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## Karl Menger's unfinished biography of his father: New insights into Carl Menger's life through 1889

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KARL MENDER'S UNFINISHED BIOGRAPHY OF HIS FATHER:  
NEW INSIGHTS INTO CARL MENDER'S LIFE THROUGH 1889

BY REINHARD SCHUMACHER AND SCOTT SCHEALL

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# **Karl Menger's Unfinished Biography of His Father: New Insights into Carl Menger's Life through 1889**

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# **Karl Menger's Unfinished Biography of His Father: New Insights into Carl Menger's Life through 1889**

## ***Abstract***

*During the last years of his life, the mathematician Karl Menger worked on a biography of his father, the economist and founder of the Austrian School of Economics, Carl Menger. The younger Menger never finished the work. While working in the Menger collections at Duke University's David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, we discovered draft chapters of the biography, a valuable source of information given that relatively little is known about Carl Menger's life nearly a hundred years after his death. The unfinished biography covers Carl Menger's family background and his life through early 1889. In this article, we discuss the biography and the most valuable new insights it provides into Carl Menger's life, including Carl Menger's family, his childhood, his student years, his time working as a journalist and newspaper editor, his early scientific career, and his relationship with Crown Prince Rudolf.*

## ***Keywords***

Carl Menger, Karl Menger, Austrian Economics, Liberalism in Austria, Crown Prince Rudolf, Anton Menger

## Introduction

Carl Menger is known in economics as the father of the Austrian School and as one of the three founders, together with William Stanley Jevons and Léon Walras, of the theory of marginal utility. Given his prominent role in the history of economic thought, it is surprising that relatively little is known about his life. Indeed, to our knowledge, his full birth name has not even been published before: Carl Eberhart Anton Menger.

There are several reasons for this state of affairs. First, tributes for his 70th, 75th, and 80th birthdays, as well as obituaries published after his death in 1921, dealt mainly with his scientific accomplishments and offered few insights into his life or personality. Even friends did not know much about his biography. An associate as close as Friedrich von Wieser had to ask Menger's son (Wieser 1921) for background details to include in the two obituaries he wrote for Menger (Wieser 1929 [1921], 1929 [1923]). When F. A. Hayek, who did not know Menger personally, wrote a detailed biographical article on the founder of the Austrian School in the early 1930s (see Hayek 1934), he also relied on information obtained from Karl Menger (1984). Second, only a relatively small part of Menger's correspondence has survived. Karl reports that his father burned two large cartons containing most of his correspondence sometime around 1912, telling his son: "Here I am burning my biography." A third reason is that Karl kept what material his father had left and did not make it available to scholars. The younger Menger was aware of the value of this material and had plans, which never came to fruition, to publish some of his father's unpublished works.

Karl Menger was thoroughly familiar with his father's scientific contributions. He assisted his father with revising the *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre*, and was responsible for editing and publishing the posthumous second edition in 1923 (Scheall and Schumacher 2018). Karl included some biographical information about his father in the introduction to this edition, and described his plan to publish more of his father's unpublished works (K. Menger 1923). Possibly in connection with this plan, late in the 1920s, the younger

Menger contacted the municipal archivist of Eger (today's *Cheb*), ancestral home of the Menger clan, for information on his forebears (Siegl 1928a, 1928b). In the 1930s, while attending conferences in Poland and what was then Czechoslovakia, Karl visited places connected with his father's childhood and studied archival documents for details about his family.<sup>1</sup> However, no further material was published.

Later in life, Karl Menger returned to his father's history. The idea for a biography was not new. In 1981, he wrote to Gottfried Haberler that "[f]or several decades, our friend Hayek has been after me suggesting that I write an intellectual biography of [my father]" (K. Menger 1981). It was only in the late 1970s that Menger started taking Hayek's suggestion more seriously. Sometime in either 1977 or 1978, Menger approached the *Siebeck Verlag*, which had reprinted Carl Menger's *Gesammelte Werke* (*Collected Works*), to gauge their interest in a Menger biography. *Siebeck* declined (Zlabinger 1978), but Menger eventually found a press. The biography was intended to be published as part of the *International Carl Menger Library*, in conjunction first with *Philosophia Verlag* and later with the *Carl Menger Institut* in Vienna.<sup>2</sup> In the same letter to Haberler, Karl stated that he had started writing the biography in the spring of 1981. He circulated draft chapters for comments to Haberler, Hayek, and Herbert Fürth in the early 1980s.<sup>3</sup> By the mid-1980s, his friends were eager for

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Menger wrote a few anecdotes of these trips, which can be found in Box 33 of the *Karl Menger Papers*.

<sup>2</sup> The *Carl Menger Institut* was founded in 1985 and directed by Albert Zlabinger (see Zlabinger 1988). It survived only a few years. *The International Carl Menger Library* (re)printed works of Austrian economists and was founded by the *Philosophia Verlag*. Zlabinger was its editor-in-chief. After the *Carl Menger Institut* was founded, the *Institut* became joint editor of the *Library*.

<sup>3</sup> Zlabinger and Paul Silverman also read draft chapters at some point.

the book's publication, but Menger never managed to finish the biography, "in spite of efforts up to his last days with us," as his daughter Rosemary Menger Gilmore (1985) wrote in a letter to Haberler. Aware that he might not live long enough to finish the biography, given his deteriorating health, Menger made provisions, including a small fund (Menger-Hammond 1985), for the completion of the project. The task was assigned to Zlabinger, under the supervision of Hayek and Haberler, but was never completed.

Karl Menger's papers, together with his father's remaining materials, were eventually donated to Duke University by his daughter Eva Menger. It was here that we rediscovered the existing drafts of the younger Menger's unfinished biography of his father. The material from this unfinished biography allows us to close a few gaps in the story of Carl Menger's life.<sup>4</sup> However, many parts of Carl Menger's story remain to be told, if only because his son did not live long enough to tell them.

### **The Scope and Relevance of the Unfinished Biography**

The biography, such as it is in its unfinished state, comprises drafts of an introduction and thirteen chapters of varying degrees of completion. There are multiple drafts of every chapter but one. The latest versions of each chapter, which we have been able to identify, add up to nearly 200 pages of material, and cover Carl Menger's family history and life through January

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<sup>4</sup> To date, the most comprehensive study of Menger's life was offered by Margarete Boos (1986) in her doctoral thesis. Boos did not have access to the *Carl Menger Papers*. Yukihiro Ikeda's (1997) doctoral thesis on the genesis of Menger's *Grundsätze*, which did rely on the *Carl Menger Papers*, also deserves mention, though it covered only a limited period of Menger's life. Both of these doctoral theses were written in German and, thus, are of limited value to scholars not fluent in the language.

1889.<sup>5</sup> We reproduce a full accounting of the extant chapters and subchapters in the appendix. The unfinished biography ends with a chapter on Carl's relationship with Crown Prince Rudolf, who died in January 1889. There are two draft tables of contents for the full biography, apparently, as Karl intended it. He planned to include further chapters on the advent of the Austrian School of Economics, his father's methodology and the *Methodenstreit*, Austrian domestic policies in the 1880s, the state of the University of Vienna, the *valuta* regulations (Austria's currency reform in the 1890s and its adoption of the gold standard), Carl's work in the 1890s on money, and the dispute over the University of Salzburg.<sup>6</sup> We do not discuss these latter topics, which are not addressed in the existing draft chapters.

The unfinished biography is written in German. Many chapters are themselves incomplete or in draft form. The goal of the present paper is to provide an overview of the content of the biography and to make the information accessible to English-speaking scholars. Karl's biography, though unfinished, provides many new insights into his father's life. If no other reference information is given in the text below, the source material is Karl Menger's

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<sup>5</sup> The majority of existing drafts can be found in Box 28 of the *Karl Menger Papers*.

Additionally, there are drafts in Boxes 11, 26, 36, 41, 42, 48 of the *Karl Menger Papers*, Box 21 of the *Carl Menger Papers*, and Box 24 of the *Gottfried Haberler Papers* at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

<sup>6</sup> There are no drafts of these planned chapters apart from two short documents that might have been intended for the later part of the book: first, a one-page draft on the development of the Austrian school, and second, a two-page draft on the relationship of Carl Menger to Hermine Andermann, Karl's mother, which indicates that Karl might have planned to discuss their relationship in the biography as well. On the relationship of Carl Menger and Hermine Andermann, see Scheall and Schumacher (2018).



unfinished biography. Unless noted, all English quotations are our own translations. When appropriate, we refer to the existing secondary literature, relevant correspondence, and contemporary newspaper articles to confirm, falsify, or qualify parts of the biography, and to add details and context.

Karl relied on three major sources in composing the biography. First, he relied on his own memory. Carl often talked about his personal history with his son. They had a close relationship (Scheall and Schumacher 2018). But, Karl was only nineteen years old when his father died and sixty years passed before he began writing the biography, so Menger relied on his own memory only to a small degree and mainly to recount family anecdotes. Second, Karl relied on what remained of his father's papers. These papers, including a diary, some correspondence that had been spared from the flames, and several notebooks, were his most important sources.<sup>7</sup> Some of the source material that Menger cites is not part of the *Carl Menger Papers*. It may either be in the possession of his descendants or have gone missing, which makes the unfinished biography even more valuable. Third, Menger did some supplementary research into his father's life. We know from Karl's correspondence that he approached the *Wiener Zeitung* in 1979 to ask if their archives encompassed the time when his father worked for the newspaper (Stiegler 1979) and, as mentioned above, we know that he consulted the municipal archivist of Eger. Unfortunately, however, he did not provide many references to his sources, so we are not able to determine what other material he might have consulted.

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<sup>7</sup> Beginning in March 1875, Carl Menger kept a diary for a short time that included a brief outline of his life to that point. He stopped regularly keeping a diary early in 1889 and added only a few keywords between 1889 and 1893. This diary is part of the *Carl Menger Papers* (C. Menger 1875-1893).

Most sons in Menger's position would be worried about how their father was seen and judged by posterity, and Karl was no exception. Thus, in the first instance, the present paper tells the story that Karl Menger wanted to tell about his father's life. We try to point out below where Karl might have, intentionally or not, glossed the story a bit in ways not supported by the evidence. We verified his claims as far as possible and comment below on their veracity, as appropriate.

Despite its unfinished condition, the biography is a valuable resource. It provides new information on the relevant periods of Carl Menger's life and includes transcriptions of sources not included in the *Carl Menger Papers*. In his introduction, Karl notes that the biography should be of value not only to those "interested in economics, methodology and philosophy or dealing with the development of theoretical economic ideas, but also to historians with a broad spectrum of interests, that is, to a broad and varied readership."

The unfinished biography is also a fascinating artifact of the Mengers' place in the history of economic thought. It is rather unusual that a son, himself a successful and influential scholar, should attempt a biography of a father considered a revolutionary figure in the field. Karl Menger seemed alive to the uniqueness of his biographical endeavour. In the introduction to the biography, Menger reflects on his relationship with his famous father, who was already 61 years-old when he was born.<sup>8</sup> He writes that their relationship became especially close during his school years.<sup>9</sup> Carl would regale the boy with vivid stories about his own childhood and student years, his relationship with Crown Prince Rudolf, his large library, and his academic career. Karl claims to have possessed a detailed understanding of his

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<sup>8</sup> Karl mistakenly writes that his father was 62 years old when he was born.

<sup>9</sup> Karl lived alone with his mother, Hermine Andermann, in his early years. His father lived nearby. Only in 1912 or 1913, when Karl was around ten years old, did the family move together to a new home (Scheall and Schumacher 2018, p. 651).

father's life when the senior Menger died in 1921 and to have retained this knowledge throughout his own life.

Karl uses the introduction to the biography to counter some misimpressions, for which he partially blames his father. According to his son, it was one of Carl Menger's idiosyncrasies that he would not allow his main works to be reprinted or, in the case of the *Grundsätze*, even translated. Only two translations of the *Grundsätze* appeared during his lifetime: one in Russian that he could not prevent and an Italian translation that he agreed to only after much cajoling. The reason for this hesitancy was Carl's repeatedly postponed and never completed plan to revise his works. The fact that his father's main writings were long unavailable, Karl argues, led to some misrepresentations of his views, since these become widely known primarily through the intermediation of his two most famous acolytes, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk and Friedrich von Wieser. Karl does not explicitly mention it, but his father's obituary of Böhm-Bawerk (C. Menger 1915) shows that there were significant disagreements concerning matters of theory among Carl Menger and his immediate followers.

According to Karl, his father's socio-political views were misinterpreted even during the elder Menger's own lifetime. Archduke Albrecht, a military advisor to Emperor Franz Josef, called Carl a socialist. He was occasionally described as a *Kathedersozialist* (a "socialist of the chair"), a pejorative term for members of the German historical school who favoured national social policies. Some of the *Kathedersozialisten*, in contrast, disparagingly described him as a Manchester liberal, while some social democrats considered him a dogmatic liberal and a toady for the interests of the capitalist class, who lacked all compassion for the disadvantaged. According to his son, however, all of these labels and accusations were unfair. Carl Menger always championed the poor, especially in his journalistic writings. Karl describes his father's main scholarly ambition as the realization of a value-free economic science, "long before others, especially Max Weber, declared this attitude a scholarly duty."

Menger also uses the biography's introduction to counter a more recent interpretation of his father as an Aristotelian. Karl argues that his father quoted Aristotle in the *Grundsätze* only to disagree with him. There is no evidence, Karl adds, that indicates a very profound Aristotelian influence on his father and much that argues against it. Karl does not name the target of this criticism, but it was probably aimed at either Emil Kauder (1957, 1959, 1961, 1962, 1965) or Murray Rothbard (1976), both of whom had offered Aristotelian interpretations of Menger in the years just before the biography was written. Incidentally, Hayek concurred with Karl's assessment of this issue in a letter to the younger Menger, calling Menger *père* "as anti-Aristotelian as is possible," explicitly criticizing Kauder (Hayek n. d., our translation).<sup>10</sup>

### **Carl Menger's Parents**

The biography begins with Karl's story of his paternal grandparents.<sup>11</sup> Anton Menger, Carl Menger's father, was born in 1795 in Lviv (*Lemberg*), where his own father, also named Anton, moved from Cheb (*Eger*) in the wake of Austrian efforts to Germanize the newly acquired lands following the first partition of Poland.<sup>12</sup> The Menger family qualified as

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<sup>10</sup> For more on Menger's (non-)Aristotelianism, see Crespo (2003). A rejection of the interpretation of Menger as an Aristotelian is also given by Karl Milford (1989).

<sup>11</sup> All information in this section is taken from the unfinished biography.

<sup>12</sup> Carl's paternal lineage can be traced back to the Middle Ages. The Mengers were originally from Alsace. In 1301, Heinrich Menger served, carrying his flag and coat of arms, as captain in the army of Albrecht I during the siege of the western German city of Bingen. In 1633, during the Thirty Years' War, a young shoemaker named Bartholomäus Menger moved from Germany to Cheb. Born in 1744, Anton Menger, Carl's grandfather, was Bartholomäus's great-grandson.

untitled nobility and was allowed a coat of arms (*Burgher arms*). It is unclear when, or for what reason, the family was granted the title “von Wolfensgrün.”

The first Anton Menger died young and his Hungarian wife Anna (née Müller) was left destitute. So it was that Carl’s father, the second Anton Menger, his brother and two sisters, spent most of their childhoods with relatives in Cheb. Anton joined Napoleon’s army, but after Waterloo, he pursued legal studies and became a judicial clerk in Bohemia for a short time, before moving back to Galicia. There he became a civil servant. Later, in Krynica, Anton became a legal advisor and, eventually, mayor of Stary Sącz (*Alt-Sandez*).

Carl’s mother, Eva Caroline Gerżabek, was born in the Bohemian town of Vysoké Mýto (*Hohenmaut*) on Christmas Eve 1814 to Josef and Therese (née Kalaus) Gerżabek. Josef Gerżabek owned a general store and a farm. He had made a fortune speculating on colonial goods when Great Britain introduced the Colonial Blockade in 1806. Caroline, Carl’s mother, had a difficult childhood, which she nearly did not survive, thrice being covered in a shroud, as was common for a person believed to be near death. She later spent a year as an exchange student with a German family in Moravia and attended a school in Prague. By that time, her father’s wealth had grown so large that he could retire as a country squire. He purchased a crown estate in Western Galicia, consisting of five villages and a manor house in Maniowy. Caroline moved there with two younger siblings in early 1830.<sup>13</sup> Though the estate was initially in something of a rundown condition, the Gerżabeks successfully turned it around.

It was at this manor house that Carl’s parents met for the first time. In early 1833, Anton Menger made a trip to the Pieniny with friends. On their way home, they were overtaken by darkness and looked for shelter in the village of Maniowy, where they were taken in by Josef Gerżabek. Anton was charmed by Caroline and visited Maniowy regularly from then on. However, Anton had a rival for Caroline and, on one of these trips, was stabbed

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<sup>13</sup> Two older brothers lived in Prague at the time.

with a hunting dagger and left for dead. He survived and was brought to the manor house, where he convalesced over the course of six weeks. After his recovery, he asked for Caroline's hand. They married in spring 1833. They soon moved to Nowy Sącz (*Neu-Sandez*) in the Austrian Crown land of Galicia and Lodomeria, in today's Southern Poland, where Anton began working as an advocate. Anton and Caroline had ten children, four of whom died in childhood and six of whom survived to maturity: three sons, Maximilian (Max), Carl, and Anton, and three daughters, Bertha, Marie, and Caroline.

Carl Menger was born around noon on February 23, 1840, in Nowy Sącz. He was named after his father's cousin, Major Carl Menger, who was close to Anton during the latter's youth in Cheb. Major Carl Menger had served in the Viennese Voluntary Battalion during the Napoleonic Wars and fought at the Battles of Aspern-Essling and Wagram in 1809. Since Major Carl Menger was not able to attend the baptism, Carl's godparents were Josef Gerżabek, his maternal grandfather, and Therese Gerżabek, Caroline's youngest sister and Carl's aunt.

Shortly after Carl's birth, his father moved to the Silesian city of Biała, while his wife and children moved to Maniowy for some time, where Carl's brother Anton was born in 1842. The family soon joined father Anton in Biała, but their time there was ill-fated. Shortly after arriving, Josef, the oldest Menger son, died from diphtheria at age eight. As a pious Catholic in predominantly Protestant Silesia, the family patriarch struggled to find clients (see also Grünberg 1909, pp. 30-1). Three years of bad harvests led to a quadrupling of prices, which affected the family directly, but also meant lower demand for legal services. Some financial relief was brought when Anton purchased a plot of land on which the first cloth mill in the industrializing region was built.

According to his son, Carl Menger had two dominant memories of childhood in Biała. In 1846, possibly encouraged by bad harvests, the Galician peasantry revolted against their oppressive lords and against serfdom more generally. As was common in Galicia, socage

prevailed on Carl's grandparents' estate in Maniowy, 120 km away from Biała. The Menger family worried about the fate of Carl's grandparents until a wayfarer traveling from Maniowy one day brought compliments and news from the Gerżabeks. There had been rioting around Maniowy, but their estate was spared. Indeed, in gratitude for their good treatment, the peasants of the estate had established a guard to protect the family against possible attacks from peasants of neighboring estates. Carl Menger remembered this joyful day throughout his life. He also kept memories of watching his father work in a smoky law office that included a library.<sup>14</sup> Carl would often say that his father was his only intellectual influence during his childhood. Unfortunately, Anton senior fell ill with pneumonia in 1847. He had been invited to serve as a Galician representative to the Frankfurt Parliament, established in the wake of the 1848 Revolutions, but his health was too weak. He died on August 1, 1848. Caroline had to manage family affairs on her own from this time forward. Though she possessed only modest means, she did this in a way that Carl admired for the rest of his life.

Carl and his siblings often visited their maternal grandparents' estate in Maniowy. After their father's death, these trips became more frequent and lasted longer. These visits to his grandparents' estate made a lasting impression on Menger. He became familiar with agricultural management and the economic work of peasants, craftsmen, and merchants.

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<sup>14</sup> Late in life, Carl stated that this library included around 4,000 volumes, most of them legal treatises, but also many historical and economic works. Carl claimed that before they were ten years old, he and his brothers were reading with interest the works of Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, Louis Say, David Ricardo, James Maitland (Earl of Lauderdale), Gottfried Hufeland, and others (quoted in Feilbogen 1911, p. 56n).

## Early Student Years

Apparently relying primarily on his father's diary, Karl retraces his school years. Between 1843 and 1851, Carl Menger attended first elementary school (two *Elementarklassen* and three *Normalklassen*) then middle school (*Realschule*) in Biała. Though a good student, he repeated the second year of *Realschule* voluntarily. Karl suspects that he was too young to be sent away to a German-language Gymnasium, such as Caroline wanted her sons to attend. In autumn 1851, Carl and his older brother Max departed for a Catholic Gymnasium in Cieszyn (*Teschen*), 30 kilometers west of Biała. Their younger brother Anton followed a year later. In Cieszyn, Carl lived with so-called "Kostfrauen," women who provided meals and lodging to pupils.

According to his son, Carl took his Gymnasium studies seriously and their influence lasted. Humanistic Gymnasiums of the era focused on ancient languages and classical literature. Carl learned Latin, Greek, French, and, rare for the time, English, though he might have learned the last outside of school. According to his son, it was during this time that Carl acquired the style that came to characterize his writings: clear and precise, but a bit cumbersome and repetitious.

Given Menger's well-known rejection of mathematical methods in economics, Karl, the mathematician son, saw fit to comment at some length on his father's mathematical education. Karl himself wrote two articles about the relationship between Austrian marginalism and mathematical economics, adopting the position – unsurprising for one of the fathers of methodological tolerance (Carnap 2002 [1934], p. 52) – that mathematical methods and Austrian economists' rejection of them are each appropriate, in different scientific contexts, for the analysis of unique economic problems (K. Menger 1972, 1973). According to Karl's account, his father was a good mathematics student and studied the subject with



interest.<sup>15</sup> He tutored at least one other pupil, the son of one of his hosts. Yet, the mathematical curriculum at Carl's school addressed nothing that was not known already in the sixteenth century. Young Carl learned simple geometry, read Euclid's "Elements," was taught the basic elements of trigonometry, common but not natural logarithms, and basic algebra. He was taught neither analytical geometry nor calculus. This was a typical mathematical education in Austria (and, thus, for potential Austrian economists) at the time.

According to Karl, all three brothers felt constrained by the strict Catholic Gymnasium in Cieszyn. Despite their family's piety, they were dubious of religion from early youth and devoured freethinking literature. The brothers all left school without religious beliefs.

After six years in Cieszyn, Carl transferred to Opava (*Troppau*), capital of the Austrian Crown land of Silesia. His brother Anton had moved there a year earlier. Karl reports that, in Opava, Carl and Anton spent much time in the public library, reading Enlightenment-era philosophy. A pamphlet paper that Carl wrote at the time against a logic teacher named Jahn – which, unfortunately, does not survive – shows that his predilection for authority-challenging polemics was acquired early. Carl left Opava after only a year, at the same time that Anton returned to Cieszyn.<sup>16</sup>

Carl went to Krakow, the cultural center of Poland, for his last year of school. According to Karl, his father took a keen interest in the Polish national hero Tadeusz

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<sup>15</sup> Later in life, Carl Menger stated that, in addition to philosophy and ethnography, mathematics was always among his favorite subjects (quote in Feilbogen 1911, p. 57n).

<sup>16</sup> Back in Cieszyn, Anton became embroiled in a controversy with his religion teacher. Anton argued that God's righteousness could not be reconciled with the claim that unbaptized children do not go to heaven. Anton was expelled when he refused to affirm the dogma demanded by the school authorities (Grünberg 1909, pp. 31-2).

Kościuszko, who had fought against the partition of Poland and later with George Washington's army in the American Revolutionary War. Carl wrote a poem lionizing him.

In spring 1859, Carl finished his Gymnasium education, graduating *cum laude*.

### **Carl Menger as a University Student**

After graduation, Carl followed his brother Max to Vienna to study law, but Carl left the city after just one academic year. Karl states that the reasons for his father's quick departure are unclear. However, Yukihiro Ikeda (1997, pp. 25, 9-30) suggests that it was a common practice in Austria at the time to change university after the first year. In 1860, Menger moved to Prague to continue his studies at the *Carolinum* (Charles University). According to Karl, the lectures of Alois von Brinz on Roman law made an impression on Menger and he took his first state exam (*erste Staatsprüfung*) in the subject, achieving *cum laude*. A discussion of the classes Menger attended both at Vienna and Prague can be found in Ikeda (1997, pp. 26-40). In Prague, Carl attended economics classes, including three courses taught by German economist Peter Mischler.<sup>17</sup>

While in Prague, according to his son, Carl Menger joined a *Studentenverbindung* (fraternity),<sup>18</sup> drank beer, learned to fence, and participated in *Mensuren* (fencing events held by fraternities). Menger was a good fencer with a competitive streak, who won most of his matches. He was once lightly struck on the face with a foil, which left him with a scar barely

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<sup>17</sup> Karl seems not to have known this. He apparently had no record from the university archives in Vienna and Prague. The information he reproduces in the biography is drawn from his father's diary. On Mischler as Menger's economics teacher, see Ikeda (1997, pp. 38-40, 90-116) and Streissler (1990a, pp. 179-80; 1990b).

<sup>18</sup> He changed fraternities three times during his stay in Prague, according to his son, who, however, does not mention which fraternities.

visible on his left nasal wing. Although Karl does not note this, students were often keen on getting such dueling scars, called *Schmiss*, which were considered a badge of honor. Karl also reports that his father participated in *Kommerse* (feasts organized by fraternities). At one such feast in 1862, held in honor of the deceased Ernst Moritz Arndt, a German nationalist writer who fought against Napoleon's occupation of Germany, Menger gave a short memorial address, in which he described Germany as "our beloved fatherland." Soon after arriving in Prague, according to his son, Carl became involved with German nationalism for a time. He drafted an essay, which his son possessed, praising German students and depicting Czech students pejoratively. Carl's flirtation with German nationalism, however, lasted only as long as his stay in Prague, according to his son.

He also belonged to the *Lese- und Redehalle*, the "Reading and Debating Society" of German students in Prague.<sup>19</sup> It was a German-nationalist but also a liberal organization. Menger actively participated, giving at least one speech during an assembly of the *Lesehalle*. He also drafted a statute for the *Redehalle*, which at the time had been closed down by the authorities (Čermák 2006, pp. 36-7).<sup>20</sup> The statute apparently never came into force.

According to Karl, his father kept a notebook at this time in which he jotted various musings. As a 22-year old student in May 1862, he wrote down what his son would later call his first scientific notes. Karl discusses these notes in some detail in the biography. They mainly concerned philosophical topics like perception (*Wahrnehmung*), language, and philosophical method. Carl had studied Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in Opava, according to his son. In his notebook, Carl wrote about wanting to develop his "system" and

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<sup>19</sup> The *Lesehalle* consisted mainly of a library, while the *Redehalle* focused on lectures, debates, exhibitions, and theatrical performances. For details and a history of the *Lese- und Redehalle*, see Čermák (2006).

<sup>20</sup> Carl Menger's draft of the statute can be found in the *Carl Menger Papers* (Box 23).

distinguishing it from those of other philosophers of the era, especially the post-Kantian German philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Johann Friedrich Herbart, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. For our present purposes, given Karl's own philosophical views and his association with the Vienna Circle of Logical Positivism, it is interesting to note his conclusions regarding his father's philosophical ideas, which "contain clear anticipations of later [Austrian] philosophy: the epistemological, anti-metaphysical character of his sketch, his treatment of the problem of other minds (*Fremdpsychisches*) and of [the logic of] negation, the reference to language, criticism of language and natural sciences, and the rejection of systems other than a system that rejects systems."

Following these philosophical reflections are three notes concerning economics and sociology, also written in spring 1862. Karl reproduces them in full. These notes discuss *free trade*, *communism*, and *money*. Carl argues that free trade is beneficial to both buyers and sellers, but not necessarily to the state or society – whole groups of workers might be harmed as a result of free trade. He concludes that a state should consider whether free trade will be beneficial before making a policy of it.<sup>21</sup> The second note rejects the possibility of communism, defined as the equal distribution of the results of production, because of its consequences, including the birth of too many children, inadequate incentives to work, and the impossibility of a socialist state existing among non-socialist states. The third note refutes the idea that money might be worth less in one country than in another.

Karl assesses these notes as hastily composed and immature, but that they show his father was thinking about economic matters early on. Regarding these notes, Haberler, in

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<sup>21</sup> It seems that Menger maintained this position in later years, but his son does not discuss this. In a newspaper article written on the occasion of Friedrich List's centenary, Menger (1889) argued that List was right to argue for protective tariffs given Germany's political and economic circumstances at the time.

response to Karl's request for comments, wrote that "[i]t is not so much the concrete content, but the general approach to the problems that is remarkable. The notes show that Carl Menger at an early age was aware of all the complexities of the problems and shunned facile simplifications, [an attitude] characteristic of his later works. Also, the individualism, so typical of the Austrian school, is already in evidence" (Haberler 1981). According to his son, Menger apparently made no further scientific notes for the next five years.

Meanwhile, his studies at Charles University drew to a close. However, in his last year, 1862/63, he became embroiled in a dispute with the dean of the faculty of law and professor for Austrian law, František Xaver Schneider. In the unfinished biography, Karl reproduces a polemic that his father wrote against Schneider. The dispute, which turned on the proper interpretation of Austrian study regulation – Menger criticized Schneider for a pedantic interpretation – was vicious and drew in other professors; however, the outcome of the dispute is unknown.

By July 1863, his son reports, Carl had attended all lectures required for a doctorate of law, but did not sit for the required oral exams (*Rigorosen*). Karl assumes that the dispute with Schneider was the reason for this.

### **Journalistic Career**

Apparently based primarily on Carl Menger's diary, the next chapter of the unfinished biography deals with his move into journalism.<sup>22</sup> A new press law that abolished strict censorship came into effect around the time that his father finished his studies, Karl notes,

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<sup>22</sup> Kiichiro Yagi (1992) and Ikeda (1997, pp. 41-65) also discuss Menger's journalistic contributions.

which led to the founding of dozens of newspapers.<sup>23</sup> Menger first worked at a newspaper, the *Tagesbote aus Böhmen*, a pro-German paper, while still a student in Prague in the spring of 1862.

Carl moved to Lviv (*Lemberg*) in August 1863 to become a junior editor of the official *Lemberger Zeitung*. The newspaper went bankrupt in October 1864. According to his son, during these months in Lviv, Menger corresponded with other German and Austrian newspapers, and was eventually offered a job at Vienna's *Botschafter*. The *Botschafter* was a semi-official paper, founded by the liberal government of Anton von Schmerling to support its centralistic position (Paupié 1960, p. 129).<sup>24</sup> However, Menger's time at the *Botschafter* was again of short duration. In late July 1865, Schmerling's government was forced to resign and five years of liberal rule came to an end. As Karl notes, "liberal-minded Austrians would later wistfully look back at this time," idealizing it as the liberal golden age. A conservative government lead by Richard Belcredi came to power and the *Botschafter* closed. Carl then transferred to the right-liberal Vienna newspaper *Die Presse*, which also supported a centralistic policy (Paupié 1960, pp. 134-8).

Around this time, Karl reports, his father and uncles agreed to renounce their hereditary untitled nobility and drop the suffix *von Wolfensgrün* from the family name. Their political views made them uncomfortable with this title. All three were convinced democrats.

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<sup>23</sup> The new law came into effect in Cisleithania in December 1862 (K. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei 1869).

<sup>24</sup> "Centralistic" in the sense of advocating for a centralized system of governance in the Austrian Empire (usually under German leadership), as opposed to a decentralized one, in which the different nationalities of the multiethnic state would have more power. This is not to be confused with "centrist" in the sense of being politically moderate *per se*.

Carl and Max were liberals and Anton a non-Marxian socialist.<sup>25</sup> Karl argues that this decision might have been prompted by questions about the legitimacy of the title, the origin of which was unknown. According to his son, Carl was embarrassed whenever his nobility was mentioned.

Menger quit *Die Presse* after a short period to found his own newspaper, “a truly democratic paper for the masses,” according to his son. In November 1865, Menger applied to the police authority for a permit to open a newspaper, submitted a program, and paid the required deposit. As Menger noted in his diary, he also had a long discussion with Minister-President Belcredi, whom he promised to support, at least until the constitution was restored.<sup>26</sup> On November 11, Menger received a permit to begin publishing the *Wiener Tagblatt*. The first issue appeared on November 26, 1865, with Menger’s name on the masthead as editor-in-chief (*Herausgeber*) and that of his former *Die Presse* colleague, Ignaz von Lackenbacher as managing editor (*Für die Redaktion verantwortlich*).<sup>27</sup>

According to Karl, the *Wiener Tagblatt* was a huge success. Its circulation grew rapidly, progressively increasing to 35,000 in February 1866. Karl suggests that this success was mostly due to its low price and its appeal to a broad audience. The price of the *Tagblatt*

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<sup>25</sup> On Carl Menger’s liberalism, see Ikeda (2010); on Max Menger’s liberalism, see Yagi (1991); on Anton Menger’s socialism, see Grünberg (1909).

<sup>26</sup> The Belcredi government had suspended the so-called February constitution, which the liberal government had introduced in 1861. The dispute was mainly about centralism and federalism in the Austrian empire. Belcredi was unpopular in liberal circles. Karl reports that Max Menger, in his own diary, took his brother to task for having a discussion with Belcredi at all.

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps based on a misreading of an entry in Menger’s diary, Yagi (1992, p. 97) incorrectly gives November 24, 1865, as the date of the first issue.

was 1 Neukreuzer, which matched the state levy on privately-published newspapers. Papers that paid the levy were marked with a newspaper stamp. The *Tagblatt's* price meant that advertising was the paper's sole source of revenue. The editors' goals for the paper were described in a letter to readers published in the first issue. The *Tagblatt* was meant to serve the public's need for an inexpensive, yet intelligible, newspaper – like similar papers published at the time in Munich, London, and Paris – and the paper's low price was meant to appeal to, and so to help educate, the masses. According to Karl, the *Tagblatt* frequently discussed social problems from the perspective of the disadvantaged and regularly championed their interests. Karl gives some examples of this. The *Tagblatt* suggested a market hall for the poor where food could be purchased at discounted prices and advocated for the establishment of public libraries. The paper lamented that the unemployed were without a political lobby, argued for prison reform, and criticized the requirement that a senior lawyer appear on a defendant's behalf in court, a rule that often made it hard for poor people to win their cases. The *Wiener Tagblatt* criticized rival Viennese newspapers for their apparent lack of interest in the problems of the working class. Karl indicates that his father endorsed these positions. It is unclear which articles Menger might have penned himself. As was common at this time, the authors of an article are not identified in the paper. As editor-in-chief, however, it is reasonable to assume that he contributed frequently and agreed in the main with the positions defended in the paper.

Karl reports that, despite its growing readership, by early 1866, the *Wiener Tagblatt* was in dire financial straits. His father resisted calls to increase the paper's price. However, with its rather supportive view of the government and its high circulation, the *Tagblatt* was



valuable to the government itself.<sup>28</sup> This led to the government's decision to acquire the newspaper and finance its operations.<sup>29</sup>

Citing an official letter, Karl shows that the government was aware of his father's journalistic talent and hoped to both retain Menger as editor of the *Tagblatt* and bring him over to its official organ, the *Wiener Zeitung*. Carl accepted both positions, taking over the economics section of the *Zeitung*.

Karl describes how his father frequently claimed later in life that he had gained his major economic insights, especially regarding price theory, which led him to the *Grundsätze*, by studying market reports and stock lists while writing for the *Wiener Zeitung*. This claim was repeated by Wieser (1929 [1923], p. 117). However, more recent research indicates that this story is an exaggeration, if not a fiction. Already in his comparatively early biographical reflection, Hayek (1934, p. 398) raised doubts about the specifics of the tale. In tracing the genesis of Menger's *Grundsätze*, Ikeda (1997, p. 59) showed that his ideas developed later, calling the stock-market report and inventory list story a "myth."

Tired and ill, Carl Menger left both newspapers around September 1866 to take a vacation. Looking back at this episode in old age, he told his son with a smile and no apparent regret that he could easily have become a millionaire had he continued his journalistic career.

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<sup>28</sup> While several Viennese newspapers harshly criticized Belcredi's government, according to Karl, the *Wiener Tagblatt* argued against unfair attacks on the conservative government.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Menger states the *Wiener Tagblatt* first appeared unstamped and without Menger's name on the masthead on February 26, 1866. However, this is incorrect. The first such issue was published on either February 28 or March 1, 1866. The February 28, 1866 edition is missing from the Austrian National Library, the only institution (to our knowledge) that retains copies of the *Tagblatt*.

## Early Scientific Work

His vacation was cut short because of a cholera outbreak that prevented travel to Italy.

Returning to Vienna. Carl rented a flat with Anton. The brothers would live together for the next four years. Carl also decided to take the examinations required to receive his doctorate, albeit not at the Charles University in Prague, but at the University of Cracow, where Anton had matriculated.<sup>30</sup> On March 19, 1867, Carl Menger became a Doctor of Law (Dr. Jur.).

According to his son, after returning from his shortened vacation, Menger joined the law office of a former colleague from the *Botschafter*, Georg Granitsch, where Anton had worked since 1865.<sup>31</sup> He also started writing scientific ideas in his notebooks again.<sup>32</sup>

From late 1866 until mid-1867, Carl's notes, which fill one whole notebook, addressed only literary matters, including books read and theatrical performances attended.<sup>33</sup> Another notebook, titled *Geflügelte Worte* (dictums), was started in 1867. This notebook includes further literary notes, some notes on foreign countries and a few aphorisms, including one that predicts the institution of marriage would slowly corrode and that free love would be the way

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<sup>30</sup> Karl does not provide any details about his father's examinations, but Ikeda (1997, pp. 60-5) reports on the four oral examinations, which took place in March 1865, August 1865, January 1867, and March 1867.

<sup>31</sup> For information on Granitsch, see Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (1959, p. 47).

<sup>32</sup> These notebooks can be found in the *Carl Menger Papers* at Duke. Ikeda (1995, 1997) and Yagi (1993) have analyzed parts of the notebooks, especially those relating to Menger's economic thinking.

<sup>33</sup> Karl devotes four chapters of the biography to his father's early scientific work and this section is based on these four chapters.

of the future. According to his son, this is one of very few occasions that Carl ever wrote of romantic or sexual matters.

These notes are followed by philosophical reflections, which are among the most important indications of Menger's pre-*Grundsätze* thought. In June 1867, he outlined the plan for a philosophical work titled "Critique of Metaphysics and Pure Reason from an Empirical Standpoint" (*Kritik der Metaphysik und der reinen Vernunft vom empirischen Standpunkte*). He wanted the book to be a "touchstone of intelligence," growing more complicated with each step of the argument, meaning that "the further one is able to read, the more intelligent" one is. The project seems never to have developed beyond the outline stage. However, his son considered these brief notes quite suggestive of later developments in Austrian philosophy. Carl Menger's philosophy was "for its time, remarkably un-speculative," avoiding any hint of metaphysics. He "condemned all so-called a priori cognitions, which are not actually empirical propositions or plainly false expressions, as meaningless combinations of words," which his son thought anticipated "one of the main theses of logical positivism." Karl argued that some of his father's notes "almost read as if they came from M[oritz] Schlick's book 'General Theory of Knowledge'."<sup>34</sup> Karl further noted, however, that his father's philosophical ideas continued to evolve. He illustrated this by noting that, a few years later, Carl would write extensive marginalia strongly critical of Ernst Mach's (pre-logical) positivism in his personal copies of Mach's books.

At some point in 1867, starting with a note titled "Theory of Political Economy" (*Theorie der Nationalökonomie*), Menger turned his attention to economics. His son marks this as Menger's "breakthrough note." It is the beginning of an extensive series of notes on

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<sup>34</sup> Schlick was a charter member of the Vienna Circle. In his own autobiography, Karl Menger (1994, pp. 33-4) commented on his father's philosophical ideas and translated a few passages from his father's notebooks.

economic matters that occupies about 300 pages of this notebook and several other notebooks as well.

At first, prompted by his critical examination of Wilhelm Roscher's *Die Grundlagen der Nationalökonomie*, Menger's notes merely analyzed various concepts, such as *good* (*Gut*) and *economy* (*Wirtschaft*). Menger wrote of his "system" from early on, though it is not clear how to interpret this term. He first indicated that the *commercial good* (*Verkehrsgut*) would play the role of basic element in his system, but this idea was soon dropped. On a sheet of paper separate from the notebooks, dated June 9, 1867, Menger specified a plan for a systematic analysis of political economy, consisting of eight chapters: 1. Nature of goods; 2. Emergence of goods; 3. Exchange of goods; 4. Emergence of values; 5. Distribution of products; 6. Distribution of Values; 7. Consumption of goods; 8. Consumption of values (1. *Wesen der Güter*: 2. *Entstehung der Güter*: 3. *Austausch der Güter*: 4. *Entstehung von Werten*: 5. *Verteilung der Produkte*: 6. *Verteilung der Werte*: 7. *Konsumtion der Güter*: 8. *Konsumtion der Werte*).

By the summer of 1867, Carl Menger still had not decided to commit to economics full-time, according to his son, despite his notes on the topic. It was only at the end of the summer that he took this decision, as indicated by a diary entry from September 1867: "I take a dive for political economics. Study Rau etc." This, according to Karl, was the beginning of his father's *annus mirabilis*.

According to the younger Menger, at this point, his father remained, as he would throughout his life, sympathetic to the plight of the poor and even offered in his notes various practical suggestions for advancing the workers' movement. However, his methodological stance in favor of a value-free economics, another position he would maintain throughout his life, meant that his social sympathies could play no part in his theoretical analyses. The economist aims not at reform, but merely to understand economic life and its deepest causes. With respect to economic theory, at this point, Menger "already [possessed] complete insight

into two fundamental points of his later theory,” according to his son. First, “the productivity of exchange, trade, and commerce,” and second, that “the greater a quantity of one good that an economic agent possesses, the smaller in general is the value that he attributes to a certain partial quantity (e.g. one unit) of this good.”<sup>35</sup>

According to his son, Menger’s economic project began in earnest in the fall of 1867. It was around this time that he decided to write a book on economic theory. To that end, he started a new notebook titled *Theoretisches Repertorium*, in which he made notes for the different chapters indicated above. The book, he specified, “should mainly contain notes from Austria, be confined to the items [listed in his plan] and be not more than 450 pages long.” This first plan was apparently thrown out rather quickly. The *Grundsätze* would ultimately contain very little material on Austrian circumstances, as Karl notes in the biography.

Menger also commenced a very broad and eclectic review of literature from which he hoped to gain insights into economic behavior. He read Roscher, as well as Karl Heinrich Rau’s *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre*.<sup>36</sup> He started a number of other notebooks that consist primarily of excerpts from, and comments about, these readings. “Besides economics,” his son wrote, Menger’s reading encompassed “philosophy and much jurisprudence, [...] travel accounts and the etymology of economic words, [...] mechanical and chemical technology, agriculture and forestry, as well as agricultural chemistry, and, initially, works in the natural sciences too.” Menger looked in many places for clues about the economy. His reading remained quite eclectic throughout his life, according to his son.

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<sup>35</sup> According to his son, Carl Menger introduced his own symbols for these two notions, which he used in his notes and marginalia: for the former, he would write “a+x b+y” and, for the latter, a right-angled triangle standing on its peak. On the use of this triangle symbol in Carl Menger’s notebooks, see Yagi (1993, pp. 707-13)

<sup>36</sup> Menger’s marginalia on Rau’s book have been published by Kauder (1963).

By late 1867, Menger's economic reflections filled ten 192-page notebooks. According to Karl, these "notebooks show how Menger [...] slowly [drew] nearer to his definitive ideas, especially his theory of value and price, his insight that the value of goods of higher order (the means of production) is determined by the value of goods of lower order (consumption goods) and not, as the classical economists thought, the other way around."

### **Ministerial Occupation and Later Years as Journalist**

As his son reports, Menger's career in journalism did not end when he quit the *Wiener Tagblatt* and the *Wiener Zeitung*. Instead, according to his diary, Carl worked for several different newspapers over the next few years, if only for a short time on each occasion. These included engagements with *Die Debatte*, *Tagespresse*, and, from autumn 1868 until February 1869, *Allgemeine Volkszeitung*.<sup>37</sup> Menger acted as the latter paper's managing director for the last six weeks of 1868.

But Menger seems to have spent most of his time and energy on scientific work and the preparation of his *Grundsätze*. According to his son, after the book was published in July 1871, Menger returned to the *Wiener Zeitung*. This new engagement with the *Zeitung* was tarnished by political events. Relations among the various peoples in the multi-ethnic empire had become more contentious. After Belcredi's federalist constitution failed and he was dismissed in February 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was established in an effort to compensate Hungarian demands for greater autonomy. However, this encouraged similar appeals from members of other nationalities, Czechs most prominently. In October 1871, the Austrian government adopted a declaration of the Bohemian parliament that demanded a

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<sup>37</sup> *Die Debatte* was a semi-official newspaper, which was replaced by the *Tagespresse* (Paupié 1960, pp. 117-8, 129-30). *Die Debatte* was not "a polemical evening paper" as Yagi (1992, p. 96) states, but a serious newspaper with federalist, anti-Slavic, and Magyarophile tendencies.

Bohemian kingdom and the subordination of the German minority in Bohemian lands to the Czech majority.

Menger, who was part of the German minority in Galicia and had lived in Bohemian territory, opposed this *Fundamentalartikel* and he resigned from the *Wiener Zeitung*, an official organ of the Austrian government, in protest. In a memorandum requested by the foreign ministry, which his son partially reproduces in the biography, Menger explained his views. He saw the *Fundamentalartikel* not as a compromise, but as a victory for Czechs and an injustice to the German minority. The result would not be reconciliation but oppression of the German minority. Menger instead proposed that Bohemia be partitioned into German and Czech territories, and organized as a federation that would allow both territories to decide their own policies.

After the Emperor's veto of the *Fundamentalartikel*, the Austrian government fell. Karl reports that the new government, led by Adolf von Auersperg, who personally raised Menger's salary, convinced him to return to the *Wiener Zeitung*. However, he soon came down with a case of spondylitis and was hospitalized for two weeks. This episode left his spine noticeably bent for the rest of his life. In late March 1872 he was granted a five-week holiday, which he spent in Italy.

Upon his return, according to Karl, Auersperg convinced Menger to work in his ministry. In August 1872, the Emperor appointed him *Minsterialsekretär* and he joined the office of the Minister-President, while he also continued to work at the *Wiener Zeitung*. But, this arrangement was short-lived. According to his son, during the summer of 1873, Carl

decided to dedicate himself entirely to academia, a move which surprised Auersperg, who thought Menger destined for a successful civil-service career.<sup>38</sup>

### **Early Academic Career**

In February 1871, according to his son, after finishing the manuscript of the *Grundsätze*, but before submitting it for publication, Menger applied for habilitation from the law faculty of the University of Vienna. Habilitation would allow him to teach at a university. His proposed habilitation dissertation was an essay on money, essentially, the last chapter of the *Grundsätze*. In his habilitation request, which Karl cites, Menger declared his intention to lecture on economics, based on his own work, starting from the next semester.

Relying on diary material, Karl discusses the struggles that his father encountered in having his request approved. Lorenz von Stein, a key figure in the Vienna law faculty, rejected Menger's initial approach in June 1871.<sup>39</sup> Menger later visited Stein and the two became embroiled in a dispute. Stein eventually relented and, in July, Menger received approval to give a colloquium and a trial lecture, which were requirements of the habilitation process. However, for reasons unknown, his trial lecture was rejected.

In the meantime, the *Grundsätze* was published and favorably reviewed in several outlets. Karl explicitly mentions two reviews, one written by the German economist Arwed Emminghaus (1872) and another written by someone named Hack. Karl mentions Hack's

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<sup>38</sup> Of course, as pointed out by an anonymous referee, by becoming a university professor, Menger was still a civil servant and Imperial employee, just not the sort that Auersperg seemed to have thought he could have become.

<sup>39</sup> According to Karl, Stein "attempted to give an economic explanation of jurisprudence. In his economic teachings Stein, a Hegelian, used a speculative method. He was a stimulating, at times brilliant, lecturer, but he did not found a school."



assessment of his father's book as among "the best works on economics to be published lately" (Hack 1872, p. 183, our translation).<sup>40</sup>

Menger emphasized these positive reviews in his next application for habilitation and argued that he met all of the requirements and was rejected only because of a "rash trial lecture." A second trial lecture, this time successful, took place in May 1872. The next month, Carl received a letter from the dean containing his permission to read (*Venia Legendi*).<sup>41</sup>

According to his son, it was in the midst of these habilitation troubles that Carl's revered mother passed away. Due to his schedule, he was neither able to visit her one last time nor attend her funeral in Biała. Menger described these times in his diary as "months of great depression of the mind." His favorite sister, Marie, four years his junior, died shortly

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<sup>40</sup> Karl misspells Hack's name as Haak. We were not able to determine Hack's full name. It is sometimes claimed that the *Grundsätze* was widely ignored upon initial publication, especially by German economists. As early as 1934, Hayek (1934, p. 403) wrote that "the immediate reception of the book can hardly be called encouraging." But this contention is not sustainable on the available evidence. Three of the four academic economic journals published in Germany at the time reviewed the book. One was the review by Hack, the other two by unknown authors (Unknown 1872, 1871). There was also a short positive review by Gustav von Schönberg, published anonymously in *Meyers Deutsches Jahrbuch* (Schönberg 1872), a short and more critical review by Gustav von Schmoller (1873), as well as reviews in newspapers, including the very friendly review by Emminghaus mentioned by Karl. Menger's book was also positively received in Austria. A short review in *Gerichtshalle* (1872) stated that the "work of the young Austrian scholar had already received multiple and warm recognitions, particularly in Germany, remarkably" (our translation).

<sup>41</sup> Contemporary newspapers reported in July 1872 that Menger was admitted as a *Privatdozent* to the law faculty of the University of Vienna (e.g., *Neue Freie Presse* 1872).

thereafter upon returning from the 1873 Vienna World's Fair, having contracted typhus on her journey home.

As his son describes, despite these early missteps, Menger's academic career soon blossomed. In 1872, he had already received an offer to become professor at the Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt, a city about 50 km south of Vienna, an offer he declined because the salary was too low. Instead, he started teaching a weekly course on credit and banking in the winter semester of 1872/73 at the University of Vienna. The three-hour class attracted about 40 students, a "surprisingly large number," according to his son. Menger soon received an offer to succeed Emminghaus as professor of economics at the *Polytechnikum* in Karlsruhe, Germany, but he again rejected the offer for reasons related to salary. Instead, he offered a weekly five-hour lecture on political economy in the summer of 1873 at the University of Vienna. Among the 14 students who regularly attended the lecture was Alexius Meinong, the future philosopher. Another job offer arrived in September 1873, this time to succeed Friedrich Julius Neumann as professor of economics at the University of Basel. However, Menger declined this offer and instead was appointed extraordinary professor (*außerordentlicher Professor*) at the University of Vienna in late September. Karl reports that his father's salary as a professor (2,300 fl.) was lower than his salary at the ministry (3,000 fl.), but staying in Vienna meant that he could also stay at the *Wiener Zeitung*, from whence he earned additional income (1,500 fl.). Karl does not explicate this, but it seems reasonable to assume that his father was happy to stay in Vienna, the cultural and political center of Austria, where both of his brothers lived.

According to the unfinished biography, Menger repeated the course on credit and banking in the winter semester, but with a decreased enrollment of only 28 students. Karl claims that the course may have been less popular as a result of the stock market crash in Austria in May 1873. Menger also introduced a two-hour weekly seminar titled *Tutorial in political economy and finance* (*Übungen in Nationalökonomie und Finanzwissenschaft*), in

which he encouraged students to think independently. Menger offered this course many times over the remainder of his career. The tutorial started with four students, but enrollment numbers increased over time. In 1877, 16 students were accepted. However, his son reports that, according to Menger's diary, the format of the tutorial created turmoil within the faculty. Stein, for one, opposed the format of the seminar, though others, especially Adolf Exner, professor of Roman law, and Josef Zhishman, professor for canon law, supported Menger's approach. According to Menger's diary, this controversy led to a showdown at the election of the dean of the law faculty in 1876. Menger and Exner planned to overthrow the faculty's "inept oligarchs." In the end, Zhishman prevailed over Stein by one vote. Relations within the faculty seem to have improved afterwards.<sup>42</sup>

In the coming years, Menger's classes drew an increasing number of students, according to his son.<sup>43</sup> In March 1875, Menger rejected an offer from the *Polytechnikum* in Zurich. At the same time, his salary at the University of Vienna was increased to 2,700 fl. by Emperor Franz Joseph after the minister of education, Karl Stremeyer, wrote a letter commending Menger, which Karl quotes. Karl also reports that his father left the *Wiener Zeitung* in early 1875, though he remained an external employee responsible for banking. This meant a significant reduction of his salary, a sacrifice he made in order to dedicate more time to scientific work.

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<sup>42</sup> Stein would be elected dean two years later. Carl Menger (1891) wrote a long obituary for Stein. In the unfinished biography, Karl writes that his father suspected Stein would be unsympathetic towards him and that this suspicion was proven right several times.

<sup>43</sup> An overview of economic classes offered at the University of Vienna at the time can be found in Howey (1960, pp. 173-5).

Karl reports that his father planned to compose a bibliography of political economy, but soon abandoned the project.<sup>44</sup> Instead, he decided to write a book on methodology, a topic in which he had long been interested, according to his son, pointing for support to the notebooks. In a diary entry dating from early 1875, Carl briefly noted “I draw up [a] plan for methodology.” According to his son, his methodological work started in earnest in late 1874. In the spring of 1875, according to his diary, he interrupted this work to write a lecture book for his finance course. It would take nearly a decade to finish the methodology project.

As his son reports, relying on diary entries, Carl Menger was unimpressed with the way economics was taught in Austrian universities. Students had to study law and could focus on economics only in their last semesters. He argued that the state needed civil servants with a deeper understanding of economics and, in 1876, unsuccessfully championed reforms that would have established political science (*Staatswissenschaften*) as an independent faculty.<sup>45</sup>

In 1872, according to his son, Menger was approached by two students previously unfamiliar to him. Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk and Friedrich von Wieser were dissatisfied with the economics they had been taught and were intrigued by Menger’s theory (see also Wieser 1929 [1923]). Menger encouraged them to study economics on their own and to think independently. In the academic year 1875/76, Menger was able to obtain four scholarships from the ministry of education for doctoral graduates enthusiastic about political economy to continue their studies abroad. Böhm-Bawerk and Wieser went to Heidelberg to study with Karl Knies. Wilhelm Lesigang was sent to Jena to work with Bruno Hildebrand (but, for some

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<sup>44</sup> In fact, it seems that Menger did not abandon the project at the time, but merely postponed it. He later received some government funding for this project (e.g., *Neue Freie Presse* 1883), but we have no evidence that he ever developed it beyond this nascent stage.

<sup>45</sup> Menger championed reform of the study of economics throughout his life. On Menger’s later efforts, see Boos (1986, pp. 59-60).

reason, went to Leipzig instead), and a student named R. Proksch (we could not determine Proksch's first name) went to Paris for the winter term. In 1876/77, Böhm-Bawerk's and Wieser's grants were renewed, and they travelled together first to Wilhelm Roscher for a semester in Leipzig and then to Bruno Hildebrand for another semester in Jena. Lesigang went for an additional semester to the Collège de France in Paris. Menger corresponded with these students, following their travels and inquiring about their well-being.

### **Carl and Crown Prince Rudolf**

The last three extant chapters of Karl Menger's draft biography concern his father's relationship with Crown Prince Rudolf, only son and third of four children born (August 21, 1858) to Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elisabeth ("Sisi").<sup>46</sup> After finishing *Gymnasium*, Rudolf was educated in law. Menger's like-minded colleagues, Exner and Zhishman were among his teachers. Menger's reputation was established by this time and his profile – liberal, politically abstinent, loyal to the Habsburg Empire – was ideal (Hamann 2017 [2005], p. 34).

Karl reports that in late September 1875, Rudolf's mentor, Josef Latour, invited Menger to become Rudolf's teacher in statistics and political economy. Menger had to submit a detailed memorandum concerning the subjects he planned to teach, from which his son quotes. The subjects that Menger planned to cover with Rudolf included theoretical economics, economic policy, finance, and statistics. He proposed to strengthen the pupil's capacity for independent judgment by a pedagogical approach that relied on both traditional lectures and more active teaching methods.

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<sup>46</sup> The most comprehensive study of Crown Prince Rudolf can be found in the recently translated biography by Brigitte Hamann (2017 [2005]), which also discusses Carl Menger's role in Rudolf's life.

He also described the Mengerian perspective on political economy such as it was in 1875. He described the field as broadly divided into two camps. The first camp consisted of economists who argued that the unfettered pursuit of each individual's economic self-interest leads to the best results and accords with the general public interest. The second camp consisted of economists who argued that the free pursuit of self-interest can, in some cases, manifest consequences contrary to the general public interest. Menger claimed that the terms "free-traders" and "protectionists" were incomplete and incorrect. More appropriate epithets for each group, Menger argued, would be "individualists" and "ethicists." Individualists thought one economic program, which grants the state the role of mere spectator, valid for all times and places. Ethicists based their economic advice on the unique conditions of each country and granted the state an active role in determining economic policy. Menger described himself as a "moderate ethicist." According to Karl, Franz Joseph agreed to Menger's appointment as his son's teacher in October 1875.

Menger's first lesson with Rudolf took place on January 3, 1876, according to Karl. Menger was free to plan his courses without interference from Imperial authorities, but his duties were time-consuming. Classes lasted for two hours in the morning, five days a week, and another hour in the afternoon, twice a week. During teaching sessions, Menger was alone with Rudolf, while a squire waited in an adjoining room. The first half of every morning session was dedicated to Menger's lecture and the second half to Rudolf's recitation of, and commentary upon, said lecture.<sup>47</sup> The first course finished in May 1876, followed by a month

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<sup>47</sup> The unfinished biography includes syllabi and extracts from Rudolf's notes on Menger's lectures. This material is kept at the Austrian State Archives. Karl apparently had copies. They have since been edited and published by Erich and Monika Streissler (1994). The latter volume includes an introductory essay by Erich Streissler that reflects on Menger's relationship with Rudolf and the content of the lectures.

of review. The exam was held on June 26, 1876, in the presence of the Emperor, and was very successful, as Menger noted in his diary.

As a student, Menger described Rudolf, who was apparently quite interested in political economy, as a quick learner, talented, innovative, diligent, and in possession of a good memory, but also as restless and diffuse. As a person, he described Rudolf as mature and kind-hearted, though he disapproved of Rudolf's belief in egoism, according to which self-interest is the sole driving force of human behavior – commenting, however, that this attitude would be helpful in understanding economics. He also noted Rudolf's liberal political views.<sup>48</sup> From early in his tenure, Menger was regularly invited to dine with the Crown Prince.

As Karl reports, Menger spent part of the summer of 1876 with Rudolf in the Upper Austrian spa town of Bad Ischl, before taking a month-long holiday. He later joined Rudolf in Gödöllő, at the Imperial palace near Budapest, to continue classes. In his diary, Menger described the stay in Gödöllő as pleasant. He enjoyed the country life, was able to rest somewhat, and his health improved. According to his son, Menger took a leave of absence from the University of Vienna at this time.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Several conservatives in the Imperial Court blamed Menger for Rudolf's "atheistic, democratic, and [r]epublican world view." However, Rudolf held these positions before Menger was appointed as his economics teacher. Hamann (2017 [2005], p. 52) argues that Menger could have influenced Rudolf only in particular matters. The Crown Prince's general philosophy was set before Professor Menger's appearance in his life. A brief discussion of their differences, especially regarding their assessments of the French Enlightenment, can be found in Ikeda (2010, pp. 14-7).

<sup>49</sup> Karl's account contradicts the claim that Menger "taught every winter and summer semester beginning in 1875 until his retirement in 1903" (Caldwell 2004, p. 27) .

Together with the Crown Prince's other tutors, Carl was invited to meet the Imperial couple. The Emperor was satisfied with Menger's work and awarded him an Order of the Iron Crown, Third Class. Menger was not pleased, commenting in his diary: "I bore it with a smile, since no one who has seen what sort of people wear first-class honors could feel honored by a third class order." He made no use of the knighthood to which he was entitled by this award. Throughout his life, according to his son, Menger was averse to decorations and titles, and argued that it was inappropriate to grant such honors to scholars.<sup>50</sup> Menger loathed most of the Imperial Court, according to his son, Latour and Rudolf being notable exceptions.

While still on leave from the university, Carl decided to spend some time in Paris, where he arrived in January 1877. He did research in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and purchased several antiquated books on economics and socialism, including some works of Henri Saint-Simon. His health improved in Paris. He would later talk of France and its people with affection, according to his son. Menger returned to Vienna in March and made some progress on his methodological work, which was still far from fruition.

The same month, according to Karl, Menger was invited to dinner with the Crown Prince, who mentioned his intention to continue his studies of political economy. On Rudolf's invitation, Menger joined him in the fall for a trip to the Dolomites, Innsbruck, the major cities in the French and German parts of Switzerland, and, on their way home, to Habsburg Castle, the ancestral home of the Imperial family. Menger described the journey as rather pleasant in his diary, a feeling apparently shared by Rudolf, who invited him for further joint travels. In October, they spent three days together in Cieszyn, where Menger had spent his Gymnasium years, touring the domain of Rudolf's relative, Archduke Albrecht. The Crown

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<sup>50</sup> In 1878, as noted in his diary, Menger refused an Order of the Prussian Crown, third class, which he was awarded after a visit to Berlin.



Prince convinced Menger to stay two additional days in Gödöllő, according to Karl, where Carl again met the Imperial couple. It was at this time that Menger and Rudolf produced their first collaborative work, an anonymously-published newspaper article on life in Albrecht's domain, that appeared in the *Wiener Zeitung* (C. Menger and Rudolf 1877) . The article addressed the humanitarian administration of the domain and the kind way that workers were treated there. Albrecht, a staunch conservative, complained about the article in a letter to Rudolf, which Karl quotes, on the grounds that "such praise in an *official* newspaper is easily suspected to be socialism."<sup>51</sup>

Rudolf and Menger would soon begin a more ambitious collaboration. According to Karl, it was Rudolf who approached his father about this project, likely in the knowledge that the professor shared his views. The Crown Prince had a profound aversion to the Austrian nobility, whom he thought indolent, religiously and culturally backward, ignorant of modern science, and utterly unworthy of their lofty place in Austrian society. According to Karl, while together in Switzerland in the fall of 1876, Rudolf had revealed his desire to make public his views on these matters, albeit not under his own byline. Menger agreed to this very sensitive collaboration, which had to be kept secret and its records destroyed. If word of the pamphlet's true authorship had leaked out, there could have been severe consequences for both authors.

According to Karl, the sharpest denunciations of the aristocracy were written by Rudolf, while Menger stressed the importance of nobility for a conservative party.<sup>52</sup> Menger

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<sup>51</sup> Karl does not provide a source for this letter, but he refers to Hamann (1978), who quotes Albrecht's letter to Rudolf, in the introduction to the unfinished biography.

<sup>52</sup> Karl's unfinished biography includes an annotated summary of the pamphlet. He also reproduces the preface and conclusion as well as five and a half pages, which were omitted from the volume of Rudolf's secret and private writings edited by Hamann (1979). Hamann

also discussed the Austrian educational system, praising the Gymnasium system, but criticizing the law curriculum at Austria's universities and arguing that young aristocrats should be educated for careers in public service. The first draft was written by Rudolf, but, according to Karl, the final version bears many of the hallmarks of the Mengerian compositional style. He argues that the pamphlet's final wording most likely came from his father's hand.<sup>53</sup>

According to Karl, the pamphlet was written during the last three months of 1877 and completed by the end of the year. Karl draws this conclusion on the basis of a plan of the pamphlet that he had in his possession, written by Rudolf, which lists dates next to some of the chapter titles, indicating, according to Karl, when the chapters were written.<sup>54</sup> Menger's son claims that the co-authors made sure they were out of the country when the pamphlet was published. He reports that Carl ended his university classes early so that, soon after Christmas 1877, he and Rudolf could embark on a trip from Paris, through Calais and Dover, to London, where they went to clubs and attended balls, dined with Empress Elisabeth, also in London at the time, and met many high-profile personages. They visited the British Museum and the Bank of England, as well as the famous antiquarian bookshop of Bernard Quaritsch, both men being bibliophiles. They traveled to Scotland and Ireland in mid-January, eventually returning via the industrial cities of England's north to spend another two weeks in London.

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had not included these pages, since they were written by Menger, not Rudolf, which is why Karl wanted to include them in the biography.

<sup>53</sup> This contradicts Hamann's (1979, p. 19) claim that Menger's contribution was confined to the discussion of university education.

<sup>54</sup> We have not found this plan in the *Carl Menger Papers*. Karl's account contradicts Hamann's claim that the pamphlet was written while Rudolf and Menger were in England in early 1878 (Hamann 2017 [2005], p. 70; 1979, p. 19).

On their way back to Austria, they stopped in Paris, where they met, among others, Isabella II, the former queen of Spain, at a dinner held by French President Patrice de MacMahon. March 1878 found the pair in Berlin, where they stayed at the Hohenzollern's Berlin City Palace and dined with Emperor Wilhelm I and Crown Prince Friedrich. Friedrich's son, Wilhelm, who would become Emperor a decade later, left an unpleasant impression on both men, according to Karl. They also met Otto von Bismarck.

Karl also mentions that his father met Hermann von Helmholtz at one dinner and talked with him about physical forces and energy. As a good proto-positivist, Menger considered *force* to be nothing but an objectified cause of change, a view that, according to his son, he maintained for the rest of his life. Postulating forces is just an anthropomorphic urge to explain natural processes in terms of causality, a tendency that Menger associated with metaphysical explanations. Helmholtz was not too keen on this pre-Machian view and responded that physicists were not in fact so philosophical.

Rudolf and Menger continued their travels to Frankfurt. But, when Rudolf's grandfather, Archduke Franz Karl, fell terminally ill, their plans to continue on to the French Riviera, Milan, Venice, and Munich were foiled, and, according to Karl, the pair abruptly returned to Vienna.

The pamphlet was prepared for publication during their travels. On January 2, 1878, a certain Friedrich Saalfelden sent a letter to Munich publisher Adolf Ackermann authorizing publication of the pamphlet in Germany. In a letter dated January 4, 1878, Ackermann answered Saalfelden, agreeing to publish the pamphlet. Six weeks later, on February 17<sup>th</sup>, Ackermann – who assumed the author to be a high-ranking official in the Habsburg Imperial military – reported publication of the pamphlet, titled *Der oesterreichische Adel und sein constitutioneller Beruf: Mahnruf an die aristokratische Jugend. Von einem Oesterreicher* ("The Austrian Nobility and its Constitutional Mission: An Appeal to Aristocratic Youth. By

an Austrian”) (C. Menger and Rudolf 1878). According to Karl, who was in possession of the letters from Ackermann, Saalfelden was one of his father’s pseudonyms.<sup>55</sup>

Based on his father’s diary, Karl reports that in May 1878, shortly after returning to Vienna, Rudolf offered Menger an appointment to teach daily classes. Carl declined the offer, but agreed to twice-weekly lessons. According to Karl, these lessons never took place, because Rudolf was soon ordered to Prague for military service.

However, this was not the end of their friendship. The last extant chapter of Karl’s unfinished biography deals with the relationship between Menger and Rudolf from 1879 until

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<sup>55</sup> We have not found these letters in the *Carl Menger Papers*. We think that it may have actually been Anton Menger who corresponded with Ackermann under the guise of Friedrich Saalfelden. In the wake of Anton’s death in 1906, the *Neue Freie Presse* reported that the pamphlet had been written by Rudolf, but identified Anton as the person who corresponded with Ackermann. Perhaps to protect Carl, who was still very much alive in 1906, the *Neue Freie Presse* downplayed his role to that of intermediary between Rudolf and Anton. According to the news report, following Rudolf’s death in 1889, Anton had revealed the authorship of the pamphlet and his role in its publication to a friend, (*Neue Freie Presse* 1906). Since Carl and Rudolf were traveling when the correspondence with Ackermann took place, it is possible Anton was involved.

If this is right, then the surviving correspondence (and the surviving plan of the pamphlet written by Rudolf) might have been retained by Anton rather than, as Karl suggested, misplaced by his father (thus, it might have been saved from destruction when Carl Menger burned his correspondence). This would also resolve a puzzle in the accounts of Karl Menger and Hamann (2017 [2005], p. 72), both of which indicate that the correspondence between Carl in Vienna and Ackermann in Munich took place while Carl and Rudolf were in fact abroad.

the latter's death in 1889. Karl's main sources were his father's diary and letters from Rudolf to his father, which he quotes at length.<sup>56</sup> They corresponded regularly and met whenever Rudolf was in Vienna. Rudolf often requested books and news updates from Menger, and would send copies of travel accounts and various other works he authored on ornithology and hunting. They often discussed political issues and, even in written correspondence, Rudolf was frank about his opinions with Menger. According to Karl, Rudolf also provided Menger with court gossip and inside information to use in his newspaper articles, and to spread in his social circles.

Apparently, according to Karl's account, Rudolf was growing ever more impatient with the conservative politics of the time, including the Emperor's. He wished to have more influence on the course of Imperial affairs. Karl discusses how Menger occasionally felt the need to restrain the Crown Prince's risky political ambitions, which endangered his future position. He repeatedly warned Rudolf not to work without or against his father, but only in agreement with him. Rudolf's time would come, Menger promised.

Karl describes an instance in May 1881, when Rudolf announced his intention to clandestinely place on the Emperor's desk a self-written memorandum castigating the events that had led in 1879 to the self-inflicted end of a liberal government and its replacement by a more conservative one. This idea unsettled Menger and he dissuaded Rudolf from taking any covert actions, though he encouraged Rudolf to write a political memorandum. Menger, who was also troubled by the domestic situation in Austria, wrote the first, incomplete draft, addressed to the Emperor in rather groveling language.<sup>57</sup> Based on this draft, Rudolf wrote a longer memorandum, retaining Menger's suggested five-chapter framework, but removing the

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<sup>56</sup> These letters seem not to be part of the *Carl Menger Papers*.

<sup>57</sup> The draft is reproduced in the unfinished biography and can be found in the *Carl Menger Paper* (Box 23).

simpering tone. In early June, Rudolf read the essay to Menger, who, according to his diary, was satisfied with it. It was Josef Latour who ultimately persuaded Rudolf not to submit the memorandum to the Emperor.<sup>58</sup>

Emperor Franz Joseph was uncomfortable with his son's political ambitions and kept him in the dark about relevant political news. Rudolf's discontent with his lack of influence continued to grow and he sought other channels for information. He approached Menger often. In 1881, Rudolf asked for an introduction to a journalist who could both act as a source of pertinent political information and publish his self-penned articles anonymously. According to his son, Menger was happy to pass these onerous tasks to someone else. He still had the methodology project to complete and various administrative responsibilities at the University to fulfill – Menger was dean of the law faculty in 1881/82 and vice-dean in 1882/83. For Rudolf's new political operative, Carl chose Moriz Szeps, editor of *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, successor of his old *Wiener Tagblatt*. Szeps was not a close friend, but Menger judged him sufficiently influential, liberal, mature, and – perhaps most importantly – discreet.<sup>59</sup> Szeps was intrigued by the idea and he met Rudolf in October 1881.<sup>60</sup> Karl also reports that, two years later, Menger tried to put Rudolf in touch with Eduard Bacher, editor-in-chief of the leading liberal newspaper, *Neue Freie Presse*, but it is unclear if this led anywhere.

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<sup>58</sup> The memorandum is reprinted in the collection of Rudolf's secret and private writings (Hamann 1979, pp. 55-78). Hamann seems unaware of Menger's role in its composition (see also her discussion of the memorandum in Hamann 2017 [2005], pp. 106-10).

<sup>59</sup> In contrast to Karl Menger, Moriz Szeps' son Julius Szeps stated that Carl Menger and Moriz Szeps were close friends (Szeps 1922, p. xv).

<sup>60</sup> On the "inappropriate friendship" between Rudolf and Szeps, see Hamann (2017 [2005], pp. 133-64).

Both Carl and Rudolf opposed another phenomenon spreading in Vienna at the time, namely, spiritualism, which was popular in aristocratic circles.<sup>61</sup> Rudolf himself hosted a séance in late 1881, where Menger and the painter Hans Canon pulled a curtain, revealing the spiritualist and exposing him to ridicule. At Rudolf's request, Menger published a note about the event in *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*.<sup>62</sup> Rudolf fretted when aristocrats and politicians fell under the influence of spiritualists, and worried that even the Emperor, who had expressed interest in the subject, might be susceptible. Still concerned with Rudolf's impulsiveness, Carl warned him not to act against the Emperor on this matter and, more generally, not to express negativity about his father so openly, especially around people who might not be worthy of his trust. Rudolf could not know who might report his comments back to other powerful people. But Menger supported his effort to unmask the spiritualists. Rudolf authored a pamphlet against the movement, which first circulated in private – Menger received a copy – and was later published anonymously.<sup>63</sup> Karl discusses this pamphlet in the unfinished biography.

Rudolf approached Menger in January 1883 to inquire whether any of his former students might make a suitable assistant to the Crown Prince. Menger recommended Victor Mataja, one of his most talented students.<sup>64</sup> Rudolf moved to Laxenburg castles outside

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<sup>61</sup> On Rudolf's activities against spiritualism, see also Hamann (2017 [2005], pp. 130-1).

<sup>62</sup> Canon also published an article about the event in *Neue Freie Presse*, which Rudolf had not authorized, according to Karl.

<sup>63</sup> The identity of the author soon became known (Hamann 2017 [2005], p. 131).

<sup>64</sup> We could not verify whether Mataja accepted the position. A member of the second generation of Austrian-School economists, Mataja received his habilitation in 1884 from the University of Vienna, the same year he published his first book *Der Unternehmervergewinn*. He

Vienna in mid-1883, where he met with Menger more often. However, their relationship cooled somewhat shortly thereafter. Menger noted in his diary retrospectively that Rudolf had withdrawn from him. According to his son, one reason for the chill might have been another warning not to act against the Emperor, this time more sternly-worded. But, Menger was still regularly invited to visit the Crown Prince and he was introduced to the Crown Princess, Stephanie of Belgium, whom Rudolf had married in 1881. Menger and Rudolf even went fishing together, but Menger noted in his diary that political discussion was avoided.

During 1885 and 1886, Rudolf was busy with military obligations and with editing his monumental work *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* (“The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy in Words and Pictures”). According to Karl, Rudolf had hoped to convince Menger to edit and contribute to this so-called *Kronprinzenwerk*, but Carl declined in order to focus on his academic duties and scientific work. Karl reports that their relationship had warmed again by 1887 and Menger agreed to join the editorial board as the new economic editor of the *Kronprinzenwerk*.<sup>65</sup>

Based on his father’s diary, Karl concludes that Rudolf’s descent seems to have commenced by April 1888.<sup>66</sup> Menger had not seen the Crown Prince for a while, and he noted in his diary Rudolf’s disheveled appearance and the massive amounts of alcohol he consumed. This is the last meeting between the two mentioned in Menger’s diary. They

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was also twice Director of the Austrian Ministry of Trade (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 1975, p. 135).

<sup>65</sup> Karl does not discuss his father’s role in the *Kronprinzenwerk*. Menger did not ultimately contribute to this 24-volume work, though he edited the sections on “economic life” that appeared in six volumes published between 1889 and 1897.

<sup>66</sup> Rudolf’s “descent” is described in detail in Hamann (2017 [2005]).



would exchange a few more letters, according to Karl, the last written by Rudolf on December 3, 1888.

Karl does not discuss Rudolf's suicide in the unfinished biography, but reproduces with a few annotations his father's reaction to it, as described in his diary. On January 30, 1889 at the Imperial family's hunting lodge at Mayerling in the woods outside Vienna, Rudolf committed suicide, after murdering (albeit at her own behest) his 17-year-old mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera.<sup>67</sup> Menger's diary entry for this date lamented the turn of events as "Horrible! [...] A heavy loss for Austria and all of us."

According to his diary, Menger spoke to one of the physicians who performed the autopsy on Rudolf's corpse, who told him that anomalies had been discovered in the brain. Rudolf was posthumously diagnosed with mental aberration, which ensured that he could be buried with ecclesial honors. Menger's diary described Rudolf as an "ingenious man," but he also complained that he had made tremendous sacrifices for the Crown Prince, all of which had, because of the latter's own stupid and selfish actions, ultimately served no good purpose. These are the last entries in Carl Menger's diary. According to his son, he never started another.

## **Conclusion**

Karl reports that, after Rudolf's death, Menger's association with the Imperial family was limited, though he occasionally met with the Emperor and was invited to visit by members of the Imperial family. Karl concludes that his father's relationship with the aristocracy effectively came to an end with Rudolf's death. However, the Menger family would benefit

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<sup>67</sup> An account of the developments leading to the events at Mayerling, as well a detailed discussion of the days before and after the murder-suicide, can be found in Hamann (2017 [2005], pp. 321-426).

from this relationship when Karl, born out of wedlock in 1902, was legitimized by Imperial decree in 1911 (Scheall and Schumacher 2018, pp. 651-2).

The unfinished biography includes Karl's scattered reflections on his father's politics. He described his father as "a liberal economist, with some conservative leanings." He portrays Carl Menger as a defender of liberalism, who disapproved of the aristocracy and the church, especially of their privileges. The picture Karl paints is of a man who rejected all varieties of paternalism. Karl argues that his father's more conservative side is apparent in his appeal for a competent conservative party in his contribution to the pamphlet written with Rudolf against the aristocracy. This fits the portrayal of Carl Menger in the biography by Margarete Boos (1986), who argued that Menger preferred historical continuity and piecemeal evolution to revolution and abrupt political change. Karl also stresses that his father was a convinced democrat, who often considered social issues from the perspective of the poor and disadvantaged, and who always championed their interests. His democratic convictions and sympathy for the downtrodden distinguished Menger from many other Austrian liberals, who tended toward elitism and sympathy with the interests of the propertied and educated *Bürgertum* (Bled 1989, p. 29). It was this sympathy that led many in the Imperial court to suspect Menger of socialism (Hamann 1979, p. 437). However, according to his son, Menger opposed socialism and communism. He argued that an unequal distribution of wealth was good for society, to some degree, as long as those favored did not thereby acquire undue privileges or forget their obligation to help the poor.

Menger's political activity occurred mostly in the background. He expressed his opinions, but often in anonymously-published newspaper articles or in hushed discussions in coffeehouses surrounded by family, friends, and trusted colleagues. He sympathized with the German-liberal party, which he voted for at every opportunity, according to his son. Menger supported the party's primary ambitions, namely, a liberal constitution and the unification of all the Empire's nationalities under German leadership, but he was often very critical of the

actual policies that the party pursued, especially when in power. His son claimed that Carl never officially joined a political party, but this might be an error. Menger was appointed to the upper house of Austrian parliament (the *Herrenhaus*) in 1900 and contemporary newspapers report that he joined the *Verfassungspartei*, the German liberal party (e.g., *Prager Tagblatt* 1900; *Bohemia* 1921).<sup>68</sup>

Above all, the picture that emerges from the unfinished biography is that of a man of science. Menger rejected promising and profitable opportunities in journalism and civil service to dedicate his life to economics. He encouraged students to think independently. Given his goal to reform political economy from its foundations up, his scientific interests extended far beyond his own field. His aim was objective knowledge and he tried to treat all scientific problems without dogma. Hamann (2017 [2005], p. 53) has argued that Carl Menger's ideal was "the man without prejudice" – an image abundantly confirmed by his son's unfinished portrayal.

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<sup>68</sup> If this is right, Menger may have left the *Verfassungspartei* after only a short time. An overview of the *Herrenhaus* in 1907 lists Menger as an independent (Kolmer 1907).

## **Appendix – Detailed list of contents of Karl Menger’s unfinished biography of Carl Menger**

What follows is a reconstructed table of contents of the existing chapters of the biography.

The chapters and section titles from the last-written draft of each chapter are indicated below.

Where sub-sections were numbered without titles in Karl’s drafts we have added a descriptive title in square brackets.

### *00 Einleitung*

1. [About the nature of this biography]
2. [A brief summary of Carl Menger’s life]
3. [Karl Menger’s recollections of his childhood]
4. [How Carl Menger has been misrepresented]
5. [On writing this biography]
6. [What else does this biography contain]

### *01 Vorfahren und Kindheit*

1. Die väterliche Linie und
2. die mütterliche Linie
3. Die Eltern und
4. ihr schweres Los
5. Nach den Tode des Vaters

### *02 Schulen*

1. Elementarschulen
2. Das Gymnasium in Teschen
3. Die humanistische Ausbildung und der Unterricht in Mathematik
4. Ein Jahr in Troppau

5. Die Bibliothek
6. Abschluss in Krakau

### *03 Universitätsstudien*

1. Ein Jahr in Wien
2. Das Carolinum. "Die deutschen Studenten der Prager Universität und ihre Verbindungen." Gedenkrede auf Moritz Arndt
3. Die Lesehalle
4. Erste wissenschaftliche Aufzeichnungen (1862): Philosophie
5. Erste nationalökonomische Notizen: Freihandel. Kommunismus. Geld.
6. Streit mit dem Dekan
7. Ende des Universitätsstudiums 1863

### *04 Erste Journalistenjahre*

1. Unterredakteur der "Lemberger Zeitung"
2. "Der Botschafter" und "Die Presse" in Wien
3. Ablegung des Prädikates "von Wolfensgrün"
4. Projekt einer Zeitungsgründung. Unterredung mit Staatsminister Belcredi
5. Die Gründung des "Wiener Tagblatt"
6. Die Behandlung sozialer Probleme
7. Die Übernahme des Blattes durch die Regierung
8. Wiener Zeitung

### *05 Philosophie*

1. Urlaub. Wiederaufnahme von Aufzeichnungen. Ihr Parallelismus zu den Studentennotizen.

2. Philosophie in modernem Geiste und minder glückliche Versuche über das Unendliche
3. Erkenntnistheoretische Gedanken
4. Plan einer "Kritik der Metaphysik vom empirischen Standpunkte"
5. Der Platz dieser Gedanken in der Geschichte österreichischer Mentalität

## *06 Ökonomie*

1. Ein break-through
2. Begriffsanalysen: Gut, Wirtschaft
3. Wirtschaft und Recht
4. Verkehrsgüter
5. Plan eines Systems
6. Die Entscheidung
7. Einsichten, mit denen Menger ans Werk herantritt
8. Und wie er die Arbeit beginnt: Lektüre von Rau; Anlegung eines Theoretischen Repertoriums; Beginn der Exzerpt- und Notizhefte

## *07 Die Exzerpt- und Notizhefte 1867/68*

- Einleitung
- Heft 1 (7.IX.67):
  - Über Ungleichheit der Einkommen. Ein methodologisches Buch von Knies.
  - Carey's Grundtheorie. Zu Mengers Wertlehre. Die "Formel"  $a+x b+y$ .
- Heft 2 (18.IX.67)
- Heft 3 (25.IX.67)
  - Beurteilung Hegels. Mengers Erkenntnisweise. Wert und Güterqualität.
  - Arbeitswert. Hegels Rechtsbegriff.
- Heft 4 (30.IX.)

Über Zweckreihen. Über Fichtes geschlossenen Handelsstaat.

- Heft 5 (10.X.)

Motto. Über Thünen. Über Liebig.

- Heft 6 (21.X.)

Erwähnung von Isothermen.

- Heft 8 (1.XI.67)

Geld – eine Quecksilbersäule. Einverständnis von Käufern und Verkäufern, Konsumenten und Produzenten. Die traurigste Konsequenz der Arbeitsteilung. Über Krisen.

- Heft 9 (21.XI.67)

1. Die Kaufkraft des Goldes heute und im 15. Jahrhundert
2. Lokale Teuerungen
3. Volkseinkommen und Volksvermögen
4. Gedanken über Arbeitsteilung
5. Öffentliche Ansichten

- Heft 10 (10.XII.67)

- 1 . Bellum omnium contra omne
- 2 . Zur Sozialen Frage.
- 3.

#### *08 Der Ausweg aus den Labyrinthen*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### *09 Weitere Journalisten Jahre und Ministerielle Tätigkeit*

1. Fortsetzung journalistischer Tätigkeit

2. Wiedereintritt bei der Wiener Zeitung
3. Österreich 1867-71
4. Mengers politisches Memorandum
5. Kurze Tätigkeit im Ministerpräsidium

#### *10 Beginn der Akademischen Laufbahn*

1. Habilitation
2. Persönlicher Kummer
3. Auswärtige Angebote. Erste Schüler. Außerordentliche Professur
4. Erste Vorlesungen und Beginn des Seminars
5. "Fasse Plan zur Methodologie"
6. Bericht an den Kaiser. Weitere Entwicklungen
7. Die juridische Fakultät
8. "Die Ursachen meiner Kränklichkeit"
9. Sorge für jungen Wissenschaftler
10. Wieser und Böhm-Bawerk

#### *11 Unterricht des Kronprinzen*

1. Mengers Lehrplan
2. Die ersten zwei Unterrichtsmonate
3. Die zehn Kapitel von Mengers Vorlesung
4. Aus Rudolfs Vorlesungsheften: Privateigentum. Staatliche Einflussnahme auf die Wirtschaft. Das österreichische Geldwesen
5. Beendigung des Unterrichts. Prüfung Rudolfs

#### *12 Rudolf, Menger und der österreichische Adel*

1. Reise nach Paris. Mengers Bibliothek.



2. Reisen mit Rudolf in die Schweiz und nach Teschen. Gemeinsamer Artikel über die Albrechtsche Domäne.
3. Zusammenarbeit an einem Büchlein über den österreichischen Adel
4. Inhaltsangabe der Broschüre
5. Reise mit Rudolf nach England und Irland
6. Rückkehr über Paris und Berlin. Begegnung mit Helmholtz.
7. Nach der Heimkehr

### *13 Menger und Rudolf, 1879-1889*

1. Vorübergehende Trennung
2. Politische Beratungen
3. Mengers Entwurf für eine Denkschrift an den Kaiser
4. Rudolfs Denkschrift
5. Zwei politische Fragmente
6. Rudolf über König Ludwig von Bayern
7. Einführung von Szeps
8. Spiritisten in Wien
9. Mengers erneute Warnung: Alles durch den Kaiser, nichts ohne, geschweige denn gegen ihn
10. Rudolfs Broschüre über Spiritismus
11. Politische Briefe
12. Konservative Literatur für Rudolf
13. Suche nach einem Sekretär
14. Wiederholte Warnungen. Der Wendepunkt in den Beziehungen.
15. Neubelebung derselben
16. Rudolfs Tod

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