philosophies

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Demythologising the Given: Schlick, Cornelius, and Adorno *contra* Husserl

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Abstract: After the attempt at collaboration between the Frankfurt School and the Vienna Circle failed in the late 1930s, Adorno stood at the forefront of critical theory's polemics against 'positivism'. Given these later polemical exchanges, some of the tendencies common to both movements have remained overlooked. Among these is their opposition to the phenomenological tradition. This paper focusses on certain features common to Schlick's and Adorno's critical responses to Husserl. The Machians, including Adorno's supervisor Hans Cornelius, were targeted by Husserl's onslaught against psychologism in 1900. The young Schlick's Machian background had motivated his contribution to the *Psychologismusstreit*, in the context of which he launched a series of objections against Husserl's 'independence theory of truth'. Adorno's later doctoral dissertation under Cornelius was also motivated by the effort to defend his master against Husserl's objections. Schlick's criticisms intensified in later works, where Husserl's epistemology of intuition is seen as yet another instance of the widespread confusion between knowledge and acquaintance. Schlick's warnings against Husserl's turn towards the irrationalist fashions of his day find their echo in Adorno's 'Metakritik'. Apart from their broad agreement in how they understand Husserl's positioning within his context, Schlick and Adorno also develop a similar criticism of Husserl's account of intuition as failing in its aspiration to discover unmediated givenness, which it confuses with mediated conceptual knowledge. Unfortunately, while Adorno explicitly acknowledges Schlick's critique of Husserl, he also misconstrues it as a scientistic rejection of metaphysical nonsense, thus failing to acknowledge the proximity to his approach.

Keywords: Husserl; Psychologismusstreit; Logical Empiricism; Frankfurt School; intuition; Schlick; Adorno; Cornelius

Citation: Vrahimis, A. Demythologising the Given: Schlick, Cornelius, and Adorno *contra* Husserl. *Philosophies* **2024**, *9*, 159. https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9060159

Academic Editors: Mirja Hartimo and Anssi Korhonen

Received: 9 September 2024
Revised: 14 October 2024
Accepted: 15 October 2024
Published: 22 October 2024

1. Introduction

The Vienna Circle (in its official guise as the *Verein Ernst Mach*) and the Frankfurt School (in the form of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt) were the two professional organisations that were directly targeted by Austrofascism and Nazism, immediately upon their takeover of power in Austria and Germany. Almost every member of both organisations was forced to flee into exile, with the majority ending up in the United States. As demonstrated in Dahms' [1] excellent research into this topic, their paths into exile at least temporarily crossed, with plans for collaboration between the two philosophical groups discussed between Otto Neurath and Max Horkheimer. Nonetheless, the effort towards what could have been an informative philosophical dialogue was soon plunged into stalemate after Horkheimer published his politically-minded polemic against 'positivism' in 'The Latest Attack on Metaphysics', followed by his refusal to publish Neurath's rejoinder, a move that led Neurath to 'cut off diplomatic relations' [1] (p. 180) between the Circle and the Institute (see also e.g., [2–6]).

In the background of Horkheimer's polemic lies a fundamental assumption shared with the 'logical positivism' he decries. The 'latest attack' referred to in the article's title is epitomised in Carnap's famous 1931 response to a certain development within the phenomenological tradition, which Carnap approaches quite indirectly (see [3], (pp. 564,

566–567)). In Carnap's article, he does not go into any detail about the positions developed within the phenomenological tradition, its relation to metaphysics (but see [7]), or the relation between metaphysics and authoritarianism. Instead, Carnap simply selects a series of statements he finds in Heidegger's programmatic declarations in his inaugural lecture at Freiburg, arguing that they exemplify typical forms of nonsense that metaphysicians are misled—by the ambiguous nature of 'historico-grammatical syntax' [8] (p. 69)—into uttering. Metaphysicians like Heidegger, Carnap argues, are like 'musicians without musical ability' [8] (p. 80), vainly endeavouring to debate their *Lebensgefühl* in theoretical terms instead of expressing such emotional attitudes in music and poetry. Horkheimer rightly presented Carnap's attack, alongside similar anti-metaphysical polemics by other logical empiricists, to have been viewed by his contemporaries as one of the prominent 'intellectual weapons against the totalitarian frenzy' [9] (p. 140). Indeed, one fundamental assumption Horkheimer (and Adorno (e.g., [10])) shared with various logical empiricists is an overview of contemporary philosophy as divided between metaphysical tendencies that offer—wittingly or not—support for authoritarian tendencies and the anti-metaphysical struggle to resist them (see [3] (pp. 569–572, 575–576)). Horkheimer's 1937 polemic vehemently rejects the view that the logical empiricist rejection of metaphysics suffices to resolve the dialectic between the two tendencies. He argues instead that it not only utterly fails to distinguish between authoritarian metaphysics and its critics, but he also, quite contentiously (and perhaps arbitrarily), claims that 'positivism' unwittingly participates in the rise of authoritarianism.

The above brief reference to Horkheimer's polemics is intended as setting the scene for what follows. One notable central tenet of Horkheimer's position that is, to a great extent, in agreement with the Vienna Circle's outlook, is an understanding of the phenomenological tradition as their common foe. In this paper, I will argue that members of the Vienna Circle and of the Frankfurt School developed substantial philosophical criticisms of Husserl's outlook that bear some interesting and overlooked similarities. I will do so by comparing two different approaches to criticising Husserl that have at least some bearing on the debates between the Vienna Circle and the Frankfurt School. On the one hand, I will examine Moritz Schlick's critical engagement with Husserl's views, beginning with his early contributions to the *Psychologismusstreit* and leading to his continuing critique of the notion of 'intuitive knowledge' that eventually at least partly contributed to the Vienna Circle's overall critique of metaphysics. On the other hand, I will turn to the development of Theodor W. Adorno's 'Metakritik' of Husserl. The roots of Adorno's approach are found in his early tutelage under Hans Cornelius, a figure associated with the Machian *Wissenschaftliche Philosophie* that had prominently shaped Schlick's early philosophical concerns. Adorno's more mature response to Husserl was written initially in Oxford as a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Gilbert Ryle. In some of its published versions, Adorno's 'Metakritik' of Husserl acknowledges Schlick's criticisms, albeit very briefly and dismissively. I argue, however, that despite its minimal acknowledgement, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly given the polemics between the Frankfurt School and the Vienna Circle, a large number of the objections put forth by Adorno were previously to be found in Schlick's commentary on Husserl.

2. An odd comparison?

At first glance, one may justifiably wonder whether there is anything that connects two philosophers as different as Schlick and Adorno. One may even suspect that it would be difficult to find two twentieth-century philosophers with more that separates them than these two. The stylistic differences would be obvious at first glance to anyone who reads work by either figure, with Schlick being among the clearest authors to write in German, as opposed to Adorno's highly obscure prose[1]. While Adorno famously champions a kind of return to Hegel, Schlick insistently portrayed German idealism, and especially Hegel, as exemplifying a kind of fundamental metaphysical error that set back nineteenth-century philosophy from its Kantian golden age (see [11] (pp. 68–71); [12] (p. 5)).

In fact, Adorno may have had some reason to resent Schlick personally. When Adorno finally realised that—after the rest of the Frankfurt School had left Germany without including him in their migration—he would have to flee Germany (after his *venia legendi* was withdrawn due to the 1933 racial laws), he initially planned to move his habilitation to the University of Vienna (see [13] (pp. 177, 185)). In his correspondence, he notes that he hoped his 'connections with the "Vienna Circle" of Schlick, Carnap, Dubislav' [14] (p. 197) would work in his favour. Nonetheless, it was not Schlick who would examine Adorno's *Habilitationschrift*, but rather his Machian colleague Heinrich Gomperz—a figure close to the Vienna Circle who ran his own weekly meetings frequented by most of the Circle's members (see [15] (pp. 50–51)). Gomperz rejected Adorno's application, claiming that the only thing of value in Adorno's work were its quotations from Kierkegaard (see [13] (p. 185)). This may have motivated Adorno's characterisation, recorded in his subsequent correspondence with Horkheimer, of Carnap and Schlick as 'idiots' [16] (p. 244) (but see [17] (p. 459)).

Gomperz's rejection eventually forced Adorno to move to Oxford where, like many other refugees, he would have to register as a student (see [18]). In order to remain in the UK, Adorno would have to write a second doctoral dissertation, ten years after he had written his first. Both of his doctoral dissertations are on Husserl. The first dissertation was supervised by Hans Cornelius, while the second one was notably undertaken under the supervision of Gilbert Ryle.

Given the names of Adorno's supervisors, we may begin to glimpse some initial connections to Schlick. Let us first note the interesting case of Ryle. Despite possible appearances to the contrary, given his polemical stance towards phenomenology, Ryle was in fact well-placed as Adorno's supervisor on Husserl. At the beginning of his career, before becoming part of the mainstream of the history of analytic philosophy, he was primarily interested in the phenomenological tradition[2]. Ryle not only taught courses on the topic at Oxford, but also met Husserl (see [23]), reviewed Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* [24], and published a series of papers on phenomenology, becoming increasingly critical as his career progressed. Furthermore, during the 1930s Ryle was becoming increasingly aware of the Vienna Circle's work, not only through notoriously sending his student Ayer on an espionage mission during his honeymoon (resulting, largely due to Ryle's encouragement, in the publication of *Language, Truth, and Logic* in 1936), but also through his personal contact with the Circle's members, including Schlick in 1930 (see e.g. [25] (p. 4)). Ryle and many of his Oxford colleagues were centrally involved in debates over logical empiricism from at least the mid-1930s onwards, and Adorno was certainly aware of this climate at Oxford (see [18] (pp. 135–136, 139–140, 158–159)). It remains unclear whether, at the time he served as Adorno's supervisor, Ryle had been directly familiar with Schlick's criticisms of Husserl. As I will show, it is clearly evident that Adorno was clearly at least partly aware of Schlick's position, and it would not have been impossible that he was the one to familiarise Ryle with it.

3. Husserl *contra* Cornelius' machism

Though now largely forgotten—apart from perhaps his role as supervisor to both Adorno and Horkheimer—Hans Cornelius had been a significant figure within the Machian tradition with which the early Schlick was also heavily engaged[3]. Indeed, apart from his formative influence on the Frankfurt School, Cornelius had been a significant interlocutor with both Husserl and the Vienna Circle (see e.g., [27]; [1] (pp. 22–25)). The first volume of Husserl's 1900 *Logische Untersuchungen*, titled 'Prolegomena to Pure Logic', famously launched a multiplicity of attacks directed against the numerous philosophical positions that he criticised as forms of 'psychologism'[4]. The one position targeted by Husserl [30] (pp. 123–133) that is most pertinent to our topic is the biological approach to epistemology developed by Ernst Mach and Richard Avenarius, alongside which Husserl attacks Cornelius[5].

In his discussion, Husserl bundles Cornelius' and other Machian views together as representatives of Avenarius' principle of economy, according to which human animals,

qua living organisms, organise their activities with a view to expending as little energy as possible[6]. In order to minimise energy expenditure, the human species' cognitive processes are biologically geared towards simplification. More specifically, cognition simplifies the complex information presented to our senses by reducing everything in sensation that is unfamiliar to us to what we are already familiar with (see e.g., [26] (p. 278)). Avenarius takes this biological principle to extend not only to practical human activity but also to scientific thinking. Thus, scientific knowledge involves discovering simple principles that allow us to understand, with the minimum expenditure of energy, the complex reality in which human animals live. In both everyday practical life and in scientific knowledge, cognition subsumes the unfamiliar under familiar categories, thus economically allowing us to simplify the complex range of information experience affords us, and even, in the case of scientific knowledge, to make accurate predictions conducive to the species' survival.

Husserl declares that he 'gladly agree[s]' [30] (p. 129) with Mach (to whom 'we owe a vast amount of logical illumination' [30] (p. 129)) and Avenarius, that 'the idea of an economy of thought [. . .] to me seems well-justified and fruitful' [30] (p. 128). Nonetheless, Husserl takes upon himself the task of delimiting the domain in which the theory of 'thought economy' is applicable, fervently protesting against overextending it by veering into logical and epistemological grounds. According to Husserl, the proper domain for these types of explanations is biology, psychological anthropology, and even 'the methodology of scientific research' [30] (p. 129), which is connected to what he calls 'practical' [30] (p. 129) (as opposed to 'pure' [30] (p. 129)) epistemology. Yet Husserl condemns the psychologistic application of the principle beyond its explanatory reach to the domain of the 'ideal laws of pure logic' [30] (p. 129) that are universal and rational. He finds in the work of Cornelius an example of this overreach[7]:

> That this new tendency ends up by being a psychologism, is made very clear in the *Psychologie* of Cornelius. In that work the principle in question is expressly given the position of 'the basic law of the understanding', of 'a universal, basic law of psychology' (H. Cornelius, Psychologie, pp. 82, 86). Psychology—the psychology of cognitive processes in particular—when built upon this basis, will also yield us the foundations of all philosophy (op. cit. pp. 3–9). [30] (p. 123)

Against raising the economy principle to the level of a universal law, Husserl [30] (pp. 131–133) objects that this would amount to a hysteron-proteron fallacy. Overextending the economy principle, one might (and Husserl thinks the Machians, and especially Cornelius, did) think logical and mathematical principles to be its products—i.e., that logical and mathematical principles in scientific knowledge serve the fundamental biological function of preserving energy. Husserl protests that, in doing so, the Machians presuppose, rather than explain, the rational, ideal, universal laws of logic:

> One is, however, only justified in that one compares one's actual thought with a perspicuously recognized ideal norm, which is accordingly πρότερον τῇ φύσει. The ideal validity of this norm is presupposed by all meaningful *talk* of an economy of thinking; it is not therefore a possible explanatory outcome of a theory of such economy. [30] (p. 132)

To think otherwise is to confuse a genetic account of the emergence of knowledge with an attempt at justifying it [30] (p. 130). The ideal laws themselves cannot involve teleology, but rather can only be the object towards which our teleological mental acts are directed [30] (pp. 129–130).

The significance of Husserl's critique of the Machians for what follows is twofold. On the one hand, Moritz Schlick, who held Mach's chair in Vienna and presided over the *Verein Ernst Mach*, can be seen as one of the leading twentieth-century continuators of the Machian tradition—though of course Schlick's unique response to the tradition also involved substantial modifications and criticisms[8]. In his earliest works, Schlick had set out an evolutionary biological approach to the naturalisation of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics that was certainly at odds with Husserl's claims in the *Prolegomena* (see e.g., [34]).

Schlick's answer to Husserl was thus to some extent motivated by the perceived threat to the naturalisation project that began with Machism and which he sought to contribute to. As we shall see in what follows, Schlick's modified conception of the economy theory will underlie his overall objection against according epistemic status to intuition, which constitutes the principal criticism he will direct against Husserl (among various other philosophical targets).

On the other hand, Husserl's critique of Machism can be pinpointed as instigating the trajectory of Adorno's critique of Husserl, mediated by Hans Cornelius. As we shall see, Adorno's early criticisms of Husserl were centrally concerned with rehabilitating his Doktorvater's position in light of Husserl's attacks. While Adorno will eventually drift very far away from anything resembling his teacher's Machism, elements of his later criticisms of Husserl's conception of intuition parallel Schlick's critique. Given their shared Machian origins, this may now appear less striking than at first glance.

4. Schlick against Husserl's independence theory of truth

Beginning with his 1910 *Habilitationschrift*, which placed him at odds with Husserl within the context of the *Psychologismusstreit*, Schlick would continue to engage critically with various different aspects of Husserl's work throughout his career. Here, I will selectively focus on those aspects of Schlick's critique that are pertinent to the comparison with Adorno's 'meta-critique'—which means leaving out various otherwise noteworthy objections Schlick put forth against Husserl, such as his later critique of the status of material *a priori* statements, on which the majority of scholarly discussions have hitherto primarily focussed (in most cases (e.g. [35–37]) with the goal to defend Husserl).

Entering the *Psychologismusstreit* with his 1910 'The Nature of Truth in Modern Logic', Schlick takes up what Kusch [28] (pp. 174, 198) shows to be a qualified defence of 'the inclusion of experimental psychology within philosophy' [28] (p. 198) in opposition to psychologism's many detractors (see also [38]). While Schlick explicitly agreed with Husserl on multiple points (e.g., [32] (pp. 22, 23)), he vehemently objected to Husserl's arguments against psychologism.

Charting the various theories of truth at play in his contemporary debates in 1910, Schlick categorises Husserl as a proponent of what he calls the 'independence theory of truth' [39] (p. 51). According to Schlick's formulation, the independence theory amounts to the claim that

> truth is something independent of all judgement, all men or other living beings, something which can indeed be grasped on occasion in our knowledge, but for the rest has nothing to do with it, exists without it, in short has no concern with it at all. [39] (p. 45)

The above describes the thesis that, as we shall see, Adorno later calls 'logical absolutism' (e.g., [40] (p. 12)), i.e., the complete disjunction between mental acts and some ideal realm of logical validity.

In Schlick's account, proponents of the independence theory are partly led to it due to the fundamental problems faced by its most prominent alternative, namely the 'inner evidence' account. According to the latter theory, the truth or falsehood of propositions is determined by some directly grasped inner state that verifies or falsifies them. As I will show, this view of truth is derivative of one of the central tenets that Schlick criticised throughout his career—and which, at least in part, he derived from the Machian economy principle: the confused notion that one can *know* anything by immediately intuiting the contents of one's consciousness.

However, in 1910, Schlick had not yet developed his attack against intuitive knowledge, which will become as we shall see the main claim underlying his subsequent criticisms of Husserl. Instead of disputing the epistemic status of 'inner evidence', Schlick [39] (pp. 43–45) simply argues that it is fallible, and thus inescapably unreliable, which is to say insufficient as a criterion for truth. Furthermore, Schlick [39] (pp. 45–51) argues against the possibility (as he finds it particularly in Neo-Kantian accounts of truth as a value) of finding a middle ground

between the 'inner evidence' theory and the 'independence' theory. Schlick thus concludes that

> The assumption of an absolute truth, independent of the subject, cannot be combined with any basically subjectivist or idealist point of view. [39] (p. 51)

For both Schlick and, as we shall see later, Adorno, the fundamental problems faced by Husserl's 'logical absolutism' are generated precisely by this incompatibility[9].

Schlick argues that this incongruity is generated by Husserl's all too strict distinction between real mental acts and their ideal objects. According to Husserl, our real mental acts are intentionally directed towards what he takes to be ideal objects. His anti-psychologism is firmly rooted in this distinction between the real, which can become the object of psychological study, and the ideal objects that our real mental acts allow us to discover or 'apprehend' [39] (p. 51), yet cannot be reduced to the type of real entity psychologists study.

Schlick takes two different approaches towards objecting to this sharp distinction posed by Husserl (what Adorno will later characterise as a Platonic 'χωρισμός' (e.g., [40] (p. 10); [42] (pp. 13, 62, 73, 121)). On the one hand, the distinction is in itself too sharp and therefore untenable. On the other hand, the distinction is ultimately contradicted by Husserl's own account of how ideal objects come to be known—a point that may further prove the untenability of the distinction's sharpness.

I cannot here rehearse in detail Schlick's multiple objections but will only briefly sketch their overall direction[10]. While conceding the significance of Husserl's distinction between act and intentional object [39] (p. 54), Schlick [39] (pp. 52–54) disputes that this entails that truths can somehow subsist as mind-independent entities that remain undiscovered by any human mind. Instead, he argues that the intentional objects Husserl takes to be mind-independent are nothing but abstractions from mental acts. For instance, logical propositions are abstracted from mental acts of judgement, and so 'if we take away from a given judgement everything mental about it, we are left with no judgement or proposition at all' [39] (p. 54). Schlick [39] (pp. 54–55) argues that, in the case of logical judgements, the intentional object inheres in the mental act. Such cases are fundamentally different from those in which the intentional object is indeed mind-independent, e.g., in sense perception where the object exists outside my presentation of it[11].

As already noted, the untenability of Husserl's sharp distinction between real acts and ideal objects comes to the fore in his epistemology. In Schlick's view, any independence theory of truth will 'necessarily come to grief' [39] (p. 59) in attempting to develop an epistemology that must combine the following two irreconcilable factors: that truth is 'independent of my experiences and yet in them' [39] (p. 59). In Schlick's view, Husserl's attempt at reconciling the two will lead him to contradiction, undoing all the effort he had put into separating the mental from its ideal objects. According to Schlick's presentation, while the main motivation that led to Husserl's independence theory had initially been its avoidance of the inner evidence theory, Husserl's epistemology crashes us back into such a theory:

> Nothing can disguise the fact that [. . . Husserl] is here contradicting himself, not even an allusion to the distinction he makes between the possibility of ideal inner evidence, relating to 'propositions', and real inner evidence, relating to acts of judgement, for here it is a matter of actual, genuine knowledge of truth, and thus of real mental inner evidence; in actual fact, of course, there is only this one real type of inner evidence [. . .] what other sort of insight could be possible to me, save the inner evidence subsisting in a real mental experience? [39] (pp. 60–61)

5. Schlick against Husserl's appeal to intuition

As already noted, in 1910, Schlick was not yet equipped with a full-fledged objection against the notion of inner evidence. The stronger objection is traceable back to his 1913 paper, titled 'Gibt es intuitive Erkenntnis?'. Here, Schlick begins his attack against the idea that there can exist such a thing as an epistemic state called 'intuition', in which the knower

is inseparable from what is known. Perhaps the most charitable way to approach Schlick's argument in the paper is by first acknowledging that he is not here interested specifically in the details of Husserl's epistemology. What Schlick begins to attack in 1913, and continues to do so more and more arduously throughout his career, is an overall tendency within the history of epistemology. As can be seen from recently published parts of his *Nachlass* [33], one of the projects that Schlick's murder had cut short involved tracing the particular error Schlick's 1913 paper attributes, among others, to Husserl back to the beginnings of Western philosophy. The question of whether Schlick's relatively brief critical discussions got the details of Husserl's highly contested epistemology correct should therefore best be understood within this much broader context. It should also be noted that the question of how to correctly construe Husserl's conception of intuition, and how it connects to the earlier history of epistemology, has been highly contested within scholarly debates (see e.g., [35,43–45]). Even if Schlick misconstrued his target in Husserl, he was certainly correct in discerning a resurgence of appeals to intuition within phenomenological circles that was at least in part due to Husserl's use of the term (and also prominently influenced by some of Schlick's other targets, such as Bergson, whose fashionableness was at its peak at around the time Schlick was writing)[12].

As Textor [26] (e.g., pp. 293–301) demonstrates, the Machian economy principle—and more specifically Avenarius' formulation thereof—constitutes the backdrop for Schlick's argument against intuitive knowledge. That is not to say, however, that Schlick's position is question-begging in light of Husserl's attack against Machism. Rather, his above objections against Husserl's theory of truth and epistemology lay the groundwork for Schlick's rehabilitation of the Machian outlook. It remains unclear whether Schlick had specifically paid heed to Husserl's criticisms in formulating his variant of Avenarius' economy principle. In the case of Avenarius, we have an explicit appeal to a biological principle that is meant to ground the view that knowledge must necessarily involve the comparison of what is unknown to that which is already known. Knowledge must function in this way because it is economic in terms of expenditure of energy. Vast amounts of energy would be wasted were we to focus on the ever-new stream of unfamiliar information that makes up the contents of our consciousness in each moment. By selectively attending to those aspects of stream that are comparable to what we already know, we save the energy that would be otherwise wasted in attending to all of the 'Heraclitian flux' [32] (p. 156) streaming before us, in all its uniqueness and unrepeatability.

In Schlick's view, a large part of Avenarius' account is roughly correct, if reformulated properly. To do so, we need to first of all revise the economy principle (see [26] (pp. 301–306)). This is because it inevitably fails to account for various human activities that are inherently wasteful, in biological terms. Schlick's [32] (pp. 98–101) main example for this is scientific knowledge, which unavoidably must involve expenditure of great amounts of energy in its search for the truth. Schlick further insists that scientific knowledge is and must remain a purely theoretical search for truth, and divorces considerations of practical utility from purely scientific knowledge-acquisition. Thus, in Schlick's view, science requires the human animal to expend multitudes of energy with no specific practical goal in mind[13]. Schlick does not completely dispose of the biological background: to become able to expend this excess of energy, the human species must already have adapted to its environment to a degree that renders this expenditure viable[14]. Once well-adapted, the human animal can undertake actions not for the sake of fulfilling some specific practical goal, but for the sake of enjoying the action itself. One may even come to enjoy attending to the ever-changing contents of the stream of consciousness, which Schlick understands as a form of aesthetic play[15].

Throughout his career, Schlick ([53]; [32] (e.g., p. 83); [54] (e.g., p. 111); [55] (e.g., pp. 190–197)) will repeat the following refrain in different guises: the aesthetic game of attending to the ever-changing contents of our consciousness is not a form of knowledge. Philosophers have traditionally failed to grasp this distinction (see also [26] (pp. 325–332); [12]). From the pre-Socratics (cf. [33]) to Husserl, and even to Avenarius and Mach[16], epistemologists have mistakenly attributed epistemic status to some form of direct immersion into the contents of our

consciousness. Following Descartes, the name given to this purported form of knowledge was 'intuition'. While Schlick does not deny that we have access to the contents of our consciousness, he vehemently opposes—as a *contradictio in adjecto* [53] (p. 146) [32] (p. 83)—the claim that intuition constitutes knowledge.

Schlick's opposition to this claim relies on the rehabilitated Machian economy principle. According to Schlick (e.g., [32] (pp. 7, 15)), all knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] is a form of recognition [*Wiedererkenntnis*]. All epistemic states are judgements that involve at least two terms: what is known, and that as which it is known (e.g., [53] (pp. 144–145)). Schlick [32] (pp. 6–7) employs the example of seeing a brown patch in the distance, which I progressively recognise *as* an animal, then as a dog, then *as* my dog Tyras. Without the comparative element that is a necessary component of all judgements, we cannot yet speak of knowledge. Indeed, to fully understand Schlick's somewhat misleading example, we must see that even our starting point—seeing a brown patch—involved seeing something in my visual field *as* a brown patch. Even here, my knowledge involves comparing what I see to my familiar conception of brown, or of spatiotemporal patches.

By contrast to two-term knowledge judgements, intuition is a kind of immersion into the ever-changing flux that constitutes my 'lived experience' [*Erlebnis*]:

> In pure intuition, raw contemplation, everything is utterly individual, for itself, compared to nothing. The multifariousness of experience is infinite—the same thing never recurs in it exactly as before. To abandon oneself to intuition is therefore to ignore all resemblances, to reject all combination and order, in short to disdain everything that actually constitutes knowledge. The would-be knower must ascend into the sphere of the universal, where he finds the concepts he has need of to order and designate the individual; the devotee of intuition is tied from the start to the individual, which he cannot get free from and therefore cannot know. [53] (p. 150)

According to Schlick, then, intuition, properly understood, is simply a form of acquaintance with the current, completely unique and unrepeatable contents of my consciousness. I have never before experienced these exact contents of my current stream of consciousness, and will never do so again. They are strictly speaking unrepeatable, and thus any similarities their elements may bear with what I already know can only be detected once I ignore the uniqueness of the qualitative flux I am immersed in. (As we shall see in Section 6, Schlick explicitly acknowledges Cornelius as his forerunner in this view.) In this sense, knowledge is *the opposite* of intuition [32] (p. 82). Pure intuition is akin to a kind of aesthetic appreciation of the whole stream of consciousness as it flows [54] (pp. 110–111). Knowledge, on the other hand, is a kind of processing of the stream's elements, comparing them with previously known images or concepts, arranging the elements of the chaotic flux into an ordered structure.

From this insight, Schlick (e.g., [32] pp. 82–89; [33]) develops a number of criticisms directed against multiple targets throughout the history of philosophy. The great error committed by philosophers throughout history is the confusion between knowledge and intuition. The error is usually committed in search of supplementing our usual two-term conception of knowledge with a further, special form of direct knowledge. One form of this error was committed by Descartes, who claimed that each of us can intuitively know ourselves in a presuppositionless manner that is more direct than our ordinary empirical knowledge. Schlick [32] (pp. 85–86) objects that Descartes mistakenly took self-knowledge to be intuitive, whereas it is in fact simply another example of two-term knowledge. When we are in a state of pure immediate acquaintance with the contents of our consciousness, we are not yet in a position to distinguish those contents that pertain to a subject from those that are its objects. Schlick argues that distinguishing myself, *qua* subject, from the rest of the contents of my consciousness presupposes having ordered the chaotic stream by comparing some of its aspects to what I already know. Thus Descartes' great error lay in ascribing to the *Cogito* the status of intuition, whereas it is in fact a form of knowledge.

This error generates further errors in Cartesian rationalism insofar as it fails to adequately distinguish pure intuition from knowledge.

The errors Schlick detects in his various other targets are generated from similar forms of confusion. An interesting case in point is that of Bergson. To a great extent, Schlick's position is close to Bergson's: roughly speaking, both conceive of lived experience as a kind of Heraclitian flux, a qualitative multiplicity with unique and unrepeatable contents (see also [56] (pp. 253–280)). Both distinguish immersion into this flux from the type of conceptual knowledge that serves our practical and scientific goals. Bergson's major error, in Schlick's (e.g., [53], p. 145; [32] (pp. 81–82)) view, is to demand that we acknowledge intuition—i.e., immersion into the qualitative multiplicity of lived experience—as a form of knowledge and, even worse, as a method for metaphysics that somehow supersedes our practically-oriented, merely 'intellectual' scientific knowledge. As Schlick argues, the error is driven partly by the thesis, which he attributes to Bergson, that 'quantitative, mathematical methods provide only a falsified knowledge' [53] (p. 143), a thesis which Schlick [32] (pp. 141–147) will painstakingly reject. Schlick's objection against Bergson [53] (pp. 145–147) [32] (pp. 81–85) —also, as we shall see, jointly directed against Husserl—consists simply in firmly denying that intuition counts as a form of knowledge. According to Schlick [53] (pp. 142–143) [32] (pp. 81–82), Bergson conceives of this special form of 'intuitive' knowledge as involving an immersion or fusion of the knower into the known[17]. Schlick agrees that intuition is a kind of immersion into lived experience, but therefore rejects the claim that it counts as knowledge. Contrary to Bergson's claims, epistemic status cannot be accorded to mere acquaintance.

In the fashionable Bergsonian criticism of the limitations of scientific knowledge, Schlick sees a looming threat of undoing what he takes to be an ongoing 'rapprochement between philosophy and science' [53] (p. 141) that he seeks to defend:

> on examining more closely the present state of philosophy we notice, I fear, indications of a rift in the lute. [53] (p. 141)

Part of what Schlick has in mind when talking of 'rapprochement' is the Machian tradition criticised by Husserl's anti-psychologism[18]. Claims to some special philosophical type of knowledge, attained through intuition, are not simply erroneous, but form barriers to the development of a *Wissenschaftliche Philosophie*. Schlick prefaces his critique of intuition with a historical overview, according to which the rapprochement between philosophy and science he defends was an answer to the preceding 'hostile opposition fomented by Schelling and Hegel' [53] (p. 141). This view of the history of philosophy is found throughout Schlick's writings, where he presents German Idealism as a disastrous attempt to set up philosophy in a hierarchical position over science (see e.g., [11] (p. 68–71); [12] (p. 5)). The renewal of rhetoric concerning intuition threatens a reversion back to the hierarchical metaphilosophies of the German Idealists.

Husserl's programmatic claim, in his 'Philosophie als Strenge Wissenschaft', that a form of intuition will pave the path to turning philosophy into a rigorous science was, to Schlick, very clearly a red flag. Schlick explicitly claims that the 'most alluring effect' [53] (p. 143) of fashionable Bergsonist appeals to intuition influenced 'the latest turn given by Edmund Husserl to the presentation of his philosophical ideas' [53] (p. 143). To some extent, Schlick's critique of Husserl can be read as a qualified opposition against the detrimental influence of this fad on phenomenology, and perhaps even as a call to turn back from this latest development.

Interestingly, Schlick's critique of Husserl's appeal to intuition primarily focusses on certain rhetorical aspects of Husserl's presentation, rather than on substantial philosophical criticisms aimed *specifically* at Husserl. That is to say, Schlick's [53] (p. 143) [32] (pp. 82–85) objection against intuition is one applicable to much of the history of philosophy, and he does not specifically examine the details of Husserl's epistemology at any length. Schlick instead simply quotes particular passages in which Husserl advertises the potential for intuition to transform philosophy into a rigorous science:

> to the extent that philosophy goes back to ultimate origins, it belongs precisely to its very essence that its scientific work moves in spheres of direct intuition. Thus the greatest step our age has to make is to recognize that *with the philosophical intuition in the correct sense*, the phenomenological grasp of essences, *a limitless field of work opens out, a science that without all indirectly symbolical and mathematical methods, without the apparatus of premises and conclusions, still attains a plenitude of the most rigorous and, for all further philosophy, decisive conclusions*.
>
> (Husserl, quoted in [53] (p. 143), my italics)[19]

Schlick cites the above passage primarily in support of his specific claim that Husserl is under the pernicious influence of the prevailing Bergsonian climate and its appeals to intuition. Schlick furthermore links Husserl's turn to a potential disastrous reversion back to German idealism:

> Now to show how, even in its outward manner, this philosophy recalls earlier periods of German speculation, I append the further remark: "Intuition grasps essence as essential being, and in no way posits being-there (Dasein)". [53] (p. 143)

Schlick's choice of the above passage is almost prophetic, insofar as it includes terminology later central to Heidegger's hostile takeover of the phenomenological tradition. It is notable that Schlick's brief remarks here explicitly focus on Husserl's rhetoric, rather than undertaking any substantial philosophical analysis of his epistemology of intuition. Schlick's [53] (p. 143) commentary on Husserl restricts itself to citing, without further analysis, an additional passage in which Husserl—possibly quite misleadingly—equates the immediateness of *Wessenschau* with that of sensory perception.

Having equated Husserl's rhetoric with Bergson's viewpoint, Schlick develops the same objection against both:

> They label as knowing a mental activity totally different from the process of comparing, finding again and designating, which revealed itself to us as the true essence of cognition. Now it might be said that perhaps the question is one merely of terminology: we are free to give the name knowledge to intuition as well. We would then distinguish between two kinds of knowing—conceptual or discursive, and intuitive. But the prophets of intuition also claim the right to give it the name knowledge on the contention that immediate intuition provides in a more perfect way *that* which symbolizing cognition tries to supply through the inadequate instrumentality of concepts. But here they are very much mistaken. [32] (p. 82)

We have already analysed the reason why they are mistaken, namely Schlick's claim that intuition is mere acquaintance and thus has no epistemic status.

It is notable that Schlick acknowledges the possibility that the whole issue might verge simply on terminology. We have seen why this may be significant already in the case of Descartes, where we saw Schlick argue that what Descartes confusedly calls 'intuitio' turns out not to be some special form of direct knowing, but rather is another case of conceptual knowledge. The same could apply to Husserl's account of intuition. If what Husserl calls 'intuition' is really what Schlick is referring to, i.e., a mere immersion into the contents of consciousness, then it cannot possibly involve *any* form of knowledge, let alone a knowledge of the same objects that are otherwise known conceptually. Like in Descartes' case, what Husserl calls 'intuition' may involve disguising as 'immediate' what is in fact knowledge, in Schlick's term, i.e., judgements involving at least two terms. In this case, Husserl has misrepresented what he calls 'intuitive knowledge' as immediate, when in fact he is referring to mediated knowledge, i.e., something that is *not* pure intuition (in Schlick's sense). In either case, Husserl is not only involved in a terminological error, but has confusedly committed the great error that Schlick has diagnosed throughout the history of philosophy: confusing knowledge with acquaintance.

It is relying on this fundamental insight that Schlick will develop a number of further criticisms of Husserl, including objections directed against the phenomenological

method [32] (pp. 23–24, 92–93, 137–141) and its appeal to the notions of *Wessenschau* [32] (pp. 92–93, 139) and adequate perception [32] (p. 153). However, an analysis of all of Schlick's criticisms would constitute an altogether different endeavour to the one undertaken here[20]. Instead, we shall now proceed to our surprising interlocutor with Schlick, Adorno.

6. Cornelius in the middle of parting ways

Adorno's attempts to respond to Husserl take up a central place in his overall philosophical trajectory. As already noted, he wrote two doctoral dissertations on Husserl, one completed in 1924 under Cornelius' supervision, the other beginning in 1934 and supervised by Ryle. It would take around two decades for the second dissertation to develop into his 1956 *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, which he considered his second magnum opus after *Negative Dialectics*. Between 1924 and 1956, the changes in Adorno's overall outlook, style, and more specifically in his view of Husserl are too complex to document here[21].

Like his friend and subsequent collaborator Horkheimer, Adorno began his career as a disciple of Cornelius[22]. Cornelius was certainly among the proponents of a *Wissenschaftliche Philosophie* that contributed to the rapprochement between philosophy and science that Schlick had referred to. As already noted, Cornelius began his career as a Machian, and was considered to be among the leading representatives of this primarily Austrian movement in Germany (see [1] (p. 22)). As discussed in Section 3, Cornelius was subject to Husserl's attacks on the Machian school. Similarly to Schlick, he participated in the *Psychologismusstreit* by objecting against Husserl's appeal to a distinction between real and ideal laws (see [28] (pp. 69–70, 91)). Like many of those accused by Husserl, Cornelius objected against the characterisation of his position as 'psychologistic' in Husserl's derogatory sense (and even accused Husserl of falling into this sort of psychologism himself), but accepted what he thought was an older non-derogatory sense of the term as characterising his position (see [28] (pp. 88–89, 111)). Despite their clashes over psychologism, Cornelius remained in dialogue with the phenomenological tradition and encouraged Horkheimer's and Adorno's critical engagement with Husserl[23].

Cornelius' psychologically-oriented philosophy is largely a result of the Gestalt approach in psychology, which he had helped initiate (see [59] (pp. 292–295)). From his 1902 *Einleitung in die Philosophie* onwards, Cornelius became highly critical of atomistic approaches to psychology, thus departing from the Machians' account of the elements of sensation (see [57] (p. 557); [60] (p. 67); [59] (pp. 294–295)). We have, in fact, already encountered a move influenced by this precise critique: in arguing for his view that lived experience is a continuous 'Heraclitian flux' [32] (p. 156), Schlick cites Cornelius' rejection of atomistic psychology, adding that 'I find myself generally in wholehearted agreement' [32] (p. 157) with his relevant views, and citing the following passage:

> nothing can be analyzed in any given content of consciousness without something *new* taking the place of this content; as soon as our analysis yields us knowledge that was not already *eo ipso* present in the given content, that content has thereby been replaced by something different from it.
>
> (Cornelius, quoted in [32] (p. 157))

It is thus noteworthy that one of the central ideas underlying Schlick's critique of intuition, i.e., the view that the contents of our consciousness are unrepeatable, was taken from Adorno's supervisor. As we shall see, Cornelius' rejection of the Machians' atomistic psychology will form the backbone of Adorno's overall critique of appeals to the immediately given.

Despite Schlick's 'wholehearted agreement' with this analysis, he would nevertheless have radically disagreed with a familiar error committed by Cornelius[24]. Cornelius retained that part of the Machian tradition, overtly criticised by Schlick (e.g., [32] (p. 231)), which had insisted on the starting point of knowledge in the given. Having rejected the Machian atomistic appeal to 'elements' of sensation, however, Cornelius asserted instead that we

have knowledge of 'immediately given objects' without the mediation of concepts (see [57] (p. 557); [60] (pp. 67, 75)). Under the influence of Gestalt psychology, Cornelius claims that this non-conceptual form of knowledge pertains to objects that are already located within a broader context, and they can only be comprehended as parts of a greater whole within the totality of consciousness (see [60] (p. 67)). The objects are wholes consisting of parts that are not themselves immediately given. Schlick does not specifically discuss Cornelius' error, yet his view that such objects are known immediately is clearly another instance of that confusion between acquaintance and knowledge which Schlick so thoroughly decried.

While Cornelius had one foot in the Machian camp, like the majority of academic philosophers at the time he also belonged within Neo-Kantianism, broadly construed. Thus, a large part of his project (e.g., in the *Transcendentale Systematik*) consisted in investigating the conditions of possibility for immediately given objects. This Neo-Kantian project is directly linked to Cornelius rejection of atomistic views that construed the given as consisting of unconditioned elements. Cornelius' critical view of the immediately given was criticised in different ways by his students Horkheimer and Adorno, who instead emphasised the social character of the conditions for givenness.

This Cornelian outlook shapes subsequent polemics between the Vienna Circle and the Frankfurt School. In Horkheimer's various invectives against 'positivism', which he construes broadly enough so as to cover over the differences between Machism and Logical Empiricism, one of his main targets is precisely the thesis that it is possible to know something immediately given that is not conditioned by social praxis[25]. This is perhaps a valid approach to criticising those earlier forms of positivism that Cornelius had also objected to by appeal to Gestalt psychology. Nonetheless, Horkheimer's onslaught completely ignores Schlick's critique of intuition, which renders Horkheimer's objections somewhat irrelevant to the Logical Empiricist tradition that was heavily influenced by Schlick (see [4]).

Interestingly, it was during his exile at Oxford at around the same time that Adorno—who had to some extent collaborated with Horkheimer in preparing 'The Latest attack against Metaphysics' (see [1] (pp. 86–96); [3] (pp. 572–574))—explicitly acknowledges Schlick's response to Husserl. (I will return to a discussion of this acknowledgement in Section 9).

7. Adorno's Cornelian critique of Husserl

Adorno's initial response to Husserl, in his 1924 dissertation *Die Transzendenz des Dinglichen und Noematischen in Husserls Phänomenologie*, involved a qualified defence of Cornelius' outlook (see [59] (pp. 296–299)). This partly explains why, from the outset, his criticism focussed on some incongruities in Husserl's epistemology of immediate givenness. Quite similarly to Schlick's objection within the context of the *Psychologismusstreit*, the young Adorno claims to diagnose a 'fundamental contradiction' [62] (p. 13) in Husserl's overall epistemological project (see [57] (pp. 557–559)). According to Adorno's indictment, Husserl calls for a 'return to the things themselves' through an immediate grasping of the intentional object, while simultaneously claiming this object to be ideal and mind-independent, transcending the real mental acts in which they are apprehended. Following in the footsteps of Cornelius' critique of Machism, Adorno argues that Husserl's call to return to the things themselves involves an irresolvable tension between, on the one hand, the immediately given as a set of experiences and, on the other hand, the things themselves as objects (and furthermore, as those objects that science deals with) (See [57] (p. 558); [59] (pp. 297–298)).

Adorno directs multiple objections against this radical division that Husserl forges (which he later describes as a Platonic 'χωρισμός' (e.g., [40] (p. 10); [42] (pp. 13, 62, 73, 121)))[26]. Among these is the claim that the division is untenable because it relies on the abovementioned confused conception of the immediately given. Cornelius' influence is clearly felt in Adorno's interpretation of Husserl's position on the given as atomistic, dogmatically assuming that individual experiences can somehow be immediately grasped

(see [59] (pp. 298–299)). In defending his mentor's view, Adorno claims this to be impossible. He does so by arguing that the objects that Husserl takes to be simple and thus immediately grasped are in fact complex, and our knowledge of them is mediated and conditioned (see [59] (p. 299)). In other words, Husserl equivocates between object and thing, and therefore confusedly imagines what is mediately known to have been immediately given:

> Things are not immediately, but only mediately known to us. Things are not experiences [62] (p. 26).

Here, already in 1924, Adorno sketches a kind of criticism that he will continue to defend, with more and more detail and sophistication, in his subsequent responses to Husserl[27]. While Adorno emphatically drops his commitment to defending Cornelius after his dissertation, some fundamental elements of his critique of Husserl are nonetheless to some degree retained, including his objections against confusing mediated knowledge with immediate givenness. And even if these are eventually given a Hegelian gloss, it can be clearly seen here that the origins of this fundamental criticism Adorno will continue directing against Husserl lie in debates surrounding Machian positivism (see also [59]).

8. Adorno and Schlick on Husserl's context

In developing this line of critique, Adorno will veer away from his early detailed analyses of Husserl's philosophical positions towards various broader diagnoses of his historical position within his contemporary philosophical scene. Indeed, one significant change in Adorno's attitude towards Husserl is precisely this intention, stated in the plan for his Oxford dissertation, to diagnose the contradictions inherent in his philosophical stance as products of 'certain "deadlocks", certain strains and conflicts, inherent in the whole situation, in which Husserl's Philosophy arose' (Adorno, quoted in [18] (pp. 141–142)). This is to some extent what Adorno means when he later names his approach to Husserl a 'metacritique'. Within this 'metacritique', the fundamental contradictions that Adorno diagnoses in Husserl's outlook are multiplied.

There are some striking resemblances between the way that Schlick and Adorno position Husserl in the context of his contemporary philosophical scene. As we have already seen, Schlick had argued that Husserl's turn towards the notion of intuition demonstrates the influence of Bergson. Interestingly, throughout his *Metakritik*, Adorno repeatedly aligns Husserl with Bergson [42] (pp. 46, 48, 49, 115, 129), and explicitly argues that the latter influenced the former's conception of lived experience as immediately known [42] (pp. 133–134) (see also [63] (pp. 113–138)). While Schlick's 1913 warning was against the threat to scientific rationality by proponents of intuition, Adorno [42] (pp. 49, 126, 127, 160, 187, 200) dialectically presents Husserl as tragically lying at the verge of a looming irrationalism with which he is also fundamentally in opposition: according to Adorno, 'Husserl was the rationalist of irrationalism' [40] (p. 12). While Adorno maintains that Husserl took himself to be opposed to 'late bourgeois irrationalism' [42] (p. 45), he nonetheless associates his and Bergson's viewpoints with subsequent developments of irrationalism (e.g., by Lebensphilosophie [42] (p. 126) and some aspects of Gestalt theory [42] (pp. 126, 160)). Precisely like Schlick, Adorno views Husserl as undertaking a revival of German Idealism:

> The fact that the new method should guarantee ideal states-of-affairs the same immediacy and infallibility as sense-data in the received view, explains the influence which Husserl exercised particularly over those who could no longer be satisfied with neo-Kantian systems and yet were unwilling to blindly hand themselves over to irrationalism. They felt that Fichtean and Schellingian intellectual intuition, though Husserl never referred to it, was raised by phenomenological management to the level of a 'rigorous science' whose programme Husserl claimed as his philosophy in the famous Logos article. [42] (p. 200)

Referring to the impact of the same article that Schlick [53] (p.143) [32] (p. 82) addressed, Adorno more or less confirms Schlick's fears: Husserl revived German Idealism in a manner that might appeal to those wary of the looming irrationalism in the parallel

Bergsonian revival. According to Adorno, Husserl 'seems incomparably more academic than Bergson' [42] (p. 48), and his appeal to intuition adds an air of seriousness to the endeavour that popular *Lebensphilosophie* may have lacked.

9. Adorno's caricature of Schlick

As far back as the 1937 manuscript of *Zur Philosophie Husserls*, based on his Oxford dissertation, and more prominently in his 1956 *Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, Adorno acknowledges Schlick's response to Husserl, though in a manner that is rather problematic. Adorno not only completely ignores the similarities with his own viewpoint, but also mischaracterises Schlick's position. He presents Schlick as part of two opposite tendencies in the reception of Husserl. On the one hand, Adorno claims that Husserl was received within the phenomenological tradition continued by Heidegger as a predecessor who has been superseded, a mere 'formalist epistemologist, devoid of care for human existence as they interpreted it' [42] (p. 186). According to Adorno, these successors ignored Husserl's own protests and proceeded to assimilate Husserl's views into irrationalist *Lebensphilosophie* [42] (p. 187). On the other hand, Adorno laments that this assimilation of Husserl was implicitly accepted by his anti-irrationalist critics:

> Husserl seemed to be very much a metaphysician to the representatives of philosophical scientism, such as Schlick in his *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre*. He appeared a prophet of that 'insight' (Schau) as was depicted less by his own texts than by the poetry of George. He had to share with other theoreticians of reason, Hegel not excepted, the cheap predicate of 'mystic'. [42] (p. 186 (cf. [64] (p. 46))

The above characterisation of Schlick's position involves multiple errors. Firstly, the Schlick of the *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre* was certainly not overall opposed to metaphysics, as he would soon come to be. Secondly, unlike subsequent variations of Schlick's overall critique of intuition (from 1926 [54] onwards), his discussion of Husserl up to and including both editions of *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre* did not involve attacking him *qua* metaphysician—at least not in the anachronistic way depicted by Adorno. Rather, as we have seen, Schlick's criticism is directed explicitly against the confusion of intuition with knowledge. His target thus may be construed as a certain type of metaphysics, but it is far from clear that this amounts to a full-fledged attack against any metaphysics whatsoever. Writing from 1937 onwards, with the Frankfurt School's anti-positivistic trajectory underway, Adorno seems to have anachronistically projected the Vienna Circle's overall anti-metaphysical attitude, to which Schlick certainly had contributed from 1926 onwards, back to Schlick's early work, to which it is not applicable without qualification[28]. Thirdly, as I have also already argued, Schlick's book otherwise takes Husserl quite seriously on multiple occasions, and in that work he is certainly not dismissive in the way suggested by Adorno. It is true that, in works from 1926 onwards, having abandoned his earlier critical realism and made an overall turn against metaphysics, Schlick takes this error to fundamentally underlie all metaphysical speculation. Schlick and Carnap will indeed talk of metaphysics as more akin to poetry and art than theory, but never explicitly refer to Husserl in that context[29].

In interpreting Adorno's remark on Schlick, two possibilities lie open here. Perhaps the most charitable option would be to assume that the many errors involved in Adorno's mention are simply a product of his ignorance of Schlick's work. Instead of a careful reading of Schlick's position on Husserl, he simply imagines him to have said something scientistic along the lines of the usual caricature of 'positivism' found in the Frankfurt School's works. The second option is less charitable: one could worry that Adorno here is purposefully mischaracterising Schlick's position so as to avoid admitting or further discussing the proximity of his position to his own[30]. As will become clear in what follows, the repercussions of this admission would go beyond the narrow issue of Adorno's distancing his critique of Husserl from Schlick's. The Frankfurt School's critique of 'positivism' had relied on attributing to Logical Empiricism a naïve belief in immediately given knowledge, a view that sits uneasily with Schlick's critique of intuitive knowledge (among other aspects of Logical Empiricism)[31]. It would clearly be more uncharitable to interpret Adorno as

wilfully misrepresenting this challenge to the Frankfurt School, than as having referred to a work that he has clearly not read[32].

10. Adorno on Husserl's positivism

The view of 'positivism' as involving a naïve belief in immediately given knowledge plays a central role in Adorno's metacritique of Husserl (as also in Horkheimer's critique of the Vienna Circle, as already noted). Overall, Adorno portrays Husserl as involved in a dialectical tension between the positivism prevalent in his contemporary philosophy, and a kind of Platonic rationalism that Husserl seeks to set against positivism but simultaneously is intended to result in what Husserl claims to be the genuine positivism (cf. [42] (pp. 191–192)). Adorno's earlier diagnosis of Husserl's contradiction is now framed in terms of the unresolvable tension between his 'positivism', which involves a naïve belief in the immediately given, and his 'rationalism', which stems from the attempt to justify the absolute validity of logic and mathematics. As a result, in Husserl's outlook

> philosophy wanders helplessly around between its two abstract poles, that of the sheer 'here' and that of the sheer 'in general'. It splits asunder in positivism and logic and shatters in the violent attempt to unite the irreconcilable poles. [42] (p. 105)

The conundrum is reached, according to Adorno, largely because of Husserl's positivistic account of evidence as something that must be grounded in the immediately given. Unlike Schlick, who does not delve into the details of Husserl's development, Adorno traces the error specifically to Husserl's highly contested conception of categorial intuition.

Husserl appeals to his notion of categorial intuition in order to account for those elements in our cognition that cannot be accounted for by sensory perception[33]. Take, for instance, the meaningful statement 'This table is round and blue'. Some elements of the statement, e.g., 'table', 'round', 'blue', do refer to, or, as Husserl puts it, are 'intuitively fulfilled' by, intentional objects of sense perception. However, what about e.g. 'and', or 'is'? According to Husserl, such elements cannot be fulfilled by reference to any possible intentional sensory objects. Yet, since the sentence is meaningful in its whole, Husserl concludes that all of its elements that are not directed towards sensory objects must be fulfilled by non-sensory intentional objects. The whole of the statement is thus verified by reference to a state of affairs [*Sachverhalt*] containing both sensory and non-sensory objects. We are immediately acquainted with both types of objects through different forms of intuition: in the former case, sensory perception, and in the latter case, what Husserl calls 'categorial intuition'.

Here, Adorno argues that Husserl was misled by his positivistic conception of knowledge. 'Positivism' here is a byword for the demand that knowledge be grounded in the immediately given. Up to the late nineteenth century, this demand had led empiricists and positivists into serious impasses over how to account for logic and mathematics. With his turn to anti-psychologism, Husserl had purportedly abandoned, and vehemently rejected, the effort to explain our knowledge of logic and mathematics by appeal to psychology. To account for logical validity, Husserl has to embrace a radical divorce ('χωρισμός', as Adorno calls it (e.g., [40] (p. 10); [42] (pp. 13, 62, 73, 121)) between the real and the ideal. Similarly to Schlick, Adorno attacks Husserl's χωρισμός (see [66] (pp. 105–110); [67] (pp. 154–156)). Like Schlick (in his 1910 contribution to the *Psychologismusstreit* [39]), Adorno (e.g., [40] (pp. 10–11)) argues that once Husserl enacts the χωρισμός, he is left with a fundamental epistemological difficulty of bridging the chasm, which he is unable to overcome.

Like Schlick, Adorno sees that Husserl's attempt to bridge the chasm fundamentally relies on his positivistic conception of intuitive knowledge. Adorno argues that, despite having forged the χωρισμός in order to reject the psychologistic element inherent in positivism, Husserl did not abandon the positivistic demand for the immediacy of all knowledge. This is what leads to his fundamental contradiction:

> Husserl the rationalist wants to confer the quality of immediate givenness to the *vérités de raison* of the Prolegomena through categorial intuition. For that quality is the sole source of justification for cognition to the positivist Husserl. [. . .] As a *deus ex machina* categorial intuition must reconcile Husserl's warring motifs. [40] (p. 202)

Contrary to Schlick's very general remarks on the topic, Adorno's in-depth study of Husserl focusses largely on the significance of categorial intuition. Adorno takes Husserl's 'positivistic' conception of categorial intuition to be what initiates a trajectory that ultimately leads to his subsequent doctrine of *Wessenschau*, which we have seen Schlick vaguely refer to.

11. Adorno against Husserl's appeal to intuition

In a move that resembles Schlick's argument much more closely than those already outlined, Adorno argues that categorial intuition fails to reconcile the contradiction precisely because its claims to immediacy falter. This is already evident in Husserl's method for demonstrating categorial intuition, which does not itself involve any direct intuition:

> Husserl, strictly speaking, does not arrive at the categorial intuitions by a phenomenological method, he does not describe any actual acts of categorial intuition, but he deduces them in a somewhat hypothetical form. [40] (p. 15)[34]

According to Adorno, Husserl could not have possibly arrived at categorial intuitions by some kind of immediate grasping, simply because they are *not* immediately known:

> Husserl calls the mediate *immediate* because he believes in the datum [. . .]. In turn he attributes to the immediate a generality and necessity which can be obtained only by mediation, by the progress of reflection. [40] (p. 16)

In other words, the categorial knowledge that Husserl describes is not immediately given to us in a way analogous to sense-data, but rather comes about through a process of reflection.

Here, at least one significant similarity to Schlick's critique of intuition should come at last to light. In criticising the confused notion of 'intuitive knowledge', Schlick's main contention had been that epistemologists' claims to immediacy are either disguised forms of genuine knowledge, or not knowledge at all. We have seen this move most clearly in his critique of Descartes, where he shows that while the *Cogito* is presented as a form of immediate knowledge, it is in fact a disguised form of conceptual knowledge. This is roughly also what Adorno is claiming here in criticising Husserl: while categorial intuition is presented as a case of immediate knowledge, it is in fact a product of mediation that remains unacknowledged by Husserl.

This is not to say that Adorno buys into the whole of Schlick's critique, which is in some ways much more radical than Adorno's position. Schlick unwaveringly insists in his absolute disjunction between intuition and knowledge: there can be no intuitive knowledge. While Adorno specifically rejects Husserl's claim that categorial intuition is an immediate form of knowledge, he nonetheless does buy into part of Husserl's claim to immediacy.

Contrary to Schlick, Adorno allows that the real mental act of judging, e.g., that 'This table is blue and round', is indeed immanent to my consciousness and thus immediately known. Adorno merely denies that, apart from the contents of my consciousness, I can also immediately know, without reflection, all the intentional objects that intuitively fulfil my judgement (see [67] (p. 159)). Thus, at least to some extent, he buys into the very myth of the given that Schlick had set out to dispel.

12. Conclusions

In the above, I have endeavoured to overlook the various hostilities that have overshadowed some of the significant affinities between the Vienna Circle and the Frankfurt School. I have, instead, focussed on some of these affinities in outlining two different trajectories in the critical reception of Husserl by Schlick and Adorno. I have demonstrated several important overlaps in these otherwise unlikely interlocutors. Both Schlick and Adorno (via Cornelius) share a common background in the Machian tradition, from which

they both critically distance themselves in different ways, and which they nonetheless partly seek to defend against Husserl's attack in the *Logische Untersuchungen*. Both Schlick and Adorno react critically to Husserl's effort to overcome the χωρισμός between the real and the ideal that he sets up within the context of the *Psychologismusstreit*. Both take Husserl to have failed in this effort. Both situate this failure in relation to Husserl's doctrine of intuition. Most significantly, both Schlick and Adorno agree that Husserl's appeal to a form of direct intuitive knowledge fails, because it pertains to an altogether different sort of mediated knowledge disguised as immediately given.

Of course, one might here insist that the aims of Schlick's and Adorno's similar approaches towards criticising Husserl radically diverge in their conflicting attitudes, e.g., towards metaphysics, or the relation between philosophy and science. Nevertheless, despite Adorno's misrepresentation of Schlick's position, and despite manifold other differences between the two, what I have sketched above merely indicates their potential affinities, and primarily constitutes a call for much further scholarly investigation and debate of this topic.

On a final note, I must clarify that the above has been a commentary on part of two philosophers' elaborate responses to Husserl (as mediated by a third). Both Schlick and Adorno focus on some highly contentious aspects of Husserl's oeuvre, and the role played by intuition in his epistemology has been widely discussed and disputed within the relevant scholarship. Given this article's scope, I have abstained from any attempt to evaluate their criticisms in light of such debates over interpreting Husserl's position. In recent scholarship, both Schlick's and Adorno's objections have been the subject of heavy criticism, and it is possible that both have fundamentally misconstrued Husserl's position (see e.g., [35,37,66]). It is questionable whether Husserl upheld the naïve account of intuition as immediate knowledge that is attributed to him by either of his two critics. Nonetheless, as both Adorno and Schlick acknowledge, a large part of their endeavour is directed against those of Husserl's successors that ushered in, according to Schlick, epistemologically suspect challenges to the Scientific World-Conception and, according to Adorno (who had subsequent hindsight), politically disastrous forms of irrationalism. Thus, even if Husserl scholars may be justified in their protests, these criticisms are perhaps best understood, at least in part, in light of the different contexts in which they were produced.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 However, Schlick's *oeuvre* includes several deviations, both in style and topic, from the technical work favoured by the Vienna Circle, including not only his musings on aesthetics, culture, or the meaning of life, but also (hitherto unpublished) works of literature.

2 See e.g., [19–21] (pp. 110–159), [22]. On Ryle's relation to Adorno, see Kramer and Wilcock [18], who argue against the assumption that this relation was polemical.

3 On Schlick's relation to Machism, see [26].

4 For an analysis of Husserl's argumentative strategy, see [28] (pp. 39–56). For an account of the earlier 19th century background of the controversy in clashes over the interpretation of Kant, see [29].

5 On Husserl's overall attitude to the relation between evolutionary biology and philosophy, see [31].

6 As Rollinger [27] (pp. 41, 44) shows, Cornelius responded by rejecting Husserl's misidentification of his views with Avenarius'.

7 Cornelius also receives a second round of criticisms in the second volume of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, where Husserl [30] (pp. 303–307) rejects his attempt to revive a Lockean account of abstraction. Schlick too would later side with Berkeley against Locke in rejecting the notion of general images ([32] (p. 18); see also [33] (p. 172), where Schlick criticises Locke for confusing psychology and logic) that Cornelius had defended. (He nonetheless refers to other aspects of Cornelius' connected account of

personhood [32] (pp. 123, 127), though, like Husserl, he criticises Cornelius' effort 'to derive all possible knowledge, even the necessity of Euclidean geometry, from the unity of personal consciousness' [32] (p. 129).

8 On Schlick's modification of Machism, see e.g., [26] (pp. 293–350).

9 Adorno overall portrays Husserl as engaged in a failed attempt to break out of idealism; see also [41].

10 For an overview of Schlick's argumentative strategy, and its relation to other positions in the *Psychologismusstreit*, see [28] (pp. 67–68, 71–73, 77, 79, 86–87).

11 Schlick further extends this line of criticism in more specifically rejecting Husserl's critique of psychologistic formulations of logical laws (mainly Herbert Spencer's conception of the law of non-contradiction [39] (p. 56)), and also objects to Husserl's distinction between vague real and exact ideal laws [39] (pp. 56–57); see [28] (pp. 72–73).

12 A case in point might be Max Scheler's 1913 call for a *Lebensphilosophie* influenced by Bergson and Husserl, among others, in which the Bergsonian method of intuition gets a phenomenological spin; see also [46]. While Schlick does not mention Scheler's name in 1913, he does discuss his views in his later objections against phenomenology's claim to know material *a priori* truths ([47]). For a critical discussion of the relation between Bergson and Husserl, see [48].

13 Schlick [32] (p. 100) maintains that there is, however, a purely theoretical goal that the Machian economy principle can capture in its reformulation as a principle of parsimony: science seeks to designate reality 'by a minimum number of concepts' (100); see also [26] (p. 304).

14 Schlick initially develops this evolutionist view in some of his early works on ethics and aesthetics; see e.g., [34,49,50]; see also [51,52].

15 On Schlick's underlying biological theory of play, see [34,50].

16 Schlick argues that, in their account of our knowledge of 'elements', the Machians ultimately 'still conflate knowing (*Erkennen*) with being acquainted with (*Kennen*), that is, with pure experiencing, mere being given' [32] (p. 231); see also [26] (pp. 331–332).

17 Schlick compares Bergson's views of intuition to the epistemology of the medieval mystics [53] (p. 142), [32] (pp. 81, 84).

18 Recall that Schlick's 1913 article [53] was printed in Avenarius' *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, with the aforementioned rapprochement evoked even in the journal's name.

19 Schlick [32] (p. 82) cites only the italicised parts of this passage.

20 For critical discussions of Schlick's objections defending Husserl, see e.g., [35,37].

21 On the over trajectory of Adorno's changing responses to Husserl, see e.g., [57].

22 See e.g., [57] (pp. 555–559); [58,59]. For an overview of Cornelius' outlook and relation to the Frankfurt School, see also [60] (pp. 66–69).

23 Corsi argues that Cornelius had encouraged his students to 'study phenomenology in order to unmask Husserl's alleged psychologism' [59] (p. 297).

24 Notably, Cornelius had defended Brentano's view that all judgements are reducible to one-term existential judgements (see [59] (p. 292), the rejection of which forms the backbone of Schlick's critique of intuition (see [26] (pp. 315–317).

25 For an overview of Horkheimer's early approaches to (primarily Machian) 'positivism', see [61] (pp. 51–57).

26 Corsi [59] (pp. 298–299) summarises six theses which Adorno first presents in 1924, and retains in his 1956 work.

27 On Adorno's overall critique of givenness, see e.g., [41].

28 For one qualified conception of the critique of metaphysics in the early Schlick, see [26] (pp. 294–296, 318–332).

29 Notably, Ryle did decry phenomenology's heading towards 'windy mysticism' [24] (p. 370), but that was in reference to Heidegger, not Husserl (or Hegel).

30 Ferencz-Flatz suggests that Adorno's critique of Husserl sought to 'avoid his arguments conflating [. . .] with those of Schlick' [65] (p. xv), an interpretation which may have the unintended effect of supporting the least charitable of the above options.

31 See [4]. On the proximity between Neurath and the Frankfurt School, see e.g., [2].

32 Perhaps a middle path between these two interpretations (remaining however at the level of pure conjecture) can be extrapolated from the origins of Adorno's reference to Schlick in Oxford. It is possible that Adorno's account of Schlick relied not so much on a careful reading of *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre*, but possibly on hearsay at Oxford, where Logical Empiricism was a central topic of discussion at the time. It would not have been unlikely that Ryle, who was acquainted with Schlick, had recommended this reference to his student. Ryle's mediating role could even possibly explain the similarities between Adorno's and Schlick's positions, though proving this would fall beyond the bounds of this enquiry.

33 For extended discussions of Husserl's account of categorial intuition, see e.g., [43,44].

34 Ryle [68] (p. 187) also raises this Schlickian objection.

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