

**The Papers of Carl Menger in the
Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library,
Duke University***

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In 1985 the Duke University Manuscript Department, in conjunction with the University's Department of Economics, began a program aimed at preserving the correspondence, writings, and related papers of a select number of distinguished economists. The papers of Carl Menger (1840-1921), consisting of approximately 7,500 items and occupying 11 linear feet of shelf space, were donated to the University in 1987 by his granddaughter, Eve L. Menger.

Scope and Content Note

The Carl Menger Papers span the years 1857 to 1985. Although the collection includes material from Menger's early professional life as well as some items from his brothers, Anton and Max, and his son, Karl, it is primarily composed of manuscripts and correspondence relating to his mature academic career. The contents are extremely dense and complex; they are also essential to an understanding of the mind of Carl Menger. Not only do the papers reflect Menger's mind, they also document his methods of work. He was a copious note-taker and read voraciously. He kept bound notebooks with reflections and excerpts from his current reading, especially in the early years when he was constructing the *Grundsätze*. Later he made notes and revisions on loose sheets, having some of them copied into a clear hand, and on those sheets, too, he made revisions. Menger also wrote directly in the printed text. For example, his papers include two copies of the *Grundsätze* (a third similar copy is in the Hitotsubashi University Library with the rest of Menger's library) with blank pages interleaved with pages of text. In each of these successively Menger made extensive notes and changes. Although it is frequently impossible to date his manuscripts precisely, one can get a sense of the development of his thought in some cases from the progression of his notes and from holographic evidence. The collection has been organized into series which reflect both Menger's style of work and his major areas of research. The series include research notebooks; manuscripts and notes on economic principles, money, and methodology; teaching materials; and correspondence.

Menger's work on political economy, on the nature of his subject, and on its appropriate research method typifies changes in the intellectual frontier in fin-de-siècle Vienna and Europe as a whole. Some of Menger's most explicit thoughts on these subjects are evident in his lecture notes. Although he taught for over thirty years, the collection contains only a small amount of material from this aspect of his career. What one discerns from the lecture notes, however, is a personal sense of the teacher, and his high degree of moral commitment to his work. Menger clearly thought it important to articulate his thoughts on the distinction between political economy and jurisprudence - since that was the faculty in which he taught - and the method and aims of the discipline.

The bulk of the collection consists of Menger's notes and revisions on economic and theoretical topics. The series on general economic principles contains material relating to his first major work, the *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre*, which he published in 1871. Despite the lack of a full-length coherent manuscript for this book, his background work can be discerned from a set of extensive notebooks he kept. These contain extracts of works Menger read, as well as his reactions and reflections. The range of works shows familiarity with classical authors, particularly Aristotle and Plato, through to his own contemporaries. He showed special interest in writers on law, political economy, and theories of knowledge, such as Grotius, Malthus, J.S. Mill, Ricardo, J.B. Say, Roscher, Descartes, Francis Bacon, Locke, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Savigny. Many of the notebooks date from the late 1860s and thus, in the absence of more explicit information from Menger about his development, serve the function of intellectual diaries. Early versions of the actual manuscript of the *Grundsätze* exist in fragmentary form, mostly heavily revised. A table of contents, dated 1870, provides a useful comparison for later revisions and schemas.

The collection contains extensive materials on the subjects of money, the gold standard, and capital theory. The work on money, which is some of the best ordered in the collection, Menger produced as an article for the second edition of the *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* in 1900, with substantial revisions for the third edition in 1909. Yet even after the latter edition, Menger continued to make changes and notations. His work on monetary reform grew out of an appointment to an Austrian state commission on currency and the use of a single or double bullion standard. Newsclippings of the reports have been maintained in the printed matter series.

Although not direct concerns in the *Grundsätze*, capital and interest received much attention from Menger, particularly in his refutation of his colleague Eugen Böhm-Bawerk's work of 1885, *Geschichte und Kritik der Kapitalzinstheorien*.

Holographic evidence suggests that after dealing with this subject extensively in the late 1880s, Menger did not return to it again until the second decade of the twentieth century, when he was no longer teaching. At that point he resumed his considerations of capital and interest but looked additionally at credit and property.

The series in the collection which seems more opaque and less easily classified by subject deals with Menger's speculation and theories about the goals and methods of research, specifically for political economy, and the classification of knowledge. The appearance of the *Untersuchungen über die methode der Socialwissenschaften, und der Politischen Oekonomie insbesondere* in 1883 provoked sharp criticism from Gustav Schmoller, representing the younger German Historical School. Their dispute came to be known as the *Methodenstreit*. In the following year, Menger replied to Schmoller with his *Irrthümer des Historismus in der Deutschen Nationalökonomie*. After this, Menger published no further major works, although he continued to produce articles and book reviews for many years. His notes and manuscripts indicate that his research came to an end only with his death.

Menger's professional contacts with respected colleagues such as Emil Sax, Eugen Philippovich, and Böhm-Bawerk demonstrate that although he refused to publish further, he did not work in isolation. The incoming correspondence shows a lively exchange of information about university teaching and politics, news of the profession, and current research. Letters also refer frequently to works of others in the profession. Menger's library of some 25,000 volumes attests as well that he kept abreast of contemporary literature. Few drafts of Menger's own letters exist in the collection. A large proportion of these seem to be addressed to Böhm-Bawerk.

Processing Note

The original order of this collection is completely lost. Karl Menger had possession of the papers immediately after his father's death in 1921. He used much of the material now in the series on economic principles, and some of the material from the series on money, for the publication of a second edition of his father's best-known work, the *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre*. A number of years later Friedrich v. Hayek ordered several of the folders containing notes and manuscripts. His numbers are visible on the outside upper left corner of a number of the hard-cover folders. From time to time he also made notes about the content of a particular folder, but none of these notes is extensive. In the 1970s, Albert Zlabinger was permitted access to some of the papers, primarily the material on money. His careful work and notations allow for the

reconstruction of the development of Menger's article on money for the *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, and its subsequent revisions.

Carl Menger did not date all, or even most, of his work, and because he made frequent emendations to his own notes and text, dating is hazardous at best. For this reason, all loose manuscript material has been arranged topically. Almost all material belonging to a particular folder, however, has been kept together. Folders have been retained.

The only materials which lent themselves to something approximating original order are the bound notebooks which Menger himself numbered. Correspondence has been arranged chronologically.

The majority of the paper in this collection has an extremely high acid content, although it is not overly brittle. Many sheets are crumpled badly, especially at the edges, but little text has been lost. All newspaper clippings have been photocopied on acid-free paper.

Description of Series**

Box

Nos. Series

1-3 Notebooks, c. 1867-1920

Contain excerpts from works on political economy, definitions of economic terms, philosophy, and the nature of science. Many entries are Menger's notes from readings, but approximately one-third are his own musings and reactions. Not all notebooks are dated, but they fall into two periods, one in the late 1860s, the second in the 1910s. Arranged chronologically.

3-9 Notes on Economic Principles, c. 1870-1919

Copious revisions of the *Grundsätze* (unpublished during Menger's lifetime), arranged according to topic in roughly the same order as presented in the first edition of the *Grundsätze*; some notes from Karl Menger along with sections he chose to include in the posthumous second edition of the *Grundsätze*. Other topics covered extensively in this series are capital and interest, particularly in relation to Böhm-Bakwerk's theories, and ownership and property.

9-13 Notes on Money, c. 1890s-1919

Contain revisions of Menger's article on money in the second and third editions of the *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*. This section is arranged roughly in the order of the second edition article. Where possible, folders have been labelled to indicate where the material would belong in either or both editions. Some of these manuscripts were used by Menger's son Karl in the second edition of the *Grundsätze*. There are also several folders on monetary reform, especially from Menger's service on an Austrian government commission to reform the currency and evaluate its relation to bullion standards.

13 Teaching Materials, 1872, 1884-1894 and n.d.

Lecture notes from several semesters; one folder of student papers on the term "capital". Arranged chronologically.

14-20 Notes on Methodology, 1860s-1919

Notes and revisions for the *Untersuchungen*, material on the ensuing *Methodenstreit*, G. Schmoller, and Menger's subsequent refutation, *Irrthümer*; notes for the article on the *Klassifikation der Wissenschaften* and material refuting Wundt; many general notes and partial manuscripts, apparently for a book on methodology and the aims of research which would have included material on the inductive vs. deductive method and the importance of theory in research. Arranged topically.

20 Correspondence, 1863-1918, 1921-85

- A. Letters to Carl Menger, predominantly from economist colleagues, especially E. Böhm-Bawerk, J. Conrad, E. Philippovich, E. Sax, and F. Wieser, concerning professional matters. Menger's drafts are in the minority; most seem to be to E. Böhm-Bawerk. Several letters concern early professional matters, Menger's association with Rudolf, the crown prince of Austria, and his appointment at the University of Vienna.
- B. Letters to Karl Menger, dating primarily from the 1920s and 1930s, although a small amount dates from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. From economists such as F. Hayek, L. Mises, O. Morgenstern, R. Schuller, J. Schumpeter, K. Wicksell, and

R. Zuckerkandl. Matters covered include Karl Menger's publication of the second edition of his father's *Grundsätze* and his later work on the Austrian School.

C. One letter to Anton Menger from A. Mussafia, 19??

21 Biographical and Personal Materials, 1860s--

Contains a biographical sketch by F. Hayek which appeared in volume one of the *Collected Works of Carl Menger* (Series of Reprints of Scarce Tracts in Economic and Political Science, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1934) and various lists for a curriculum vitae of Menger. A valuable but short (48 leaves) diary which Menger kept from 1875 to 1893/4 lists major events since his birth in 1840, but deals primarily with Menger's health, his appointments as a journalist, employment in the press section of the Austrian prime minister's office, his association with Crown Prince Rudolf, university politics, and academic research. A folder contains notices of celebrations for Menger's seventieth and seventy-fifth birthdays, and obituaries. There is one undated postcard/photograph of Menger and friend fishing.

22-23 Related Family Materials

Anton Menger: An unidentified business register; a tribute by K. Grünberg; various articles by A. Menger.

Max Menger: A diary spanning the years 1861-70; a work by M. Menger; obituaries.

Karl Menger: "The Logic of the Laws of Return" by K. Menger; articles by others; miscellaneous news clippings; one page of recollections.

23 Miscellaneous, undated

Notes; bibliographical references on topics other than economics or methodology; partial catalog of Carl Menger's library arranged alphabetically.

24-26 Printed Matter

- A . Books and articles by Menger, many with his annotations; some proofs of items in press.
- B . Reviews of Menger's works; articles sent to him by other authors.
- C . Clippings on the Austrian university students' uprisings.
- D . News clippings concerning articles by Menger and others.

Endnotes

- * Copyright interests in the Menger papers are reserved to his heirs under the provisions of the U.S. copyright law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Further information about the collection, or access to it, may be obtained from the Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina 27706, USA (Telephone: 919-684-3372).
- ** A more detailed description of the contents of the 26 Boxes can be obtained by HETSA members from the editor of the *HETSA Bulletin*.