**Karl Menger as Son of Carl Menger**

Scott Scheall

Arizona State University Polytechnic Campus

College of Integrative Sciences and Arts

Faculty of Social Science

Santa Catalina Hall

7271 E Sonoran Arroyo Mall

Mesa, AZ 85212

[scott.scheall@asu.edu](mailto:scott.scheall@asu.edu)

Reinhard Schumacher

Universität Potsdam

Department for Economic and Social Sciences

August-Bebel-Straße 89

14482 Potsdam, Germany

[rschumac@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:rschumac@uni-potsdam.de)

Although their contributions to the history of economic thought and their scholarly reputations are firmly established, relatively little is known about the relationship between Carl Menger, founder of the Austrian School of economics, and his son, Karl Menger, the mathematician, geometer, logician, and philosopher of science, whose famous Mathematical Colloquium at the University of Vienna was central to the early literature on the existence of general equilibrium and the concomitant development of mathematical economics. The present paper begins to fill this gap. Karl Menger’s diaries, held in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University, offer insight into the intimate relationships within the Menger clan, Karl’s work and study habits, and the development of his uncommonly broad intellect, as well as on life in a vanquished city, Vienna, in the immediate wake of the humiliating defeat of the First World War and the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Some Background on the Menger Family**

Karl Anton Emil Andermannwas born on January 13, 1902 to Carl Menger and Hermine (“Mina”) Andermann. The nature of his parents’ relationship, which Karl would later describe as “peculiar” (K. Menger, n.d.[a]), remains obsure.

Mina was born in Stanislau, in Galicia (Stanisławów; now the western Ukranian city of Ivano-Frankivsk), probably in the winter of 1868/1869.[[2]](#footnote-2) Sara Andermann was only 15 when she gave birth to Mina. After only a few months of marriage, her husband, Herz Zahler, presented his wife with a *get*, a Jewish divorce decree. In 1874, Sara Andermann moved with her daughter to Vienna, where she worked as a postal employee. She soon met Stephan Gergacsevicz, who was several years her junior.[[3]](#footnote-3) The couple moved in together, Sara converted to Catholicism (Staudacher 2009, p 25), and they married in 1879. The couple had at least one child, Emilie Gergacsevicz, later Karl Menger’s aunt and godmother. The Gergacsevicz family suffered financial difficulties and fell into debt (*Neue Freie Presse* 1882). The couple was arrested and charged with mail fraud, and tried in August 1882. Though Stephan was acquitted, Sara was sentenced to ten months strict confinement (*Wiener Zeitung* 1882), a sentence appealed by the prosecution as too lenient and extended to fifteen months (*Morgen-Post* 1882). Sara died in 1885 (K. Menger, n.d.[a]), soon after her release. The details of young Mina’s life during these years are largely unknown.

Carl Menger met Mina Andermann in October 1888 (C. Menger [1875-1889]), when the economist was 48 and his inamorata nearly thirty years younger. Karl Menger himself could at best piece together the history of his parents’ relationship from stories passed on by his mother (K. Menger, n.d.[a]). It seems that Carl was on a fishing holiday in a small city when he first encountered Mina performing on stage in the play *Die Waise von Lowood*. Whether their relationship was romantic from the beginning is impossible to tell, but Carl quickly became her benefactor and sought work on her behalf at the Vienna *Burgtheater*. These efforts proved futile. Mina’s slight frame and soft voice made her unsuited to the grand stage. She became a bank clerk for a time, but eventually was given the task of managing Carl’s extensive library. At this time, she moved to a separate residence in Vienna’s 9th district, near where Menger lived. Mina also started writing, publishing stories and newspaper articles, some on the so-called “woman question,” under the *nom de plume* Mina Ander (Kosel 1902: 224). Carl and Mina frequently travelled together during the 1890s, making trips to Belgium, Switzerland, and several jaunts to Italy. Carl became a father in 1902 at the age of 61, but continued to live separately from, although nearby, his small family. It was not until 1912 or 1913 that the family moved together to a new home (Lehmann 1859-1922).

Carl and Mina lived together until his death in 1921, but never married. The reasons for this remain unclear. Of course, Carl was nearly 30 years Mina’s senior, but why this should have prevented their marriage, but not their cohabitation, is not obvious. It has been argued (see, e.g., O’Connor and Robertson, 2014; Skousen 2009, p. 183) that the fact that all marriages in predominantly Roman Catholic Austria required religious sanction could have prevented an official coupling between the Jewish Mina and the Catholic Menger. However, “emergency civil marriages” became possible in Austria after 1868 for couples of different religious faiths. Moreover, Mina left the Jewish religion in 1893 (Staudacher 2009, p. 24) and, according to her son’s baptismal record, converted to Catholicism the same year (quoted in Beham 2010, p. 93). It has been suggested (Skousen 2009, p. 183) that Mina was divorced and that this might have sufficed to hinder her remarriage. However, given that she was not married when, at a young age, she first met Carl, she must have married very young to have been divorced by that time; and, if she had been previously married, then she either did not take her husband’s last name or returned to her maiden name immediately upon her divorce. A final, especially intriguing, possibility is that Carl and Mina were simply uncommonly progressive in their attitudes toward marriage. Carl once argued that marriage was obsolete and that, in the future, civil society would be based on free love (C. Menger, 1867-1868).

Whatever his reasons for remaining officially a bachelor, Carl Menger eventually appealed to the Emperor to have his son declared legitimate. Of course, the fact that Carl had once been personal tutor and intimate friend to Emperor Franz Joseph’s son, the ill-fated Crown Prince Rudolf, surely did not impair the prospects for acceptance of this appeal.[[4]](#footnote-4) Karl was legitimized in April 1911.[[5]](#footnote-5) Karl offered his own take on his parents’ relationship: “Mina apparently took the decision early on to dedicate her life to her admired scholar. When his eyes subsided, she read to him a lot, cared for him devotedly when he was sick and, in the last decade of his life, maintained the economist’s household. Emperor Franz Joseph declared the child that arose from their liaison a legitimate son of the two *per rescriptum principis*” (K. Menger, n.d.[a]).[[6]](#footnote-6)

Whether as a consequence of controversy over his romance with Mina, a matter of fatigue, ill health, or the desire to dedicate more time to research, his son’s birth marked the beginning of Carl’s gradual retreat from Viennese society and academic life in particular. He resigned the chair of political economy (to which Franz Joseph had appointed him in 1878) at the University of Vienna in 1903. Carl had been appointed in 1900 to the House of Lords of the Austrian Imperial Council, but his participation in the legislative activities of the *Herrenhaus* was nominal at best and, after 1903, virtually nonexistent. The extant material preserved in the Carl Menger Papers at Duke indicates that the senior Menger continued to work to advance his economic ideas over the last 18 years of his life and, in particular, to complete the long-promised, much revised, second edition of the *Grundsätze*. However, these efforts were largely abortive, and the final decades of Carl Menger’s life revolved more around his small family than the further development of subjectivist economics.

**Karl’s Prehistory**

His diaries portray Karl Menger as an avid maker of lists—lists of books purchased, lists of books read, lists of books to be purchased and subsequently (one assumes) read, lists of economists, politicians, and other acquaintances who sent personal regards upon Carl’s death in 1921, etc.[[7]](#footnote-7) In keeping with this predilection, and after noting in a characteristically dour personal epigram that the diaries are a product not of an idle hand, but of a sentimental mind that likes to recall past memories, fond or otherwise, Karl lists both all of his past home addresses and each of the family’s summer holidays going back to 1902, the year of his birth. In keeping with the circumstances of a middle-class Viennese family of the time, it is perhaps unsurprising that several of these summers were passed either in various hamlets surrounding Vienna proper (Baden bei Wien, Puchberg am Schneeberg, Hinterbrühl) or in some spa town in or around the Austrian Alps (Reichenau an der Rax, Bad Ischl, Teufenbach, Scheifling, Schneedorf).

Karl then proceeds to detail his teachers, educational experiences, and academic accomplishments to date. We are told that (from 1907 through 1912) Karl attended a private elementary school (*Privatvolksschule*) in Hörlgasse 10 in Vienna’s 9th district, where he was considered a very diligent student.[[8]](#footnote-8) By his fourth year of formal education, Karl had thoroughly absorbed – at his father’s knee – the canon of Austrian economics as it then was. By his fifth and final year at the *Privatvolksschule*, Karl was taking French lessons from a private tutor and further investigating political economy. As a prize for passing his Gymnasium entrance exams, Karl received a copy of his father’s (1883) *Untersuchungen über die Methode der Sozialwissenschaften, und der politischen Oekonomie insbesondere* from the personal library of his uncle, Max Menger, Carl’s older brother, a prominent Viennese political figure, who died in August 1911.[[9]](#footnote-9)

In the fall of 1912, Karl entered the Döblinger Gymnasium, a public high school in the Döbling district of northwest Vienna. The coursework at the Gymnasium covered languages, mathematics, history, geography, philosophy, drawing, writing, physical education, religion, and – to the delight of the precocious and scientifically-inclined Karl Menger – physics and chemistry (Weissensteiner 1985, pp. 14-15). However, his formal education left him unchallenged and he regularly looked forward to holidays when he could pursue his academic interests outside a formal setting. The diaries make plain that Karl Menger’s education, at least through his Gymnasium and undergraduate years at the University of Vienna, was primarily self-directed.

The desolation of the First World War makes its initial appearance in Karl’s diaries when he indicates that, in the fall of 1914, the premises of the Döblinger Gymansium were converted to a hospital for injured soldiers returning from the two fronts. For the next eighteen months, classes were held in an auxiliary location in the Krottenbachstraße. The military hospital closed in December 1915 and the Gymnasium building reverted to its original purpose in late February 1916 (Weissensteiner 1985, p. 16). However, these dislocations and disruptions seem to have borne little consequence for Karl’s intellectual growth. It was during this time that the future mathematician first mastered differential and integral calculus, and embarked on self-directed investigations of the problems of both theoretical and experimental physics, and the history of philosophy. He also (re)read his father’s writings as well as those of his uncle, the influential socialist theorist, Anton Menger (Carl’s younger brother, who died in 1906), Werner Sombart, and, much to his loathing, Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*.

Finally, before beginning his regular diary entries, Karl saw fit to catalog his medical history in a list of all of the illnesses that he had suffered at one time or another. Karl had whooping cough and rubella (once or twice) before entering school, chicken pox in 1908, an elevated temperature accompanied by neck discomfort that lasted for some two months in 1915/16, and, in 1918, an apparently severe case of influenza.[[10]](#footnote-10) Karl further indicates, rather furtively, that in the winter of 1917/18, he came down with a disease that he described with the single letter “P” (followed by two exclamation points). As we will see, in the spring of 1921, Karl developed pleurisy, a respiratory disorder symptomatic of the severe tuberculosis that would necessitate his removal from Vienna for a year-long retreat at a sanatorium in the Styrian Alps. One wonders whether this “P” disease was either pneumonia or an earlier case of pleurisy and – perhaps – the first sign of the respiratory infections that would plague Karl more or less continuously for the next several years.

Karl’s editorial work on the second edition of his father’s *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre* began earlier than has been previously noted and, indeed, well before his father’s passing in February 1921. The first entry in Karl’s diary, dated December 29, 1918, indicates that he had spent the days after Christmas compiling, organizing, and sifting through his father's notes for the second edition of the *Grundsätze*. What is not known is the intended division of labor between father and son. Carl’s eyesight was in an advanced state of decline at this late date, but his mind remained active and he continued to read, albeit with Mina’s assistance. Did Carl consider the second edition complete at this point and his son’s task was meant to be merely that of compiling the existing material—or was Carl still developing his ideas, writing (and perhaps also dictating to Mina and/or Karl) on a regular basis, and Karl’s task was to maintain some sort of order over the development of Carl’s new ideas? The available evidence seems to indicate that Karl was more actively involved in the ongoing development of the second edition than has been previously understood. Father and son spoke often about economics, but it is not always clear from the diaries whether these discussions concerned material meant to be included in the second edition of the *Grundsätze*. What is clear is that the extant material intended for the second edition was in a state of utter disarray in late 1918. Several chapters remained incomplete. A number of chapters that Carl considered finished were missing or – as they would eventually turn up in surprising places – had been misplaced. Some ideas were expressed as sentence fragments or, worse yet, as nothing more than key words. It seems that Karl’s task was to sort and, when necessary, reformulate this material.

Carl and Mina’s attentive supervision of his editorial work caused their son “awful toils and troubles,” as Karl expressed it in late 1918, but he saw in these labors the potential for a valuable addition to intellectual history perhaps surpassing the mark set by the first edition of the *Grundsätze*. He believed himself on the verge of contributing “a great thing for science, perhaps even for humankind.” He hoped to finish his work on the second edition by February 23, 1920, his father’s 80th birthday. Beside the sentimentality of presenting his father with a completed manuscript on this date, Karl worried that the potential for further deterioration of political conditions in Vienna, which could leave the manuscripts pillaged, made quick work advisable. In his diaries, Karl describes how he and his mother walked into a “bloodstained battlefield” at the Hörlgasse on June 15, 1919. This was the bloody end of a large communist demonstration. Among the demonstrators was Karl Popper, who, though unharmed, soon turned his back on the Communist party (Popper 1974, p. 25). As it happened, Karl Menger was to be disappointed both in his ability to meet his own deadlines and in the eventual impact of the second edition of the *Grundsätze*.

**1919**

The first days of 1919 found Karl Menger depressed and discontented. No specific reason is given for this malaise, but the absence of a functioning typewriter to facilitate his work on the second edition of the *Grundsätze* was an annoyance. The diaries also note that Karl’s Aunt Marie, the widow of Max Menger and daughter of the astronomer and mathematician Franz Schaub, had taken ill with some combination of influenza, coronary disease, and kidney infection. The Menger family would be frequent visitors to Marie’s bedside over the course of the first two months of 1919. Karl seems to have been fond of Marie, who would send him books as gifts, often from Max Menger’s library. When she died in late February, Karl received a bequest of the perhaps deceptively generous sum of 25,000 Kronen.[[11]](#footnote-11) He also received some family memorabilia, in particular, a ring with the family seal and a walking stick inlaid with his grandfather’s name and coat of arms.

The extended Menger clan seems to have been quite close. Several of Karl’s aunts and uncles make frequent appearances in his diary, especially his aunt Emilie Glaser (née Gergacsevicz), Mina’s half-sister, who was his godmother (Beham 2012, p. 94), and her husband Arthur Glaser, a journalist who also wrote books on social welfare.[[12]](#footnote-12) The Glasers were active in the local Society for the Prevention of Poverty and Begging, and have been described by recent authors as the “Webbs of Vienna” (Janik/Veigl 1998, pp. 68-69). The Glaser family was related to the Wittgensteins and it was Emilie who first introduced Karl Menger to certain peripheral members of the famous Viennese family (Janik/Veigl 1998, pp. 68-9; Menger 1994 pp. 75-6). Karl was also close to his Aunt Bertha (Carl’s older sister)[[13]](#footnote-13) and cousin Mansuet Kosel, who Karl describes as an intellectual. Mansuet Kosel was a career civil servant, who succeeded Eugen Böhm-Bawerk as Austria’s Minister of Finance from October 1904 to June 1906.

On Karl’s 17th birthday, January 13, 1919, the family ate a fine meal (well, *relatively* fine, one presumes, given Vienna’s infamously impoverished circumstances in the months following the armistice) and Karl received as a gift a wristwatch—a hand-me-down, albeit one with a lovely sentimental history: it was the first gift that his mother gave to his father. Karl celebrated his birthday with one of his favorite pastimes: a night at the *Wiener Volksoper.* On those seemingly rare occasions when he allowed his attention to wander from autodidactic pursuits, Karl would typically enjoy an evening at the opera or theater, or a night out with friends at a local dancehall. He started taking dance classes in early 1919 and the diaries include humorous disparaging remarks about his foxtrot, polonaise, and one-step.

The problem of the typewriter – or the problem of its absence – continued over the course of the spring, but Karl pushed forward on the *Grundsätze* with intermittent success. By February, the first two parts of the revised edition, concerning the theory of goods, had been completed, and Karl looked forward to the Mengerian theory of value proper. However, a change of plans led him to tackle price theory first. He also started, but never finished, French and English translations of the chapter on goods.

Karl’s economic inquiries at this time were not limited to his editorial responsibilities on the *Grundsätze*. His diaries indicate that he read parts of Marx’s *Kapital*, Eugen Philippovich’s *Grundriß der politischen Ökonomie* and re-read parts of his father’s *Untersuchungen*. He also re-read Böhm-Bawerk on value and capital, and claimed to discover several deficiencies.

Karl’s melancholy extended throughout the spring of 1919, but ultimately gave way to concerns more physical than emotional, in particular, persistent stomach upset and the common cold, which Karl sought to nip by various home remedies (documented in the diaries in some detail). Later in the spring, a pain in the left foot that lasted for eleven days, combined with the symptoms – fever, cough, sore throat – of a burgeoning respiratory infection forced Karl to miss five days from school. These respiratory issues returned in force in April and again in varying degrees of severity, occasionally, throughout the year. These trials left Karl depressed, in large part, because they impaired his ability to work. He expressed this despair in the form of an aphorism: “The ideal world would be one in which sickness were the punishment for idleness and good health the reward for hard work. But, even the industrious get sick. For the diligent, this is a double misfortune, as he is both sick and agonizes over the inactivity to which his sickness has condemned him.” However, as the diaries make plain, at least during this period of his life, when left to decide for himself, Karl Menger always prioritized work over well-being. Indeed, during the years immediately following the Great War, whenever some combination of hunger, disease, politics, inflation, and teen angst overwhelmed Karl’s disposition, he dove headlong into work.

Karl’s technical labors were greatly abetted when, in May, he managed to procure a borrowed typewriter, which, of course, promptly broke down. However, the malfunction was resolved in a few days and Karl was back at work on the *Grundsätze*, making considerable progress as compared to the sluggish pace he had been making previously. His diary indicates that some of the typing was done by his mother, whose assistance he acknowledged in the foreword to the second edition. His uncle Arthur Glaser also supported him (K. Menger 1923a, p. XVIII). However, all work on the *Grundsätze* seems to have ceased during the summer holiday, not to resume again until winter.

The Mengers spent the summer of 1919 sharing a rented vacation home in Lower Austria with some friends, the Tislowitz family. Holidays in Lower Austria meant occasional trips back to Vienna proper for this occasion or that. Father and son returned to the capital in late July to attend the unveiling of a bust of Anton Menger at the University.[[14]](#footnote-14) It was at this unveiling that Karl first met Friedrich von Wieser, with whom he would develop a correspondence following his father’s passing. Karl celebrated his uncle’s legacy in his own unique way: by re-reading the published canon of Anton Menger. The family returned to Vienna again later in the summer following the sad and surprising death of Mansuet Kosel.

In August, father and son sat down to discuss the Austrian political crisis. We have no details of this conversation concerning the politics of the nascent Austrian republic, but we know that talk soon turned to the elder Menger’s relationship with Crown Prince Rudolf. It was during this conversation that Carl revealed the existence of a political pamphlet against the Austrian nobility that he and Rudolf had co-authored, and published anonymously. Carl instructed his son to secure his authorial rights and pursue the pamphlet’s publication after his passing, which Karl – the ever-dutiful son – did in June 1921, when he deposited the pamphlet along with a sealed letter attesting to his father’s authorship with the Vienna Academy of Sciences (Beham 2012, p. 156-7). The true authorship was made public in the pages of *Neues Wiener Journal* in May 1923 (see Szeps 1923a; 1923b). Soon after this conversation in the summer of 1919, Karl accompanied his father on what was Carl’s first and, as it would turn out, last visit to the cinema.

Karl’s initial plans for the summer holiday included preparing a first draft of a planned critical history of philosophy. Descartes was considered; Malebranche and Leibniz were read, as was Gassendi (and, perhaps not surprisingly for a future logical positivist, preferred to both Descartes and Malebranche). His initial plan was to dedicate the work to his father and present a finished version on Carl’s 80th birthday in February 1920. His father supported this work, encouraging him after having read a draft page. However, these plans were scotched when (as has happened to so many clear minds before and since) Karl’s research bogged down in the perilous swamps of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. Karl started the *Critique* in May and struggled with it through August, at which point he immediately reread (and then re-reread) the central parts of the book. Alongside multiple attempts to get at Kant, he investigated post-Kantians Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Johann Friedrich Herbart, as well as Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner. But, little progress was made on the project beyond this research and its prospects soon foundered.[[15]](#footnote-15)

As a young man, Carl Menger had tried his hand at writing comedic plays. In April 1919, Karl stumbled across a number of his father’s early manuscripts. These included fully-developed plays (and, apparently, short novels as well), though pages were missing from a few, and others were mere sketches.[[16]](#footnote-16) Seemingly inspired, Karl developed outlines for plays based on his father’s drafts. Nothing ever came of these outlines, but Karl was moved to once again pursue his own literary amibitions, which had apparently lain dormant for some time. He had started a stageplay about Alexander the Great in the fall of 1917, which he picked up again in 1919 and continued to develop through the remainder of the year. Unfortunately, the diaries provide no insight into its content or storyline. During the summer of 1919, Karl also worked on a libretto for an opera titled “Raimund.” He had ideas for similar works from time to time, but the literary project that most occupied his attention in 1919 and for several years to come was his play *Päpstin Johanna*, an attempt at a comedic rendering of the popular legend of the apocryphal Pope Joan, who had, according to myth, masqueraded as a man and ruled as Pope for several years during the Middle Ages. Karl began developing ideas and gathering “jokes” intended for the playlate in the summer of 1919, and began writing the first act in earnest before returning to Vienna in the fall. The seriousness with which he approached this new project is reflected in the relative paucity of references in the latter third of 1919 to his several other projects.

One aspect of this project that apparently appealed to the younger Menger was its irreligious – one might say, anti-religious – nature. In early 1919, Karl had scrawled in his diary, “God has outlived himself.” In this, he seemingly followed his father, who as a committed man of science, tried to live a life free of prejudice (Hamann 2005, p. 82), especially of a religious kind. Karl similarly opposed all manner of superstition be it occult, mystical, or merely religious.

In keeping with his literary turn, Karl’s reading during these months turned belletristic. He was particularly fond of the novels of Emile Zola. Ibsen’s poetry was read, as was Edmond Rostand’s (1897) *Cyrano de Bergerac,* Tolstoy’s (1889) *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and several of the literary works of Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whom Karl deemed “tremendously overrated.”

Carl Menger fell seriously ill with a bladder infection in the fall of 1919 and was left listless and bed-ridden for several weeks. Indeed, the episode was so serious that he saw fit to review his will.

The end of 1919 found Karl Menger in a reflective mood. Much had been learned over the course of the year, and Karl found himself in a supportive intellectual environment that made his work enjoyable, despite school (!) and the terrible physical sufferings to be endured in Vienna. It would prove impossible to maintain this relatively sunny disposition over the course of the next few years.

**1920-1921**

The festering danger of illness and disease continued to cloud Vienna, and the Mengers were not immune. Karl developed a series of headaches severe enough to keep him bedridden throughout much of January. In February, Karl suffered a catarrhal inflammation that immobilized him yet again. This catarrh returned in March, accompanied by a cough and sore throat.[[17]](#footnote-17) Mina suffered from a gastric disorder throughout much of the spring at the same time that the elder Menger was seriously ill, sleeping poorly, and barely eating. In April, Karl came down with influenza and a high fever, and was again bedridden for several days. During the spring of 1920, Karl would occasionally take his meals at the American food outlet where handouts consisted of either vegetables and white bread, or a dairy dish and hot chocolate. This seems to have been one of Vienna’s few reliable food sources at the time.

In celebration of his 80th birthday on February 23, 1920, Carl Menger was feted by the University of Vienna. Unfortunately, the honoree could not attend the ceremony due to ill health. Karl too was feverish all day leading up to the event, but effectively concealed his sickness from his parents so he could attend. Also present at the ceremony were several of Carl’s former colleagues and students. The University of Vienna was represented by economics faculty members Othmar Spann, Friedrich von Wieser, Carl Grünberg, as well as representatives of other departments. Ludwig von Mises, then a *Privatdozent*, also attended.Among Carl’s former students were Joseph Schumpeter, Victor Mataja, Wilhelm Rosenberg, Gustav Seidler, and Richard Schüller. Wieser surprised the Mengers, who, for reasons that are not entirely clear, were expecting some harsh criticism of the family sire, with a mostly honorific dedication.[[18]](#footnote-18) Schüller, a regular visitor to the Menger home, also sang Menger’s praises as a teacher. Paula von Böhm-Bawerk, widow of Eugen and sister of Wieser, sent a lovely letter of congratulations.

The day before his birthday, Carl had been visited at home by Ernst Ritter Seidler von Feuchtenegg, the former (1917-1918) Minister-President of Austria. A delegation of the Austrian Academy of Sciences visited the Menger home on Carl’s birthday, as well as a committee from the University of Vienna to present him with a honorary doctorate of political science (*Staatswissenschaften*). In his inimitable way, this celebration of the Mengerian legacy in economics prompted Karl to reread the original *Grundsätze* yet again, and to consider modifications to the theory of value for the second edition.

Sweden was a popular destination for young Austrian exchange students during these years and Karl was attracted to the idea of spending his summer there. However, as he would not be officially enrolled as a student in the summer of 1920 – the summer following his graduation from the Döblinger Gymnaisum and preceding his first semester at the University of Vienna – such a trip required a formal invitation from a Swedish family. In April 1920, at his son’s urging, Carl Menger wrote to his friend Professor Knut Wicksell of the University of Stockholm to ask whether Wicksell might put him in touch with a family willing to host his son’s visit (C. Menger 1920a). To the elder Menger’s surprise, Wicksell not only agreed to assist with securing a travel visa, but invited Karl to spend the first half of the summer with his own family in Stockholm and contacted Professor David Davidson, who invited Karl to spend the second half of the summer with his family in Uppsala, where Davidson taught (C. Menger 1920b, 1920c). And so it was that Karl’s summer vacation was arranged.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Karl underwent his *Matura* examinations in mid-June and received his diploma with honors on July 2, 1920. He received the highest marks possible in all subjects except Latin, Greek, and history, in which he received the second highest grade. Given his interests and autodidactic pursuits, it was probably not surprising when his examiners noted particularly outstanding achievements in mathematics and “philosophical propaedeutics.”

Karl arrived in Stockholm on July 6, 1920, and was met on the platform by Wicksell. Karl stayed in Stockholm for nearly seven weeks, but made a number of extended jaunts from the Swedish capital. He visited the economist Eli Heckscher on the island of Utö on the eastern side of the Stockholm archipelago. In early August, Knut Wicksell traveled alone to Copenhagen, while his wife, Anna Wicksell Bugge, accompanied Karl to Tokerov to visit the Wicksell’s son, Sven, and his two children. The Wicksells introduced Karl to several Swedish intellectuals, including Anna Whitlock, the journalist and suffragette—Anna Wicksell Bugge was herself quite active in the women’s movement (Wisselgren 2012). He was also introduced to the Scottish liberal politician and feminist Chrystal Macmillan.

On the 24th of August, Karl traveled with Knut Wicksell to Nynäshamn south of Stockholm, where he met Professor David Davidson and family, who escorted him to their home in Uppsala. Much of his time in Uppsala was spent discussing economic theory, especially certain value-theoretical problems, with Davidson. According to his diary, these discussions encouraged Karl to write two essays on economics, one concerning relative values titled “On the Analogy between Value Fluctuations and Motions,” and another (whose title is lost) that addressed the question, “If a commodity becomes scarcer and at the same the value of money falls, and so the commodity’s price rises; how much of this price rise is due to each cause?” While in Uppsala, he twice visited Róbert Bárány, recipient of the 1914 Nobel Prize in Medicine and former colleague of his father’s at the University of Vienna. He and Bárány would maintain a correspondence for several years to come.[[20]](#footnote-20)

During his time in Sweden, Karl continued to milk his *Päpstin Johanna* project for new jokes, apparently with some success – the diaries assert the hilarity of the revised first act – and recommenced much of his self-directed scientific, mathematical, and philosophical investigations. For a time in 1920 (and beyond), Einstein’s theory of relativity became an obsession—Karl being convinced, at least initially, that he had discovered some fatal flaw in Einstein’s presentation. In Uppsala, Karl attended lectures on physics and geometry at the University. Of course, the bulk of the trip was dedicated to less academic pursuits and Karl spent much time hiking and sailing. In Haga, Karl and the Wicksells enjoyed an evening of Swedish folk songs and dances. While in Stockholm, Menger visited the Swedish *Nationalmuseum.* He made sure to maintain regular communication with his parents in Vienna, obediently writing and mailing briefs every Monday.

By all appearances, Karl enjoyed Sweden and the company of his (father’s) economist friends immensely. Davidson even invited Karl to stay with the family through the winter and spring, but the prospect of his first semester as an official student at the University of Vienna beckoned, and Karl returned to his hometown in the first week of September 1920 (but not before stopping again in Stockholm to receive a ham as a gift from the Wicksells). For several years to follow, Karl maintained correspondences with Professors Wicksell and Davidson – both of whom provided much needed sympathy in the wake of Carl’s passing in 1921 – as well as gift exchanges with both families. Reflecting on this journey in his diary two years later, Karl wrote, “Sweden gave me a new perspective, especially the Wicksells, who are utter internationalists. To my irreligion was added anationalism.”

Karl entered the University of Vienna as a physics student in the fall of 1920. Unfortunately for our purposes, his diary keeping became somewhat less frequent at the same time. Karl’s coursework in the fall semester included algebra with Philip Furtwängler, a brilliant and influential German number theorist, paralyzed from the neck down, who would eventually serve on Karl’s doctoral thesis committee, and a mechanics course (originally announced as “general relativity”) taught by Hans Thirring (Beham, 2012, p. 171). Throughout his studies at the University, Karl would attend Thirring’s seminar every semester, either as a formal registrant or an unofficial participant (Beham, 2012, p. 172). However, apart from his enthusiasm for the courses taught by Furtwängler and Thirring, the diaries indicate that Karl was somewhat disappointed by his initial experiences at the University. His reflections upon 1920, made at year-end, seem to indicate that only Furtwängler’s course represented a true challenge, but that algebra – whatever interest it may have held – was less than essential, given his other interests. However, by the end of 1920, these disaffected impressions notwithstanding, Karl had made an important personal connection. Otto Schreier’s name makes its first appearance in Karl’s New Year’s Eve reflections on 1920. Schreier was a year older than Menger and also a graduate of Döblinger Gymnasium, though there is no evidence that the two were closely acquainted before 1920. Something of a mathematical *savant*, Schreier would soon become a sounding board for Karl’s burgeoning ideas concerning the mathematical treatment of both curve and dimension.

Schoolwork did not prevent Karl from pursuing his literary interests. One of Karl’s closest friends at Döblinger Gymnasium was Heinrich “Heini” Schnitzler (1902-1982), who later became a well-known actor and director both in Austria and, for a time following the *Anschluss*, on Broadway. Heini was the son of the even more famous dramatist and author Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), who would humor Karl’s ambitions of a career as a writer of stage dramas.[[21]](#footnote-21) The Schnitzlers, especially Arthur, would occasionally read and comment upon Karl’s drafts of *Päpstin Johanna*. Suffice it to say that, though the senior Schnitzler liked the premise of the play, he often expressed brusque criticisms of Karl’s writing ability. Schnitzler occasionally recorded his impressions of Karl’s unique personality, and sporadic thoughts of suicide, in his own diary: “In reply to my question about his actual plans [Menger replied]: ‘I actually would prefer to kill myself’.” Arthur Schnitzler concluded that Menger was “undoubtedly very talented, but perhaps not quite a normal young man” (Schnitzler [1920-2] 1993, p. 107).

The last stage of Carl’s uremic disease began in early February 1921. To complicate matters, the family maid had recently left the Mengers’ employ and Mina fell ill around the same time. In the week leading up to his passing, Carl was frequently incoherent and often muttered the word “aberakadabera” senselessly. He slept little and could breathe only with difficulty. On the night of February 21st, after a severe attack the evening before, Carl was left unconsciously gasping in pain and the family doctor gave him only a few hours to live. However, he unexpectedly recovered the next day, started again responding to his bedside entourage, and, by the morning of the 24th, was speaking merrily and listening attentively to a reading of the newspaper. Sadly though, he was worse again by the afternoon and, the following day, was again in a deep state of unconsciousness. In the early hours of Saturday, February 26, 1921, Carl Menger stopped breathing.

In his diaries, Karl tracked the condolences received – and not received (including former students Schumpeter, Mataja, and Robert Zuckerkandl) – from correspondents around Europe. Carl’s remaining assets were distributed between his partner and their son. Karl inherited the philosophical part of his father’s extensive library (“a comparatively small philosophical annex of about 1,500 volumes” [K. Menger 1994, 71]).[[22]](#footnote-22) In his will, the elder Menger indicated that his collection of economics texts was to be sold in order to keep Mina and Karl from financial hardship (K. Menger 1921b). Given the reverence in which both Mina and Karl held not only the family patriarch but also *books*, the fact that this collection was ultimately sold to, of all places, Hitotsubashi Univeristy in Tokyo, must have been difficult.[[23]](#footnote-23) The economics library of Carl Menger currently resides not with any of his direct descendants (familial orintellectual), or even in the country forever linked with his name, but in a university library some 9,000 miles from his final resting place. Karl would later reflect in his diaries upon the period immediately following his father’s death as the “unhappiest time of my life.”

However, it does seem to have fortified Karl to resume serious work on the second edition of the *Grundsätze*. His mother would assist yet again. By Easter, Karl’s editorial introduction was written, though he later extended it, and the chapters on needs (*Bedürfnisse*) and goods were near completion.[[24]](#footnote-24) The chapters on value and capital theory had been completed in 1919. Karl expected the chapters on price, exchange, and commodities to be easy to complete. All that remained were the chapters on the economy and on money. The former chapter seems to have been in a serious state of disrepair and Karl ultimately decided to simply follow the original edition as closely as possible. After completing his work on the *Grundsätze* in the first half of 1921, he noted that organizing the chapter on the economy was his greatest accomplishment as editor of the second edition.

Richard Schüller, who, in addition to holding the title of professor extraordinarius (i.e., a “professor without chair”) at the University of Vienna, held a prominent position in the Austrian Foreign Ministry at the time, had by then agreed to write the book’s preface. Schüller had been one of Carl Menger’s “best students” (Ehs 2014, p. 556) and would later serve from 1930 to 1938 as editor of the *Zeitschrift für Nationalökonomie*.[[25]](#footnote-25) According to Karl’s diaries, Schüller was the sole follower of Mengerian economics to have accepted with grace and munificence the junior Menger’s stewardship of the second edition. He would prove a valuable ally during Karl’s imminent health crisis, completing negotiations with the publisher, Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The spring of 1921 found Karl once again in Hans Thirring’s seminar, this time on elasticity theory and hydromechanics, and in Philip Furtwängler’s advanced number theory seminar. However, the most important academic event of the semester was Karl’s first meeting with Hans Hahn, who had arrived in Vienna from Bonn in the winter of 1920/1921 to occupy the chair left vacant by the retirement of mathematics professor (and former University president) Gustav von Escherich. A native of Vienna and graduate of the University, Hahn started his academic career in Czernowitz in 1909 and was severely wounded in battle in 1916, at which time he joined the mathematics faculty at Bonn. Karl Menger’s first encounter with Hahn would be life changing and, as it turned out, ultimately lead him to the recognition he so clearly desired.

The subject of Hahn’s first seminar at the University – Neueres über den Kurvenbegriff (Recent developments concerning the concept of a curve) – was, according to Menger’s testimony, a pedagogical *tour de force*:

“Hahn went right to the heart of the problem. Everyone, he began, has an intuitive idea of curves […] But anyone who would make that idea precise, Hahn said, would encounter great difficulties. In this seminar we would examine attempts by several eminent geometers to define the curve concept, only to find that some of their definitions were too wide, others too narrow and still others altogether unsatisfactory, so that at the end of the seminar we should see that the problem was not yet solved” (K. Menger, 1994, 38-39).

Menger was inspired like never before. He spent the following weekend absorbed in the problem of a mathematical definiton of the curve concept and emerged with what seemed an elegant solution, which he immediately took to Otto Schreier, who pointed out, “‘if an idea as simple as yours could solve the problem, why would several great geometers have given unsatisfactory solutions and why would Hahn say that after discussing all previous attempts we should see that the problem was still unsolved?’ I admitted that this thought had also crossed my mind. […] ‘Yet as you will agree’, I said in keeping with a general penchant of mine for simplicity, ‘one should never reason that an idea is too simple to be correct. I shall tell my solution to Hahn’” (K. Menger, 1994, 41-42).

It was unusual at the time for undergraduate students to seek out personal meetings with University of Vienna professors. But, of course, setting aside the fact that he was the scion of a famous and recently deceased Viennese professor, Karl was not a standard-issue freshman. So, undeterred by time-honored convention, Karl found himself in Hahn’s office before the second meeting of the seminar.

“Hahn, who had hardly looked up from the book he was reading when I entered, became more and more attentive as I went on. At the end, after some thought, he said that this would be indeed a workable definition, and asked me where I had learned so much about point sets and topology. I replied that I was a physics student at the end of my first semester and had not heard about topology; but that my definition used only concepts defined the week before in the first meeting of the seminar, which was all that I had ever heard about point sets. Hahn had not realized that two hours of his excellent presentation of basic concepts were sufficient to make them operative even in the mind of someone totally unfamiliar with the field. He nodded rather encouragingly and I left” (K. Menger, 1994, 43).

For the next few months, with the exception of the relatively minor cleanup work left to bring the second edition of the *Grundsätze* to press, projects unrelated to the definitions of curve and dimension were mostly set aside. Even *Päpstin Johanna* was overshadowed by the curve and dimension problems, though Karl still hoped to finish the play. He had at last discovered the problem that would eventually lead to his first publications as sole author—a problem, moreover, that could not be tied back to Carl Menger’s legacy and which would allow the younger Menger to make his own name. However, there were still several trials to be overcome.

Conditions in Vienna had apparently improved to some degree by 1921 (K. Menger, 1994, 1). However, this improvement in the city’s living conditions does not seem to have positively affected Karl’s physical (and, consequently, emotional) state. He again suffered respiratory problems, but continued his relentless pace until, finally, one day in late June, he could no longer stand up. According to his diary, Karl received a diagnosis of pleurisy around this time, which meant three and a half weeks confined to his bedroom.[[27]](#footnote-27) However, in what had become his customary fashion, Menger refused to give up work on his latest obsession while the potential promise of publication remained in view and continued “to work feverishly in the literal as well as in the metaphorical sense […] During the spring and summer of 1921, I elaborated the principle of my definition of curves” (K. Menger, 1994, 45-46).

Menger’s illness kept him out of the University’s seminar rooms for several weeks. He corresponded with Thirring, Hahn, and his other professors during this time, while Schreier kept him abreast of coursework. Indeed, to Karl’s delight, his friend informed him that in the most recent meeting of Hahn’s curve seminar, the professor himself had expounded a definition of curve drawn from Karl’s own.

Later in the summer, Menger joined his mother and the Tislowitz family[[28]](#footnote-28) for a two-month stay in the resort town of Bad Ischl in Upper Austria. The trip was meant to finally cure Karl’s pleurisy, but the mountain air and sunshine – not to mention the excessive intimacy of the domestic environment, did little to improve his physical or emotional disposition. Indeed, the diaries depict the vacation as something just short of plain hell for the bookish Menger. He could not get well – or away from people – long enough to advance his reading or any of his critical research projects.

In mid-September, Karl made a solo trip to Amsterdam by way of Salzburg, Munich, Cologne, and Frankfurt, “with the hope of finishing *Johanna* […] and then, possibly, to die.” He had received an invitation to Wageningen from Lizzy van Dorp, a Dutch liberal politician, economist and feminist.[[29]](#footnote-29) Van Dorp, whom he met in Bloemedaal, was very welcoming, “even though she is a tremendous Germanophobe.” Van Dorp introduced him to Hendrik Antoon Lorentz and Karl was delighted to spend an hour talking physics with the 1902 Nobel laureate. Karl had been struggling for some time to understand Lorentz’s defense of aether theory and its relation to Einstein’s theory of relativity. On the evening of the same day that me met Lorentz (September 27th), Karl traveled to The Hague for two days to visit the Dutch liberal economist and former Treasurer-General Anton van Gijn. The two spent several hours discussing the international economic situation. In his diaries, Karl would describe van Gijn as “downright brilliant.” In early October, Karl traveled to Utrecht to visit Prof. Conraad Alexander Verrijn Stuart, an economist and jurist, who he described as “very educated, but not very likeable.” In Wageningen, Karl visited the mathematics professor Marie Johan van Uven (Kruit 2015, p. 512; Maat 2001, p. 190), who was also working on relativity. He left Holland on October 15th, arriving in Vienna the next day.

According to the diaries, at this point in his life, Karl’s overarching ambitions were twofold: 1) to complete at least one of his unfinished projects and 2) to die as painlessly and comfortably – and, preferably, as soon – as possible. He almost managed both feats.

By the fall, his pleural condition had been diagnosed as full-blown tuberculosis, but still Karl kept working. Indeed, far from taking a much-needed and well-deserved rest, Karl developed a new project wholly unrelated to his coursework in physics and mathematics. He became preoccupied with the pressing problems of the Austrian economy and focused for several weeks on the preparation of an editorial entitled “Lebensmittelzuschüsse und Noteninflation” (“Food Subsidies and Paper Inflation”) that was published in *Neue Freie Presse* on November 17, 1921 (K. Menger 1921a).

Any reader of Mises or Hayek would recognize in Menger’s overarching argument a permanent Austrian (school) theme: printing money is rarely, if ever, a solution to economic problems of the kind then confronting Austria, Hungary, and Germany. Karl labels printing money the “fundamental evil.” The need to print money stemmed from the government’s budget deficit, itself a result, according to Karl, of the “enormous” wage bill of the Austrian civil service and the need to keep food affordable for a starving populace in the midst of extreme inflation. Austria was stuck in a vicious circle: printing money led to declining purchasing power, falling exchange rates, rising import costs, and ever higher prices, which in turn required additional state expenditure to keep food prices artifically low for consumers and to cover the costs of civil-service wages, and thus, the printing of yet more money.

Karl argued against an abrupt cessation of the program of food subsidies, which paid the difference between the escalating market price of food and what consumers, with declining purchasing power, could afford. An immediate end to this program had been proposed by Wilhelm Rosenberg (1869-1923), once a student of Carl Menger and at the time Vice President of the Anglo-Austrian Bank (and especially well connected to the Austrian Finance Ministry). Rosenberg’s plan was the explicit target of Karl’s essay. Any attempt to abolish food subsidies all at once would likely lead to violent protests. However, more to the point, such a policy might fail to end the vicious cycle of money printing. Food prices would increase and workers, including civil servants, would demand higher wages. The effects of such a policy could well be counterproductive.

Instead, Karl argued that the end of the food subsidy program should be incremental and carefully managed (incidentally echoing one of his father’s favorite maxims that policy changes should be gradual rather than sudden), and supported by other measures. Above all, in order to stabilise the value of the Krone domestically and internationally, the government should make a credible promise – and keep it – to stop printing banknotes. Further restrictive measures would be necessary during the stabilization period, namely, some food rationing and severe punishment of illegal importers. Karl argued that the debasement of the Austrian Krone was in some measure the fault of currency speculators and he advised “enormous taxation of all trade of foreign currency, bank, and stock exchanges.”

To get the economy growing again, Karl recommended policies to encourage investment. He saw considerable potential in Austria’s hydropower sector and encuraged the government to support investments in this area. Growth in this sector would offer the added benefit of shifting a significant number of civil servants to private industry and, thus, of reducing state expenditure. Through these policies, Karl argued, inflation could be halted, the Krone stabilized, international creditworthiness regained, and economic growth eventually achieved.

Mina again helped with the preparation of the essay, which, though well received by those who paid attention, made little impression on the Austrian public. One who did notice was Rosenberg, who invited the younger Menger to lunch for a discussion.[[30]](#footnote-30) With some relief, Karl indicated in a letter to Wicksell in late December, delivered with a copy of the article, that the “portentious plan” of an immediate cessation of the subsidies program was losing proponents and unlikey to be implemented (K. Menger 1921c). Unfortunately, Austria’s economic situation continued to deteriorate, as did the Mengers’ financial circumstances. The hyperinflation persisted and Carl’s library was not yet sold. In December 1921, Mina had been forced to rent out the family dining room to a young Greek boarder, who had fled Greece to avoid being drafted.

Knut Wicksell celebrated his 70th birthday in December 1921 and Karl sent along copies of two letters for inclusion in Wicksell’s *Festschrift* in *Ekonomisk Tidskrift*. The first letter was written by Eugen Böhm-Bawerk ([1907] 1921) and was originally sent to Wicksell on July 5, 1907 (how it came into the Mengers’ possession is a mystery). It was published in the *Tidskrift* as “Zur Zinstheorie Marshall's” (“On Marshall’s Theory of Interest”). The second letter, from Carl Menger ([1884] 1921) to Böhm-Bawerk, was dated November 13, 1884, and published as “Zur Theorie des Capitalzinses” (“On the Theory of Interest on Capital”). These contributions seem to have greatly pleased Karl’s Swedish friends. David Davidson, also a contributor to the *Festschrift*, returned a lovely thank-you note along with some butter and sugar, while Wicksell himself sent 50 (presumably, Swedish) Krona and a letter of gratitude.

**1922**

Karl’s work on the theories of curve and dimension continued through the fall and winter. However, he was at his most maudlin in February 1922, bemoaning not only his lack of friends and poor health, but also the fact that he was no longer enjoying his mathematical and scientific research. Hahn was nevertheless very encouraging about the work Menger had recently forwarded to him, telling Karl that perserverance would surely lead to publishable – and important – results.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Of course, Karl’s refusal or (perhaps better) congenital inability to slow down had no beneficial effect on his health. Although it is impossible to support this point with documentary evidence, given that at this point in his life Karl wanted nothing more than to both publish *and* perish, it seems reasonable to think that his mother must have asserted her influence at some point. If he was not to quite prematurely go the way of his namesake, certain decisions had to be taken out of Karl’s hands. His condition was such that by late winter – the 1921/1922 winter was apparently an especially harsh one in Vienna – he could barely follow a simple lecture. Never the most stout young man, Karl also found himself unexpectedly dropping kilos during the first days of February. By the second week of the month, he was breathing only with considerable pain and planned to stay bedridden for several days. However, his fever remained dangerously elevated after ten days. Indeed, according to the diaries, his temperature remained elevated for two and a half months. The family brought in a number of physicians. At one point in January, a doctor by the name of Pineles prescribed arsenic treatment, which temporarily warded off a few symptoms, but did nothing to cure the underlying tubercular infection. Further specialists were consulted, several of whom recommended an extended recreational stay.

So it was that in May 1922 Karl entered the sanatorium Am Hofacker in Aflenz in the Styrian Alps.[[32]](#footnote-32) As it turned out, it was exactly what he needed not only to heal his weakenedrespiratory system but also to finally produce the definitive results on curve and dimension he had been practically killing himself to find in Vienna. It was Schreier who provided the lifeline between Menger, isolated in the Styrian Alps, and Hahn, Furtwängler, Thirring, and others in Vienna. Schreier maintained a constant correspondence with his sick friend, commented on his work, and visited him once for several days at the sanatorium.[[33]](#footnote-33) Indeed, so effective was Schreier at keeping his friend abreast of coursework that Karl was able to maintain his university studies without pause during the year in Aflenz (Beham, 2012, p. 242).[[34]](#footnote-34) During the sanatorium retreat, Karl also completed what soon became his dissertation manuscript.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Richard Schüller continued to prove his loyalty to the Mengerian cause. The manuscript of the *Grundsätze* had been delivered to the Viennese publishing house Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky in April, but it was Schüller who negotiated the final contract with the publisher. 5,000 copies would be printed and remuneration was set at 1,667 “Mark” per print sheet.[[36]](#footnote-36) This was a meager sum, according to Karl, but he was able to retain translation rights, which he thought (wrongly, as it turned out) might bring some future revenue.[[37]](#footnote-37) Schüller also made the trip to Aflenz and kept Karl current concerning the *Grundsätze*.

There was still some minor work to be completed after the first manuscript was delivered. Karl was not satisfied with the presentation of the theory of capital and interest, and these chapters, together with a planned appendix, were dropped from the second edition.[[38]](#footnote-38) At the time, Karl intended a multivolume anthology of his father’s unpublished works – the second edition of the *Grundsätze* was meant to be the initial installment (K. Menger 1923a, pp. IX-X) – and he intended to include these chapters, but this plan never materialized.

Karl had fully recovered his health by the end of the year, but remained in Aflenz through the winter as a precautionary measure. At the same time, the Mengers’ finanical situation improved, perhaps because Carl’s economics library had finally been sold. Karl wrote to Wicksell that the family would be free of financial worries for years to come (K. Menger 1922b).

In his penultimate journal entry, dated New Year’s Eve 1922, a much healthier – in both body and spirit – Karl Menger reflected upon the trials of the year then ending. In a marked change of attitude and despite the not inconsiderable sufferings he had endured, Karl was able to recognize, even then, that his illness and, especially, the retreat to Styria, had led to certain insights, personal as well as mathematical, that he otherwise might never have realized. At the same time, he saw further trials in his future and was not quite certain that the Reaper might not yet find him in 1923. But, at least he was no longer hoping for such an encounter.

**1923 and Beyond**

Karl left Aflenz in late February or early March 1923 as a “happy and healthy young man” (Schreier 1923). In his last journal entry, dated March 22, 1923, and posted from the Hotel Pension Hohl, Gardone Rivera, Italy, where he traveled after leaving Styria and before returning to Vienna, Karl set a three-year plan – after which he sincerely hoped to still be alive – for realizing certain research goals. Although it would take longer than expected to check off each item on the list, check them he eventually did. Indeed, the list reads like it could have been written as a retrospective ten or twelve years later. Karl’s projects are grouped into three broad categories: mathematics, epistemology, and ethics. It was in fact in these three fields – one could add economics as well – that Karl Menger made his most important contributions over the course of the next decade.[[39]](#footnote-39)

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, the material presented in the present paper is drawn from the three diaries that Karl Menger wrote between late 1918 and early 1923. All translations from the original German are the authors’ own. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. We uncovered different dates for Hermine Andermann’s birth. Kosel (1902, p. 224) indicates January 4, 1869. However, Beham (2012, p. 95), referring to Karl Menger’s baptismal register, gives December 4, 1868. Staudacher (2009, p. 25) states “1868 winter.” An August 1882 newspaper report on a court case in which Mina appeared as a witness indicates her age as fourteen, placing her birth some time in late 1867 or early 1868 (*Die Presse* 1882). Karl Menger states that Mina was nineteen years old when she met Carl Menger in October 1888 (K. Menger, n.d.[a]). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Different sources give different spellings, e.g., Gergassewitsch, Gergacosgvics. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Far more liberal than his autocratic father, Rudolf was the only son of Franz Joseph and Empress Elizabeth, Duchess of Bavaria. On January 30, 1889, at the Imperial family’s hunting lodge at Mayerling, southwest of Vienna, 30-year-old Archduke Rudolf concluded the terms of an apparent murder-suicide pact with his 17-year-old mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. When the Emperor’s brother, Karl Ludwig, renounced his rights to the throne a few days later, Rudolf’s similarly ill-fated cousin, Franz Ferdinand, found himself next in line to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Of course, It was the dual assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914 at the hands of Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb nationalist, that sparked the First World War. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. It is likely that Karl’s family name was changed from Andermann to Menger at this time. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The common-law principle of *legitmatio per rescriptum principis* permitted unmarried parents to legitimate their children via either ceremony (typical in Bavaria) or explicit approval of the sovereign (the common practice in other German-speaking states). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For reasons of brevity, we will not document all of Karl’s very extensive readings over the period covered by the diaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Beham (2012, p. 98) provides further details. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Dekker (2016, 51-52) for a discussion of Max Menger’s political activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A Spanish Flu pandemic infected more than 500 million people worldwide in the years 1918 through 1920. The pestilential conditions connected with the war meant that cases were especially numerous in Europe. Given these circumstances, it might seem reasonable to assume that Karl’s infection was one such case, but we have no direct evidence for this. The fact that Viennese doctors at the time regularly diagnosed Spanish Flu as such and that Karl’s diaries do not specify such a diagnosis might indicate that he suffered a strain other than the H1N1 virus subtype associated with the (misnamed) Spanish Flu. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It is difficult to determine how much 25,000 Austrian Kronen at the end of February 1919 would be worth today. However, it can be said with some certainty that this sum was worth far more in the spring of 1919 than it would be at the end of the same year: the supply of Austrian crowns was at the end of 1919 fifteen times what it had been in March (Ebeling, 2006). The Austrian strain of the infamous postwar hyperinflation was well in motion. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Karl had previously noted the passing in early 1917 of his beloved aunt Karoline, who, our evidence suggests, was Carl Menger’s sister. We have not been able to determine whether Karoline was older or younger than Carl, whose parents had ten children, four of whom died at young ages. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. We struggled to determine the exact ages of some of Carl Menger’s less famous siblings. Thanks to Hansjörg Klausinger for tracking down Bertha Kosel’s birth year (i.e., 1835). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The bust currently resides in the Arkadenhof at the University of Vienna. According to Karl, it was generally agreed among Anton’s friends and relations that the bust is a poor representation. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Preparotory material concerning Karl’s critical history of philosophy can be found in Box 46 of the Karl Menger Papers at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. It is possible that some of Carl’s literary works were anonymously published as serials in newspapers. Before entering academia, the elder Menger worked as a journalist and editor, founding the *Wiener Tagblatt* newspaper in the 1860s. Karl expended some considerable effort over the course of 1919 trying to find past copies of *Wiener Tagblatt* in the library of the University of Vienna, apparently, in order to read some of his father’s literary works. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. “Catarrh” is a word rarely used in modern medicine, though it has a long history. It typically marks an inflammation of the mucous membranes in the throat or sinuses, and is considered symptomatic of other disorders (cold, cough, sore throat, inflamed adenoids, tonsilitis, and sinusitis) of the respiratory system. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Karl’s diaries leave the impression, without providing much detail of its nature, that there was considerable disagreement between the senior Menger and Wieser during Carl’s later years. In addition to attending the celebration at the University, Wieser (apparently accompanied by Grünberg) had also visited the Menger home earlier on Carl’s 80th birthday. Karl noted that Wieser made a peculiar impression during this visit. It was Karl’s opinion that Wieser had arrived at the conclusion that his contribution to economic science was insignificant and that the discipline itself had reached something of an impasse that he was powerless to resolve.

    It also seems that Carl Menger had a somewhat strained relationship with certain unspecified members of the Austrian School’s third generation. This may have been connected with the choice to make his teenage son editor of the second edition of the *Grundsätze*. Apart from Schüller who, as we will see, offered much assistance to the younger Menger, no member of the Austrian School was willing to help with, or even contribute a foreword to, the new edition, despite Carl’s death in 1921, well before the second edition was ready for publication. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In conversation, Robert Leonard raised the possibility that Karl’s trip to Sweden was connected with his ongoing respiratory problems. In the years following the war, it was not uncommon for Viennese suffering from various respiratory ailments – at least, those who could afford to do so – to escape the perilous circumstances of the city for more healthful climes. Sweden was apparently a popular destination. In any case, though we cannot rule out the possibility, the diaries provide no explicit evidence of a connection between Karl’s health and his Swedish summer holiday. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Indeed, in a letter sent in August 1921, Bárány worried about Karl’s health (he would soon be officially diagnosed with tuberculosis) and advised him to rest and avoid work. Bárány also recommended a retreat and a physician in Yugoslavia. Suffice it to say that, then as today, few 19-year-old college students received medical advice from Nobel laureates. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Schnitzler was among the belletrists who Menger most admired. During the years covered by the diaries, Karl read 14 of Schnitzler’s works, some of which were gifts from the author himself, and saw a number of Schnitzler’s plays performed in theater. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. This “annex” of philosophical texts “included the collected works of practically all great philosophers from Bacon and Descartes to about 1900. In my last two pre-university years I made extensive use of this philosophical library: in fact, I wrote abstracts of the main works from Bacon to Fichte.” We believe that Menger refers here to his abandoned history of philosophy project. “[A]fter my father’s death…I retained the philosophical annex, completed it during the next 10 years by acquiring the complete works of the few classical authors that had been missing (such as Pierre Gassendi and Pierre Bayle), and brought it up to date especially along the lines of logic and philosophy of science, which interested me more and more” (K. Menger 1994, 71). In a letter written sometime in the decade before his own passing, Karl stated that this philosophical library “includes most important philosophical books published since 1600 in English, French, and German” (K. Menger, n.d.[b]). We do not know the current whereabouts of the Menger philosophical library. It is not part of the collections gifted by the descendants of the Menger family to Duke University, nor does it appear to have ever been delivered to Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, where Carl Menger’s vast library of texts related to economics and the social sciences resides. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Beham (2012, p. 27) speculates that the sale of the library must have been connected with the need to fund Karl’s tuberculosis treatments in 1922, but the decision was taken by Carl Menger before his death. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Karl soon discovered a previously unknown section on needs, which he ultimately decided not to incorporate into the second edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Additional biographical material on Richard Schüller can be found in Craver (1986) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Another publisher, Rikola, was originally supposed to publish the second edition, but negotiations between editor and would-be publisher broke down over the summer of 1921. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. However, his later *Reminiscences* place the diagnosis a bit earlier in the year: after “long studies in unheated libraries during the winter of 1921 and weakened by post-war malnutrition and overwork, I succumbed, in May 1921, to a serious respiratory infection” (K. Menger, 1994, 45). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The Tislowitz family appears often in Karl’s diary and they seem to have been quite close to the Mengers. Fanny and Fryderyk would be victims of the holocaust. Their children, Richard and Eduard, escaped their parents’ fate (Raghavan 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Van Dorp was an acquaintance of the Mengers; she had written a letter of condolence after Carl’s death. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Many thanks again to Hansjörg Klausinger for filling in various details regarding Rosenberg’s position. A short overview of the postwar Austrian debate over food subsidies can be found in Exner (2016, pp. 174-176).

    [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The clouds parted briefly when, in early 1922, at the suggestion of mathematics professor Tonio Rella and physics professor Josef Lense, Karl (along with Schreier) was made a member of the *Mathematische Gesellschaft in Wien*—later renamed *Österreichische Mathematsiche Gesellschaft* (Austrian Mathematical Society). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. There is conflicting evidence concerning the date of Karl’s admittance to the Aflenz sanatorium. His *Reminiscences*, written in the late 1970s, give no specific date, but seem to indicate he was admitted in late 1921. However, his diaries and correspondence do not support this. Karl wrote relatively few entries in 1922, but the entries he did write indicate he was still in Vienna in early February and definitely in Aflenz by the end of May. In a letter to Wicksell dated April 28, 1922, he wrote that he was leaving for Aflenz in a few days and in a letter written in December of that year, he wrote that he arrived in May (K. Menger 1922a, 1922b).

    Whatever the case may be, before leaving the capital, Karl deposited another sealed envelope with the Vienna Academy of Sciences. This letter, which contained his results on curve and dimension, such as they were in mid-December 1921, was eventually opened according to the Academy’s protocol in April 1926 and subsequently published in 1929 in Hahn’s *Monatshefte der Mathematik und Physik* as part of “Zur Dimensions- und Kurventheorie: unveröffentlichte Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1921-1923” (“On Dimension and Curve Theory: Unpublished Papers of the Years 1921-1923”) (K. Menger, 1929). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Mina visited the sanatorium often and would transport correspondence between Menger and Schreier. Another visitor was Maria “Mizzi” Feßler, later Maria Zach, who, in the 1930s, would emigrate to the Soviet Union, where she and her husband, Karl Zach, eventually became victims of Stalin’s Great Purge (McLoughlin/Vogl 2013, pp. 563-4). Mizzi was the same age as Karl and, as a fellow math student, offered another connection to the University. Though the details are unclear, their relationship seems to have been quite close. They maintained contact for some time. Karl would write to her, probably in late 1926, from Laren in the Netherlands, where he was living at the time while working at the University of Amsterdam. Robert Leonard (1998, p. 2; 2010, p. 110) and, subsequently, Beham (2012, pp. 244-5) and Taschner (2015, p. 96), suggest that this same correspondence was with his future wife, Hilda Axamit, but we believe this is a mistake. Axamit, whom Karl married in 1934, was his student at the University of Vienna in the early 1930s. The Karl Menger Papers at Duke include books of notes written by Axamit from courses taught by Menger and Hahn in the 1933-34 school year. It seems unlikely that they knew each other, much less were in constant correspondence, in the early- to mid-1920s. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Karl’s letters to Schreier have apparently been lost. Schreier’s letters to Karl are held at the Rubenstein Library at Duke. Most, but not all, of these letters have been edited and published in Odefey (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. In a letter to Wicksell dated July 1, 1923, Karl stated that his professors had indicated this manuscript surpassed the requirements of a doctoral dissertation (K. Menger 1923b). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. We are a bit confused by this. In his diary, Karl stated the contractual terms in “Mark.” However, the Krone was the currency of Austria at the time. We assume that Karl means the German Papiermark, which the Weimar Republic was printing (far too much of) at the time. However, it is not clear why a contract between two Austrian parties would be written in terms of German currency. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. On the reception of the second edition and its relationship to the original, see Becchio 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. A chapter on income was also apparently omitted from the second edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. We would like to thank Hansjörg Klausinger, E. Roy Weintraub, Robert Leonard, Giandomenica Becchio, Kevin D. Hoover, Erwin Dekker, Stefan Kolev, Paul Dudenhefer, Bernhard Beham, and an anonymous referee, for valuable feedback concerning the present paper. Any remaining errors are the authors’ own. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)