GAY APOCALYPSE

Making Art and Architecture in Vienna during the time of “The Man Without Qualities.”

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INTRODUCTION

> "An analysis of that epoch might produce some such nonsense as a square circle trying to consist of wooden iron, but in reality it all blended into a shimmering sense. This illusion, embodied in the magical date of the tum of the century, was so powerful that it made some people hurl themselves with zeal at the new, still-unused century, while others chose one last quick fling in the old one, as one runs riot in a house one absolutely has to move out of, without any one feeling much of a difference between these two attitudes." [1]

> "He suspects that the given order of things is not as solid as it pretends to be; no thing, no self, no form, no principle, is safe, everything is undergoing an invisible but ceaseless transformation, the unsettled holds more of the future than the settled, and the present is nothing but a hypothesis that has not yet been surmounted." [2]

In 1848, revolutionary uprisings swept across Europe, with the Habsburg Empire, after 570 years of rule, being no exception. Despite significant proletarian involvement, the revolution remained primarily a bourgeois endeavor.[3] As liberalism emerged as a substantial force, the Habsburg monarchy entered a period of complex evolution, oscillating between constitutional and absolutist tendencies. While Habsburg power briefly embraced liberal rule, it reverted to authoritarianism under the Schwarzenberg ministry, a counterrevolutionary regime that endured for a decade. However, military defeat in 1859 and territorial losses to Italy necessitated reform. In 1861, the establishment of a pan-Austrian parliament marked the introduction of Austria's constitution. Despite this step, the system remained rooted in a monarchical tradition prioritizing stability over expansive democratic representation.[4]

The parliamentary system was built on class-based suffrage that marginalized the empire's diverse nationalities, maintaining a fragile balance through political favoritism. In classic imperial fashion, the Habsburg strategy leveraged ethnic disputes to preserve cohesion, turning centrifugal forces into a temporary equilibrium. The momentary stability marked the peak of Viennese liberalism. However, tensions endured as nationalist movements gained momentum and liberal dominance waned. This shift paved the way for populist leaders like Karl Lueger, who appealed to the lower middle class alongside the emergence of a rising pan-German movement. Meanwhile, the Workers' Party aimed to unify the empire's diverse groups through universal suffrage and socialist ideals. By the late 19th century, Austria's political structure had been hollowed out, as centrifugal forces had ejected its substantive meaning. Unable to manage escalating pressure, the empire entered a period of decline, ultimately paving the way for its dissolution in the early 20th century.[5]

> "On paper it was called the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but in conversation it was called Austria, a name solemnly abjured officially while stubbornly retained emotionally, just to show that feelings are quite as

1 Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 1st American ed (New York: A.A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1995), 53.

2 Musil, 269.

3 Hermann Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time*: The European Imagination 1860-1920; Based on the Author's Works in the Volume Entitled "Schriften Zur Literatur I: Kritik.," ed. Michael P. Steinberg (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), 69.

4 Broch, 70.

5 Broch, 71.

Viennese Kaffehaus, Max Oppenheimer. Image from Wien Museum, Online Sammlung.

6 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 29.

7 The creative fervors were not limited to high culture, Viennese Football for example, during the Gay Apocalypse evolved from a working-class sport into a sophisticated, tactical game shaped by the city's coffee-house culture. Clubs like Rapid Wien and Austria Wien had their own café hubs, where players, fans, and managers mingled alongside writers, philosophers, and intellectuals. The Ring Café, a hub for football journalists and critics, became a "revolutionary parliament" of football culture. Viennese players like Josef Uridil and the creative Matthias Sindelar (der Papierene) were celebrated in coffee houses alongside figures like Adolf Loos and Arnold Schoenberg, highlighting football's elevation to an intellectual and artistic pursuit. see: Richard Cockett, Vienna: *How the City of Ideas Created the Modern World* (Yale University Press, 2023), 15.

8 Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time*, 3.

9 Musil,*The Man without Qualities*, 53.

> important as constitutional law and that regulations are one thing but real life is something else entirely. Liberal in its constitution, it was administered clerically. The government was clerical, but everyday life was liberal. All citizens were equal before the law, but not everyone was a citizen. There was a Parliament, which asserted its freedom so forcefully that it was usually kept shut; there was also an Emergency Powers Act that enabled the government to get along without Parliament, but then, when everyone had happily settled for absolutism, the Crown decreed that it was time to go back to parliamentary rule. The country was full of such goings on, among them the sort of nationalist movements that rightly attracted so much attention in Europe and are so thoroughly." [6]

Vienna, the capital of a multiethnic and multilingual empire of 52 million, became the focal point of upheaval. The newly ascendant bourgeoisie seized the opportunity to reshape the city in their image. However, liberal dominance faced its own crises: the Empire's precarious condition, policies that alienated the lower middle class and proletariat, and unresolved identity trauma. Paradoxically, the social and political disintegration threat catalyzed Vienna's unique cultural, artistic, intellectual, and political legacy. The city evolved into a crucible of ideas, nurturing a distinctly Viennese tradition.

Even as war loomed, Vienna's intellectual and cultural output flourished,[7] earning the era the moniker "Gay Apocalypse." The intellectuals of this period included luminaries such as Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, and Oscar Kokoschka in art; Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner in architecture; Gustav Mahler and the "Vienna School" of Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern in music; the logical positivists of the "Vienna Circle," including Ludwig Wittgenstein in philosophy and Otto Neurath in sociology. Sigmund Freud in psychoanalysis; and literary figures like Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer-Maria Rilke, Robert Musil, Arthur Schnitzler, Karl Kraus.[8] Following World War I, as the Empire collapsed, its cultural afterglow persisted, giving rise to one of history's most ambitious social democratic experiments, commonly referred to as Red Vienna.

> "No one knew exactly what was in the making; nobody could have said whether it was to be a new art, a new humanity, a new morality, or perhaps a reshuffling of society." [9]

This paper examines Viennese cultural production through the interplay between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—two interdependent yet opposing forces. The bourgeoisie, acutely aware of its internal contradictions, sought to reconcile them through artistic and cultural aspirations. In contrast, the rising working class, whose growing influence was largely overlooked by the established order, found its voice in the emergence of populist political movements. Rather than presenting a linear narrative, this paper unfolds through a series of portraits that overlap and contradict each other.

Robert Musil. Image from Manwithoutqualities.com.

PARALLEL ACTION

Robert Musil, born in 1880 in Klagenfurt, spent his early years in military academies before leaving the army at sixteen to study engineering in Brno. After graduating, he worked briefly as an assistant to a mechanical engineering professor, during which he began writing his first novel, *Young Törless*. Shifting focus, he studied philosophy and psychology at the University of Berlin and pursued a literary career despite promising prospects as an engineer or soldier. During WWI, Musil served as a front-line officer and military newspaper editor in the Austrian army. He worked for the Foreign Ministry and War Ministry during the Post-war period. His experiences undoubtedly informed his seminal work, *The Man Without Qualities*.[10]

> "Rationality and mysticism are the two poles of the age we live in. I'm in the dubious position of having been a born soldier with monkish inclinations, ending up as a monk with soldierly inclinations who can't give up swearing." [11]

Following the Anschluss, Mussil fled to Switzerland where he died in abject poverty on April 15, 1942. He had dedicated the best part of the last 25 years of his life to a single book, *The Man Without Qualities*, which he never completed.[12]

Although the novel is a work of fiction, it provides a razor-sharp, somewhat cynical map of reality, offering a vivid portrayal of Vienna—and, by extension, Austria-Hungary—on the eve of World War I. The central scheme of *The Man Without Qualities*'s plot is the Parallel Action, an initiative by Count Leinsdorf, an aristocrat who serves as a direct advisor to Franz-Joseph I, to uncover a unifying idea in celebration of the Monarch's seventieth anniversary. It arises as a reaction to similar celebrations in Prussia honoring Emperor Wilhelm II and seeks, albeit vaguely, to identify an idea that could help Austria define itself. The Parallel action is to be conceived by a committee composed of intellectuals, scientists, army officials, socialites, industrialists, lawyers, and bankers. Count Leinsdorf selects this option, conceding to the assumption that a liberal categorization of society represents all:

> "In short: even if we could not yet imagine it in any detail. It must come out of the total community, or it would not come at all [...] His Grace had rightly observed, the august ministerial departments already represented a division of the world in accordance with its main aspects, such as religion and education, commerce, industry, law, and so on." [13]

This desperate and ultimately fruitless quest for an "Idea" that could bring order to a fragmented and disordered empire is a piece of recited humor that runs throughout the entire storyline. Throughout 725 pages, absolutely nothing comes of it. The Committee's inability to achieve anything meaningful is understood as the breakdown of liberal structures and ideologies in the wake of modernity in an empire that is waving farewell to its heydays. The host of characters, each functioning as ide-

10 Frank Kermode, "Robert Musil," *The Kenyon Review 28*, no. 2 (1966): 224.

11 Robert Musil, Eithne Wilkins, and Ernst Kaiser, "A Conversation with Robert Musil," *The Transatlantic Review*, no. 8 (1961): 15.

12 Kermode, "*Robert Musil*," 226.

13 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 190.

The Emperor's bed. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.

ological types, navigate a Vienna that feels theatrical. The city becomes a stage where these figures play off one another: Nietzschean copycats clash with bourgeois socialists, 19th-century liberals uneasily coexist with proto-Nazis, scientific ethos conflicts with feudal spirituality, and moral campaigns run parallel to publicized stories of murder. The result is comical chaos, heightened by the tragic irony of the looming war. The composite world Musil creates feels suspended in time, where contradictions spin wildly without fixed orientation points. Musil, with ruthless wit, investigates the search for a way to exist amid a fractured world :

> "When she spoke of symbols earlier in the meeting, she had naturally meant not soup kitchens but that nothing less was at stake than the need to recover that unity of mankind that had been lost because the disparity of interests in society had grown so great. The question arises whether at the present time the peoples of today are still at all capable of such great, unifying ideas? All the suggestions made so far were splendid, of course, but they diverged so widely, which already showed that none of them had unifying power." [14]

14 Musil, 190.

Unlike neighboring nation-states that successfully addressed the ideological and power vacuum left by Enlightenment revolutionaries through nationalist sentiment, Austria struggled to adapt. The empire, which Musil dubbed "Kakania," struggled with a lack of cohesive identity in the figurative absence of the emperor, whose unifying presence had been essential in holding its diverse territories together. Under monarchic rule, rich and poor alike were bound by the principle of divine might. Austria's idiosyncratic nature meant that, after 1848, without the symbolic authority of the crown, its structure became utterly devoid of substance. The rise of scientific progress further eroded the aristocratic myth.[15] The emperor's last remnant of godly power lay in his authority to wage war. The once-dominant aristocracy had been reduced to a mere ghostly figure: [16]

15 Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time*, 69.

16 Emperor Franz Joseph infamously avoided modern conveniences. His official residence, Schönbrunn Palace, featured 1,441 rooms but reportedly no baths, as they were seen as an unnecessary indulgence. Rising daily at 4 a.m., the emperor endured ice-cold water dousing as part of his routine. He favored letters over telephones, and until his death, his private study in Vienna's sprawling Hofburg Palace was lit by kerosene lamps. Franz Joseph slept on an iron camp bed. See: Cockett, *Vienna: How the City of Ideas Created the Modern World,* 10.

> "The number of his portraits one saw was almost as large as the number of his kingdom's inhabitants…and the voices of millions vowed that they loved him as a father; an anthem in his honor was the only work of poetry or music of which every Kakanian knew at least a line. But this popularity and publicity was so superconvincing that believing in his existence was rather like believing in stars that one sees though they ceased to exist thousands of years ago." [17]

17 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 83.

> "For what use will it be on the Day of Judgment, when all human achievements are weighed, to offer up three articles on formic acid, or even thirty? On the other hand, what do we know of the Day of Judgment if we do not even know what may have become of formic acid by then?" [18]

18 Musil, 268.

Upon gaining power, the bourgeoisie reshaped state and society, blending Enlightenment and Baroque values. One set, moral, emphasized a scientific, rational culture centered on law and language. The other, aesthetic, derived its qualities from the Counter-Reformation. In contrast to aristocratic sublimation, it manifested not explicitly as religious but through cultural ventures.[19] These values were expressed through their

19 Carl E. Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism,* Course Book, Princeton Legacy Library (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 126.

commitment to *Bildung*. This concept, rooted in late 18th-century Weimar Classicism, emphasizes intellectual and spiritual growth through self-cultivation. The tradition offered greater accessibility to bourgeois individuals born outside the seemingly inflexible ethnic, class, religious, and gender hierarchies of the mid-19th century. *Bildung* was thus closely intertwined with the emerging liberal era.[20]

> "Director Fischel of the Loyd Bank enjoyed philosophizing, but only for ten minutes a day. He enjoyed thinking that human life had a solid rational basis and that it paid off intellectually; he imagined this on the pattern of the harmonious hierarchy of a great bank and noted with satisfaction the daily signs of progress he read about in the papers." [21]

Ulrich, the book's protagonist, moves through life by hopping from one discipline to another. He initially pursues a career in the cavalry, drawn to its rigid routine and reassuring hierarchy. However, as he senses the onset of modernity, he embarks on a quest to understand its essence. In pursuit of concrete knowledge he turns to civil engineering. Yet, he soon becomes dissatisfied with the lack of abstraction in applied science. Seeking pure abstraction, Ulrich devotes himself to mathematics, only to grow frustrated once more—this time by the discipline's inability to unify its parts into a coherent whole. He recognizes his existence in a world where everything seems pregnant with its contrary. This repeated disillusionment ultimately leads him to take a "vacation from life." Ulrich is referred to as the "man without qualities" because he resists being defined by fixed attributes, ideologies, or social roles. He is both a product of the Austro-Hungarian intellectual elite and a critic of its failings. His detachment and intellectual skepticism grant him an edge in describing the paradoxical nature of his era. His lack of definitive qualities becomes both his strength and his limitation, reflecting the existential dilemmas of early 20th-century Europe :

> "Which is why today every idea has its opposite. Every action and its opposite are accompanied by the subtlest arguments, which can be defended or attacked with equal ease." [22]

> "The only people who actually lived in ignorance of these dangers were the mathematicians themselves and their disciples the scientists, whose souls were as unaffected by all this as if they were racing cyclists pedaling away for dear life, blind to everything in the world except the back wheel of the rider ahead of them." [23]

> "In this way an open-ended system of relationships arises, in which independent meanings, such as are ascribed to actions and qualities by way of a rough first approximation in ordinary life, no longer exist at all. What is seemingly solid in this system becomes a porous pretext for many possible meanings; the event occurring becomes a symbol of something that perhaps may not be happening but makes itself felt through the symbol; and man as the quintessence of his possibilities, potential man, the unwritten poem of his existence, confronts man as recorded fact, as reality, as character." [24]

20 Cockett, *Vienna: How the City of Ideas Created the Modern World*, 18.

21 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 219.

22 Musil, 234.

23 Musil, 37.

24 Musil, 279.

In contrast to Ulrich, Arnheim embodies the self-confident Bourgeois par excellence. Son of an industrial self-made man, he firmly believes in his mission to buttress his wealth and influence while sublimating it through *Bildung*. He represents the materialistic ambitions of the bourgeoisie and strives for a modern life. One in which the world is filled with the promise of adventure, power, joy, personal growth, and the opportunity to transform both himself and his surroundings :

> "That was his favorite concept: carrying ideas into the spheres of power and talking business only in connection with cultural questions. He liked to draw analogies from history in order to fill it with new life; the role of present-day finance seemed to him similar to that of the Catholic Church: a great influence behind the scenes; unyielding yet yielding 'in its dealings with the ruling powers; and he sometimes saw himself functioning like a cardinal." [25]

> "Objectively put, he had brought about the fusion of interests between business and the soul by working out the overall concept of the Business King, and that feeling of love that had once taught him the unity of all things now formed the nucleus of his conviction that culture 'and all human interests formed a harmonious whole." [26]

In Musil's extensive description the proletariat makes its presence felt through its notable absence. The underclass is only hinted at through peripheral characters. One such figure is Rachel, a young servant to Diotima, the socialite responsible for hosting and moderating discussions about the Parallel Action. Rachel eavesdrops on these high-society debates but struggles to comprehend the abstract ideas being discussed; her bewilderment and frustration underscore a gap in reality between the working class and the intellectual elite :

> "But most of all it was the little keyhole that opened up vistas which curiously, somehow, reminded Rachel of the long-forgotten time when she lost her virtue. That tiny opening let her gaze slip deep inside the room's interior, where people broken up into sections flat as cardboard moved about, their voices no longer held within the fine borders of words but proliferating into meaningless sound; the awe, reverence, and admiration that bound Rachel to these people then came wildly undone, dissolving in excitement as when a lover suddenly penetrates, with all his being, so deeply into the beloved that everything grows dark before her eyes, and behind the drawn curtain of her skin the light flares up." [27]

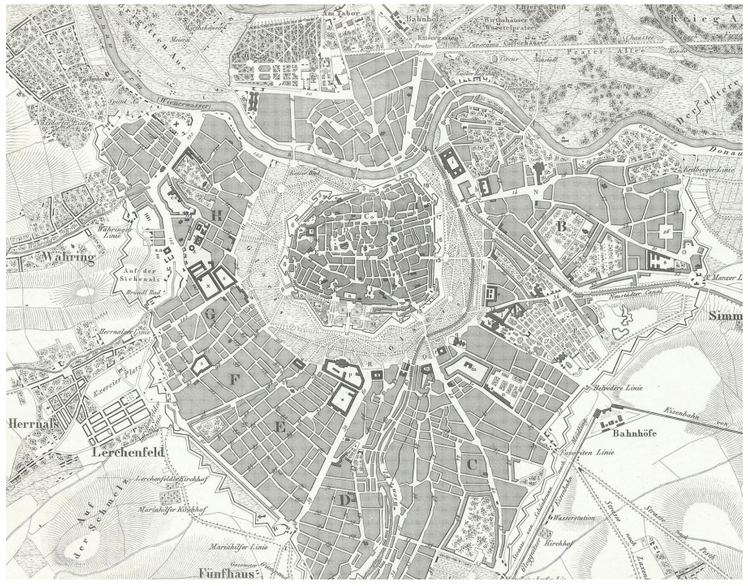
25 Musil, 213.

26 Musil, 422.

27 Musil, 364.

Bourgeoisie's veil : Opera Superstar Caroline Tellheim. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.

Key hole spectacle. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.



Map of Vienna 1844. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.
Satellite picture of Ringstrasse. Image from Google Earth.

WALLS MELT INTO AIR

Before the bourgeoisie rose to power, Vienna remained a medieval city centered around churches, aristocratic palaces, and imperial residences. Embracing it all, 13th-century fortifications surrounded by a 570-meter-wide open belt. With the threat of Turkish invasions long gone, the defense line no longer served as an effective military apparatus. Rather, it provided a psychological defense against the looming threat of revolutionary forces. This historical inertia left Vienna with a unique legacy: a vast, undeveloped area at its center. The 1848 revolution made way for the abolition of feudal jurisdiction and fully integrated the suburbs into the city. At the same time, the liberals secured municipal self-government, ending centuries of direct imperial rule. This newfound authority enabled the municipal forces to compel the imperial government to begin dismantling the obsolete defensive walls, giving way to the creation of the Ringstrasse. The liberals set out to reimagine the Ringstrasse and, by extension, the city of Vienna in their own image. Through architecture, the redevelopment symbolized the victory of constitutional law over imperial authority and secular and scientific values over religious dogma instead of palaces, garrisons, and churches. The Ring was sprinkled with centers of constitutional governance and institutions of high culture. Luxury speculative housing developments were erected between public buildings.[28]

The rising Big Business class was bold in asserting its independence. However, when it sought to convey its values through architecture, it consistently turned to historical ways. The Burgtheater, dedicated to Austria's traditional art of theater, was designed in an early Baroque style, evoking an era when theater united clergy, courtiers, and commoners in shared aesthetic appreciation. The University, bastion of enlightenment ideals, was constructed in the Renaissance style. The Parliament was adorned in classical Greek fashion, reflecting a reverence for democratic ideals. The speculative apartment block were built on the image of Baroque *Adelspalais* found in Vienna's inner city. Adapted to the needs of the new Ringstrasse elite, these structures became known as *Mietpalast* (rental palaces). Floor plans were tailored to the bourgeois family structure, as most buildings were multi-family dwellings, while their façades projected an aristocratic identity. In the Ringstrasse, the realities of industrial and commercial society were cloaked in the aesthetic language of pre-industrial traditions. While science and law formed the substance of the cultural ambitions of liberal bourgeois society, the facades remained a screen on which they chose to project an image firmly rooted in interpretations of historical traditions. [29]

The development of the Ringstrasse unfolded alongside the rise of Vienna's growing proletarian class. Prior to the 19th century, the city's economy was largely agrarian, dependent on natural resources, particularly from the empire's eastern regions. As the population remained tied to feudal structures, a defined urban working class was virtually absent. A decree by Francis II prohibited industries within Vienna's outer city walls, preserving the semi-rural character of the outer districts with farmland, gardens, and vineyards into the 18th century. Rapid industrialization in the 19th century, however, reshaped Vienna's social and economic landscape. The shift from feudalism to a liberal economy saw

28 Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 19–21.

29 Schorske, 46–49.

Kokoska's Girl with lamb. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.

the under-class transform from serfs to proletarians. The swift industrialization of the 1840s brought major railway projects and a booming textile industry. The 1848 abolition of feudal dues spurred large-scale migration as former peasants sought opportunities in Vienna, turning the city into a vast construction site. By mid-century, the Ringstrasse alone saw over 500 new buildings, while ambitious 1870s municipal projects, like the Danube regulation and a drinking water conduit, coincided with a population boom that tripled the size of the outer suburbs in just two decades.[30]

The Viennese proletarian living quarters were relegated to the city's outer limits, where tenement buildings influenced by Ringstrasse designs became increasingly prevalent. These differed from middle-class apartments mainly in layout, with floor plans clustering units around two small courtyards to maximize space. Typically five or six stories high with a single staircase to cut costs, these buildings offered standardized one-room-and-kitchen apartments, which by the 1890s made up 90% of working-class housing. Often cramped in just 30 square meters, these spaces housed entire families and subtenants. Kitchens opened onto dim corridors with no direct light or ventilation, while courtyards—often less than three meters wide—were mere air shafts. Lax building codes encouraged such conditions, with few density, sanitation, or ventilation regulations. An 1868 reform further relaxed standards, leaving many families in dark, damp cellar rooms or tiny apartments without running water, heating, or proper lighting. Outdoor privies, shared by dozens, were often the only sanitation available. The street façades of late 19th-century tenements were often indistinguishable from middle-class apartment blocks of the same era in terms of massing, proportions, and ornamentation. Not only did it mask the harsh living conditions inside, but it also obscured an entire social class from public view, further contributing to the spatial and social marginalization of Vienna's working class.[31] In addition, they were subject to grueling seven-day, seventy-hour workweeks that persisted well into the 1880s. Child labor was widespread in factories. Women, meanwhile, faced even harsher economic realities, earning significantly less than men for the same work.[32]

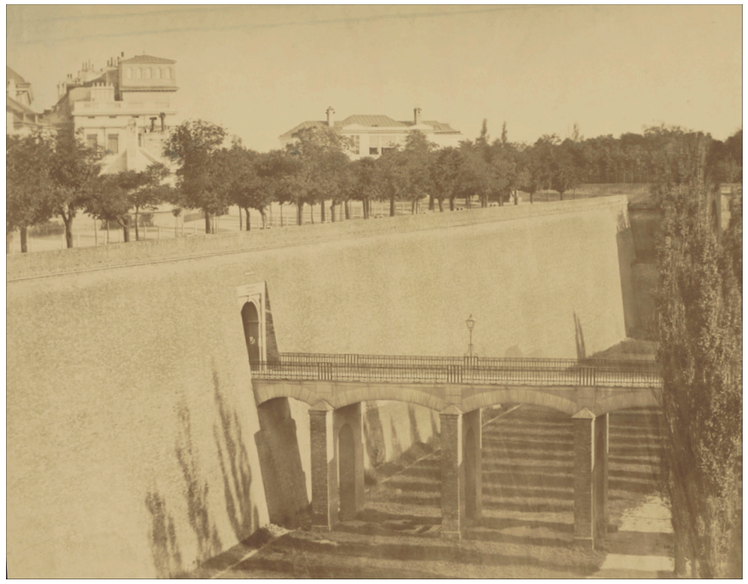
In *the Man wihtout qualities* Moosbrugger is a peasant-born man who migrated to Vienna in search of a better life. Confronted with hardship, he descends into homelessness and eventually commits the murder of a prostitute. Moosbrugger becomes an object of fascination for the bourgeoisie, who treat him as a case study. Some romanticize his "primal bestiality," projecting onto him an idealized image of untamed nature, loosely connecting his actions to Nietzchean instinct. Others view him as a specimen for the burgeoning field of Oedipal psychoanalysis, while still more see his trial as a chance to test the resilience of liberal ideals, particularly the judiciary system, in the face of extreme circumstances. Yet, amid intellectual theorizing, none recognize Moosbrugger's actions as symptomatic of the harsh realities faced by the migrant underclass. This other Vienna, marked by misery and poverty, remains invisible to the bourgeoisie's privileged gaze, highlighting their disconnection from the social conditions that fuel the violence they attempt to comprehend :

"Law courts resemble wine cellars in which the wisdom of our forefathers

30 Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919-1934* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999), 52–53.

31 Blau, 66–68.

32 Cockett, *Vienna: How the City of Ideas Created the Modern World*, 57.



Vienna's fortification wall. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.
Ringstrasse view from Rathaus. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.

> lies in bottles. One opens them and could weep at how unpalatable the highest, most effervescent, degree of the human striving for precision can be before it reaches perfection. And yet it seems to intoxicate the insufficiently seasoned mind. It is a well known phenomenon that the angel of medicine, if he has listened too long to lawyers' arguments, too often forgets his own mission. He then folds his wings with a clatter and conducts himself in court like a reserve angel of law." [33]

The Ringstrasse, built as a symbol of Enlightenment ideals, paradoxically became a manifestation of estrangement. Most streets entering the Ring from the inner city or the suburbs lacked prominence, merging into the circular flow of rapidly moving vehicles without any infrastructure to facilitate crossing. What had once been a solid brick-and-mortar wall now had melted into air, transforming the Ringstrasse into a barrier of dynamic movement. As a result, the old city was reduced to a museum-like enclave, while the working class was socially and spatially excluded from becoming an integral part of the urban fabric.[34] This division was particularly felt by the lower-middle artisan class, who had traditionally operated workshops within the inner city. They were gradually pushed out, both geographically and socially, to make way for expanding commercial spaces.[35]

The bitterness, anger, and discontent resulting from such inequalities were exploited by a new breed of politician. The political ideology that took root in Vienna is what we now recognize as populism. On the far-right stood Austrian demagogues, agitators, and elected officials who pioneered the Sharper Key;[36] "post-rational politics", prioritized emotional appeal, identity-driven narratives, and symbolic gestures, often rejecting Enlightenment ideals. They played by a harsher political approach that resonated deeply with the neglected working and small artisan classes.[37]

Karl Lueger, Vienna's mayor from 1897 to 1910, marked the liberal decline as political dominance waned despite cultural and economic influence. Seen as Europe's first openly anti-Semitic politician and a pioneer of modern populism, he mobilized new voter bases through the Christian Social Party, uniting the lower middle class and pan-Germans with nationalist, anti-socialist, anti-capitalist, and anti-Semitic rhetoric. Lueger's populism primarily targeted the lower middle class, as Vienna's democratic framework excluded many proletarian migrants from voting due to the lack of universal suffrage. While his antisemitism may have resonated with part of the proletariat, his administration largely ignored the poor living conditions of the working class. Viennese landlords, who differed from liberal large-scale businesses, were predominantly small-scale property owners and constituted a significant part of Lueger's voter base. This reliance on landlords likely influenced his reluctance to address the inadequate living conditions in the city.[38] Known for grand political spectacles, he championed the "little man" against the (Jewish) elite. His legacy also includes transforming Vienna with public works, municipalization, and modernizing transportation through an electric streetcar system.[39] On the left, the Austrian labor movement began in the 1860s after the constitutional monarchy of 1867 legalized workers' organizations, though they were denied political rights. Early groups adapted to restrictions by focusing on *Bildung* and the pedagogical ideals central to Austrian Social Democracy.[40]

33 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 263.

34 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture*, 33.

35 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 52.

36 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture,* 130.

37 Cockett, *Vienna: How the City of Ideas Created the Modern World*, 53., This was the environment in which Hitler fermented prior to the First World War. After failing twice to gain admission to the Academy of Fine Arts, he eked out a living by painting postcards. Residing in hostels and leading a life of poverty and frustration. Hitler was heavily influenced by the xenophobic and racist literature that was widely circulated in the city and held deep admiration for Karl Lueger.

38 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 79.

39 Cockett, 58–60.

40 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 22.

Nuda Veritas. Image from Wikipedia.

FLATTENING THE LIBERAL EGO

Gustav Klimt gained prominence within the bourgeois culture of the Ringstrasse, though his roots were more humble than the liberal middle class he came to represent. Born to an engraver father, Klimt and his brothers were initially trained as artist-craftsmen. At fourteen, he entered the School of Arts and Crafts. There, Klimt acquired the technical skill and broad knowledge of art and design history required by the eclecticism of the era. Klimt graduated as an architectural decorator during the final phase of the Ringstrasse's monumental construction program. He applied his skills to historical paintings for two of its last significant projects: the Burgtheater and the Museum of Art History.[41] This early phase of Klimt's work reflects a bourgeois culture confident in its identity. For instance, the Schubert panel depicts Hausmusik, where music serves as the aesthetic pinnacle of an orderly and secure social life. The scene is suffused with warm candlelight, softening the figures' outlines and blending them into a harmonious whole, both in its subject matter and formal composition.[42]

Beginning in the 1870s, discontent with liberalism arose from ethnic frustration, social inequality, economic depression, and political corruption. Liberalism faced criticism from below through mass movements and from within, as a younger generation, *Die Jungen*, sought alternatives to the juridical rationalism of their elders. University students in the 1880s embraced anti-liberal and populist thinking, advocating for an aesthetic culture that rejected the rational traditions of the modern state.[43] They critiqued the scientific and analytical spirit of bourgeois society, elevating instinct as a counterpoint to reason. Instinct was seen as offering intellectual empowerment, akin to the role of divine grace in Baroque culture, and was imagined as fostering fraternal unity to counter the competitive egotism of the modern state. This philosophy sought to restore emotional depth to a psyche drained by excessive intellectualism and rational detachment, envisioning a true *Volksgemeinschaft* (folk community). Generational revolt persisted among them merely as a diluted political ideology, while the creative energies of that culture found expression in the nonpolitical realms of art and philosophy. Figures such as Theodor Herzl, Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, and Viktor Adler (founder of the SDAP) initially supported this intellectual movement, which later, under Karl Lueger's influence, devolved into an antisemitic ideology.[44] In *The Man Without Qualities*, Ulrich understood the disorientation that accompanied scientific progress, which had dispelled the dark superstitions of feudal dogmas. However, even his abundant cynicism couldn't prepare him for the moment when the heirs of a culture built on rational thought turned their backs on it :

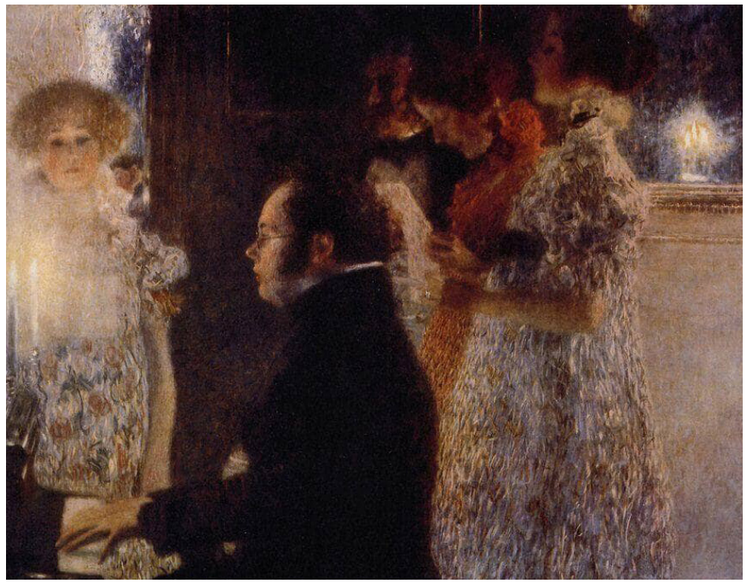
> " All protesting that pure knowledge tore apart every sublime achievement of mankind without ever being able to put it back together, and they demanded a new humane faith, a return to inner primal values, a spiritual revival, and all sorts of things of that kind. At first Ulrich had naively assumed that the outcries came from hard riding people who had dismounted, limping, screaming to have their sores rubbed with soul; but

41 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture*, 208.

42 Schorske, 220.

43 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*,131.

44 Schorske and De Gruyter,142.



Schubert at the Piano II (1899). Gustav Klimt, Complete Paintings of GustavKlimt, (London: Delphi Classics, 2014), 113.
Pond of Schloss Kammer (1910), ibid. 134.

> he gradually realized that these repetitive calls for a new dispensation, which had struck him as so comical at first, were being echoed far and wide. Science had begun to be out-dated, and the unfocused type of person that dominates the present had begun to assert itself." [45]

45 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 269.

Vienna bathed in a constant flux of slew; the Revolution of 1848 marked the liberals' rise to power, wresting control from the aristocracy. Once liberal order was established, it faced a second wave of criticism in the 1870s and 1880s, driven by the very scions of the 1848 revolutionaries. This critique was eventually co-opted by Karl Lueger, who used it for his own populist agenda. Ironically, the sons of the 1870s and 1880s then found themselves on the receiving end of their own critique, which gave rise to the Secessionists. The political ethos of *Die Jungen* of the 1870s was shattered by the advent of antisemitism. In its wake, only a sense of modern society's incoherence remained, leading to an inward turn in the search for meaning.[46]

46 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, 148.

In Musil's *Man Without Qualities*, Leo Fischel, a wealthy banker, could very well have been a client of Klimt's. As populist politics unfold before him, he refuses to acknowledge them—perhaps out of despair, perhaps out of arrogance—either or he retreats :

> "But since misfortune had decreed that in the course of this marriage the mood of the times would shift away from the old principles of liberalism that had favored Leo Fischel the great guiding ideals of tolerance, the dignity of man, and free trade-and reason and progress in the Western world would be displaced by racial theories and street slogans, he could not remain untouched by it either. He started by flatly denying the existence of these changes, just as Count Leinsdorf was accustomed to deny the existence of certain "unpleasant political manifestations" and waited for them to disappear of their own accord." [47]

47 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 219.

The secessionists rose in the realm of fine and applied arts. Their mission was to craft a new, ahistorical form of beauty, appealing to the refined sensibilities of the aesthetically cultivated. They believed modern man's challenge was to find his own voice and articulate his truth, liberated from the oppressive weight of the past.[48] Secession painters represented an art and culture through which the upper middle class made a final attempt to use art as a coping mechanism. The Secession's most significant support came from newly wealthy industrialists, bankers, and merchants, who sought the social prestige once reserved for the aristocracy. The Jugendstil clientele shared the same social origins as those who favored Historicism, which had dominated for the previous fifty years, but their focus shifted. As the haute bourgeoisie lost political power despite growing material wealth, their interest moved from public, communal symbols to creating private, aestheticized environments. Art was where life could be lived detached from the surrounding social and political upheaval. The upper middle class—once champions of *Bildung* and the rational—retreated into aestheticism, estranged from the society they had helped create. [49]

48 Schorske and De Gruyter,147.

49 Reinhold Heller, "Recent Scholarship on Vienna's 'Golden Age,' Gustav Klimt, and Egon Schiele," *The Art Bulletin 59*, no. 1 (1977): 111–18.

"Everything in public life has already ceased to be narrative and no

Landscape Garden (1906), ibid. 121.
Island in Lake Attersee (1902), ibid. 110.

longer follows a thread, but instead spreads out as an infinitely interwoven surface." [50]

50 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 709.

In *Nuda Veritas*, featured in the Secession's opening exhibition, Klimt depicts a flat, nude figure gazing directly at the viewer. Flowers at her feet symbolize the *Ver Sacrum* ("sacred spring"), a metaphor for Austrian artistic renewal. Above her head one reads : "Truth is fire, and to proclaim the truth is to illuminate and to burn." Her figures is rendered flat, lacking any sense of depth or perspective. Holding a mirror toward the observer, she invites self-reflection, embodying Klimt and the Secession's vision of art as a means to confront modern man with his true self.[51]

51 Kevin C. Karnes, "Wagner, Klimt, and the Metaphysics of Creativity in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna," *Journal of the American Musicological Society 62*, no. 3 (2009): 654.

Amid newfound aspirations through the Secession, Klimt retreated to the Attersee countryside, far from Vienna's chaos and addressing patrons' demands for new subjects. He turned to nature, exploring gardens and parks—long associated with aristocratic and bourgeois aesthetics and imbued with symbolic meaning beyond their practical uses. Since the mid-eighteenth century, European art had used landscapes to reflect inner states, offering spaces removed from social and political contexts. Klimt's landscapes align with this tradition but also mark his search for a new aesthetic, ultimately found in surface representation and ornamentation.[52] *Die Jungen* were also characterized by the *Gefühlskultur* (Emotional culture) with a distinct focus on the gaze. The eye held a privileged role as the organ connecting the individual to the external world of objects. It became a recurring symbol, often portrayed as a link between the hands and the soul.[53]

52 Reingard Nethersole, "Enchanted Gardens: Landscape Imagery in the Works of Hofmannsthal and Klimt," *Modern Austrian Literature 22*, no. 3/4 (1989): 109–10.

53 Nethersole, 114.

Klimt's gaze is defined by a focus on scanning surfaces, registering the texture of sensory impressions, and grouping objects without regard to the inherent meaning they might hold in the real world. For instance, in *Garden with Chickens*, the inclusion of domestic animals like chickens may initially appear to reference country life or domesticity. However, they function merely as shapes, contributing to the definition of space within the picture plane. The garden, in this context, simply becomes a site that realizes the conditions and possibilities of beauty; it stands for nothing else.[54]

54 Nethersole, 115.

In *Garden Landscape* presents an almost spaceless composition of tree shapes and a flower meadow, their volumes barely suggested by color. The meadow stretches across the picture plane, loosely framed by a blue sky. Firmament, meadow, and trees are connected by a crowd of regular yet broken brushstrokes, forming, carpet-like arrangement. Without the physical boundary of the frame, the scene seemingly extends infinitely in all directions. The painting offers no fixed perspectival anchor. Instead, the viewer's gaze is directed by the grouping of trees and the barrier they create against the barely discernible airspace, leading to the endless ground at the center of the canvas. The meadow rises vertically into space, defying traditional three-dimensional illusion and prioritizing the arrangement of shapes as patterns. The proximity of larger to smaller forms takes precedence over traditional concepts of near and far. This approach emphasizes the interplay between volume and flatness, reinforcing the painting's rejection of illusionary depth in favor of a decorative, patterned composition.[55] Similar approach can be found in *Pond of Schloss,*

55 Nethersole, 116.

Park (1910), ibid. 136.
Beech Grove I (1902),ibid. 114.

Garden with Chickens (1917), ibid. 150.
Birch Tree I (1909),ibid. 121.

Portrait of Fritza Riedler (1906). Gustav Klimt, Complete Paintings of Gustav Klimt. (London: Delphi Classics, 2014), 122.

Island in Lake Attersee ,Park ,Beech Grove I, and Birch Tree.

In addition to his retreats into nature, Klimt also painted commissioned portraits for his patrons. He approached these portraits with the same philosophy as his landscapes, rendering the liberal ego flat and decorative. Fritza Riedler depicts a woman seated in an armchair, smiling at the viewer. The setting provides no context, as no details about her surroundings or belongings are included. The background comprises orange brushstrokes, golden leaves, and precious stones; she sits in an abstract, decorative field. While an armchair is discernable in the foreground, it appears less like furniture and more like a two-dimensional fata-morgana. Gold and silver eye-shaped motifs float on the surface, flat and irregular, breaking any adherence to perspective.[56]

> "But then there was one plane after another, and they all looked alike. The sameness of things out there was different from the way his thoughts were all alike in being wonderful. He couldn't figure it out, and anyway it had always got in his way. He shook his head. To hell with the world, he thought. Or to hell with him and let them hang him: whatever happened, what did he have to lose ... ?" [57]

Klimt's earlier works explicitly referenced bourgeois culture and its associated myths. Klimt's later period paintings offer pure contemplation; by collapsing the distance between the perceived object, the gaze becomes a meeting point between the eye and the soul. Form is expunged of allusions to tangible life and reflects nothing beyond itself, much like the committee's futile search for a great unifying Austrian idea in *The Man Without Qualities,* which ultimately leads nowhere :

> "We are learning to recognize the interplay between inner and outer, and it is precisely our understanding of the impersonal elements in man that has given us new clues to the personal ones, to certain simple patterns of behavior, to an ego-building instinct that, like the nest-building instinct of birds, uses a few techniques to build an ego out of many various materials." [58]

56 Anna Miscena, Jozsef Arato, and Raphael Rosenberg, "Absorbing the Gaze, Scattering Looks: Klimt's Distinctive Style and Its Two-Fold Effect on the Eye of the Beholder," *Journal of Eye Movement Research 13*, no. 2 (October 6, 2020): 1–3.

57 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 579.

58 Musil, 272.

Otto Wagner's boudoir. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

Born in 1841, Otto Wagner was already a prominent architect of the Ringstrasse era when he launched his critique of its historicism in the 1890s. His background was deeply tied to the forces that braided the Ringstrasse. Wagner's father rose from humble origins to become a court notary, while his mother, from a wealthy bureaucratic family, instilled in him entrepreneurial values: a strong sense of self and ambition. Widowed early, she prepared him to thrive in a world defined by *Bildung* (education) and *Besitz* (property ownership). Wagner trained at the Vienna Polytechnic School, followed by a stint at Berlin's School of Architecture. He completed his studies at the prestigious Viennese Academy of Fine Arts in 1861. By the late 1860s, Wagner had entered Vienna's booming speculative building market. Over the next 25 years, he became an architect-entrepreneur, constructing apartment buildings in the Ringstrasse area. Wagner often lived in the buildings he designed until they were sold to finance his next project. His early career exemplified the entrepreneurial spirit of the Ringstrasse generation.[59] However, his later critique of its historicism marked a pivotal shift in his work, laying the groundwork for his modernist legacy. The first step in his metamorphosis came through his involvement with urban engineering projects; the second, through his participation in the Secessionist movement, Vienna's art nouveau. The StadtBahn project gave him new construction principles, while the Secession provided a new style in which to execute them.[60]

It is observed by Cacciari (through Simmel and Benjamin) that when feudal "City" turns into capitalist "Metropolis" its meaning changes drastically. The "city" is molded by straightforward relations of production, namely the relations of ownership over the means of production and the mode of appropriation of surplus values. In the "Metropolis" simple relations of production are superseded by the monetary market economy. The kernel of social relations is now capital which is inherently abstract but calculable. Therefore the "city" loses its meaning in capitalist society and its symbols are rendered obsolete. The impersonal nature of economic transactions in the metropolis which prioritises monetary value over personal relation, now shapes the dynamics of social interactions. This crisis of meaning, compels subjects to metropolitan life to adopt psychological defenses mechanisms, resulting in a detached and rational demeanor. Additionally as modernity is galloping towards progress the metropolis finds itself adorned with myriads of new forms and symbols. Bringing about an overwhelming stimulus to the urban dweller which in need to cope takes on a "blasé" attitude. "Blasé" is considered not just as a manifestation but as the very symbol of capitalist culture. At the same time, the metropolis emerges as a "center of freedom," tied to the expanding capitalist market and individualistic identity. While this process leads to alienation, it also brings about liberation from traditional social circles.[61]

Wagner, firmly grounded in *Bildung* and bourgeois ideals, argues that the "blasé" individual can find direction when the metropolis transcends its purely rational condition through the integration of culture. He advo-

59 Heinz Geretsegger, Max Peintner, and Walter Pichler, *Otto Wagner 1841-1918: The Expanding City*, the Beginning of Modern Architecture, English language ed (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 9.

60 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture,* 85.

61 Massimo Cacciari, Stephen Sartarelli, and Patrizia Lombardo, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture, Theorical Perspectives in Architectural History and Criticism* (New Haven London: Yale university press, 1993), 3–10.

cates embracing capitalist market laws while rejecting pure speculation, which he perceives as the engineer's manipulation of modern conditions to serve revenue-driven ambitions—an approach he believes obstructs rationalization and the true expression of "law" and "moral thinking." However, Cacciari critiques Wagner's stance as fundamentally confused, asserting that the inherent "blasé" nature of capital leaves no room for meaningful cultural engagement within the Metropolis.[62]

Wagner championed an embrace of reality, highlighting the socioeconomic and technological forces influencing contemporary architecture. Practical needs ought to be managed by engineers under the guidance of architects to prevent speculative overreach, while ensuring that rational modern forms are infused with appropriate artistic expression addressing itself to the busy, disinterested, fast-moving urban dweller. Furthermore, the advancements introduced by bourgeois, enlightened scientific minds—new technologies and materials—were seen by Wagner as instruments to address class struggles and promote societal progress.[63] For example, the electric lift equalized apartment status, eliminating hierarchical façades and enabling unified, flat exterior. Similarly, the Stadtbahn offered affordable and efficient transit throughout the city, providing the working class with newfound mobility and opportunities fostering a more equitable urban experience, while embodying the potential of the modern metropolis.[64] In Wagner's words:

> "make visible our better, democratic, self-conscious and sharp-thinking essence, and do justice to the colossal technical and scientific achievements as well as to the fundamentally practical character of modern mankind." [65]

It is as if Musil had taken passages from Wagner's Modern Architecture, his commitment to Bildung and had applied them to Arnheim :

> "Arnheim came to see the regal man of business as the synthesis of change and permanence, power and civility, sensible risk-taking and strong-minded reliance on information, but essentially as the symbolic figure of democracy-in-the-making. By the persistent and disciplined honing of his own personality, by his intellectual grasp of the economic and social complexes at hand,' and by giving thought to the leadership and structure of the state as a whole, he hoped to help bring the new era to birth, that age where the social forces made unequal by fate and nature would be properly and fruitfully organized and where the ideal would not be shattered by the inevitable limitations of reality, but be purified and strengthened instead." [66]

The Stadtbahn project included four lines, with Otto Wagner designing over 30 stations, along with bridges, tunnels, doors, ironwork, lifts, ticket offices, toilets, and luggage facilities.[67] Railways were elevated above or sunk below street level, while trams, buses, and cabs operated at grade, all requiring integration with long-distance rail and water transport networks. Wagner's metropolis embraces constant three-dimensional movement across multiple levels. In a fast-paced world dominated by time and movement, Wagner's was to give the confused metropolitan

62 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, 128.

63 Harry Francis Mallgrave, Otto Wagner: Reflections on the Raiment of Modernity [*Evolved from an International Symposium Held at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, Calif., 3-5 November 1988*], Issues and Debates 3 (Santa Monica: Getty center for the history of art and the humanities, 1993), 83.

64 Frisby David, "Metropolitan Architecture and Modernity: Otto Wagner in Context" (ProQuest LLC, 2018), 324.

65 Otto Wagner, Martine Sgard, and Liane Lefaivre, *Architecture moderne : et autres textes*, Eupalinos (Marseille: Parenthèses, 2019), 63.

66 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 421.

67 Geretsegger, Peintner, and Pichler, Otto Wagner 1841-1918, 47.

68 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture,* 85

69 David, "Metropolitan Architecture and Modernity: Otto Wagner in Context," 237.

70 Schorske, 73.

71 Musil, The Man without Qualities, 27.

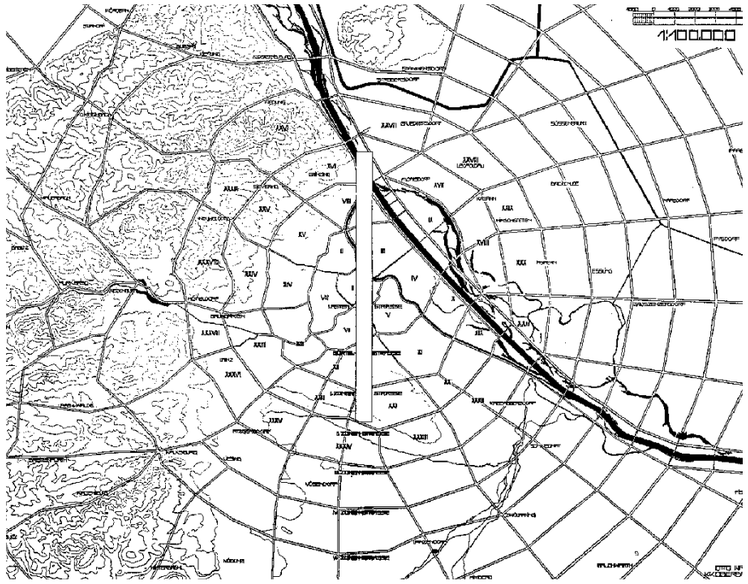
72 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919-1934*, 246.

man direction. To guide the "blasé", Wagner sought overall formal coherence. Adorned with street and district names, the ironwork—used both as structural elements and in smaller components such as doors, poles, and barriers—functioned as an intricate system of signage throughout the city.[68] Embedded in capitalist reality Wagner adornes train passerelles with advertisements, signifying that liberal commercial activity is to be expressed as an integral part of metropolitan experience.[69] Wagner's face of modernity sought to reflect the truths of the bustling and purposeful capitalist urbanity he eagerly embraced, for which he sought a new aesthetic form.[70]

> "Air and earth form an anthill traversed, level upon level, by roads live with traffic. Air trains, ground trains, underground trains, people mailed through tubes special-delivery, and chains of cars race along horizontally, while express elevators pump masses of people vertically from one traffic level to another; at the junctions, people leap from one vehicle to the next, instantly sucked in and snatched away by the rhythm of it, which makes a syncope, a pause, a little gap of twenty seconds during which a word might be hastily exchanged with someone else. Questions and answers synchronize like meshing gears; everyone has only certain fixed tasks to do; professions are located in special areas and organized by group; meals are taken on the run. Other parts of the city are centers of entertainment, while still others contain the towers where one finds wife, family, phonograph, and soul." [71]

Acting as intermediaries between the city and the railway, the Stadtbahn stations facilitated the transition from street to train, bridging pedestrian scale with metropolitan flow. These stations vertically connected elevated viaducts or underground tunnels to ground level, while their strategic locations at key intersections, positioned as vital connectors between traditional and modern urban circulation systems. The stations serve as focal points of public movement within their neighborhoods, embodying his principle that urban buildings should function as markers, clearly indicating both their own location and that of the observer on the city map. By integrating architecture with cartographic representation, Wagner emphasized that building in the city is inherently an act of interpretation. The Stadtbahn not only linked previously isolated areas but also redefined Vienna's spatial and visual relationships, transforming its character, internal dynamics, and foundational structure into a more cohesive urban entity.[72] The fast-moving cars racing around the Ringstrasse functioned as a dividing line, while the Stadtbahn's speedy wagons compressed time and space, transforming distant points into mere moments of contact.

But Wagner's ambitious metropolitan vision comes with its shares of contradiction, as his station designs reflect his long standing career as a historicist architect. The early stations were adorned with cosmetic stuccoed brick, molded decorations, and historical elements such as doric columns, entablatures, and cornices. Even along the tracks, this historicist style persisted, with miles of railings featuring Roman-inspired square-and-diagonal motifs. Or even the Hofpavillon for the Stadtbahn



Radetzkyplatz Station. Image from Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung, Wagner's Grösstat project,Geretsegger, Heinz, Peintner and Pichler. *Otto Wagner 1841-1918: The Expanding City, the Beginning of Modern Architecture*. (York: Rizzoli, 1979), 38.

73 Mallgrave, *Otto Wagner*, 386.

near Schönbrunn, evoked the era of Fischer von Erlach.[73] Yet, although riddled with curious anachronism, hints of his future radicalism were already perceptible. Musil puts it best :

> "Such anachronistic mixtures turn up everywhere nowadays. Even as our dead, for instance, are being trotted off to their resting place by internal combustion engine, we can't forgo dressing up the top of such a handsome motorized hearse with a medieval helmet and two crossed swords, and that's how it goes with everything; human evolution is a long-drawn-out process. Only two generations ago business letters affected flowery turns of phrase, while today we can already state all sorts of things from love to pure logic in the language of supply and demand, security and discount, at least as well as we can in psychological and religious terms; however, we don't do that yet. That's because our new language is not yet quite sure of itself" [74]

74 Musil, *The Man without Qualities,* 470.

In the Unter-Döbling station (1895), Wagner subverts the Ringstrasse tradition of symbolic architectural forms. An ornamental iron arch supporting the projecting roof of the central building block is shaped like an iron railway trestle—a structure typically used for elevated railways. Here, the trestle form is purely representational, with the iron serving a decorative rather than structural purpose, marking the first step on his path toward total flatness in the public façade.[75] In Breitensee Station (1897), bare steel makes its appearance in the facade facing the street, albeit disguised as a Greek frieze. A steel truss supporting a protruding roof is left exposed, upheld by two Doric columns. On the station's opposite side, facing the tracks and serving the same structural function, these columns are replaced by simple steel elements.[76] Perhaps Wagner understood that the passing public, not having asked to be bothered, is unprepared to confront modern truth. Musil certainly think's so as the paragraph cited above continues as follows :

75 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture,* 79.

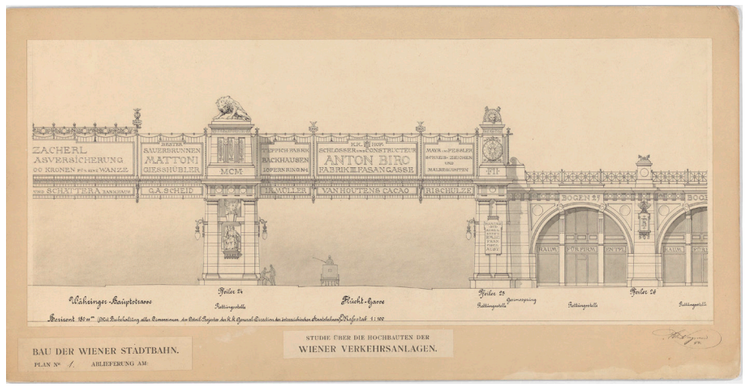
76 Geretsegger, Peintner, and Pichler, *Otto Wagner 1841-1918*, 50–51.

> "The ambitious money man finds himself in a difficult spot these days. To place himself on a level with the established powers, he must dress up his activities in great ideas. But great ideas that command instant allegiance no longer exist, because our skeptical contemporaries believe in neither God nor humanity, kings nor morality-unless they believe in all of them indiscriminately, which amounts to the same thing [...] and not all of us have the knack of swallowing this innermost truth of our times without gagging a little." [77]

77 Musil, *The Man without Qualities,* 470.

It is as if Wagner was trying to civilize the new material culture. Yet, the moving passenger, - which is welcome by the steel columns - being immersed in the very act of modern motion, would surely understand.

The Karlsplatz station (1898-1899) represents the Stadtbahn project where Wagner most completely synthesizes his vision of modernity: the fusion of art and science. Unlike his forebears, who cloaked themselves in historical references, Wagner's work embraces a newfound bourgeois identity, unashamed of its contemporary character. This modernity is both functional and symbolic, reflecting an aspiration to the transformation of Viennese liberal culture.



Unbilt project. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.
Unter-Dobling Station. Geretsegger, Heinz, Peintner and Pichler. *Otto Wagner 1841-1918: The Expanding City, the Beginning of Modern Architecture*. (York: Rizzoli, 1979), 48.

Breintensee station front, Geretsegger, Heinz, Peintner and Pichler. Otto Wagner 1841-1918: *The Expanding City, the Beginning of Modern Architecture*. (York: Rizzoli, 1979), 50.
Breintensee station back, ibid, 51.

Karlplatz station font. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung, Karlplatz station back. Geretsegger, Heinz, Peintner and Pichler. *Otto Wagner 1841-1918: The Expanding City, the Beginning of Modern Architecture.* (York: Rizzoli, 1979),58.

78 Geretsegger, Peintner, and Pichler, *Otto Wagner 1841-1918*, 57–58.

79 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, 85.

80 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna : Politics and Culture*, 45.

Here, the Ringstrasse's heavily molded stucco brick walls have been replaced by equalized, unobtrusive casements; marble-slab walls anchored by a light steel frame; and an efficiently spacious entrance. The heavy steel elements Wagner once used as expressive tools now unapologetically assume the width and depth dictated by the laws of physics. While the roof might appear ornamental when viewed from the public plaza, its side, oriented toward the Ringstrasse, is designed to cater to fast-moving cars rather than strolling pedestrians. From this perspective, the facade appears flat, with ornamentation disappearing and the corrugated steel roof panels abstracted as if existing on the same plane.[79] Klimt's two-dimensional approach to space, designed to symbolically convey the abstract essence of the material world's illusion, is introduced through architecture with renewed perception of the wall.[79]

In contrast to Klimt, Wagner's use of ornamentation does not signify retreat; rather, its placement on the surface of the facade embodies the core principles of Vienna's bourgeois Enlightenment culture. The firstly, Law, representing individual rights, freedoms, equality, and secularism, is expressed through a new type of flattened ornamentation. Ornamentation and the flattened treatment of facades, stripped of historical emotional weight, emerge as unifying symbols for both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The second tenet, Science, embodying reason and rationality, is evident in his unapologetic use of materials and structure.[80]

The Stadtbahn was conceived as a solution to Vienna's rapid urban expansion, aiming to connect the city's inner districts with its outer suburbs. Strategically aligned with Lueger's political agenda, it provided employment while simultaneously serving as a rhetorical tool to slander the bourgeoisie—and, by extension, scapegoat Jews—who were blamed for neglecting Vienna's outer districts. Yet, a paradox emerges: while Lueger used the project to launch a political assault on the bourgeoisie, Wagner saw it as an opportunity for the bourgeoisie to address its identity crisis. By leveraging modern infrastructure, the bourgeoisie could showcase its technological contributions as a means to alleviate the burdens of the working class,and by finding the (utopian) metropolis true expression it would bridge the gap between the cultural ambitions of liberal bourgeois society and the social realities it sought to address. Wagner's attempt to assign meaning to the metropolis beyond its capital relations inevitably plunges into a maelstrom of contradictions.

Mahler's first symphony third movement. Image from Musescore.

80 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 33.

81 Among Mahler's university contemporaries were Siegfried Lipiner, a Polish Jewish writer; Victor Adler, the Jewish leader of the Austrian Social Democrats, originally from Prague; Richard von Kralik, an Austrian Catholic dramatist raised in present-day Czechia; and Heinrich Friedjung, a prominent Austrian historian and Moravian-born Jew. Circulating in similar intellectual circles were Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, who grew up in Pest and later studied at the University of Vienna, and Sigmund Freud, born to Jewish parents from Galicia in the Moravian town of Freiburg. See : Leah Batstone, "Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in the Centre and on the Periphery," *Music and Letters 105*, no. 2 (May 1, 2024): 214,

82 Schorske and De Gruyter, Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism, 188.

83 Schorske and De Gruyter, 172.

84 Stefan Zweig and Dominique Tassel, *Le monde d'hier*, Folio 616 (Paris: Gallimard, 2016), 47–50.

85 It is intriguing to note that, in contrast, the symphony's premiere in Lemberg was met with great success. The city's tapestry of diverse ethnic and social identities shaped not only daily life but also its institutions, particularly among cultural minorities. For Leopolitans, the coexistence and interplay of multiple voices were a natural part of life, rather than a challenge to a fragile hegemony. see: Batstone, "Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in the Centre and on the Periphery," 201.

86 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism,* 180.

> "In Goethe's world the clattering of looms was still considered a disturbing noise. In Ulrich's time people were just beginning to discover the music of machine shops, steam hammers, and factory sirens. One must not believe that people were quick to notice that a skyscraper is bigger than a man on a horse."[80]

Gustav Mahler was born of Jewish parents in 1860, he grew up on the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Iglau, Bohemia, his early life was deeply influenced by that cultural environment. As he formed a close bond with a Czech nanny he absorbed the folk traditions of the nearby Czech villages, particularly their dance music. At the same time, Iglau offered him a strong foundation in elite music. The small city had a rich musical life, blending the Austrian bureaucrats' amateur instrumental tradition with the choral culture of the bourgeoisie. His integration of his childhood in Bohemia into his work as a composer awaited a pivotal shift in his intellectual environment, which he encountered as a student in Vienna.[81] In 1875, Mahler became involved in the counterculture movement known as Die Jungen. However, the populism Mahler embraced during his student years was less focused on political or nationalistic agendas and more rooted in multiculturalism.[82] Over sixteen years, Gustav Mahler steadily climbed the ladder of prestige in the opera houses of Central Europe. At just thirty-seven years old, in 1897, he achieved ultimate success. On the basis of his rigorous aWnd inspired conducting of canonic pieces, he was appointed as conductor and director of Vienna's Court Opera, The highest distinction in arts of the Habsburg Empire. That a child of the far Bohemia could at such a young age achieve such a feat was unheard of.[83]

The Court Opera House, deeply rooted in tradition, was regarded as the epitome of high aristocratic culture. The newly arrived bourgeoisie had taken over its halls, making their presence felt and legitimizing their position in society through cultural engagement. while lower grade aristocrats were left competing fiercely for tickets. Mahler was entrusted with the task of safeguarding and carrying forward the monumental musical legacy of viennese luminaries such as Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, and Beethoven.[84]

Mahler's debut as a composer, marked by the performance of his First Symphony, left the Viennese intelligentsia shocked. Critics fused furiously claiming the composer had "totally failed in the high task he set himself." That he had a "disrespectful treatment" of listeners. And that his music was no more than "parody of symphonic composition," [85] The alienating effect of Mahler music lay in his exploration of post-classical order. He incorporated sounds that could only be heard by venturing beyond the gilded perimeter of the Ringstrasse. Challenging the self-referential nature of the classical system. His works featured peasant dances, waltzes, Yiddish and Bohemian tunes, student songs, marches, machinery like sounds. This "otherness" blurred the frequencies of the well-established traditional sound waves, forcing the audience to engage with an auditory landscape that encompassed the experiences of the common world.[86]

Even when Mahler appears to adhere to traditional transitions, there is an underlying subversion at play. The First Symphony opens with a

clear nod to tradition. The opening bars adhere closely to the conventions of a slow introduction. It includes several gestures that can be traced to specific works from nineteenth-century symphonic literature, such as the opening bars of Beethoven's Sixth and Ninth symphonies, Haydn's Creation, and Mendelssohn's Die Erste Walpurgisnacht. Mahler was openly engaging with the symphonic tradition, but he was also recasting these gestures in an entirely new discursive context.[87]

The very first moment of the First Symphony begins with a sustained pedal point in the strings, where all sections play harmonics except for the lowest group of double basses. This sound reaches the violins' highest A, producing a sharp, whistling tone evocative of the screech of old-fashioned steam engines — an auditory image as jarring to sensitive ears as a steam engine would be to sensitive eyes. Traditionally interpreted in romantic fashion as depiction of pure, untroubled nature, this passage instead invokes technology and history as sources of aural disruption, challenging romantic representation of nature.[88]

The opening of Mahler's First Symphony is also dominated by hunting calls and fanfare-like figures, whose transformation pushes the introduction beyond conventional boundaries. At the symphony's première, these calls were performed by a quartet of horns, but in the first published edition (1898), Mahler reassigned them to three clarinets. This change introduced a haunting pianissimo fanfare, with two clarinets in their pale, lower register and a weak bass clarinet as the third voice, creating an effect as if the sounds were emanating from behind a curtain. The clarinets strained to be heard, amplifying tension and subverting expectations, dramatizing deformation of sound. As the clarinets' ghostly tones fade, two distant trumpets deliver a brief military fanfare, followed by a third trumpet with a fragment of the initial horn call. The spatial arrangement is precise: the first two trumpets are placed "in the very far distance" , while the third is closer, described as "in the distance". The distant players then move slightly nearer, to positions termed "in the far distance". This staging of sound demonstrates Mahler's meticulous attention to spatial dynamics.[89]

These offstage elements unfold within the introduction, treated by Mahler as an "extra-territorial" space distinct from the movement's main sonata-form structure. While offstage instruments were not unprecedented in 19th-century symphonies, Mahler elevates the technique, turning the introduction into a dynamic stage where sound moves and evolves. This liminal space blurs the boundaries between the concert platform and the world beyond, creating tension between the symphony as a genre and external musical practices.[90]

This experiment reflects Mahler's theatrical experience,which he had gathered working in provincial theaters, where his reinterpretation of spatial elements spilled into the symphonic realm. The offstage tableau of the introduction not only creates an external space but also introduces the possibility of musical events originating beyond the work itself. This interplay between offstage and onstage sound suggests a music that operates at the boundary of visibility and audibility, fostering a dialogue that moves from the periphery to the core. This movement reflects Mahler's broader exploration of mobility as a guiding metaphor for his symphonic writing, redefining the genre's spatial and dramatic dimensions.[91] It

87 Thomas Peattie, "The Expansion of Symphonic Space in Mahler's First Symphony," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association 136*, no. 1 (2011): 75.

88 Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler : A Musical Physiognomy*, Paperback ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4.

89 Peattie, "The Expansion of Symphonic Space in Mahler's First Symphony," 75.

90 Peattie, 79.

91 Peattie, 86.

92 Zweig and Tassel, *Le monde d'hier*, 45.

93 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism,* 175.

94 Batstone, "Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in the Centre and on the Periphery," 213.

95 Adorno, *Mahler : A Musical Physiognomy,* 37.

96 Adorno, 166.

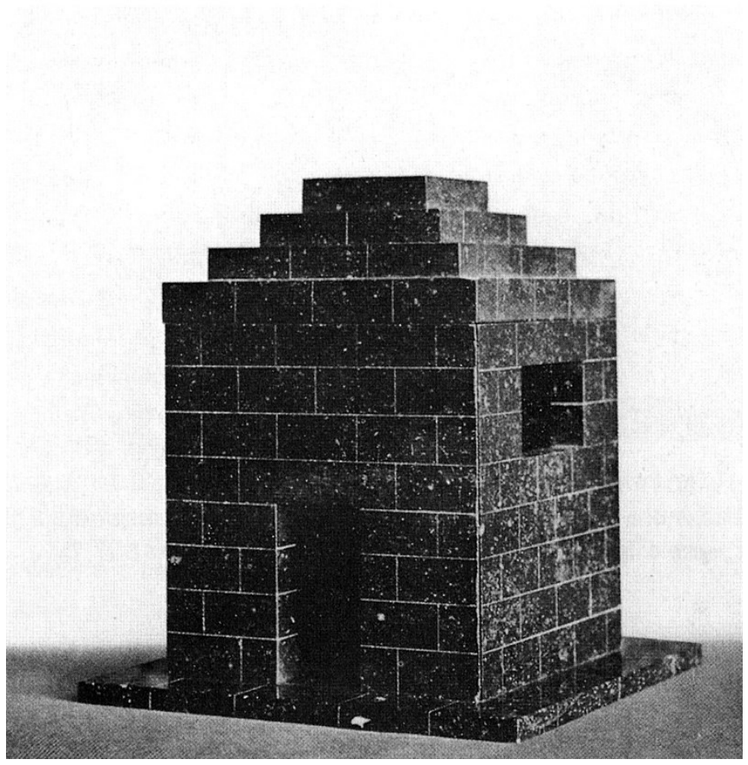
draws from more popular forms of entertainment, particularly theater, which, though appreciated by the bourgeoisie, was unique in being celebrated across all social classes through its myriad forms, ranging from high to low productions.[92]

In the third movement, Mahler reimagines the folk round "Frère Jacques," traditionally a lighthearted chiding of a lazy friar who fails to rise for his duties. Mahler transforms its playful major-key melody into a solemn funeral march in minor, turning a childish failure into a grounding statement. The funeral march soon gives way to a lightning-fast intrusion of drums hinting at Czech and Yiddish vernacular tunes, which irreverently convert the march of death into a boisterous dance of life.[93] His symphonies fracture traditional symphonic storytelling, abandoning its univocal perspective and linear trajectory. They present a deliberately multivocal, subjective narrative instead of a unified, objective one.[94]

Mahler's musical language captured the complexity of the multipolar world he lived in and transformed it into sound. He sublimates the potential idea of a cohesive multi cultural and ethnic Europe, bridging ethnic and social traditions. While at the same time warning the elite their dismissal of street songs had provided inspiration for the composition of nationalist chants and would soon be replaced by the deafening blasts of war cannons. What history had divided, Mahler united: the high and the low, the transitional and the modern. Drawing his critique of bourgeois music from within its very framework, Mahler reimagined it with a transformative vision. A product emancipation, Mahler embodied an acculturated Austrian identity. His cultural foundation enabled him to navigate and integrate the intricate contradictions of Austro-European culture, while also granting him the clarity to perceive the world's profound inconsistencies and the resolve to reconcile them into a unified artistic expression.[95]

If one had to find an anthem for the Gay Apocalypse, surely, Mahler's symphonies would be it. And if Mahler had existed in the world of The Man Without Qualities, the 'unifying idea of Greater Austria' that the elite so desperately sought at the dawn of WWI might have been found in his work.

> " Hence his fracture are the script of truth. In them social movement appears negatively, as in its victims. Even the marches in these symphonies are heard and reflected by those whom they drag away. Only those cast from the ranks tamped underfoot, the lost outpost, the one buried " where the shinning trumpets blow", the poor " drummer boy," those wholly unfree for mahler embody freedom. Bereft of promises, his symphonies are ballads of the defeated, for " Nacht ist jezt schon bald" – soon the night will fall". [96]



Dvořák mausoleum.Rukschcio, Burkhardt, Roland L. Schachel. *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos* (Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987) 253.

> "And while faith based on theological reasoning is today universally engaged in a bitter struggle with doubt and resistance from the prevailing brand of rationalism, it does seem that the naked fundamental experience itself, that primal seizure of mystic insight, stripped of all the traditional, terminological husks of faith. freed from ancient religious concepts, perhaps no longer to be regarded as a religious experience at all, has undergone an immense expansion and now forms the soul of that complex irrationalism that haunts our era like a night bird lost in the dawn."[97]

> "If we consider what vast and probably wasted efforts would have been needed to effect such revolutions in the way people lived by the slow, responsible, evolutionary road traveled by philosophers, painters, and poets, instead of tailors, fashion, and chance; it enables us to judge just how much creative energy is generated by the surface of things, compared with the barren conceit of the brain."[98]

97 Musil, The Man without Qualities, 603.

98 Musil, 443.

Adolf Loos, born on December 10, 1870, in Brno, was influenced early by his father, a sculptor and stonecutter. After his father's death in 1879, Loos pursued varied training in mechanical construction and architecture, gaining hands-on experience in Arts and Crafts schools. A transformative 1893 trip to the United States exposed him to the Chicago School's America's pragmatic, egalitarian spirit, shaping his critique of Europe's decadence and inspiring his polemical writings upon his return to Vienna.[99]

In his 1898 essay *Potemkin City* for Ver Sacrum, Adolf Loos critiques the Ringstrasse for concealing its true identity beneath façades of historical styles. He warns the Viennese public that they have been swindled.100 We have previously examined Cacciari's understanding of the metropolis. Cacciari sees in Loos the materialization of this critique through a focus on use value. In a metropolis where the sole symbol is capital, objects must reflect this condition; in other words, they must represent the maximal potential of use value. In a context where relationships are purely based on exchange and the metaphysical is excluded, ornamentation becomes a form of mystification. Loos's critique of the Ringstrasse as a Potemkin city lies in its hypocrisy— the failure of liberals to acknowledge and confront the very phenomena they unleashed in Vienna.[101]

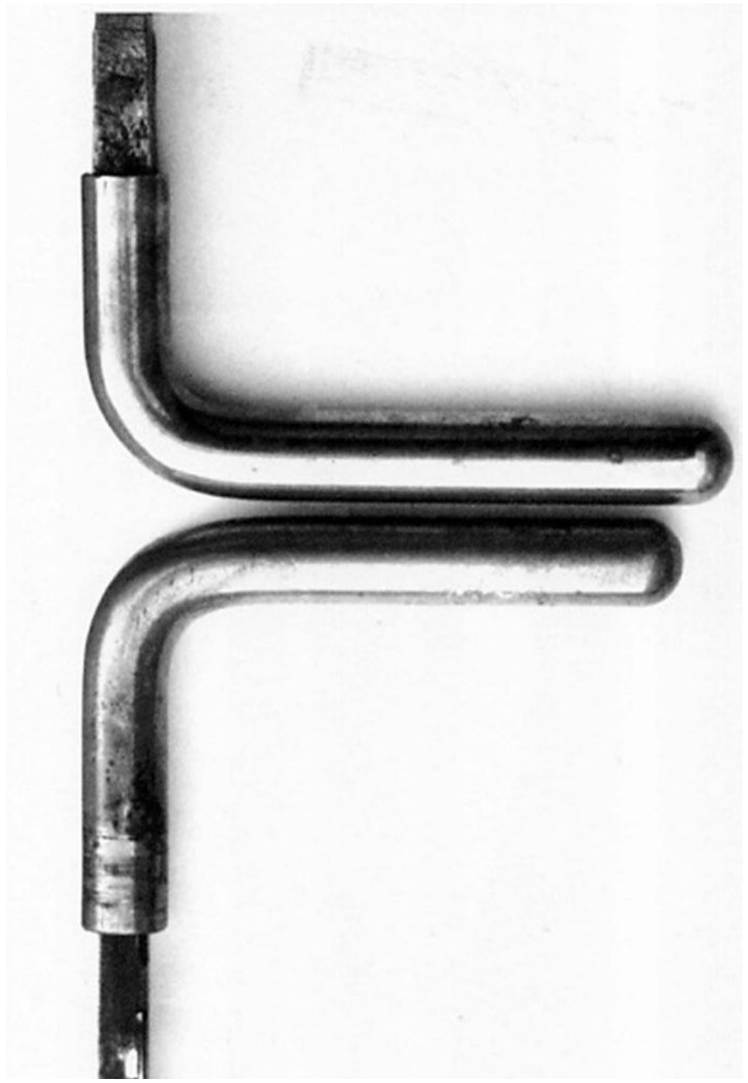
In an article for the *Neue Freie Presse*, "Men's Fashion" (1898), Loos claims: "Everyone now enjoys the right to dress as he pleases, even like the king if he wants. The level of a nation's culture can be measured by how many citizens take advantage of this newly acquired freedom." He later adds: "To be dressed correctly! [...] We have tried to get at fashion with words like 'beautiful,' 'stylish,' 'elegant,' 'smart,' and 'strong.' But this is not the point. Rather, it is a question of being dressed in a way that stands out the least." [102] This comment could, at first glance, seem dandyish, but let us remember Caciarri. Clothes that stand out the least are, for Loos, a reflection of their use value. In a world where money talks, a good craftsman strives to make their work as efficient as possible, both in terms of production—such as time and labor—and by taking materi-

99 Panayotis Tournikiotis, *Adolf Loos,* 1st ed (New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 9–10.

100 Adolf Loos, *Spoken into the Void : Collected Essays, 1897-1900*, 1st MIT Press pbk. ed, Oppositions Books (Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago, Ill., and the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York, N.Y., by MIT Press, 1982), 95.

101 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, *Architecture and Nihilism,* 101–3.

102 Loos, *Spoken into the Void* : Collected Essays, 1897-1900, 11.



Villa Wittgenstein door handles. Image from Socks Studio.

al resources into account. If aligned with these principles, a craftsman through trial and error will naturally find the most appropriate form for its use in accordance with market demands. Thus, when Loos speaks of clothing "not standing out," he means that clothes should exist in symbiosis with the relations of production and exchange. Any superfluous gesture is mystifying because it nullifies any attempt to understand one's relationship with value, use, and material.[103] This translates into the use of materials and construction in architecture. In his essay *Building Materials* (1898), Loos asks:

> "Which is worth more, a kilogram of stone or a kilogram of gold? The question probably seems ridiculous. But only to the merchant. The artist will answer: All materials are equally valuable as far as I am concerned."[104]

The artist (here Loos launches a parallel critique of the Secession) treats materials independently of their functional use, as the value of art lies in ideological concepts. However, the good architect thinks in terms of human labor, recognizing that materials are not equal in their process of transformation, and that they should be treated accordingly. Loos adds:

> "We live in a time that gives precedence to the quantity of work performed. It is immediately obvious to anyone and demands no skilled eye or special knowledge. Thus, there are no errors. So many workers have worked at a job for so many hours at such and such a wage. Anyone can calculate it. And we want to make the value of the things with which we surround ourselves easy to understand. Or else there would be no point to them." [105]

Value lies in the availability, use of resources and its relationship to labor. Therefore, the English road layer, when building with cobblestone, does not need to feel inferior to the Greek road layer who builds with marble. Failing to recognize this fact leads to a spiral toward immorality. Anachronistic ornamentation, rooted in ideological premises, creates confusion about value, causing the public to lose sight of the inherent worth of things. This mask compels individuals, in their desire to appear valuable, to adorn forms with confused ornamentation. The same can be said of imitation, which, in its effort to appear as possessing qualities, disguises itself as a lie.[106]

Loos attacked the historicist facades of the Ringstrasse but also launched a critique of the Secessionists for their unapologetic embrace of aesthetics. Committed to purifying culture's confused language, he framed the conflict as one between ethicists and aesthetes. The Secessionists' retreat into ornamentation, even when reimagined rather than borrowed from the past, was fundamentally immoral.[107]

> "The thesis that the huge quantities of soap sold testify to our great cleanliness need not apply to the moral life, where the more recent principle seems more accurate, that a strong compulsion to wash suggests a dubious state of inner hygiene. It would be a useful experiment to try to cut down to the minimum the moral expenditure (of whatever kind) that

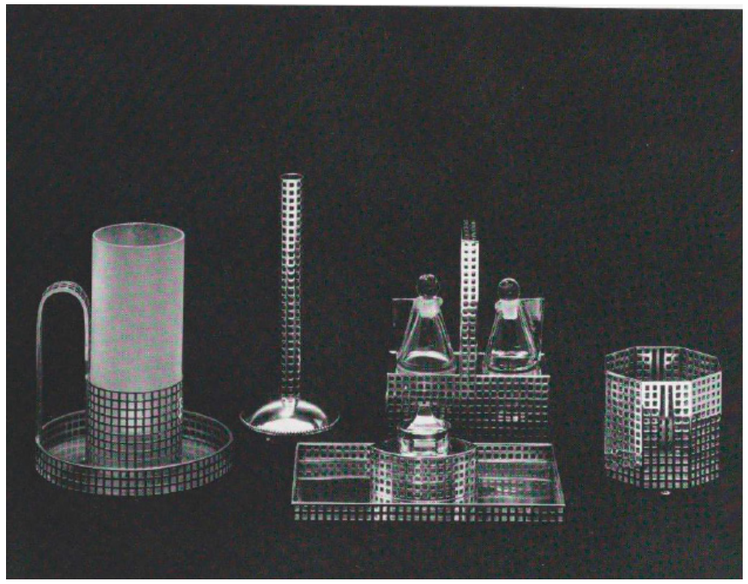
103 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, *Architecture and Nihilism,* 104.

104 Loos, *Spoken into the Void* : Collected Essays, 1897-1900, 63.

105 Loos, 63.

106 Loos, 64–65.

107 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, 163



Joseph Hoffman for the Werkbund cutlery. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.

Joseph Hoffman for the Werkbund table set. Image from Wien Museum Online Sammlung.

> accompanies all our actions, to satisfy ourselves with being moral only in those exceptional cases where it really counts, but otherwise not to think differently from the way we do about standardizing pencils or screws. Perhaps not much good would be done that way, but some things would be done better; there would be no talent left, only genius; the washed-out prints that develop from the pallid resemblance of actions to virtues would disappear from the image of life; in their place we would have these virtues' intoxicating fusion in holiness. In short, from every ton of morality a milligram of an essence would be left over, a millionth part of which is enough to yield an enchanting joy." [108]

Loos's critiques of objects were inherently critiques of the culture that created them.[109] His idea of culture was one which was rooted in habits, behaviors, and reactions grounded in a constant awareness of one's material world. To be coherent in one's interactions with the world of capital, one must act accordingly. Thus, pathos about identity, traditionalism, and ideological ideals of what culture ought to be are dishonest and mystifying. Loos seeks to introduce a culture that, by engaging critically with tradition, transcends the narrow division between thought and perception. For Loos, morality [110] ought to be based on this critical engagement, not on ideological pathos.[111] Loos's impersonal reality establishes a dialectical relationship with the past, rejecting any language that pretends to be entirely free of assumptions and claims to exist independently.[112] Here, we understand two additional aspects of Loos's critique of the Secessionists: in response to the crisis, they either retreated into a communal-organic traditionalism or, as previously discussed in relation to the image of Klimt, created a self-referential world free of the aspect of commodity.[113]

In a similar vein, Loos critiques the Werkbund, whose mission was to resolve the conflict between art and industry, with the former as a vehicle to sublimate the latter. Cacciari elaborates that separation, for Loos, is not about creating abstract hierarchies or conflicts but about discerning and assessing specific differences rooted in unique functions, histories, and traditions. While the Werkbund envisions a harmonious integration of handicraft, industry, and art, Loos firmly delineates boundaries between them.[114] By elevating industrial objects, the Werkbund downplays the alienation caused by industrial labor conditions and the erosion of use value, and, as a result, fails to address the conflict between the metropolis and labor.[115]

The concept that Cacciari coins as *actuality,* should be considered, particularly when reflecting on Red Vienna in the next chapter. Loos's architecture is inherently grounded in the present, aligning itself entirely with the language and social practices of its time. In the context of modernity, where everything is in constant flux, designing architecture with an eye toward the future inevitably renders it obsolete. Thus, there is no room for anticipation or nostalgia—thinking toward a utopian future is, paradoxically, antimodern. The collection of Loos's writings, *Spoken into the Void*, encapsulates Loos's understanding that by committing his ideas to paper, they are, by the very nature of time, destined to lose their relevance and substance by the moment they are read.[116]

Having examined Loosian culture and his relationship to craftsmanship and materials, we can now understand his claims about the redemp-

108 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 265.

109 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, 165.

110 In personal life, Loos had his very own definition of morals, as he was brought to court for attempting to seduce minors and for the discovery of inappropriate materials involving underage individuals in his possession. For more see: Christopher Long, *Adolf Loos on trial* (Praha: KANT, 2017).

111 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, *Architecture and Nihilism,* 160.

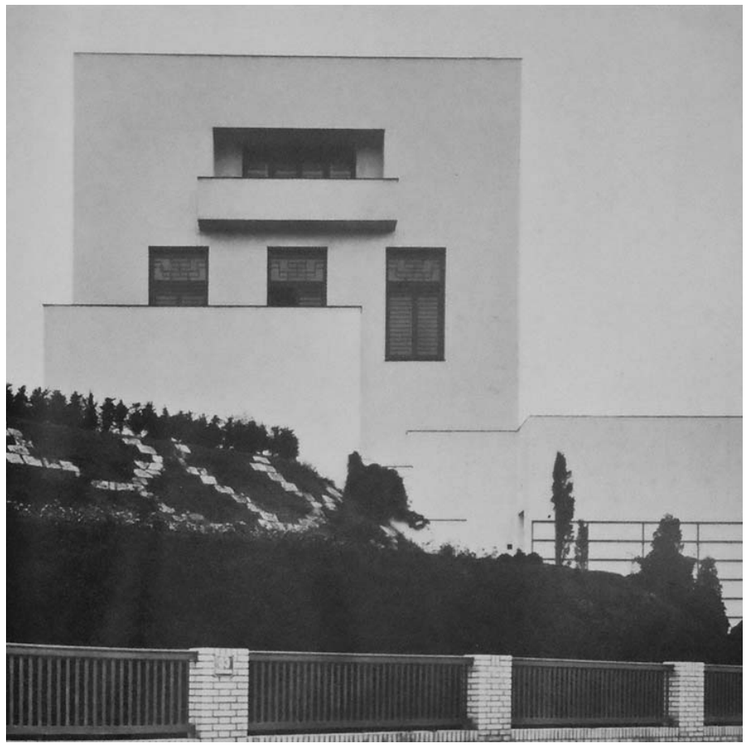
112 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, 149.

113 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, 164.

114 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, xliv.

115 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, 37.

116 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, 192–93.



Villa Müller. Rukschcio, Burkhardt, Roland L. Schachel. *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos* (Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987) 613.

tive potential of finding an appropriate language for every act of life. If each discipline is to develop its own distinct language, a tension inevitably arises between exterior and interior. When the craftsman is solely responsible for expressing the value of an object, a division emerges: the craftsman focuses on creating objects, while the architect is concerned with the wall.[117] In this context, the exterior and interior operate independently, with no meaningful communication between them. Any attempt to express the interior through the exterior would contradict the inherent nature of each. The architect remains faithful to his role by embracing these differences and allowing them to manifest fully.[118]

Villa Müller, designed for building contractor Frantisek Muller, partner in the successful building firm Kapsa & Muller and his family Loos employed rough-cast walls and stucco as an honest cladding material consistent with Viennese architectural traditions, rejecting its use as a mimicry of expensive stone. He embraced stucco as a protective skin, adhering to the tradition of Viennese stucco. This decision reflected neither a rejection of the past nor a pursuit of a new aesthetic but rather an appreciation for local tradition and the inherent qualities of the material.[119] Rejecting egotistical exceptionalism and projecting personal image into the public sphere. The house's facade was designed without qualities, serving as a critique of the culture of representation—whether grounded in historical symbolic traditions or driven by the transformative aspirations of modern architecture.[120]

> "But if one does hear them, then something descends like the quiet peace of a snowfall. Suddenly walls are there, from the earth to the sky; where before there was air, one strides through thick soft walls, and all the voices that hopped from one place to another in the cage of the air now move about freely within the white walls that have fused together down to their inmost essence." [121]

With a bourgeois clientele, Loos adopted the villa as the ideal typology to reflect their social status. He draws formal structure of his plans and facades reflects the enduring tradition of Palladian villas, with volumes and facades adhering to symmetry and a rhythmic arrangement of square and rectangular windows. In an era when the avant-garde celebrated asymmetry, Loos upheld classical language, using his facades to assert the logic of his architectural language.[122]

He divides the house into distinct zones: daily life, nocturnal life, and service spaces. The uppermost level is reserved for privacy and rest, featuring bedrooms and a bathroom. The lower levels are dedicated to living areas, including the living room, library, and boudoir. A separate service zone houses the essential facilities required to ensure the smooth operation of the household. The entrance of a house holds significance, serving not just as a gateway but as a transitional space that distinguishes the external world from the private realm.[123] The entrance featured a vestibule with a small toilet, the living area was accessed through an intricate staircase, involving an ascent and descent of two sets of four steps before reaching the living room at the hall's end. The dining room was six steps above the living room, while Mrs. Müller's boudoir, divided into a niche and a writing corner, was eight steps up. Mr. Müller's library was the sole

117 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, 106.

118 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, 173.

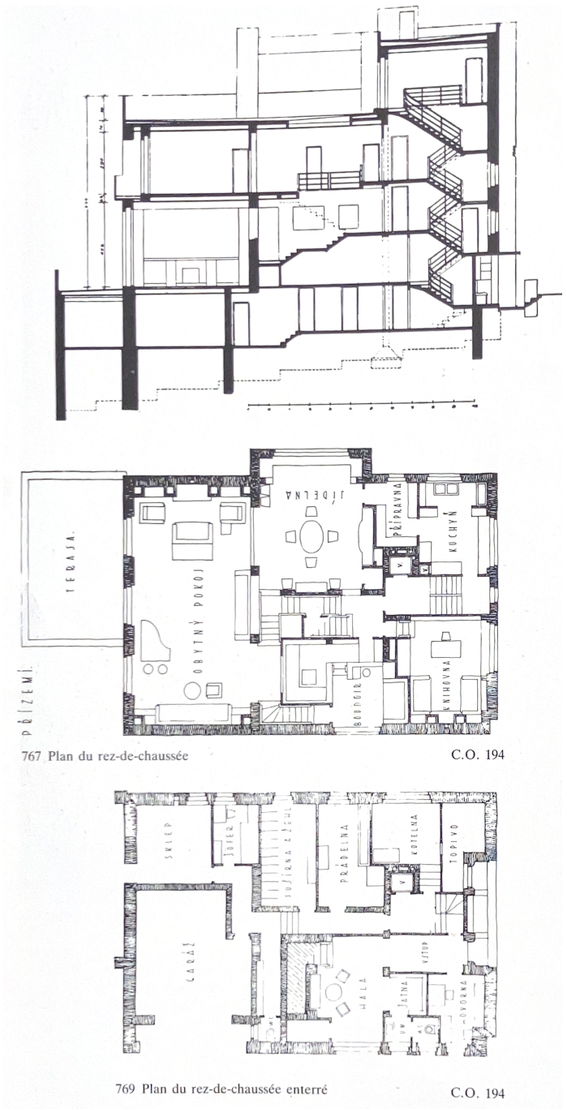
119 Tournikiotis, *Adolf Loos,* 63.

120 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism,* 165.

121 Musil, *The Man without Qualities,* 124.

122 Tournikiotis, *Adolf Loos,* 66.

123 Tournikiotis, 71.



767 Plan du rez-de-chaussée C.O. 194

769 Plan du rez-de-chaussée enterré C.O. 194

Plans and Section Villa Müller. Rukschcio, Burkhardt, Roland L. Schachel. *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos*. Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987. 612.

space that, while on the same level as the other daytime areas, remained secluded and shielded from their activity. Materials reflected the home's owner's material condition: cipolin marble adorned walls and columns, paired with white walls, red brick chimneys, yellow draperies, and a blue carpet. The dining room and library were paneled in mahogany, while the boudoir featured lemon wood.[124]

The Raumplan, defined as the resolution of the plan in space. In villa Müller, space was conceived not as a flat surface but as a three-dimensional volume. He determined the size and positioning of these volumes based on their functional requirements, creating an overall composition enriched by the interplay and overlap of the spaces. The interior of the house became a complex puzzle of interlocking volumes distributed across multiple levels, connected by various flights of stairs.[125] Loos's Raumplan not only addressed the distinction between exterior and interior but also emphasized the emotional, social, and psychological purposes of architecture. Additionally, it provided a framework to mediate between living, and serving spaces, keeping them both connected and distinct. Through a thorough understanding of the occupants' needs and habits. This insight forms the basis for designing spaces that align with their lifestyle. Since personal relationships are inherently fluid, the spaces within the home needed a certain ambiguity to effectively accommodate and nurture the evolving dynamics of the bourgeois family.[126] The retreat into the private, expressive sphere where individuals could freely explore their desires and create meaning without external imposition, including from architects. The architect's role was to shape the physical habitat, not to impose symbolic forms or dictate the meaning of their lives.[127]

It rather contradictory that we mention Loos's interior value is seen as something tied to personal, lived experience—an internal quality—rather than an external, fixed measurement or standard. This internal value becomes the "quality" of the space, meaning it is where artistic expression and creativity emerge. Here, his thinking takes on a somewhat contradictory nature, as this creative emergence does more than highlight a difference in language; it challenges the very definition of use value. This ambiguity took shape in Loos's villas built after World War I, coinciding with his involvement in the Viennese Siedlung movement. During this time, Loos published a text titled "*Guidelines for an Art Office*" which shocked Wittgenstein, with whom he had shared intellectual affinities. In response, Wittgenstein sought to redeem this "intellectual bogus" by pushing use-value language to its extreme in the house he designed for his sister.[128]

> "A few days ago I looked up Loos. I was horrified and nauseated. He gave me a pamphlet about a proposed 'fine arts office', in which he speaks about a sin against the Holy Ghost. ' This surely is the limit! I was already a bit depressed when I went to Loos, but that was the last straw! He has become infected with the most virulent bogus intellectualism!"[129]

Austria emerged as one of the great losers of World War I. Following the Treaty of Saint-Germain (1919), the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantled. The core Habsburg lands were reduced to a small, landlocked Republic of Austria, stripped of vast productive territories. In addition to

124 Tournikiotis, 92.

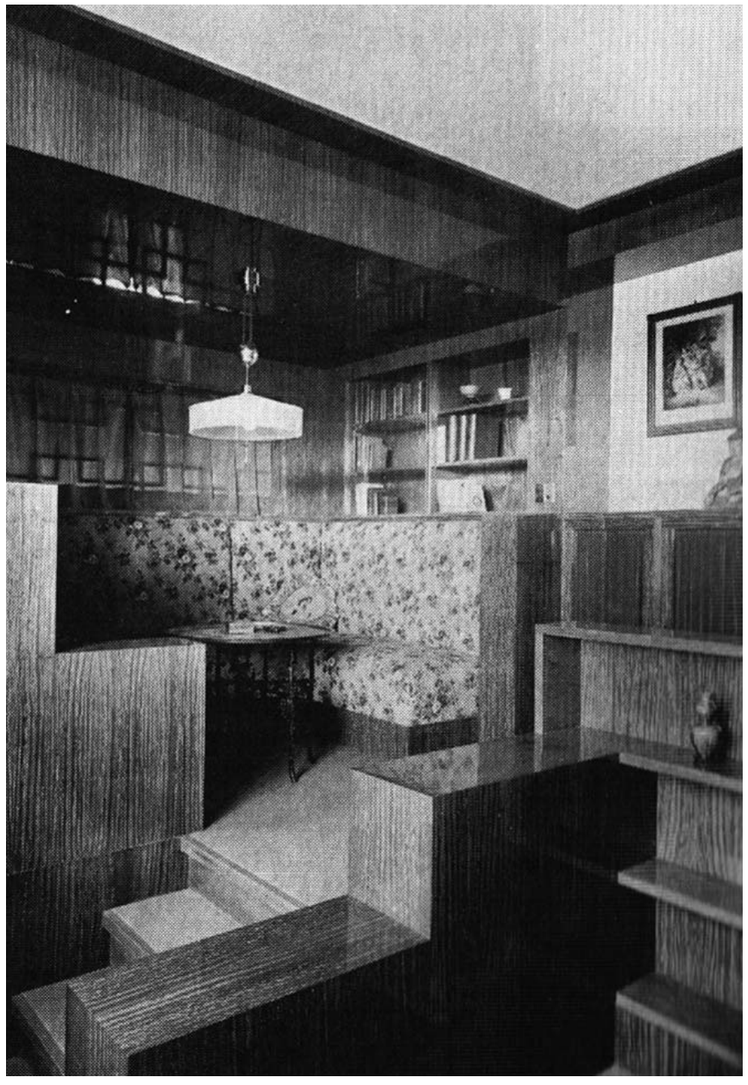
125 Tournikiotis, 70.

126 Tournikiotis, 170.

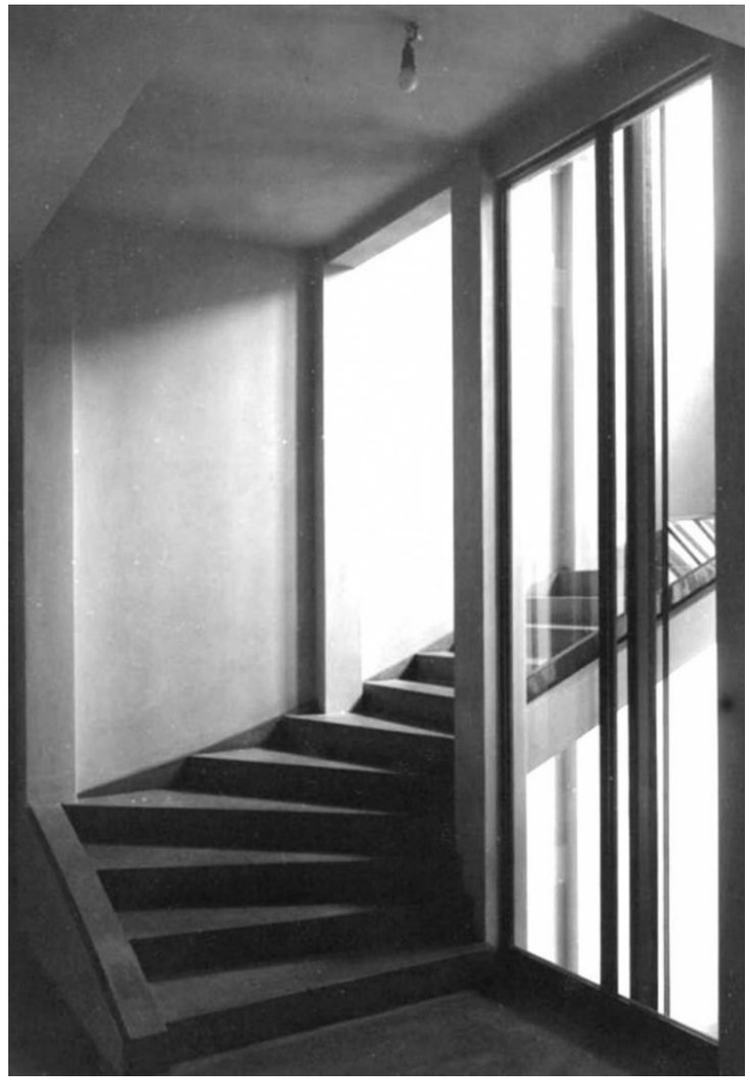
127 Schorske and De Gruyter, *Thinking with History : Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, 166.

128 Cacciari, Sartarelli, and Lombardo, *Architecture and Nihilism,* 118–19.

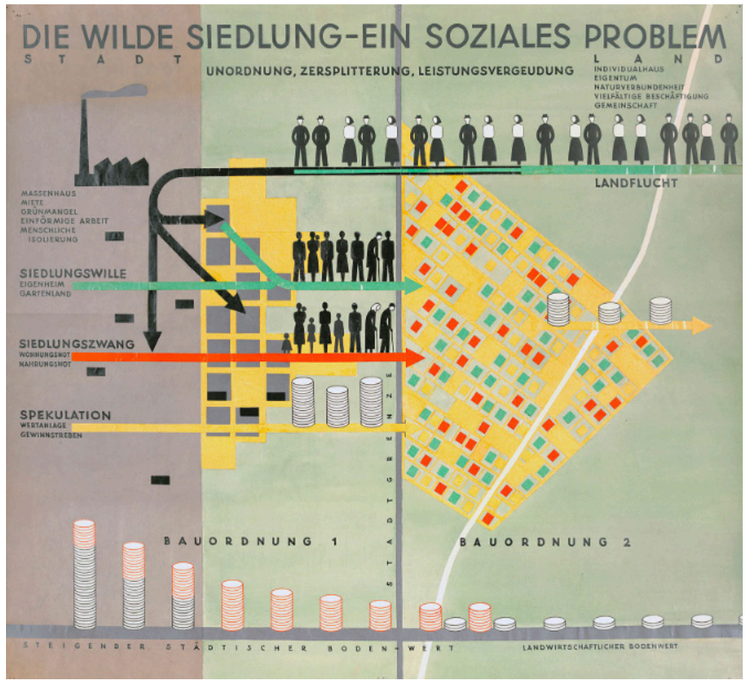
129 Paul Engelmann, L. Furtmüller, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein : With a Memoir* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 17.



Villa Müller boudoir, Rukschcio, Burkhardt, Roland L. Schachel. *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos* (Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987) 616.



Villa Wittgenstein staircase. Image from Socks Studio.



Otto Neurath Isotype for GartenSiedlung. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.
Garten Siedlung self-construction. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

its already precarious living conditions in the tenement housing, Vienna grappled with a severe housing shortage, as tens of thousands of soldiers returned home. The number of households surged from 40,000 to 60,000, while the availability of vacant homes remained close to zero. To address the immediate need for shelter, thousands of workers resorted to squatting on public land at the city's outskirts, constructing makeshift shelters in a desperate attempt to secure a roof over their heads. Additionally, they maintained vegetable gardens for subsistence.[130]

The settlement movement began as loosely organized cooperative self-help societies, shaped by limited resources and a need to reduce building expenses. Settlers contributed labor based on their individual skills, with those trained in building trades enjoying preferential status. Artistic contributions, such as murals and ornamental stucco work, were also accepted as payment from painters and craftsmen. Unskilled tasks, like mixing cement, constructing formwork, and quarrying stone, were undertaken by both men and women, with workloads distributed according to physical ability rather than gender. Settlers' efforts extended beyond constructing their own homes, encompassing the creation of shared community facilities.The houses were collectively owned, with ownership retained by the settlement society. Settlers could transfer their homes to family members but were restricted to selling them back to the association.[131]

By 1921, the settlement movement had gained backing from the Social Democratic Municipality and Labour Unions. The OVSK (Austrian Association for Settlements and Small Gardens), founded in 1921 by Otto Neurath, embraced the settlement movement as a grassroots socialization project. Rooted in English guild socialism, it envisioned settlers as both producers and consumers of their housing, social institutions, and food. The OVSK centralized support for settlers, offering resources like building materials, insurance, and technical advice on construction, farming, and design. It also provided lectures and courses on settlement housing and theory. These programs featured architects such as Max Ermers, Adolf Loos, Margarete Lihotzky, and Josef Frank.[132]

Serving as chief architect of the Siedlungsamt (May 1921–June 1924), Loss set design standards, reviewed settlement proposals, and initiated a zoning plan for allotment gardens. The plan included extended, electrified streetcar lines and tax exemptions for new houses in these zones.[133] But for Loos the planning of the settlement housing was a cultural issue rooted in architectural typology rather than urban planning. Since the proletarian subject was neither a farmer nor a builder but a factory worker—often enduring long daily commutes by streetcar or on foot in addition to eight-hour shifts—Loos meticulously considered their limited resources, space, time, and skills, as well as the practical needs, daily routines, social practices and customs. These constraints dictated the design requirements for both the house and its productive garden. While the houses offered minimal space and amenities, their conceptual simplicity allowed for flexibility, making them easy to construct, operate, and maintain.[134]

The allotment garden which ought to was essential to the settlements, benefiting both individuals and the state. He argued that the state should harness voluntary labor for this purpose. In 1920, Vienna's allotment gardeners produced food worth one billion crowns, reducing import reliance.

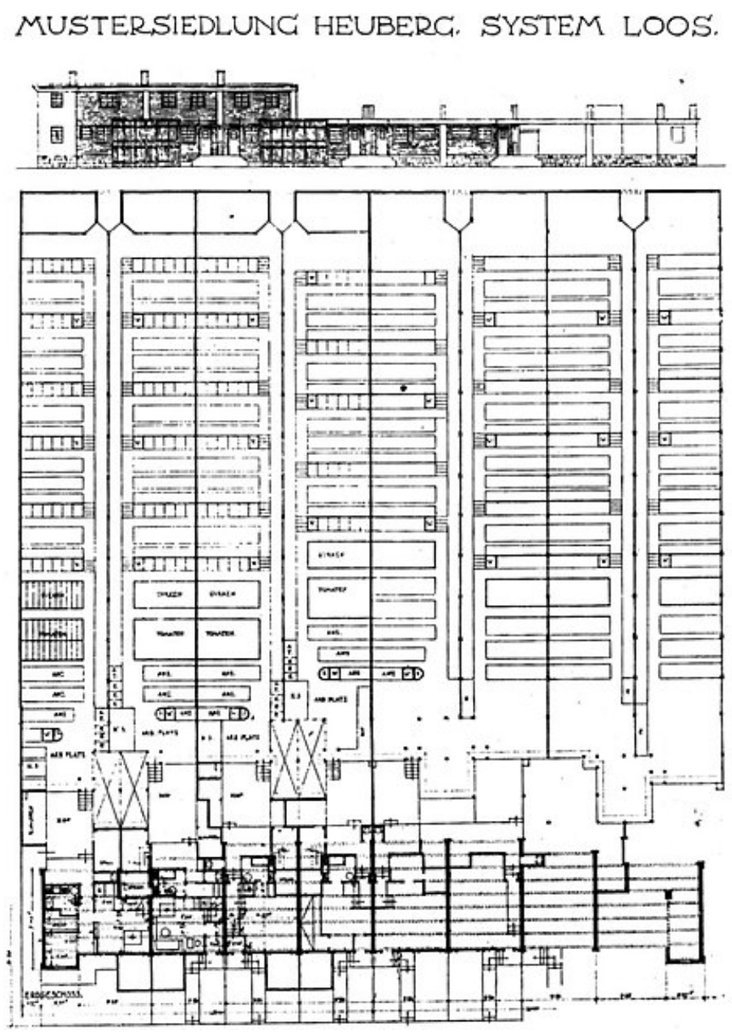
130 Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna : Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919-1934* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).48.

131 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna,* 1919-1934, 95.

132 Blau, 96–98.

133 Burkhardt Rukschcio, Roland L. Schachel, *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos* (Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987), 258.

134 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919-1934,* 107.



Plan and elevation Heuberg Siedlung, Rukschcio, Burkhardt, Schachel, La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos,(Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987), 284.

135 Rukschcio, Schachel, *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos,* 257.

136 Rukschcio, Schachel, 257.

137 Rukschcio, Schachel, 255.

138 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 108.

Due to the garden's significance, streets were planned to run east-west, allowing narrow vegetable plots to align with cardinal points, as advised by allotment-garden experts, ensuring they received maximum sunlight. Loos stressed that proletarian gardeners should live near their gardens to use leisure time productively, transforming homes from places of rest into production hubs, as he outlined in his programmatic article, conspicuously titled: *Learning to Live*.[135]

In a similar fashion that had shaped Loos's bourgeois projects, their design also reflected his vision of what the social habits and customs of modern urban settlers ought to be—what he considered "appropriate." Loos envisioned garden houses with clear functional divisions: upper floors exclusively for sleeping and ground floors for daytime activities centered around the family table. In traditional Viennese tenements, nuclear families rarely ate together due to extended household structures, renters, and irregular working hours. Most Viennese workers dined in canteens, and Loos observed that only "20 percent of Viennese know this type of eating culture." He believed communal family meals, "as peasants do," should define proletarian identity. Despite resistance from some proletarians, Loos defended the model, highlighting its efficiency and ability to save time, energy, and money. Loos even advised on food choices, advocating simple, economical meals. Drawing from his experiences in America, he introduced the concept of an apple and oatmeal breakfast, asserting: "Whether rich or poor, destitute or a billionaire, every American eats oatmeal for breakfast." He viewed it as both nutritious and cost-effective. "The residents of the workers' housing will call it a dining kitchen and will feel as aristocratic as an English lord or as humble as an Austrian peasant."[136]

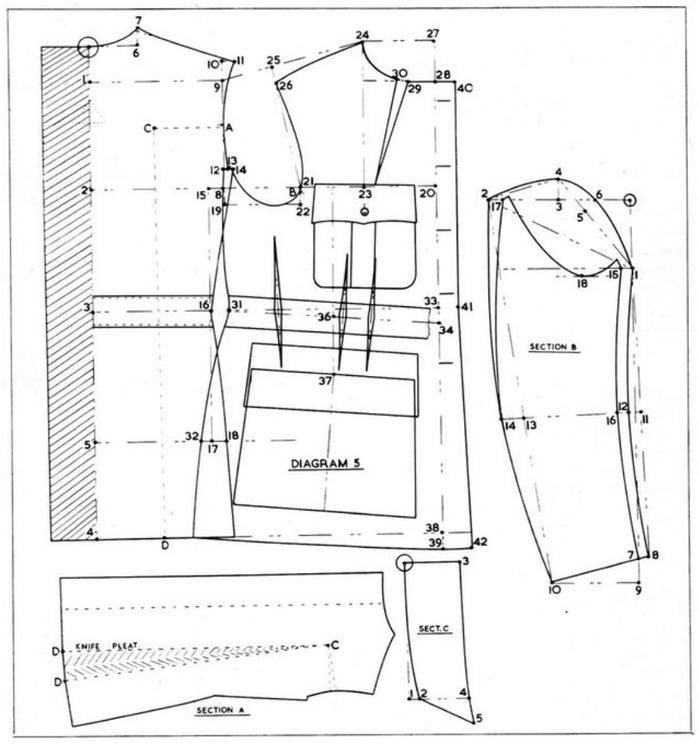
In this spirit, Loos developed a structural system known as the "House with One Wall," drawing inspiration from a Norwegian method. Patented in April 1921, the system aimed to minimize building costs by adapting to commercially available materials and reducing labor requirements.[137] Also known as "system Loos", the front and back walls were suspended from the lateral walls rather than being built on their own foundations. It eliminated the need for separate foundations for the two external walls. Instead, foundations were laid only for the lateral party walls, which were shared by adjacent houses in the row—hence the name "house with one wall." Wooden beams, spanning 5.5 meters across the width of the house, supported the suspended outer walls. The design necessitated stairs to rise parallel to the street, following the direction of the structural beams due to the narrow street fronts and suspended walls. It also removed both the basement and attic levels. Characterized by their flat roofs In the early 1920s Siedlung housing projects, these houses were notable as a distinct anomaly in Vienna. The facades were covered in wood shingle cladding, a material and technique Loos had admired during his time in North America. Eight houses of this type were constructed in the Heuberg workers' settlement. Unfortunately, while the construction was efficient, it was not particularly durable, much of the original cladding was later replaced with asbestos tiles or cement rendering.[138]

Loos's drawings for the Heuberg houses included floor plans, sections, elevations, and layouts for long, narrow kitchen gardens with vegetable beds arranged to optimize sunlight. This self-building method

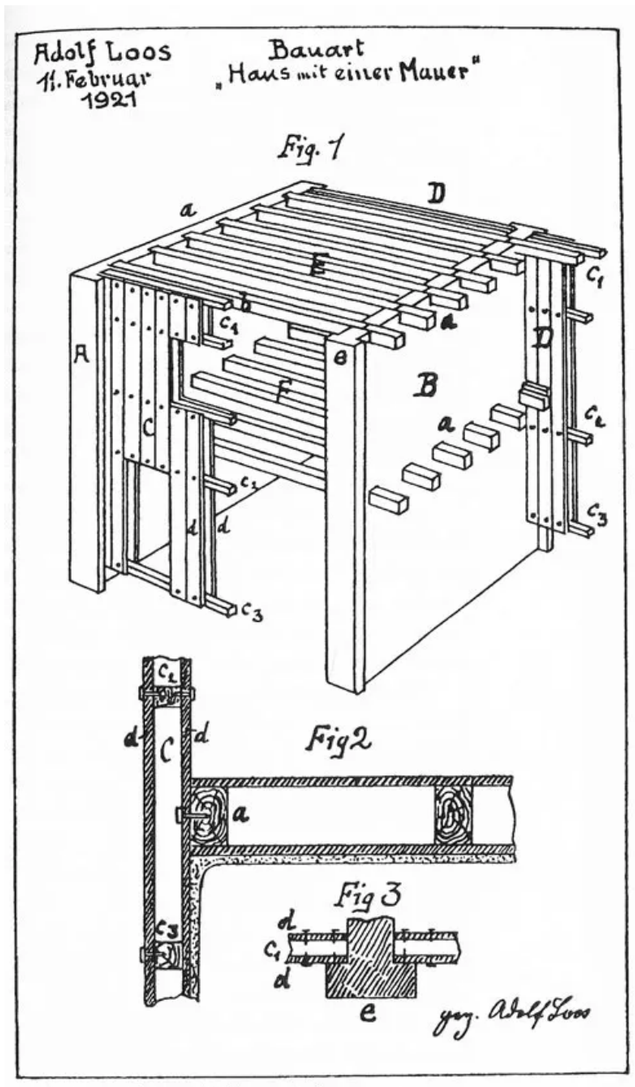
9 from 7=1½ in.; square to 10.
10 from 8=⅛ scale+¼ in.
11 is midway 1 to 8; square out to 13.
12 from 11=¾ in.; shape forearm.
14 from 13=1½ in.; shape hindarm.
15 from 1=¾ in.
16 from 12=¾ in.; shape forearm of under-sleeve from 15 through 16 to 7.
17 from 15=distance A round base of scye to B.
18 is located ½ in. below line squared from 1, and about 2⅛ in. from 15.

COLLAR—Section C

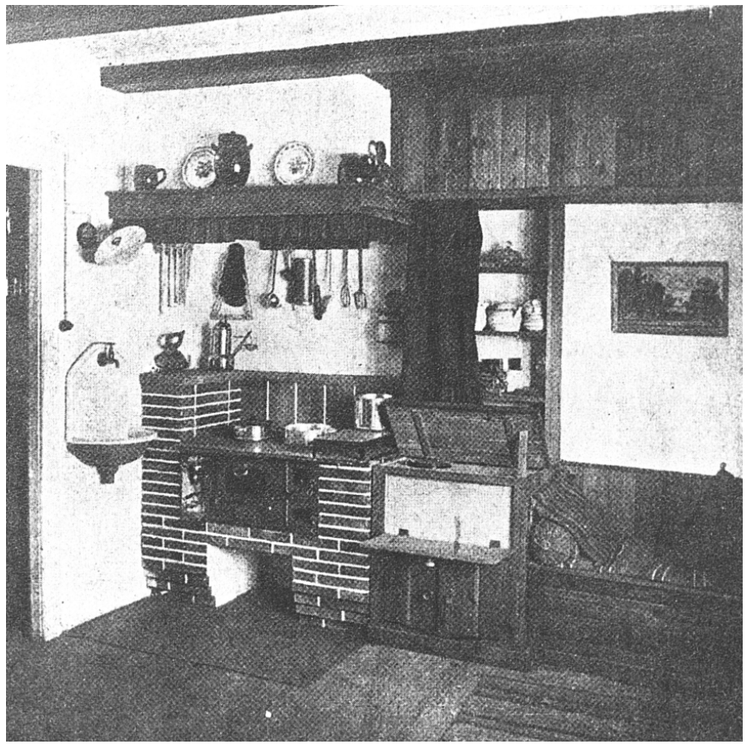
Draw line 0 to 1.
1 from 0=distance round gorge (0 to 7, 24 to 30, 29 to 28).
2 from 1=¾ in.; 3 from 0=3½ in.
4 from 1=3¾ in.; 5 from 4=1½ in.
Shape collar as shown.



Pattern for a Newfolk Shirt, Loos Adolf, S*poken into the Void : Collected Essays, 1897-1900* (Cambridge: Mass.MIT Press, 1982), 14.



House with one wall, Rukschcio, Burkhardt, Schachel, *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos* (Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987), 255.



Kitchen Siedlung Friendenstadt, Rukschcio, Burkhardt, Schachel, *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos,* (Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1987), 265.

also reflected Loos's commitment to reviving artisan traditions. Focused on fostering the autonomy of working-class families, "System Loos" encouraged self-sufficiency by enabling proletarian households to build their own shelters - unlike Ernst May's mass-production initiatives in Germany - and cultivate their gardens. Interiors were designed for adaptability, featuring movable furniture, curtains, and panels to create flexible, dynamic spaces.[139]

Max Ermers wrote of Loos's experience as chief architect in the Siedlungsamt:

> "He was truly devoted to serving the poorest residents of the housing estates, whom he sought to lift out of their proletarian condition to transform them into gentlemen. His projects will remain an example for decades. Never has a population, busy building their lives, had a more sincere friend, ready to help. Inner richness, simplification of daily life, comfort in housing, and economy in every aspect formed the core of his architectural principles. He refused the title of socialist builder, but he was one nonetheless." [140]

Loos, at the service of the poor, held an ambiguous position. His Siedlungen were undeniably of remarkable quality, and provided the working class with comfort and practicality they had previously lacked. His efforts granted the proletarian family a degree of autonomy, shielding them from the unforgiving exploitation of liberal society. At the same time, he stripped away the architectural mask of hypocritical historical facades, offering housing that reflected the working class's condition. Yet, another paradox emerges: it seems Loos's cultural project aimed to "deproletarianize" the settlers, encouraging them to become "gentlemen" through the means of their own homes. This ostensibly apolitical stance raises a question : In a Loosian world, the veil of social conditions is lifted from cultural practice, allowing the proletariat to express its true identity through an appropriate cultural language while affording it a more comfortable existence. However, this approach also acknowledges and reinforces clear lines of difference. Does Loos's vision ultimately serve to entrench class structures in a seemingly immutable expression of culture ?

139 Tournikiotis, *Adolf Loos*, 149.

140 Rukschcio, Schachel, *La vie et l'œuvre de Adolf Loos*, 259.

Karl-Marx-Hof. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

We explored earlier the heydays of high culture, which ultimately failed to acknowledge the lived experience of Vienna's two million inhabitants. After 1919 Vienna waved goodbye to the days of bourgeois Bildung and culture. Nonetheless, the city continued to foster historical significance, this time in conducting a grand socialist experimentation. Aiming to reshape Austrian society, the organized working class that had developed during Vienna's Golden Age emerged as a formidable force under the leadership of the Socialist Party (SDAP). For the bourgeoisie in Fin-du-Siècle Vienna culture served as a substitute for political power, we will see that similarly, for the socialists, building a proletarian counterculture became essential as they struggled to gain influence in the national political arena.[141]

The Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria was founded in 1888 but only entered the parliamentary stage twenty years later. Following mass demonstrations in industrial cities, the empire was pressured to reform to abolish the curial electoral system and introduce universal male suffrage. Consequently, in the 1907 elections, they secured 23 percent of the vote and 87 seats. However, pre-World War I, parliament was paralyzed by the "nationalities conflict," leaving proposed reforms unaddressed. As the stand of lingered, Austrian socialists—later known as Austro-marxists—developed a theoretical framework that the SDAP later used as the foundation for Red Vienna's policies and programs.[142]

The Austro-Marxists argued that a nation is defined by shared cultural values rather than territorial boundaries. In societies rooted in private ownership of labor, national identity traditionally belonged to the ruling classes, shaped by shared education, language, and upbringing, excluding the popular masses due to a lack of unified education. Reframing the nationalities conflict in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a class conflict, they proposed that socialist education could democratize national culture. Rejecting dictatorship and force, they advocated for "revolution through reform".[143] This concept, termed *Hineinwachsen*—growth from within, envisioned the final revolution as a gradual consolidation of socialist state powers, serving slices of Marxist utopia on a capitalist tray. This step-by-step process relied on reforms, ultimately placing its faith in bourgeois democracy.[144]

Importantly, *Hineinwachsen* was to be achieved through Bildung (education)—despite its bourgeois origins. The aim was to create a 'socialized humanity' by granting workers access to high culture and preparing them for political power through Social Democracy's pedagogical efforts.[145] As Manfredo Tafuri masterfully observed, Red Vienna was a doomed political project, with its revolutionary aims undermined by reformist policies and rhetorical gestures. Its economic system ultimately functioned as a non-aggression pact with the bourgeoisie, while attempting to balance populist politics.[146]

In prior chapters, we examined the social background of our protagonists, the creators of bourgeois culture. Interestingly, the key leaders of the SDAP were not shaped by an established working-class culture but were middle-class intellectuals who viewed the working class as the 'historical progressive class.' While they dedicated their intellectual efforts

141 Gruber, Red Vienna : *Experiment in Working-Class Culture*, 1919-1934.12.

142 While the SDAP claimed theoretical roots in Austromarxism, they did not follow a preconceived plan but instead used it as a flexible framework for day-to-day practice. For more see : Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna,* 1919-1934, 22.

143 Blau, 24.

144 Gruber, Red Vienna : *Experiment in Working-Class Culture*, 1919-1934, 5.

145 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 29–30.

146 Manfredo Tafuri, *Austro-Marxism and the city: Das Rote Wien"* trans. Jolanda Devalle, Order and Disorder, Birkhauser 2025 (forthcoming). It is important to understand Tafuri's critique within the context of the 1970's Italian radical Left. From today's perspective, his critique might appear overly harsh and dismissive of the SDAP's epic achievements and the enduring legacy it left on Vienna's housing program.

Shared launderie in Gemeindehof. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.
Children's pool the city of Vienna. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

147 Gruber, *Red Vienna : Experiment in Working-Class Culture*, 1919-1934.7.

148 Gruber., 9.

149 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 34.

150 The Welfare Department achieved notable milestones, including hospital training programs, a kindergarten-training institute (1924), public bathing facilities, reorganized cemetery services, and Vienna's first crematorium. These efforts led to significant results: mortality dropped by 25%, child mortality by 50%, and tuberculosis rates fell, particularly among children. However, enforcing standards of orderliness and morality sometimes provoked violent clashes with workers. Social policies emphasized motherhood as a woman's primary role, discouraging working mothers and drawing criticism for being prescriptive and authoritarian. The welfare agenda rested on the belief that improving workers' health required reshaping their behaviors through intervention by trained specialists, treating workers as "unformed" and "malleable," and reinforcing hierarchical subject-object dynamics. For more see : Blau, 38.

151 Blau, 4–5.

152 Blau, 137.

153 The à fonds perdu legacy endures to this day, providing the Gemeindebauten and Vienna's municipality. For more see: Blau, 138.

to the proletarian cause, their middle-class origins continued to shape them. Thus, a paradox emerges: they could advocate for the working class but never fully integrate with it.[147]

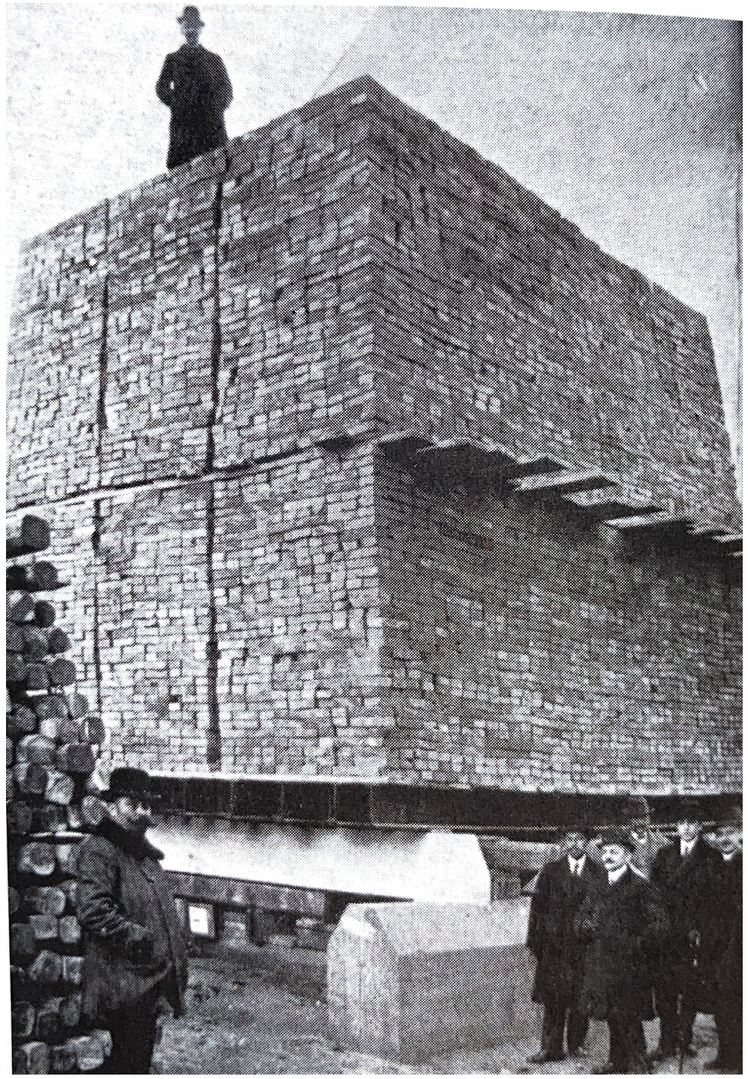
Analyzing the architectural production in Red Vienna, requires to raise questions about the relationship between bourgeois socialist thinkers and proletarian subjects. In this context, Gruber poses insightful questions: "Was all of bourgeois elite culture to be rejected, or were the workers to be given their share of what was considered a national heritage? In the latter case, how were elite forms to be given a socialist interpretation to make them appropriate for working-class appreciation?"[148]

Following World War I, the Social Democratic Party did not manage to assert control on a national level. However they obtained dominance in Vienna, making it their political stronghold. The January 1919 suffrage law granted women the right to vote, introduced proportional representation, and established a secret ballot. In March, Vienna extended voting rights to all Austrian citizens over 20 residing in the city since the start of the election year, enabling the Social Democratic Party to win 54% of the vote.[149] The collapse of the Habsburg Empire left Austria in economic devastation, with its remaining provinces lacking resources and producing only a fraction of the coal, raw materials, and food needed. Vienna, home to nearly a third of the population and the country's industrial hub, was cut off from critical supplies, including Bohemian coal, Galician oil, and food from Hungary, Moravia, and Styria.

The city faced additional challenges, including a depleted municipal budget and a severe housing crisis. Addressing this crisis became a priority for the municipality, which launched large-scale housing construction in 1923. By 1934, 64,000 dwellings had been built, providing homes for 200,000 people. Recognizing the transformative potential of housing, the Social Democrats made the building program the cornerstone of their municipal reform agenda, aimed at socializing working-class culture. This led to the development of the Gemeindebauten, large-scale housing complexes. Their efforts extended beyond housing to include education, healthcare, childcare, parks and gardens, sport facilities, pools and other social services,[150] while engaging workers in communal activities such as sports, travel clubs, and music societies —all aimed at creating a "new socialized humanity."[151]

The municipality's economic tools, including a new tax structure, land acquisition policies, standardized building parts, and administrative reorganization, were key in shaping the Gemeindebauten. Central to this was funding the housing program through current taxation, avoiding debt. From 1923, all new buildings were fully financed by tax revenues.[152] The city chose not to seek any return on the capital invested in housing, treating it as a nonrecoverable municipal cost. This approach to ensure autonomy from the banking system, recognizing that reliance on it could, in difficult times, undermine the project's foundation.[153]

On February 1, 1923, the municipality introduced a highly progressive "housing construction tax," levied on fixed rents rather than landlords' income. Rates ranged from 2% to 37% based on property size, with tenants of small apartments and shops (86% of the city's rental properties) paying just 23.6% of the total tax, while the wealthiest tenants (0.5% of properties) contributed 41.7%. Thus, the 90 most expensive rentals paid



Bying in Bulk. Blau Eve, The Architecture of *Red Vienna 1914-1934*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999), 214.

as much tax as the 350,000 least expensive, ensuring the tax burden fell primarily on the wealthy.[154] Additional taxes targeted goods and property, such as real estate, capital gains, luxury items (famously the Sacher Torte and Champagne), and services, while a 4% welfare tax applied to all payrolls. Combined with federal tax revenue, these funds financed the municipal building program.[155]

The Rent Control Act of 1922 fixed rents at half the 1914 level, reducing them to near zero due to currency depreciation. For instance, a $600 prewar annual rent dropped to $0.04, effectively expropriating landlords' income beyond maintenance costs. This gave tenants an equity-like stake in their apartments, though it was non-transferable and tied to occupancy, worsening the housing shortage as vacancies disappeared. The Act ended private building speculation, lowered land values, and enabled the city to expand its holdings, owning 17% of its area by 1918, 5,040 hectares by 1922, and doubling by 1931 under the Social Democrats. The Social Democratic administration adapted the Christian Socialist prewar land reclamation policy, shifting its purpose from limiting supply contributing in rent raises to socially managing housing.[156] Rents in new municipal housing covered maintenance, repairs, taxes, and utilities, averaging 3.4% of semiskilled workers' income.[157]

The Rent Control Act had significant implications beyond tenant protection, notably keeping workers' real wages among the lowest in Europe. Although the act was crafted at the national level and not by the SDAP, the party's provision of low rents and welfare effectively maintained artificially low wages. This arrangement allowed Austrian industry to sustain minimal domestic consumption while enhancing its competitiveness in the global export market. For a resource-scarce country with outdated technology, the Rent Control Act served as an indirect subsidy to industrialists.[158] Additionally, The Gemeindebauten were constructed using stucco-faced load-bearing brick masonry and adorned with an expressive facade. This intentionally labor-intensive approach, requiring minimal skills, provided significant employment opportunities, making it particularly appealing to the large unemployed population.[159]

While the municipality lacked the means to socialize the large-scale means of production, between 1919 and 1933 it had the opportunity, as Vienna's sole builder, to restructure the construction industry from a market-driven system to a communalized model. With no serious economic competition, such "municipal socialization" would have faced no greater challenges than other socialist reforms. Although the municipality influenced pricing policies for building materials, it made no attempt to replace inefficient small construction companies with production cooperatives or consolidate control over them, instead allowing these private enterprises to survive. This approach, shaped by rent control policies that halted private construction, was expedient and temporary. The SDAP ultimately failed to implement a long-term strategy to reshape the city's economy through gradual socialization of the construction industry, a missed opportunity further limited by the antimodern architectural choices, materials, and construction methods employed.[160]

This highlights the link between Austro-Marxist ideology and its economic policy. Municipal building development served as a political strategy to mitigate unemployment, especially in the construction sector,

154 Zweig and Tassel, *Le monde d'hier,* 57. Zweig recounted that his bourgeois circles had complained about taxes before the war, but mostly out of habit, as the socialist taxes made his prewar taxes feel like a mere "tip to the state."

155 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 138.

156 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 17.

157 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 139.

158 Blau, 137.

159 Blau, 145.

160 Gruber, *Red Vienna : Experiment in Working-Class Culture,* 1919-1934, 56.

the largest labor group apart from the peasantry appealing to populist sentiment. Simultaneously, the Social Democrats ensured industrial capital's competitiveness by controlling real wages. Their policy, separating "productive" entrepreneurial capital from "parasitic" feudal urban land rent. Ultimately, their policies preserved a static capitalist economy, providing a hidden subsidy to industrial capital at the expense of broader growth opportunities.[161]

The economically short-sighted program aimed at appeasing the working class, and big-business all at once. While politically expedient, this approach failed to establish a coherent economic strategy. Meanwhile, it provoked conservative middle class opposition, particularly from the nationalist Heimwehr group, which had strong ties to landlords' associations. Rent Control policies, rather than addressing broader economic issues, became entangled in political maneuvering.[162]

Ultimately, the tension between economic policy and ideology permeated the architectural form of socialist housing. The question of what the future socialist city should look like sparked a debate over adopting either the low-rise Siedlungen or the Höfe model.[163] This discussion was not strictly political, as supporters and critics of single-family homes and multi story apartments existed across the political spectrum. Conservatives generally favored single-family homes and opposed large municipal apartment complexes. However, some conservatives supported Höchsthausbau (high-density housing), and opposition to inner-city apartment blocks also came from left-wing socialist groups, particularly the settlement movement. Ultimately, the concern was less about housing type or location and more about administrative organization—whether it should be decentralized and cooperative or centralized and municipal.[164] As SDAP aimed to initiate socialization through the creation of principal sites for developing a new, socialized urban culture. These sites combined worker housing with cultural and social institutions. Consequently, decentralization would not have allowed for a unified and cohesive cultural project.

As Blau emphasizes, practical challenges made developing undeveloped land costly, while expanding beyond Greater Vienna was impractical due to required constitutional amendments. The ineffective 1919 expropriation law, combined with national political deadlock, forced the municipality to rely on costly open-market land purchases, further complicating efforts to assemble contiguous plots for housing.[165] The Hofe typology prioritized rapid, cost-effective development. Leveraging Vienna's modernized infrastructure, the Social Democrats centralized management, some mass-produced components (such as doors and windows), and used public transportation networks to reduce costs. Large blocks with communal facilities eased women's dual burden, as supported by Otto Bauer and feminists. Single-family housing was deemed impractical, making Gemeindebauten a viable solution for reforming Vienna's exploitative prewar rental system.[166]

But the debate was also ideological, many of the plots on which the Höfe were built had been acquired by the Christian Socialist administration. By directly engaging with and building upon this legacy using new proletarian symbolism, the "proletarian monuments" positioned themselves "against" the historical contingencies of the city. However, in

161 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 19.

162 Tafuri, 20.

163 Blau, The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919-1934, 169. In Vienna, the Siedlungen had a grassroots tradition, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, they did not emerge from the same socio-economic and political environment as the renowned German Siedlungen, which served as countermodels in the debate. The Siedlungen in Vienna, briefly embraced by the SDAP, were linked to tenement gardens. On the other hand, the Höfe, rooted typologically in the 19th-century working-class tenement housing (Mietkasernen), were significantly modified to include communal facilities. Despite these changes, they still carried associations with the exploitative conditions of their historical origins.

164 Blau, 160.

165 Blau, 153.

166 Blau, 157.

accepting this legacy, they also relinquished the possibility of a completely reimagined urban organization.[167]

In The Philosophy of Money, Georg Simmel argued that the indifferent attitude of the metropolitan individual stems from the devaluation of the material world and the dissociation inherent in a monetary economy, which he viewed as the pinnacle of socialization. Ultimately, the metropolis emerges as a space of internalized conflict and profound ideological self-reflection.[168]

European avant-garde were attempting to reconcile the anonymity of the "capitalist city" with the excessive individualism of high bourgeois patronage—absorbing their contradictions as part of a reality where all were equal under the alienating qualities of a space where "all objects float with equal specific weight in the constant flow of money".[169] In a context where the proletariat remained subject to capitalist forces—particularly in Vienna, where wages were kept low to satisfy industrial demands— the refusal to engage with the realities of capital and alienation, which continued to shape their productive lives, is understood as deeply mystifying. Tafuri argues that the so-called slow revolution, envisioned as being achieved through the expression of Bildung or ideology in spaces fully controlled by the proletariat—where the labor force could supposedly reclaim its complete "humanity"—is, in reality, nothing more than a "regressive utopia."[170]

As previously discussed, complex contingencies influenced the adoption of labor-intensive construction methods, yet within this framework, a degree of flexibility was imaginable. This raises the question: how were the Gemeindebautenintended to present themselves to the city? Many of the Gemeindebauten catered to populist tastes, drawing heavily from the Biedermeier tradition.[171] Their designs incorporated local references and historical allusions, such as slanted roofs. The facades were adorned with socialist symbolic elements, most notably the names of the Höfe, inscribed in large letters to honor socialist luminaries.

Their expression was inherently contradictory: the building process aimed to raise employment while attempting to convey a new socialist ethos, yet it refused the socialization of the construction industry. The facades were intended to embody new cultural ideals, but they heavily drew on bourgeois and vernacular elements. For Tafuri, this contradiction highlights the SDAP's failure to establish a genuinely socialist society. Instead, it underscores the limitations of their gradual socialization, which functioned as a substitute for revolution and the true restructuring of society. This approach also creates a clear separation within the city both spatially and visually, as new proletarian ethos alienated the population which did not benefit from the socialist political project.Their dispersion throughout the urban landscape is manifested as isolated proletarian enclaves.[172]

In terms of urban organization, the Social Democrats lacked a distinct vision for a socialist city and instead relied on prewar bourgeois urban reform ideas. Ultimately, they chose to build upon Wagner's bourgeois Großstadt framework, which was not without its own contradictions, utilizing the infrastructural foundation established during Lueger's administration. This foundation emphasized centralized land control, the importance of transportation and sanitation, comprehensive planning,

167 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 24.

168 Tafuri, 25.

169 Tafuri, 26.

170 Tafuri, 27.

171 Biedermeier is both a stylistic and cultural term that encapsulates the values and aesthetics of the early 19th-century European bourgeoisie, emphasizing practicality, comfort, and a retreat from the tumult of politics.

172 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 25.

Satellite image Football Stadium, Karl-Marx-Hof and Stadtbahn. Image from Google Earth.
Courtyard Karl Marx Hof. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

large-scale construction, urban cultural centers, and a focus on the role of the busy urbanite. [173]

By intertwining the spaces of "New Vienna" with "Old Vienna," the Social Democrats created a dialectical urban environment that simultaneously destabilized and reinforced traditional relationships between public and private space, insider and outsider, and building and city. This contradictory approach enabled Red Vienna to craft a new urban narrative that precariously balanced continuity with transformation. While they failed to socialize the productive sphere and could be accused of paternalism[174] in the reproductive one. Ultimately, the SDAP intelligentsia failed to develop a comprehensive framework that could have guided Viennese decision-makers and architects in overcoming the habits and mental constructs inherited from the *Gay Apocalypse*.[175] Their greatest achievement was the economic resilience and tax system they implemented which provided the proletariat with affordable housing and welfare benefits, alleviating their living conditions but ultimately failing to bring about socialist revolution.

We have discussed the key aspects of the Red Vienna building program, including stylistic elements such as Biedermeier aesthetics, as well as historical, vernacular, and stylized features, which can be observed in many Gemeindebauten, such as : Reumannhof, known as the Ringstrasse of the proletariat, as well as Jodl-Hof, Reben-Hof, Friederich Engels-Hof and Metzleinstaler-Hof Some oddities which deserve honorable mention are: Friederich Engel Platz Hof, Klose-Hof and Wiedenhoferhof. Now let's examine two particular cases: Karl Marx Hof and Wynarsky Hof.

Karl Ehn. Best known for designing the Karl-Marx-Hof, Ehn (1884–1959) was a student of Otto Wagner, and played a key role in the Social Democrats' building program.[176] The Karl-Marx-Hof, completed in 1930, is the central monument of Red Vienna, reflecting the Social Democrats' vision of integrating socialist ideals into urban housing. Architect Karl Ehn treated the complex as a single, continuous structure, on a plot which could have had multiple perimeter blocks. The design includes pedestrian pathways and streets that pierce the building through large, round-arched openings, leading to a central public square flanked by long courtyards[177] The structure spans 1.2 kilometers and accommodates 5,000 residents in 1,400 apartments, while providing extensive communal facilities, including laundries, clinics, and a library, showroom of the BEST,[178] a youth hostel, post office, and a pharmacy and twenty-five other commercial premises.[179]

For Eve Blau, Its colossal scale redefines traditional concepts of perimeter blocks and courtyards. The Karl-Marx-Hof reimagines courtyard spaces, expanding them into vast open areas resembling public squares rather than traditional enclosed courtyards. Creating an in-between condition, blurring boundaries between open and closed structures while integrating public circulation spaces into the complex. Facilities such as kindergartens, cafes, and clinics are strategically positioned at intersections of main streets and cross streets, serving both residents and non-residents. The vivid red and sky-blue facade contrasts with the subdued tones of the inner courtyards, emphasizing the Hof's dual role as both civic and domestic architecture.[180]

Strategically situated where the river and railway traffic enter the city,

173 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 171.

174 Gruber's perspective provides valuable insight into this question. For more see: Gruber, *Red Vienna : Experiment in Working-Class Culture,* 1919-1934,

175 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 30.

176 Although briefly a member of the Social Democratic Party from 1927 to 1929, Ehn remained politically unaffiliated for most of his career. As a city employee who began his service under the empire, he gained recognition for his work during Red Vienna. Remarkably, he continued his career through the Austro-fascist era, the Anschluss with Nazi Germany, World War II, and the Allied occupation of Austria, maintaining his professional status and adapting to the demands of various regimes. See : Blau, The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919-1934, 266.

177 Blau, 320.

178 A city-run furnishing and interior design advice center for new Gemeindebauten residents.

179 Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna*, 1919-1934, 324.

180 Blau, 325–326.

Reumann-Hof . Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.
Friederich Engels-Hof. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

Reben-Hof. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.
Friederich Engel Platz-Hof. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

Jodl-Hof. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

Metzleinstaler-Hof, Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

Karl-Marx-Hof after Austrofascist coup. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

181 Blau, 327.

182 Blau, 329.

183 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 37.

the Karl-Marx-Hof is both a physical and symbolic gateway. The central section of the Karl-Marx-Hof was strategically positioned between the Stadtbahn station and a Viennese football stadium, ensuring that every match saw large crowds of supporters passing through the grand Red Arches on their way to the stadium. This mise en scene, accompanied by the supporters' chants, served as a powerful symbolic gesture of epic proportions. Here the Höf is freed of Biedmeer tradition and interpretation into an epic socialist statement.[181]

As previously discussed, Mahler redefined the bourgeois symphonic tradition by integrating folk elements and breaking its spatial conventions, ultimately using music to bring light on social realities of his time. Similarly, for Blau (drawing on a Berchtold Brecht example), the Karl-Marx-Hof reinterprets the relationship between housing and the city, therefore challenging the bourgeois ideal. Its scale and plan introduces a critical architectural form that transcends the traditional urban fabric while remaining communicative and connected to it, making place for new reinterpretations and giving new significance to Vienna.[182] Tafuri delivers a scathing critique, viewing the Karl-Marx-Hof as a world where the proletariat becomes the ruling class of a "new order" while reappropriating bourgeois semantics. Its alternating towers with flagpoles and massive archways create a heroic, monumental effect that underscores the estate's self-contained nature, isolating it from the fragmented surrounding city. Autonomous only through its scale and formal arrangement. Positioned as a center of working-class self-organization, the Karl-Marx-Hof rejects passive architectural forms associated with industrial labor and assembly-line aesthetics. Instead, it takes on a utopian character, embodying a "human city" that resists and therefore masks the dehumanizing massification of capitalist technocracy. of Tafuri's term "regressive utopia," standing in opposition to the bourgeois city. The Karl-Marx-Hof also suffers from functional limitations. The residential units lack typological innovation, relying on empirical layouts with significant inefficiencies. Although the complex features extensive collective services, it is technologically outdated, exemplified by the lack of central heating. Viennese planners leaned on established models rather than pursuing typological critique or integrating insights from Central European Existenzminimum research, reflecting the broader limitations of the Social Democratic architectural program.[183]

Adolf Loos, visiting Otto Wagner's grave, might well have heard him turning in it. They, who had worked so hard to lift the historical veil from Viennese liberal Ringstrasse architecture, now saw it reapplied in the Karl-Marx-Hof—not through historical motifs, but through an idealized and mythologized notion of proletarian form. As Viennese liberals retreated into secessionist surface art, where their political impotence didn't incomber them, the SDAP retreated into the image of socialism—one devoid of its structural substance. However, this time, instead of being confined to the homes of the very few, it was projected and boasted throughout the city, offering an (illusionary) image of hope for the proletariat while provoking the middle class into fascism. In contrast to Musil's Parallel Action Committee, which never discovered its salvatory Grand Idea, the Social Democrats realized theirs—though it ultimately did not save them. As legend has it, during the fascist takeover of Vienna, SDAP armed militia retreated into their Potemkin Castles, which proved to offer little defense against Austrofascist violence.

Death jump artist. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

If news headlines are any indication, the future is filed with uncertainty. Competing forces seem to pull in different directions, much like in the disorienting atmosphere of the *Gay Apocalypse*. Political agitators are once again embracing the *Sharper Key*,[184] ideological positioning and mystification. Additionally, the emergence of new forms of intelligence, coupled with escalating climate challenges, adds yet another layer of complexity to understanding what is and what is not. Yet again we summon Robert Musil:

> "People who were not born then, will find it difficult to believe, but the fact is that even then time was moving faster than a cavalry camel. But in those days, no one knew what it was moving towards. Nor could anyone quite distinguish between what was above and what was below, between what was moving forward and what backward." [185]

How should we navigate our own confusion? Investigating the *Gay Apocalypse* has shown that, in times of crisis, art and architecture can act as profound conveyors of meaning—or tools of mystification. At one end of the spectrum, Musil eloquently articulated the bourgeois crisis, while Red Vienna, at the opposite pole, transformed proletarian discontent into an ideological framework and form of socialism. In the space between, figures like Klimt, Wagner, Loos, and Mahler wrestled with their own disorientation, each striving to make sense of it in their own way.

Living through periods of seemingly radical change is unnerving, but it's worth remembering that standing at the brink of a new era is neither unique nor inherently apocalyptic—The Viennese legacy, after all, endured. The image projected by the Gemeindebauten became an integral part of Viennese identity, equipping the city with unparalleled tools to address its housing issues. Yet, perhaps this observation carries a note of gravity, as it arises in comparison to troubling housing crises. This is not to suggest that one should fuel a fire of euphoria. Such untammed joy would serve merely as a comforting retreat from the daunting perspective of the future, numbing us to the potential for disaster or tragedy. Behrens' Winarsky Höf offers an alternative.

Behrens' cultural perspective diverged sharply from Romantic utopianism and avant-garde experimentation that shaped most Viennese Gemeindebauten, instead drawing from a nineteenth-century urban planning tradition. Rejecting concepts like the garden city or suburban sprawl, he championed a compact metropolis guided by a "new classicism" to impose form and order on the capitalist urban landscape. Additionally, he underscores the need for typological coordination and formal elementarism to address urban multiplicity.[186]

The Winarsky Hof is opened and linked to the city by Leystraße, which cuts across the residential block horizontally, breaking the continuity of the sequential building structures with four grand portals. The superblock and the city confront one another, attempting an integration that ultimately proves unfeasible. Key city-wide services, such as the el-

184 In reference to Luegers political legacy as an agitator. See : *Schorske, Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, 130.

185 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 7.

186 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 31–32.

Winarsky Hof courtyard. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

ementary school and maternity home, are positioned at the corners of the main Hof structure, providing a degree of connection to the surrounding urban context. However, the inherent characteristics of the superblock prevent any meaningful interaction with its environment.[187]

It is interesting to note that publications of the time interpreted the The Winarskyhof plan could be interpreted as a series of open-ended Zeilenbau row blocks.As well as in contemporary architectural journals, conspired with the written description of the structures to present an image of radical modernity, by suggesting that each segment is a separate structure, a Zeilenbau even, standing free of the others and open to the city.[188]

They failed to recognize the subversion at play, as the actual structure contradicts its perceived openness. The Winarsky Hof has a closed footprint—a perimeter block nested within another—spanning two city blocks while isolating itself from the street that bisects it. Although Leystrasse passes through its courtyards, the Winarsky Hof turns away from the street, fencing it off and maintaining its separation. It creates a clear distinction between interior and exterior, decisively isolating itself from its urban surroundings. While its boundaries are physically breached, they remain unmistakably defined. This approach disrupts the city's spatial continuity, aligning more with avant-garde interventionist strategies and the defamiliarizing techniques of montage, rather than the historically grounded urban dialectics of the Wagner School.[189]

Behrens' Gemeinde Hof, a freestanding rectangular perimeter block featuring a single-story pavilion that houses the library and meeting hall, stands out as one of the most cohesive and accomplished components of the Winarsky Hof. Nevertheless, it operates primarily as a self-contained structure. Concealed from view outside the complex, Behrens' design encloses an additional courtyard within the larger courtyard of the Winarsky Hof. Departing from the typical layout of Gemeindebauten and subverting it, Behrens positioned the entrances along the outer edges of the block, effectively orienting the structure away from the central courtyard and Leystrasse. Although his plan incorporates the street into its design, the building ultimately turns its back on it.[190]

The main entry facade designed by Oskar Strnad features a striking classicist composition that emphasizes its dual and paradoxical role as both an entryway and a boundary wall. Manfredo Tafuri credits Strand's entrance pavilion with achieving a perfect balance of static and dynamic elements, influenced by Peter Behrens and the "solemn syntax" evident in Behrens' own contribution to the Winarsky Hof.[191] The dynamic interaction of building masses, emphasized by horizontal cornices that thicken and fragment at the imposing tripartite portals, directly interacts with the prominent inscription celebrating the contributions of the Gemeinde Wien.[192]

Behrens' Winarskyhof stands out as a successful example of expressing and mediating the heroic claims of the Hof within its contradictory socio-economic framework. The Winarskyhof retains ornamentation, reflecting the labor and economic conditions that necessitated the deployment of large workforces across the city, but without indulging in folkloric or late romantic sentimentality. At the same time, the ornamentation is limited to horizontal lines, which reflect a degree of abstraction that

187 Tafuri, 33.

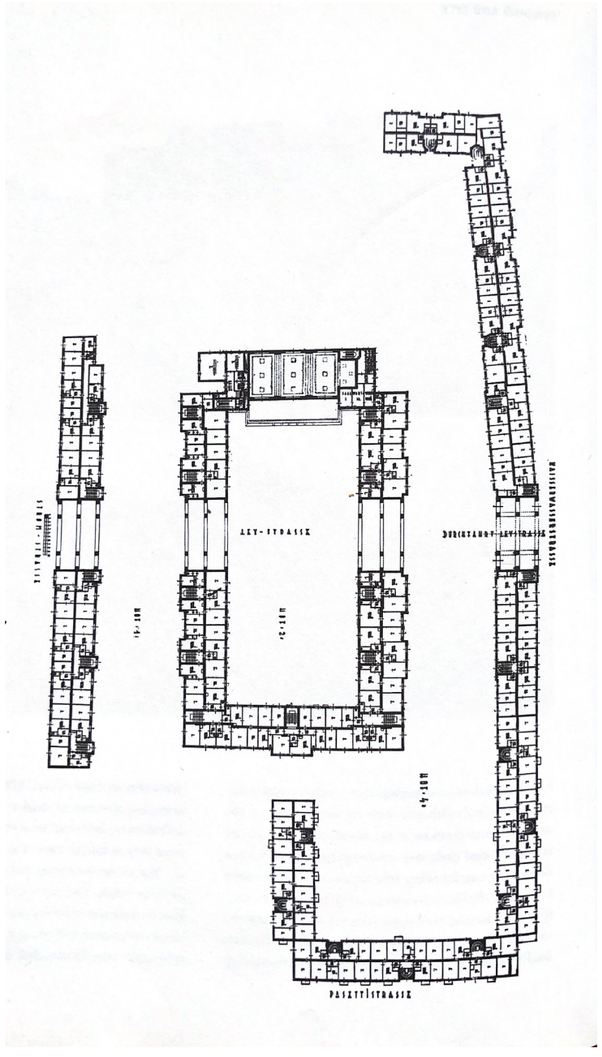
188 Blau, The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919-1934, 308.

189 Blau, 310.

190 Blau, 305.

191 Blau, 305.

192 Tafuri, "AustroMarxism and the City: Das Rote Wien," 33.



Winarsky Hof Plan Blau Eve, *The Architecture of Red Vienna 1914-1934*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999), 310.

Winarsky Hof Entrance. Image from Wien Museum online Sammlung.

highlights the Social Democrats' duality: while socializing the proletariat in the reproductive sphere, they left the productive sphere in the hands of capitalists—and thus the broader urban framework of Vienna—firmly rooted in a capitalist system and the Großstadt. As seen previously the Gemeindebauten courtyard types and positioning suggest an attempt to integrate with the urban fabric, but its image remains purely rhetorical and in opposition to the city's underlying realities. Therefore, the Winarskyhof's footprint, which simultaneously integrates with and distances itself from the city fabric, exemplifies the Social Democrats' ambiguous stance toward the historical city. Therefore for Tafuri it is with Behrens that the residential socialist program is translated into a coherent architectural ideology. [193]

Behrens demonstrated architecture's power in laying facts bare. His approach represents a coherent architectural ideology in the sense that it acknowledges, without romanticizing the socio-economic, political, and labor conditions of 1924 Vienna. The Winarsky Hof, inaugurated a century ago, feels more relevant today than ever.

Here, I would like bring Marx and Musil into discussion, from which I derive the term "lover-scientist." Marx provides us with the definition of the scientist:

> "All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided."[194]

Meanwhile, Musil helps us understand the lover:

"Lovers have nothing new to say to each other; nor do they actually recognize each other; all that a lover recognizes is the indescribable way in which he is inwardly activated by the beloved. To recognise some inanimate object doesn't mean decoding its characteristics one by one; it means that a veil falls away or a barrier is lifted, somewhere beyond the world of the senses. [...] Awareness of a person or thing apart from one-self then becomes impossible, for to take notice is to take something from the things noticed; they keep their shape but tum to ashes inside; something evaporates from them, leaving only their mummies. For lovers there is no such thing as a truth-it could only be a blind alley, the finish, the death of something that, while it lives, is like the breathing edge of a flame, where light and darkness lie breast-to-breast. How can any one thing light up, in recognition, where all is light? Who needs the beggarly small change of security and proof where everything spills over in superabundance? And how can one still want anything for oneself alone, even the beloved itself, once one knows how those who love no longer belong to themselves but must give themselves freely, four-eyed intertwined creatures that they are, to everything that comes their way?

Anyone who has mastered the idiom can run on in this vein without even trying. It is like walking with a lighted candle that sheds its tender rays on one aspect of life after another, all of them looking as if their usual appearance in the hard light of the common day had been a crude misrepresentation. How impossible it becomes, for instance, to apply that verbal gesture "to possess" to lovers, once one remembers the etymology

193 Tafuri, 33–35.

194 Karl Marx, *Capital: The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole,* vol. 3 (New York: New World Paperback, 1967), 817.

(from potis and sedere, i.e., pos-sess equals "to sit upon," "be-set"). Does it show desires of a higher order, to aim at "pos-sessing" principles, the respect of one's children, ideas, oneself? But this clumsy ploy of a heavy animal subduing its prey with the full weight of its own body is still, and rightly, the basic and favorite term of capitalism, showing the connection between the possessors of the social world and the possessors of knowledge and skills, which is what it makes of its thinkers and artists, while love and asceticism stand apart in their lonely kinship. How aimless this pair appears, how devoid of a target, compared with the aims and targets of normal life. But the terms."aim" and "target" derive from the language of the marksman. To be without aim or target must have meant, originally, not to be out to kill. So merely by tracking down the clues in language itself – a blurred, but revealing trail! – one can see how a crudely changed meaning has everywhere usurped the function of far subtler messages now quite lost to us, that ever-perceptible but never quite tangible nexus of things."[195]

195 Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, 609.

In a profession increasingly distanced from political influence and undergoing gradual proletarization, architecture still retains a fundamental quality: the ability to make sense of its own language. Only then can architects – as lover-scientists – give meaning to architecture as a whole, that is more than sum of its parts. Hence, architecture equips us with sharper tools to organize, confront, and navigate what is above from what is below, and what is moving forward from what is moving backward. In doing so, the discipline becomes a form of resistance—subversive in the face of mystification.

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Collective Rampart, Jean Richter

Gay Apocalypse, François Mégret

Mechanical Symphony, Paulina Ornella Beron

Murder on the Floorplan, Léo Perrin-Livenais

Peasant-Mania, Julia Maraj

Speculative Coastlines, Emile Iacopo Jourcin & Melina Schechinger

The Architecture of the Superblock, Michelle Mortensen

The Boundaries of Labor, Lea Marzinzik

Typological Mestizaje, María Ruiz Medina

Work It Home, Emilie Hamel

ANNEXE

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