Introduction

OBJECTIVES AND OBSTACLES OF AUSTRIAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

"The gay apocalypse"—so Hermann Broch called the period from 1848 to 1918 within the Habsburg Empire and, above all, at Vienna, where old and new attitudes interacted with unequaled fecundity. It was in Austria and its successor states that many, perhaps even most, of the seminal thinkers of the twentieth century emerged: Freud, Brentano, Husserl, Buber, Wittgenstein, Lukács, and countless others. This book investigates why so many innovative thinkers should have inhabited that vanished realm. An arrangement into six themes coordinates sociological analysis with exposition of approximately seventy major thinkers. These individuals have been selected both for the extent of their contributions to academic disciplines and for the vividness with which they illustrate Austrian attitudes.

Part One shows how bureaucracy sustained the Habsburg Empire while inciting economists, legal theorists, and socialists to urge reform. Part Two examines how Vienna's coffeehouses, theaters, and concert halls stimulated creativity together with complacency. Part Three explores the fin-de-siècle world view known as Viennese Impressionism. Interacting with positivistic science, this reverence for the ephemeral inspired such pioneers as Mach, Wittgenstein, Buber, and Freud. Part Four describes the vision of an ordered cosmos which flourished among Germans in Bohemia. Their philosophers cultivated a Leibnizian faith whose eventual collapse haunted Kafka and Mahler. Part Five explains how in Hungary wishful thinking reinforced a political activism rare elsewhere in Habsburg domains. *Engagé* intellectuals like Lukács and Mannheim systematized the sociology of knowledge, while two other Hungarians, Herzl and Nordau, initiated political Zionism. Part Six investigates certain attitudes that have permeated Austrian thought, such as hostility to technology and delight in polar opposites.

No branch of historical inquiry has been so hampered by conflicting methodologies as has intellectual history. Exponents of one or another

approach proceed as if their method excluded or subsumed all others.[1] In an effort to untangle these disputes, I propose to differentiate three disciplines within intellectual history. These I call internal history of ideas, the sociology of thinkers, and the sociology of engagé intellectuals. In order to delineate what I conceive to be an all-inclusive program for intellectual history, I shall explain how these three disciplines relate to one another. All three are implemented in this book.

The first and irreplaceable discipline of intellectual history expounds ideas for their own sake, in isolation from individuals and society. Mathematics and philosophy epitomize the necessity for expositing what a man said while ignoring whatever extrinsic reasons may have impelled him to say it. Among Austrian philosophers, Bolzano and Husserl exemplified a logical rigor that outsoared social limitations. Certain Austrian historians of ideas such as Karl Pribram and Rudolf Eisler conceived categories as timeless entities that constitute a seamless web overarching all ages and milieus. However much Habsburg society may have helped to elicit their Platonism, these scholars rightly insisted that internal history of ideas must precede every other form of intellectual history.

Before one can undertake sociological analysis, it is essential to record not merely what opinions a theorist held, but what arguments he advanced to support them. Accordingly, I have supplied for nearly every major philosopher and social theorist an exposition of his principal theses, together with some analysis of his argumentation. In order to bring out debaters' nuances, I have used comparisons, adducing both allies and adversaries to contrast with a given contention. Wherever possible, I have phrased exposition of each thinker in terms that he himself could have understood. To reconstruct a thinker's lifework requires that the historian should have received formal instruction in each of the disciplines treated. There is no other way to learn how to exegete technical terms, to unravel crucial issues, and to interpret previous masters of a field. In this book, philosophy, theology, political theory, sociology, and history of literature provide the underpinnings upon which my formulations rest.

To expound a thinker's principal arguments does not by itself constitute intellectual history. A second discipline, known loosely as the sociology of knowledge, aims to situate theorists in society. To avoid ambiguities inherent in this term, I shall introduce two new labels, which differentiate the main field from a subdivision of it. However clumsy such new labels may seem, there is no simpler designation of conflicting ways in which thinkers react to society. What I call the sociology of thinkers examines how milieu modifies a person's thought.

A subdivision of this field, which I call sociology of engagé intellectuals, explores how thinkers seek to modify their milieu. The first treats each thinker as a recipient of social influences; the second views him as a disseminator of them. The distinction is crucial because—*pace* Marx—not every thinker plays the second role.

Once a theorist's premises have been exposited, a question arises as to how these may have been shaped by his milieu. Such an inquiry may embark on either of two levels, which following Werner Stark I call micro- and macro-sociology. Micro-sociology of thinkers examines formative influences exercised upon intellectuals by their immediate environment, especially during childhood and youth. The example of parents, schools, and church, and later of military service, profession, and hobbies channels a man's thinking, reinforcing some options and foreclosing others. Early influences leave an indelible imprint precisely because a child cannot choose them; he inherits them. Among impulses that are first inherited only later to be embraced or rejected, religion plays a paramount role. In this book I have emphasized how frequently a vestige of theology persisted beneath seemingly nonreligious creativity.[2] Even the most secularized of Austrian thinkers imbibed during childhood Jewish or Christian attitudes that could not easily be shed.

In contrast with micro-sociology, which scrutinizes one or more milieus within a larger society, macro-sociology investigates attitudes pervading an entire city or nation. Bureaucracy, industrialism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism touched nearly every inhabitant of the Habsburg Empire. More particularly, Freud and Wittgenstein betrayed affinity with such Viennese traditions as aestheticism, the cult of nostalgia, and preference for diagnosis over therapy. To describe Freud's interaction with his society requires first a micro-sociology of the persons and institutions that trained him and then a macro-sociology of Viennese proclivities that at once attracted and repelled him. Often such proclivities have been discerned most keenly by novelists, notably those who like Robert Musil or Joseph Roth also wrote culture criticism. No less revealing is the testimony of memoirs and autobiographies, which chronicle how individuals reacted to successive milieus. It goes without saying that neither micro- nor macro-sociology can succeed unless the thinkers studied have first undergone systematic exposition.[3]

What by rights ought to have remained a subdiscipline of the sociology of thinkers has come to constitute a third branch of intellectual history: the sociology of engagé intellectuals. This is what Mannheim meant by the sociology of knowledge. It is what most political his-

torians envision when they embark upon intellectual history. Decisive debates within this subdiscipline have weighed such questions as whether Rousseau's ideas influenced Robespierre's actions, and whether the Russian intelligentsia could have reformed Imperial Russia without resort to revolution. The sociology of engagé intellectuals presupposes that thinkers yearn above all else to instigate social change. Their customary vehicle for implementing far-reaching change is to formulate dissent into an ideology.[4]

The sociology of engagé intellectuals has gained autonomy from the main discipline chiefly because the former field emerged first. Karl Marx introduced the concept of ideology in order to differentiate the distorted class-consciousness of the bourgeoisie from the objective truth believed to be distilled in socialism. Marx assessed thinkers simply by reckoning whether their premises promoted or impeded proletarian revolution. Although Marx's followers usually excel at sociological analysis, too often they discount or degrade contemplative thought. Some Marxists pontificate that to be worthwhile a thinker must be engagé; anyone else may be dismissed as "decadent" or "aesthetic" or "irrational." In an endeavor to avoid such invective, less vituperative Marxists often impute to a thinker political convictions without first inquiring whether the supposed "fellow traveler" would have acknowledged them. To be sure, a lifetime spent in disdaining politics may constitute a political gesture, as the virulence of Karl Kraus shows. What counts is whether the motive for opting out is ideological, as in the case of Nietzsche or Kraus, or purely disinterested, as in the careers of countless Austrian literati and theorists.

However justified it may be to evaluate a publicist by his flair for mobilizing society to change, such a criterion can only caricature someone who spurns politics. Because Austria, albeit not Hungary, abounded in such adamantly apolitical figures, it is indispensable to segregate Marxist sociology of engagé intellectuals from the more inclusive sociology of thinkers. The former does violence not merely to those who repudiate Marx but even more to those who ignore him. To assume that only by seeking to alter society can a thinker display embeddedness within it, unduly narrows the relevance of sociology for intellectual history. Max Scheler and more recently Werner Stark have redressed this imbalance by differentiating social determination of ideas from Marx's emphasis on the ideological distortion of thought.[5] The dichotomy of Scheler and Stark prompted my distinction between the sociology of thinkers and the sociology of engagé intellectuals. By discriminating these two types of sociology of knowledge, I hope to

apply the discipline as equitably to apolitical theorists as to political activists.

My effort to coordinate two varieties of the sociology of knowledge with the history of ideas convinces me that these three disciplines yield uneven results. The sociology of thinkers cannot unveil the mystery of creativity. No matter how beneficent or hostile a milieu, a titan like Husserl will wrestle free to initiate unprecedented visions. Applied to highly contemplative philosophers, micro-sociology discloses more about epigones than about creators. In particular, it can forestall errors of exegesis by clarifying what technical terms meant at a given time within a certain university or church.[6] More broadly, macro-sociology elucidates ways in which a regional tradition such as Bohemian Reform Catholicism fostered adherence to Leibniz. At the opposite extreme, advocates of social change invite sociological analysis. Nearly every ideology incorporates specific grievances that its authors leveled against society. Straddling the middle of the spectrum stand the writers, philosophers, and psychoanalysts associated with Viennese Impressionism. However firmly they may have eschewed politics, these innovators interacted with numerous milieus and traditions, challenging the sociologist to display his panoply of tools. Because the Habsburg Empire harbored such a diversity of milieus, the sociology of thinkers can yield a rich harvest of insights. Polymaths in particular gain in intelligibility from such a study of their background. In an age when intellectual versatility has all but disappeared, it seems pertinent to explore how social conditions promoted a flowering of integrative thinking just two generations ago in Austria-Hungary.

Anyone who has confronted Austrian thought must wonder why so many of its luminaries have fallen into neglect or even disrepute. Innumerable historians and scholars of literature write on things German without differentiating Austria-Hungary from Bismarck's empire. The fundamental cause of this neglect is the disappearance of the Habsburg Empire as a geographic unit. Whereas England, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and even Poland have survived as familiar entities, Austria-Hungary, if we exclude the Ottoman Empire, is the only Great Power to have fragmented since Sweden was rolled back early in the eighteenth century. How many people remember which parts of Romania, Yugoslavia, Italy, and Poland belonged to the Habsburg monarchy in 1918? Truncated Austria and Hungary can scarcely aspire even to be epigones of these vanished dominions. Circumlocutions such as east central Europe or Danubian history merely veil the dismemberment that area underwent fifty years ago. Although a grow-

ing band of historians, both in the United States and Europe, is resurrecting Habsburg studies, their zeal has not yet spurred philosophers or social theorists to inventory the intellectual riches that Austrians have bequeathed us.

Reinforcing the geographic impediment to scholarship stands the plethora of languages once spoken in the Habsburg Empire. Historians who cannot read Czech, Polish, or Magyar shrink from studying Bohemia, Galicia, or Hungary. However laudable in principle, such caution prevents a scholar from discovering that he can interpret the culture of these areas provided he is fluent in German. In Austria-Hungary, German did provide a *lingua franca* for all but the most recalcitrant nationalists. Although I can scarcely decipher Magyar, throughout this book I have stressed Hungarian thinkers who also wrote in German. Even a cursory acquaintance with the literature and customs of Hungary accentuates previously unnoticed features in the culture of Vienna and Prague. Similar scrutiny of Bohemia, even without reading Czech, sheds a provocative light over the rest of the empire. It is high time for scholars to view Vienna as a foil to Prague and Budapest, and no longer simply as a competitor of Paris and Berlin.

Other obstacles discourage the intellectual historian who would study the Habsburg Empire. First, too many English-speaking and French-speaking scholars patronize the German language, interpreting its abstruseness as obfuscation.[7] Second, even among those adept in German, the virtual disappearance of classical education has removed a precondition for understanding men who regarded Latin and Greek as prerequisite to thinking. A facility in juggling ideas, imparted by eight years of translating Latin and five or six years of assimilating Greek, cannot be acquired by easier means. Third, many Jews who might otherwise study Austria-Hungary are repelled by Hitler's persecution of their people. Too often those Jews who do research on the history of the Habsburg Empire either ignore its virtues, or, increasingly, scant its faults. Finally, the splintering of scholarship through specialization has made polymaths seem obsolete, especially in the United States. Today Freud, Neurath, or even Wittgenstein would be patronized as unprofessional, so dazzling was their versatility. Constricted by training and by criteria for advancement, scholars who do examine these men cannot help but interpret them from a parochial point of view. Philosophers consider it demeaning to recall Wittgenstein's antecedents in Vienna, and historians of psychoanalysis forget that Freud's favorite teacher, the physiologist Ernst Brücke, was no less versatile than Freud himself.

More than anything else, a lost breadth of knowledge separates these men from ourselves. In an attempt to bridge that gap, this book will coordinate analysis of social conditions with systematic exposition of thought. By situating thinkers in their respective milieus, I hope to elucidate that Gay Apocalypse, without whose innovations our intellectual lives would be barren indeed.