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978-1-107-12640-4 - The Viennese Students of Civilization: The Meaning and Context of Austrian Economics Reconsidered

Erwin Dekker

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THE VIENNESE STUDENTS OF CIVILIZATION

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 concept of civilization in their work and how they conceptualized their own responsibilities toward that civilization, which was attacked from the political left and right during the interwar period. Dekker argues that what differentiates their position is that they thought of themselves primarily as students of civilization rather than as social scientists or engineers. This unique focus and approach is related to the Viennese setting of the circles, or 'Kreise,' scientific and artistic communities that constituted the heart of Viennese intellectual life in the interwar period.

Erwin Dekker is Assistant Professor in Cultural Economics at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. 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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*The Meaning and Context of Austrian
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ERWIN DEKKER

Erasmus University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands



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*We felt that the civilization in which we had grown up had collapsed.
We were determined to build a better world.*

Friedrich A. Hayek

Humans are—at best—in the process of becoming civilized.

Norbert Elias

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Acknowledgments

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