



The Viennese Students of Civilization: The Meaning and Context of Austrian Economics Reconsidered (Historical Perspectives on Modern Economics)

By Erwin Dekker

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This book argues that the work of the Austrian economists, including Carl Menger, Joseph Schumpeter, Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, has been too narrowly interpreted. Through a study of Viennese politics and culture, it demonstrates that the project they were engaged in was much broader: the study and defense of a liberal civilization. Erwin Dekker shows the importance of the civilization in their work and how they conceptualized their own responsibilities toward that civilization, which was attacked left and right during the interwar period. Dekker argues that what differentiates their position is that they thought of themselves primarily as students of that civilization rather than as social scientists, or engineers. This unique focus and approach is related to the Viennese setting of the circles, which constitute the heart of Viennese intellectual life in the interwar period.

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Review

"... a brilliant exploration of the historical, scientific, philosophical and cultural context of the Austrian School of economics ... Any reader fascinated by intellectual history and the play between idealizations and circumstances will find Dekker's approach very illuminating."

Peter Boettke, George Mason University, Virginia

"Erwin Dekker's thoughtful book firmly situates the so-called 'Austrian School' of economics within its Viennese background, showing its members can be better thought of as students of civilization than as disciplinary economists ... The Viennese Students of Civilization is to be welcomed as an important contribution to twentieth-century intellectual economic history and current political thought."

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"In this thoughtful account of interwar Vienna and the Austrian tradition, Erwin Dekker reveals a humanistic scholarly sensibility quite rare amongst historians of economics. He adroitly interweaves the exploration of economics, sensibility and culture, yielding a book that will appeal to a correspondingly broad readership."

Robert Leonard, Université du Québec ... Montréal

About the Author

Erwin Dekker is Assistant Professor in Cultural Economics at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. He has published in the fields of cultural economics, economic methodology and intellectual history, and he is currently working on valuation and the qualitative measurement of quality.

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