

Chapter 2

The Vienna Circle and Logical Empiricism in the First Republic

As we have seen above, between 1907 and 1911 the proto-circle of what would later emerge as the Vienna Circle was formed with Hans Hahn, Philipp Frank, Otto Neurath, and also Richard von Mises. Essential elements of Logical Empiricism were already anticipated in that discussion group, but World War I represented a radical caesura within this intellectual development. It could not, however, permanently stop the efforts to bring about a renewal and a “turn in philosophy.” The return of Hans Hahn to Vienna as professor for mathematics in the summer semester of 1921 signified the launching of scientific philosophy in terms of content and organization.

Thus, we can consider the period between 1918 and 1924 to be the *constitutive phase* of the Vienna Circle. With Schlick’s appointment to Vienna in 1922, the personal and philosophical basis was laid—in conjunction with the pre-war formative phase—for the Circle’s regular Thursday evening meetings. These were arranged by Schlick, beginning in the winter semester of 1924–25.

This institutionalization inaugurated the *non-public phase* of the Schlick circle. Approximately five years would pass before the circle’s first public gatherings in Prague. This period was marked by the efficacious and mutually enriching contacts with Ludwig Wittgenstein, reaching their peak in 1930.

The *public phase* was inaugurated with the collective appearance of members of the Schlick circle, under the name “Vienna Circle,” at the First Conference on the Epistemology of the Exact Sciences in Prague, accompanied by the presentation of the manifesto *The Scientific World Conception: The Vienna Circle*; the establishment in 1928–29 of the Ernst Mach Society as the circle’s populist arm; and the publication, starting in 1930, of the journal *Erkenntnis*. The Circle’s increasingly public activity came to a temporary halt in 1934: the Ernst Mach society was dissolved, Otto Neurath emigrated after February, 1934, and Hans Hahn died unexpectedly. An externally-determined dissolution process had already begun with the onset of emigration early in the thirties; the murder of Moritz Schlick in June,

1936, brought a final, brutal end to the expansive phase inside Austria. In the subsequent *phase of decline* between 1936 and 1938 a few peripheral circles formed around Friedrich Waismann, Viktor Kraft, Heinrich Neider, and Edgar Zilsel tried to maintain the original communicative network in Vienna. This ended with the “annexation” of Austria to Hitler’s Germany in March, 1938.

It is to be noted that, in parallel to the start of the public phase with its conferences and congresses and manifold publications, we find an *internationalization* of both the Vienna Circle and Logical Empiricism (1930–1940). The process involved an exchange of views with related groups such as the Polish school of logic and the American pragmatists. At the start of the 1930s as well, communication with Karl Popper began on the group’s periphery. Soon the “mathematical colloquium,” organized by Karl Menger, represented a broadening and accentuation of the Circle’s focus; Menger’s colloquium met regularly and published the *Ergebnisse eines mathematischen Kolloquiums* (Reports of a Mathematical Colloquium) (8 vols., 1931–36).

Following their appearance at the Prague conference, the Vienna Circle participated in the Second Conference for the Epistemology of the Exact Sciences in Königsberg (1930), in Prague’s Eighth International Congress for Philosophy (1934), and in six International Congresses for Unity of the Sciences (1935–41)—twice in Paris, and once each in Copenhagen, Cambridge, Harvard, and Chicago.

With this interdisciplinary expansion and pluralization, both Logical Empiricism and the Schlick circle’s philosophy of science were transformed into the “unity of science” movement, organized by Neurath and Carnap with non-Austrian philosophers such as Charles Morris. Along with the ninth volume of the journal *Erkenntnis*, edited by Carnap and Reichenbach (starting with vol. 8, as the *Journal of Unified Science*), additional diversity was achieved through the series *Schriften zur wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung* (ed. by Moritz Schlick and Philipp Frank, 11 vol., 1929–1937), as well as *Einheitswissenschaft* (ed. by Otto Neurath, 7 vol., 1933–39). Finally, the latter efforts at a pluralization and concretization of scientific empiricism culminated in the publication, starting in 1938, of the large-format *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (ed. by Otto Neurath, with Rudolf Carnap and Charles Morris). The project has appeared in a body of two volumes and 19 monographs, under the title *Foundations of the Unity of Science* (ed. by Neurath, Carnap and Morris, 1970–71). The activity after 1940 already signifies, however, a new phase in the final emigration, exile, and transformation of Logical Empiricism; it represents part of a development to be considered separately: the movement’s international influence following the outbreak of World War II, which includes the phenomena of integration and diffusion.

Before more closely scrutinizing these external and internal developmental phases, let us first consider the cultural context of the Vienna Circle and Logical Empiricism in the First Republic.

2.1 The Sociocultural Framework: The “Late Enlightenment”

We can gain a deeper sense of the Vienna Circle’s history, as well as that of its wider milieu, by considering “late Enlightenment” currents both within the Ethical Movement and among monists and freethinkers. The context for such an orientation is Austria’s socio-liberal cultural movement.

A variety of neo-liberal groups and associations both on the edge and inside the “leftist camp”—the social-democratic cultural movement—offered the conceptual grounding and institutional framework for the late Enlightenment: a phenomenon defined by programmatic homogeneity, ideological affinity, and personal interconnections (Stadler 1981a). What all the late Enlightenment currents had in common was a basic humanitarian-cosmopolitan perspective, an uncompromising orientation toward progress and reason, and the advocacy of social and cultural reform. In addition, the groups involved worked, both theoretically and in practice, on forming an anti-metaphysical world view and shaping an ethical foundation for everyday life through non-revolutionary strategies that corresponded well to an ethos fundamentally radical-bourgeois in nature.

In 1919, these groups were united under an umbrella organization called the Free Union of Cultural Associations. It included the General Austrian Women’s Association, the Ethical Society and Ethical Community, Readiness [*Die Bereitschaft*], Association for Social Work and for the Spread of Social Knowledge, the Association for the Reform of Marriage Law, the Austrian Monist Society and Viennese Academic Association of Monists, the League of Austrian Freethinkers, the Society for Social Pedagogy, and the Association for Popular and Young People’s Education. The Union of Austrian Associations for Peace, the Viennese Sociological Society, and diverse, smaller reform associations (e.g., Josef Popper-Lynkeus’ Association for a Universal Alimentation Service) were closely connected to the other groups. Along with the more narrow linkage of all the groups to the Viennese movements for adult education and school reform, there was also collaboration and intellectual exchange with the Ernst Mach Society and Otto Neurath’s Museum for Society and Economy.

By virtue of their particular qualities, most important among these groups were the monists, the freethinkers and the members of the Ethical Society linked to them, and the Association for a Universal Alimentation, for it is only within the context of their activities that the Ernst Mach Society assumes its intellectual-historical value and socio-historical dimension. In addition, we need to take account of the Masonic influence (Zirkel 1984; Patka 2010, 2011): the Monists’ Association and Ethical Society, for instance, were founded by lodges—a fact reflected in their humanistic-pacifist perspective. The partial integration of the groups into the culture of the labor

movement represented another key element of their identity¹—an element likewise reflected in the social standpoint of the Ernst Mach Society. Although the other groups belonging to the Free Union had been strongly stamped with social-democratic tendencies since 1918, this applied for the Society only to a limited extent, as we will see. Put briefly: due to its program for a logically and empirically based rationality and a scientifically grounded philosophy, the Ernst Mach Society “emancipated” itself more strongly from the metaphysical, historical-dialectical materialism of Austro-Marxist provenance and instead developed the concept of unified science in the spirit of Logical Empiricism.

The roots and operating conditions of all these intellectual phenomena lie in the Vienna of the fin-de-siècle and in the breakup of the Habsburg monarchy. The present chapter of the Austrian history of science did not emerge ex nihilo, but continued from the earlier developments, under the transformed social conditions of the post-war period. These conditions can only be touched on briefly here. They mark a phase of late-bourgeois and high-capitalist society, which led to the fascist seizure of power—a phase characterized, on the one hand, by a process of societal democratization in the wake of a failed revolution, and, on the other, by the remaining leanings of a “conservative monarchy.” Alongside and in interaction with these social realities a second revolution took place in the natural sciences and a corresponding process of technological innovation with particular emphasis on concepts of rationalization and planning.

The crucial presence of directly opposing political-cultural camps is mirrored in a predominantly bipolar cultural landscape (Heer 1981), which an externally-oriented intellectual history must consider in relation to both epochs (monarchy and republic) and integrate into a differentiated perspective. Let us cite several trends within this pattern of “modified continuity”: leaving aside their continued dominance within Austria’s press, liberal ideas, strongly influenced as they were by German and Austrian Jewry, had exhausted their political effectiveness long before World War I; they nevertheless still set the tone of discourse in the sciences and arts. Cultural streams such as humanism, pacifism, scientism, and social and cultural reform had already been strongly represented in the monarchic period by figures including Ernst Mach, Josef Popper-Lynkeus, Albert Einstein, Ludwig Boltzmann, Bertha von Suttner, Alfred H. Fried, Rudolf Goldscheid, Friedrich Jodl, and Sigmund Freud. After 1918, their impact was presented in what was perhaps a sharper and less compromising manner than in the previous aesthetic and impressionistic epoch.

Through the new party landscape (comprised of social democrats, Christian socialists, pan-Germanists, and German nationalists), neo-liberalism was either squeezed into the political subculture² or gradually absorbed by the mass parties; the Austrian Social-Democratic Workers’ Party was here destined to be an integrating

¹Glaser 1981; Weidenholzer 1981; Pfoser 1980; Langewiesche 1979; *Arbeiterkultur* 1981; *Die ersten 100 Jahre* 1988; *Das Rote Wien* 1993. On “red Vienna” in general see Rabinbach 1983; Gruber 1991.

²For example anarchists and reformers of living conditions: Botz/Brandstetter/Pollak 1977.

vehicle. The alliance of scientific philosophy with the adult education movement emerged from precisely this social constellation in the post-revolutionary phase of an unstable republic, threatened by fascism and civil war. Rationality, technophilia, an anti-metaphysical orientation, all directed at promoting science and progress, served as a means to emancipate the masses. The gulf between this program and the opponents of progress was so great that more subtle means of social critique and contemplation of nature could be dispensed with: a solid basis among the populace had to be first informed and then mobilized in any event. In this particular situation, given the antagonistic environment of “black Vienna” (Wasserman 2014), the social-democratic stronghold of “red Vienna” underwent considerable radicalization, everyday political life being marked by a process of self-confirmation and self-representation—an assertion of a strength that was often auto-suggestive. Equally at play was the theme of constructive action and thought on the part of the new people, future *Bauvolk*, or founding populace, of an anticipated socialist society. Both manifestations, the interaction of world view and ideology, on the one hand, and strictly scientific development, on the other, will be described below in relation to the Ernst Mach Society (Sect. 4.2).

On the initiative of the Freethinkers, the Austrian Monists’ Association was founded before World War I, following some official resistance.³ The actual agent of the group’s establishment, however, was the 6,000-member strong German Monists’ Association under the direction of Ernst Haeckel and Wilhelm Ostwald (Lübbe 1963, part 3). Already in 1911 the Viennese philosopher Friedrich Jodl had spoken of cultural issues at the international congress of monists held at Hamburg, and he subsequently became a major intellectual and organizational activist for the Monist movement. As in Austria, the German Monists’ association stood in close proximity to the workers’ movement through its mass agitation to renounce membership in the Christian churches. The common front formed by Wilhelm Ostwald and Karl Liebknecht demonstrated that a political-ideological coalition between the progressive, liberal bourgeoisie and socialism did exist. A similar movement emerged in 1913 in Austro-Hungary, in which the Czech Socialist Monists’ Association initiated a large campaign to leave the church in order to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Jan Hus’s burning at the stake (Herneck 1960, 35).

During World War I, the pacifist tenets of Ostwald and a large portion of the German association faltered (in contrast to the Austrian monists). With ninety other distinguished artists and scientists, Ostwald signed the pro-war appeal “To the World of Culture”; in doing so, he set himself apart from the modest number of anti-militarist and pacifist scholars grouped around Einstein (Lübbe 1963, 1972, 238; Böhme 1975). As was the case with his scientific program for “energetics,” Ostwald would come to accept the untenability of his pro-war position. Along with Jodl, active members of the Austrian Monists’ Association before 1914 included Rudolf

³ Sources: Unpublished handouts and lecture programs; *Schriften des Deutschen Monistenbundes*; Belke 1978, pp. 43–48.

Goldscheid, Wilhelm Börner, Wladimir Misar, and Paul Kammerer (Misar⁴ would later participate in the Ernst Mach Society). In 1913, Edgar Herbst founded the Viennese Academic Monists' Association. This group was active only to a modest extent, since its anti-metaphysical, scientific orientation held a defensive, minority status in the university. The already mentioned Rudolf Goldscheid (1870–1931) played a central role within this circle. As a freethinker, he had published numerous texts before the war treating women's emancipation, human rights, and pacifism.⁵ He is considered the founder of the "sociology of finance," and of the concept of the "economy of humans"—the terminology now meets with disfavor—that was particularly favored by the monists; he arrived at the latter through his rejection of any mode of Social Darwinism and his uncompromising anti-militarism.

Goldscheid based his work on a Marxist-monistic ethic with biological, sociological, and economic foundations ("ethical positivism"). He arrived at a theory of society oriented toward the natural sciences, condemning the inhuman conditions accompanying the commodification of human beings and advocating their rectification through an economical development that excluded conflicts between classes and peoples. The premise for such a process—and here we see the weakness of a sociology based on economic-developmental principles—is a non-capitalist society existing in a peaceful world, which according to Goldscheid can be achieved through planning and organization (Herzberg 1928, 192ff.). Let us note that a strikingly similar model of rational social technology is to be found in Otto Neurath's planning-schema. Alongside Max Adler, Rudolf Eisler, Josef Redlich, and Wilhelm Jerusalem, Goldscheid was a founder of the Viennese Sociological Society. As editor of the internationally circulating journal *Friedenswarte*, he was a chief representative of the European peace movement, as well as a member of both the Ethical Society and Readiness. Accordingly, along with a few members of the Monists' Association, he vehemently turned against the war-euphoria of his German colleagues: a position he would maintain after the war in an even less compromising manner.

With Paul Kammerer (1880–1926), the monists' ranks included a distinguished natural scientist with pacifist sympathies as strong as Goldscheid's. In his role as an internationally recognized biologist, Kammerer attempted to sustain the Lamarckian thesis that the inheritance of acquired characteristics is possible under either natural or artificial conditions; in doing so, he drew bitter opposition from a number of neo-Darwinists. This debate, and the accusation (still unsubstantiated) that he doctored his experiments, may have contributed to his sudden suicide.⁶ In their early phase, the Austrian monists engaged above all in activities related to social reform in the realms of law, education, and public welfare, along with the anti-alcohol and women's suffrage movements. Their philosophical doctrines of monism were basically

⁴Wladimir Misar: teacher, also at secondary schools (physics and mathematics); freethinker, member of the Ethical Community, Freemason High Secretary.

⁵On Goldscheid: Belke 1978, p. 34 f.; *Deutsche Biographie* 1953 ff.; Hickel (ed.) 1976; Ch. Fleck 1990.

⁶On the eventful life and work of Paul Kammerer: Koestler 1971.

copied from the organization’s German branch and included the assumption, amongst others, of a natural unity of the world and its explainability through scientific reason alone.

This vague program had room, however, for a broad range of different “monisms,” as one can see from their lecture schedule. After the war, only a small membership was available to resume monistic activity—and then only in cooperation with the proletarian freethinkers. Goldscheid remained the dominant personality, partly because, after 1918, he continued to publish pamphlets on socialization and brochures on problems of the state budget and taxes (Schwarz 1919). The names of the members, authors, and lecturers demonstrate that, with its appeal to reason and science and its technologically-oriented planning, the Austrian Monists’ Association was attractive to both those in the Austro-Marxist sphere and members of the Vienna Circle. We thus find Moritz Schlick, Otto Neurath, and Herbert Feigl giving talks in the Monists’ Association, along with the author Hedwig Rossi, with whom Schlick maintained a warm correspondence.⁷ In February 1921, Schlick had delivered a talk “on the meaning of life” at the German Monists’ Association; his *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre* (1918, *General Theory of Knowledge*) was considered not only as a critique of traditional positivism but also as offering a scientific foundation for the monistic view of the world (Schlick 1927; Herzberg 1928, 115f.). Schlick directly affirmed the monistic perspective in the second edition (1925), indicating in chapter 35 (“Monism, Dualism, Pluralism”) that

Thus we are thoroughly convinced that all the qualities of the universe—all being whatsoever—are of one kind in so far as they can be made accessible to knowledge by means of quantitative concepts. In this sense we embrace a monism. There is only *one* kind of reality, that is, we need in principle only *one* system of concepts to know all the things of the universe. And there do not exist in addition classes of things that this system does not fit. (Schlick 1974, 326)

In Austria, Schlick seems to have refrained from further engagement with the Monists’ Association—after 1929 the Ernst Mach Society served as a platform for his ideas. Schlick’s student Herbert Feigl wholeheartedly agreed with Schlick’s pointed critique of any sort of psychophysical parallelism or dualism. Feigl was to be concerned for many years with the mind-body problem; he formulated a language-analytic, monistic solution to the problem, without classifying it—in the manner of Rudolf Carnap—as a pseudo-problem or one lacking content. Schlick’s own “identity theory”—in the end a metaphysical construct—had anticipated Russell’s position of “neutral monism”; it was then refined by Feigl in his talk “The ‘Mental’ and the ‘Physical’” (1958) (Blumberg and Feigl 1974, xxii ff.). It is thus not surprising that Feigl appeared as a speaker for the Monists’ Association in 1930, presenting a talk on “Naturgesetz und Willensfreiheit” (The Laws of Nature and Free Will)—nor that talks by both Neurath and Sigmund Strauß, supporter and member of the Ernst Mach Society, were announced for the program of January–April, 1923.⁸ Two years later, Neurath, along with Theodor Reik and Rudolf

⁷Further speakers and supporters of the monist movement included Max Adler, Theodor Reik, Julius Tandler, Josef Karl Friedjung, Robert Wälder.

⁸*Flugblatt* 1923; *Der Pionier* 1930, No. 150.

Goldscheid, was included in the program of the Association with a lecture entitled “Gott in der Geschichte” (God in History).” Neurath, however, had doubts regarding both a trivialized monism and an ideological brand of freethinking:

It is rather annoying to see how the doctrines of semi-theologians and academic philosophers, adorned with modernist finery, are confronted by freethinkers, monists, and other opponents with outdated arguments that were lame and weak even a generation ago. A discussion between modernized reaction and old-fashioned freethinking quite often leaves one with the impression that one party is trying to milk the bull, while the other is holding a sieve underneath. (Neurath 1932, 387)

However much the philosophical profiles of Schlick and Feigl differed from that of Neurath, the monists’ program doubtless comprised a conceptual basis for the program that would be presented in the Circle’s manifesto and in the Ernst Mach Society. The family resemblances between (natural-scientific) monism and the scientific world conception become apparent when one compares the main philosophical currents in the Monist movement with the description of the historical background of the Vienna Circle in the Circle’s manifesto (1929, cf. Neurath 1973, 301–05). They suggest at least an overlapping of influences. At the same time, there is a clear-cut divergence between the two movements: in the Vienna Circle, the latest developments in scientific research (e.g., the work of Helmholtz, Poincaré, Duhem, Boltzmann, and Einstein) as well as mathematics and logic (Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein) were always being taken into account, whereas the Monists based themselves on popular science. Unlike the prehistory of the Vienna Circle Monists who were essentially amateurs, those at the center of the Vienna Circle engaged, to some extent, in basic research. Against the backdrop of this difference, the distinction that would later be drawn between the *wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung* and *wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung*—between the scientific world view and the scientific world conception—takes on plausibility. In any event, it is striking that both Rudolf Carnap and Karl Popper cite monism as both backdrop and starting point of their intellectual development (Popper 1976, 12f.; Carnap 1963, 7).

However committed the Monists’ Association activists, their role within the Viennese late Enlightenment remained a minor one. As indicated, the group to which they were closest was the Freethinkers, whose activities proceeded on a broader basis and with more publicity within Vienna’s labor movement. The consistently monistic world view and ideology of the Freethinkers, as well as their political program, also furnished a framework of orientation for some members of the Vienna Circle, for example Philipp Frank and Otto Neurath. Conversely, the Ernst Mach Society offered the League of Freethinkers a suitable forum for promulgating their viewpoint, so that a majority of the Society’s members were in fact freethinkers. But despite such narrow connections, it would be an error to speak of a symmetrical relation of influence between freethinkers and representatives of Logical Empiricism: despite a certain interdependency, we in fact find a growing intellectual dominance on the part of the Society as the influence of the Vienna Circle grew (Sect. 4.2.4). The League of Austrian Freethinkers was founded during the First Republic (1921), but revived the Society of Individuals without Denomination first established in 1871, and advocated the separation of church and state for school

reform, in particular for a free-spirited, worldly ethic and a corresponding program of instruction in the schools.⁹ In 1931, the league had 310 local groups in nine provincial organizations, and a total of 45,000 members; the journal *Der Freidenker* appeared with a circulation of 50,000, and up to that point 41 brochures had been published by league members using their own press.¹⁰ The League also founded an office for legal defense, a network for medical care, and an arts center. Despite official resistance, a program on the “ethical approach to life” was established by Wilhelm Börner and like-minded colleagues in the league’s own school, which had 2,000 children in 60 classes directed by 35 teachers.

Together with the Readiness association as well as Hans Kelsen, the freethinkers pushed unsuccessfully for a reform of the marriage law, that is, for the legalization of so-called dispensation marriages, which, although entered into by approximately 50,000 couples, had been declared invalid by the Constitutional Court as a result of Church pressure. It is clear from this and similar efforts that the League of Austrian Freethinkers was very much part of the labor movement. Even though it speaks of itself as an “unpolitical association” in its statutes (*Der Freidenker* 1922, 2) a later paragraph corrects the impression this might leave and describes the League’s purpose (in 1933 it was to serve as a pretense for the legal dissolution of the League): “Cultivation of free thought, that is, the construction and promulgation of a socialist world view and way of life on a scientific basis.” The freethinkers were not uncontroversial within the Social Democratic Party, for there was, after all, competition in the form of the Religious Socialists around “little” Otto Bauer. Still, they did represent a significant cultural-political entity in “red Vienna”—one that was strengthened through membership in the International Proletarian Freethinkers.

This latter organization, with its journal *Atheist*, split off from the Comintern’s Opposition of Revolutionary Freethinkers in 1931 (*Protokoll* 1931). The philosophical foundation of the freethinkers’ world view and understanding of science was formed by empirical rationalism, a (partly eclectic) assimilation of dialectical materialism, and to a great extent by the (non-dialectical) “Epicurean Marxism” in Otto Neurath’s sense of the term, which represented a further development of traditional, mechanistic materialism. In late 1928, Neurath explained his special form of Marxism programmatically in a short exposé in the *Freidenker* (basically a summary of chapters from his book *Lebensgestaltung und Klassenkampf* (“Personal Life and Class Struggle”, in: Neurath 1973, 249–298)). Neurath argued there for the advantages of the Epicurean and Enlightenment tradition within Marxism in opposition to that of the German Idealist tradition grounded in Kant and Hegel. With reference to Marx’s dissertation on Epicurus and Democritus, he offered a bipolar, historical-genetic interpretative schema, which served to separate the tradition of Plato-reception that he rejected from the tradition stemming from Epicurus that he favored. During his entire lifetime, Neurath would remain an advocate of this

⁹Sources: Ronzal 1931, pp. 86–92. *Freidenkerbücherei*; *Der Pionier*; *Der Atheist*; *Der Freidenker*; handouts and programs of the Austrian Union of Freethinkers; *Arbeiterkultur* 1981; Kahl/Wernig (ed.) 1981.

¹⁰Until 1928 32 volumes appeared in the *Freidenker-Bücherei* (Freethinkers Library).

eccentric position within the dazzling spectrum of Austro-Marxism; in the process, he took on the position of an anti-idealist, anti-dialectic outsider, competing above all with Max Adler's synthesis of Kant and Marx.¹¹

Yet the freethinkers also remained open to a dialectic version of their theoretical superstructure. This was the point, for instance, of the talk given by the biologist Julius Schaxel—one of the few “dialectic” natural scientists writing in *Erkenntnis* (1930–31)—at the 1931 Congress of Freethinkers on the dialectic of nature as a fundamental scientific orientation. Furthermore, the Austrian freethinkers viewed Goldschied's “economy of humans” as a prescription for social planning; in this vein they organized a “conference for an ethical approach to life [*sittliche Lebenskunde*]” in April 1928, together with various teachers' organizations. Designed to offer an alternative to compulsory religious instruction,¹² this gesture was greeted with severe criticism by the bourgeois press. The general intellectual situation was also reflected very lucidly in freethinkers' descriptions of the cultural scene and in their self-understanding. We thus find references to “the struggle of monism for its existence,” objections being raised to speculative and irrationalist trends, and lectures delivered in 1930 concerning the concordate and the peace movement.¹³ Slowly and reluctantly, freethinkers began to analyze the rise of fascism, while proceeding with their activities for workers' sport, the youth movement, and proletarian art. In 1931, they organized the International Conference for Sexual Reform in Vienna—a goal fitting well into their broader socialist schema for reforming human life.¹⁴

We can discern additional biographical and intellectual ties with Logical Empiricism at work within the Ethical Society, in its relation to both the Ernst Mach Society and certain members of the Vienna Circle. The naturalistic-utilitarian ethic of the educator and philosopher Friedrich Jodl (1849–1914) formed the philosophical basis for the Ethical Society after World War I. As one of the chief figures in Vienna's late Enlightenment, Jodl's biographer Wilhelm Börner (1882–1951) was the First Republic's most prominent champion of the ethical movement.¹⁵ Börner was a tireless advocate of adult education—between 1906 and 1909 he served as secretary of the Viennese Association for Popular Education—and an independent author. Until his emigration in 1938, his talks and articles championed radical pacifism, monism, and freethinking, along with the goals of the bourgeois feminist movement and a partly psychoanalytically oriented educational theory.¹⁶ Börner's “critical optimism,” with its aesthetic-literary tenor, offered him a framework for opposing the age's growing anti-Semitism. Considering all politics to be a form of applied social ethics, he also condemned the violent daily politics he saw around

¹¹ Glaser 1981, p. 39ff. and pp. 48–58ff.; Pfabigan 1982; Stadler (ed.) 1982, pp. 1–181.

¹² *Atheist* 1927, no. 11, p. 9; *Enquete* 1928.

¹³ *Atheist* 1929, no 1, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Sozialismus* 1981; *Arbeiterkultur* 1981.

¹⁵ Sources: library and estate of Wilhelm Börner; Vienna Municipal Library and Vienna Municipal Archives; literature: *Zum Gedächtnis Wilhelm Börners* 1971.

¹⁶ Huber 1977; Wiesbauer 1982.

him (Maderegger 1973, 185f.). The “ethical approach to life” was his response to an education centered around state authority; he hoped to see this response integrated into a comprehensive social and popular ethic. The philosophical world view he strived for was meant to find its technical completion in an “art of living.”

Considering its social-liberal humanism, it appears to be no coincidence that Moritz Schlick was a member of the Ethical Society. The puristic-ethical Börner was more aware than Schlick of a specific mission: in the inter-war period, he delivered approximately 800 lectures to the different groups connected with the Free Union of Cultural Associations and other such forums, treating themes such as sexual education, penal education, the formation of character, the anti-alcohol movement, pacifism, the ethical approach to living, scientific philosophy, knowledge of human beings, public welfare, wisdom concerning life, and social ethics. Still, for Schlick such concerns converged with his own literary alter ego and his own interest in eudaimonistic ethics and a humanistic sense of wisdom in life. The “worldly Sunday celebrations” inaugurated by Börner and copied by the Monists’ Association were intended as a non-religious (albeit similarly structured) alternative for freethinking people (workers and bourgeoisie alike); these meetings suited Schlick’s this-worldly orientation and his stress on social harmony. In 1928, Schlick thus lectured at the Ethical Society—he had been on its board since 1926—on “The Ethics of Duty and Ethics of the Good.” After Schlick’s murder in June, 1936, Börner evoked his role as an ethical thinker in a short public eulogy and in a note to his wife, praising him as a worthy successor to Jodl and as a friend of Popper-Lynkeus, and stressing his harmonious conception of “between ethical theory and ethical praxis.”¹⁷

Among the Ethical Society’s members and supporters (after 1927) were Rudolf Carnap and Viktor Kraft, together with other members of the Ernst Mach Society (Hans Thirring, Wladimir Misař, Bruno Schönfeld).¹⁸ As the center of the Free Union from 1918 onward, the Ethical Society would continue to exist until 1938, in contrast to other groups in the Union. It postulated a humanistic-cosmopolitan program similar to that of the Freemasons, its goal being the secular ethicization of education and politics. Correspondingly, a women’s group was formed for the promulgation of pacifism and social ethics,¹⁹ courses were held on worldly moral instruction and the “ethical approach to life,” and the already-mentioned Sunday celebrations were organized, with classical music and solemn speeches.²⁰ Practical work was carried out at the Center for Social Protection founded to help those threatened and in need of assistance; among other things, the center supported sexual and educational reform as well as pacifism through its conference on ethical education. The Society presented its worldly, anti-metaphysical ethic as a minimal

¹⁷ Börner 1936. Cf. the correspondence Schlick-Börner (Vienna Circle Archives, Haarlem).

¹⁸ Sources: Börner library, loc.cit.; *Flugblätter* and *Mitteilungen der Ethischen Gemeinde*, Vienna Municipal Library. A. Fuchs 1978, p. 147 ff.; Belke 1978, p. 39 ff. See also a letter from W. Eckstein to V. Kraft, 3.6.1929 (Viktor Kraft estate, Vienna).

¹⁹ *Mitteilungen* 1918, p. 1.

²⁰ Cf., for instance, the report in: *Abendblatt*, 1.18.1919.

goal for the moralists. On this basis remarkable activities were organized in the period of incipient civil war: against militarism, for the (bourgeois) women's movement (conference on the equality of women, 1927), and—together with the Social Democrats—for a reform of marriage law (the retention of dispensatory marriage) in the framework of the association formed for that purpose. In addition, Börner established a *Lebensmüdenstelle*—a Center for Suicidal People, which often served as a shelter in a Vienna already marked by a high rate of suicide.

The Association for a Universal Alimentation Service operated in a similar manner.²¹ In Popper-Lynkeus's spirit, this association, like that of the freethinkers, advocated a program of social reform and educational policies located between liberalism and social democracy. Dedicated to enlightenment and remaining aloof from party politics, this relatively small organization existed between 1918 and 1938, producing a journal with the same name. Its members demanded the free provision of food, housing, and clothing, created by an "alimentation army" in which it would be compulsory to serve. The utopian socialist program was based on Popper-Lynkeus's concept of socialization and aimed for the semi-socialization of the economy, a mixed economy that allowed both a planned centralized economy and a private economy with free competition and money.

Within the Social Democratic movement, this program was discussed heatedly by figures such as Wilhelm Ellenbogen, Otto Bauer, Karl Renner, Engelbert Pernerstorfer, Käthe Leichter, and Otto Neurath.²² Neurath, in particular, was from his youth a follower of Popper-Lynkeus and his plan for a rational economy. At the start of 1919, in his role as director of Munich's Central Planning Office, he euphorically (and inaccurately) evoked Popper-Lynkeus's semi-socialization schema in a telegram to him: "Your work is becoming reality, we are proceeding toward full socialization" (Weissel 1976, 231). Among the founding members of the Association, members of the Readiness group were conspicuous; later members included Wilhelm Börner, Felix Frankl, Bruno Frei, Fritz Wittels, Albert Einstein, Margit Ornstein, and Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi. To be sure, with only 1,000 members in 1929, the Association appears to have played merely a marginal role within the First Republic. The alimentation program was popularized widely in the social democratic movement and by the Readiness group, the Society for Social Pedagogy, and the centers for adult education. One expression of the much harried liberal cosmopolitanism at work here was the Association's solidarity with the Pan-European and Esperanto movements—each reminding us of the vision shared by Carnap and Neurath of a world society and an encyclopedic program linking different peoples and cultures.

²¹ Belke 1978, chapter 5; handouts of the "Allgemeine Nährpflicht" association, Vienna Municipal Library.

²² Popper-Lynkeus 1925; Frankl 1930; Belke 1978, pp. 132–196; März/Weber 1978a, b.

The Vienna Circle

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