not sure. I know a lot about the history of philosophy and he was very interested in that. I know an awful lot about Aristotle, for example, who was my great hero. I wasn't a Wittgensteinian because I was an Aristotelian, to begin with, but Aristotle, in his practical works, says more or less the same as what Wittgenstein says. Stephen relished being told about these things. What we talked about is that Aristotle invented the perspective used in the philosophy of *The Uses of Argument*. Well, Aristotle also invented the formal analysis. I mean, it is unbelievable that it was the same person – if it really was he, not one of his students. But when I first read *The Uses of Argument*, I said: "Oh, this is Aristotle's topic." One of the reviewers also made that point. And "Tell me about that" is a typical phrase of

Stephen's. If you said something interesting, he'd say "Tell me more about that." Since he was often very much alone in the academic world, he had no philosophical community behind him, even though he was, and died, as a known philosopher. He landed in all sorts of strange places in universities but seldom in the philosophy department. Philosophers kept their distance from him when they were not outright hostile. What could he have got from me? Lots of history of German thought as well as the Austria connection and lots of facts. I mean all the broad panoply of figures in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, for example, that he would have never researched on his own, but he was very happy that it was done. Pretty typical of how he worked with other people. I never got too far trying to criticize him, I did it occasionally later.

ZARĘBSKI: You mentioned that the main idea Toulmin was preoccupied with was searching for an adequate explanation. Could you tell me something more about that? Do you mean not only scientific explanation?

JANIK: It's very interesting. In Toulmin, you see movement from physics to philosophy and to ethics. And the focus is on reason. That was against the current, in the heyday of emotivism, with Stevenson, etc. Stephen comes from a very different perspective, a liberal perspective that there's something rational about it. And for all the other guys, which is crazy, there was nothing positive in ethics, because rationality has no room for ethics – as an area for giving reasons. But what we're doing is that we'll consider some reasons better than others. And then? So Stephen had that sense from the beginning. That's what you want to get at. Basically, it's not simply the scientist who gives reasons, but the scientist defends… his reasoning, his model. And he might give them up and change on the basis of criticism, et cetera. And this was something that they're all around, all the way through, for Stephen. How do you get a good explanation? How do you get a good explanation of Wittgenstein? And you need to take Vienna into account. He's always on that point, by the way.

Another very important point to me is that Stephen has collaborated with other writers. More than anyone I know in 20th-century philosophy. I mean the list of people who Toulmin worked with,

starting with June Goodfield in the history of science, Kurt Baier on questions of ethics, with me on Wittgenstein and Vienna, as well as with Albert R. Johnson on casuistry. I mean, Stephen worked with all sorts of people. Very, very few philosophers have collaborated with so many different people. But Stephen did. And that is a very important dialogical, pragmatist, dimension in his thinking. What we always emphasize about pragmatism is that it is social. Well, it's a way of looking at things going on in society, and how they function in society. And the collaboration was mostly successful and the books written in that collaboration are still sold, and still wonderful to read. He was a very, very gifted man. And putting what you are saying in the right context was the thing that gave him the right kind of wit. And so the idea of the adequate explanation comes along.

ZARĘBSKI: Well, I would also like to ask you about the role of Wittgenstein in your philosophical life and development.

JANIK: It's very hard because at different points I was appropriating different things from Wittgenstein. I don't know if I can say what I want to say here. But the profound thing about Wittgenstein, for everybody, is that the questions, the way we tend to formulate our questions normally, is probably dead wrong, it's probably totally distorting. How do you formulate a question – again it's a part of the explanation business. Well, think of a phenomenon like Donald Trump. Plenty of people hate him. It's easy. Some people love him. It's also easy. But neither one of these groups had any real reason for telling anybody else why they might accept their opinions. Everything about Wittgenstein is unconventional. Like, I mean our social world consists of conventions that we need to get through this world, but they're not ultimate, they're not forever and one has to be able to question the things that people consider to be self-evident. And that sometimes involves digging in strange places, and a language, how we speak about something. Well, there's a wonderful text somewhere in Wittgenstein that neither McGuinness nor I could find when we wanted to, but we know it existed, where Wittgenstein said later, in contrast to the *Tractatus*, that it wouldn't make any difference what a person did. What makes a difference is how that person spoke about it. That kind of quote involves a great deal of analysis, a great deal of thinking to see how it

might have been if it were different. It's not accepting the world in a naïve way. The naïve way is the wisdom of the world and Wittgenstein was always prepared to challenge that. Being a philosopher is not a job that you could work five days a week and then go home on Friday. It's there all the time, the problems, the puzzles. And from Wittgenstein I've taken a particular kind of skepticism… I was always disappointed because one of my other teachers at Brandeis was Richard Popkin, who wrote a history of skepticism; Popkin wrote about Wittgenstein, but it wasn't good in the way he wrote about Hume, Bayle, and Pascal. And it's interesting, by the way, to mention the name of Pascal. Von Wright, when he wrote his biographical sketch, noted that there were so many similarities between Wittgenstein and Pascal. Nobody ever picked that up. There is no book on Wittgenstein and Pascal that I am aware of. And Pascal is like Wittgenstein, I would say. He's a great mathematician, realizing that mathematics, in real life, is not what we want. It's not the answer. The lack of a literature on Wittgenstein and Pascal puzzled me very much. I mentioned the connection on a few occasions, and I found it very, very profound but others never reacted. Strange!

ZARĘBSKI: Finally, I would like to ask you a great question, the question about your own account of philosophy. In your biographical sketch "A Life with Wittgenstein", you mentioned that in opposition to many scholastically oriented scholars that focused on abstract problems and methods, you always found the practical world interesting, and crying for philosophical attention. In your career you have been engaging in many professional enterprises, both at universities and think tanks working on political strategy, but always as a philosopher. Could you explain what philosophy is for you?

JANIK: For me, the quickest way that would sum up my attitude to philosophy is that philosophy helps you to understand why things don't work, why the solutions we create don't hang on to the world, why it's so difficult to solve problems. This is not an attitude that I invented. I learnt that from Alasdair MacIntyre. I started off as a very young man before I even could spell the word "philosophy", then I realized that there was very little reflection in the world. People didn't reflect on what they did, people didn't think about abstract questions at all, say, honor, or something like that. And there was room for something that was very

different from ordinary activity, but crucial to the formation of the world we had to live in. And that's what to do with reflection. I mean, when I got into philosophy and started learning various approaches to philosophy. The one that caught me right away, that spoke to me, was the Aristotelian view of ethics. Namely, it's what you do and not what you say about what you do – that's important. How is action structured? It is from that perspective that being maybe 25 years old and learning, I was going in the direction that Wittgenstein overlaps with Aristotle in respect of the interpretation of action. People like Peter Winch and MacIntyre, also Toulmin, I mean we have agreed upon an awful lot as to the practice-oriented character of philosophy.

ZARĘBSKI: Where is the place of philosophy and philosophers today? And what is its relation to the practical sphere?

JANIK: Well, I mean philosophy is needed when things don't work. To help you understand why it's so difficult to get through this world. And that's, I mean, that there's about everything in different degrees. You stressed my activities in public with groups and the reason for that is that on your own you don't have much impact. You need to know from the beginning you're talking about a real problem, and that you need to know from other people. To have an impact, you need to be able to formulate your own ideas in a way that appeals to people, and that's not always so simple. It's very important to have an anchor in the world so I and Toulmin shared that, I mean working with others. I'll tell you an interesting story. When I was a student, one of my fellow students, I think we were in our first year in advanced studies in the history of ideas at Brandeis, said to Toulmin: "You know, the way you talk, you present the scope of understanding of human behavior, human activity, that reminds me of people like C. G. Jung and Teilhard de Chardin." And Toulmin said: "Well, I'm pleased you find it to be the case, but I don't like the company you put me in because these people talked too much about their views rather than putting them into practice." Stephen's and my approach is not to make great statements (this was long, long before *Cosmopolis*), not to make statements, but to work with people to help them to understand their problems better. And now Stephen worked with physicists, I mean all his work and philosophy of science; which was possible because he was continually talking to physicists and he

really liked that. The same with psychoanalysts; he spent a lot of time on psychoanalysis. With medical doctors; there's a center in New York, I don't know if you ever run across it…

ZARĘBSKI: The Hastings Center…

JANIK: Yeah, Hastings. Steven was almost the founder of that. People who started that, for example Daniel Callahan, had asked Stephen to participate in a discussion of Hastings and he's talking to people. He was very, very proud of this when I was a student. By the end of his life, it was much more making the big statement. And I found that contradictory to what Stephen stood for. When I met him, what made him interesting to me was this: "No, don't put me together with Jung, whom I admire very much, by the way, and Teilhard de Chardin, because what they do is too flashy and I want to get down to. I want to be down to earth all the time." And that's a very good goal. So we always do matter how far apart we got, we always had enough common ground, if we could always talk together, and we could always work together if it was necessary.

ZARĘBSKI: Thank you very much for the conversation.

JANIK: You're very, very welcome.

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Biographical notes

Allan Janik (1941), is a philosopher and historian of ideas. He is retired Senior Research Fellow of the Brenner Archives, Innsbruck University, and honorary professor of philosophy at the University of Vienna. His publications apart from *Wittgenstein's Vienna* include *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited*, *Assembling Reminders*, *Hitler's Favorite Jew: The Enigma of Otto Weininger*, *The Concept of Knowledge in Practical Philosophy* (in Swedish), Augenblicke (a study of skill formation in acting in German), *The Use and Abuse of Metaphor*, *Theater and Knowledge*, *Style, Politics and the Future of Philosophy,* as well as the study *Towards a New Philosophy for the EU.*

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