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Hodge, J (2008) Poietic Epistemology: Husserl between Adorno and Heidegger. In: Adorno and Heidegger Philosophical Questions. Stanford University Press, pp. 64-86. ISBN 080475635X

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**Version:** Accepted Version

**Publisher:** Stanford University Press

Please cite the published version

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# Poietic Epistemology: Reading Husserl Through Adorno and Heidegger

*Joanna Hodge*

In this sense phenomenology sets about breaking out of a fetishism of concepts. It shakes up the ornaments, which take on in the domain of abstract conceptuality a mask-like, pernicious articulation of mere surface appearance, as the architecture and the music of the same period did with respect to sensuous ornamentations.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

These remarks fall into four brief sections after this introduction: a section on framing, a section on style, a section on some differences between three stages in Adorno's responses to Husserl, and a short, inconclusive excursus on Kant. Adorno's diagnosis of Husserl's phenomenology is well enough known: that it is an idealism driven to the point of subverting idealism. Less clear is what, in Adorno's considered view, is to take the place of such an outmoded idealism; nor is it clear that Adorno's subsequent return to a version of Kant's critical philosophy is to be preferred to the program launched by Husserl.<sup>2</sup> The point of this chapter is to suggest a reassessment of Husserl's phenomenology, via a re-reading of Adorno's critique, which I shall explicitly discuss, and in the light of Heidegger's appropriation of Husserl, which will have to remain less to the fore. The aim is to assess Adorno's critique of Husserl, and to suggest an odd collaboration between Heidegger and Adorno, which obscures the genuine inno-

vation at work in the notions of categorial intuition and of passive synthesis. I suggest that neither the appropriation of Husserlian themes, by Heidegger, nor the rejection of Husserl's phenomenology, by Adorno, does justice to the distinctiveness of Husserl's work. This can be shown to provide an account of a new formalism, as pure grammar, which is no longer held in place by Aristotelian or Hegelian distinctions between form and matter, concept and nature, cause and effect. This formalism can then be shown to be resistant both to any dialectical operation or modification and to the standard critiques of, for example, Kantian formalisms with respect to thinking of space and time and with respect to ethics.<sup>3</sup> This resistance results from Husserl shifting the frame of inquiry from a theory of cognition to a theory of meaning, and from a correspondence theory of truth to one of ideal fulfillments. Adorno's emphasis on reading Husserl as a theorist of cognition shows up what is wrong in the diagnosis and paradoxically reveals the radical innovation of thinking questions of cognition through questions of meaningfulness.

Adorno and Heidegger are perhaps understandably over-impressed by the systematic presentations of phenomenology made by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* of 1900/1901 and in *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* of 1913. They are thus less attuned to the intellectual struggle and the philosophical work to be found stretched out across Husserl's writings, in the preparatory drafts and lecture cycles.<sup>4</sup> A reading of Husserl's work, by contrast, across the published writings, rather than reading each as a separate event, leads to a less distorting, more open-ended notion of what Husserl's phenomenology consists in. It permits a consideration of what remains constant and what evolves in the course of a fifty-year struggle to formulate a philosophical breakthrough. This kind of transverse reading leads into the notion of a poietic epistemology, as given in my title, one which constructs itself in the practices of thinking, undertaken by each bearer of thought, for themselves, and it leads up to a notion of phenomenology, as that which is in process of formation. There is then an important difference to be marked between the temporal conditions for knowledge claims based on cognition, which have a certain universality and non-localizability in terms of time and historical context, and the temporal conditions for the fulfillment of meaning intentions, which are simultaneously universal and temporally neutral with respect to meaning

content, and temporally singular to the occasion of each fulfillment. I shall show that these temporal differences have not received the attention they deserve. This connects to a difference between the notions of time and space deployed in relation to Kant's notion of intuition and the determinations of time under development in Husserl's notion of intuition. In conclusion to these remarks, I shall draw attention to a gap between Husserl's thought and that of Kantian idealism, not noticed by Adorno, by attending to a complication of the notion of intuition in the famous 'Principle of all Principles' from section 24 of Husserl's *Ideas I*.

### Framing the Discussion

I shall make one remark about this notion of transverse reading, one about the notion of the poietic, and one about Adorno's mode of reading Husserl and Heidegger as conjoined, before proceeding further. One implication of the notion of transverse reading is that phenomenology is not to be understood as completed system or doctrine, and does not propose itself as attempting to provide either of these. This renders suspect Adorno's mode of reading Husserl as subscribing to what he calls, in 1924, a transcendental systematics, a term that drops out of the later readings. The 1924 text, under the title "Die Transzendenz des Dinglichen und Noematischen in Husserls Phänomenologie" ("The Transcendence of Thingliness and the Noematic in Husserl's Phenomenology") presents a markedly different reading of Husserl from that proposed in the later text from 1956.<sup>5</sup> Thus Adorno's reading of Husserl, too, is marked by an evolution in time, and by shifts of perspective, which may not be as internally consistent as the shifts identifiable in Husserl's writings. Husserl's writings can be seen to propose a system as a series of temporal relays, whereas those of Adorno appear to wander from a neo-Kantianism in the 1920s, to a Hegelianism in the 1930s and 1940s, and back to a different version of neo-Kantianism in the 1950s and 1960s. One distinctive feature of twentieth-century philosophy is that, in place of completed systems or delimited position statements, philosophy has tended to be written under the sign of incompleteness, and thus has the open-ended form of a practice which requires the active participation of its inheritors. This is filled out by Husserl's account of the necessary reactivation of meanings and the fulfillments of meaning

intuitions, in sense-giving acts, to secure sense. Nor is there any such definitive separation of philosophical domains of inquiry, which Adorno's notion of a critique of a theory of cognition seems to presuppose. I will, however, attribute an epistemology in formation to each of these three thinkers, Husserl, Heidegger, Adorno, for they write in the form of a practice requiring the active participation of its inheritors. However, none of them proposes an epistemology as free standing with respect to other dimensions of philosophical enquiry.

For Adorno, epistemology cuts off analysis of knowledge from its actual historical and political conditions, thus attempting to take meaning as a given, rather than as historically constituted. For Heidegger, there is a different sense in which epistemology cuts theorizing off from consideration of the sources of meaningfulness for the terms in which it is analyzed. In *Being and Time* this is done in terms of a priority for the notion of being-in-the-world, which later drops out in favour of the notion of the sendings of being, and their historical determinations (*Geschick/Geschichte des Seins*). The dispute between Adorno and Heidegger on how to understand these connections between knowledge, meaning, and history must regretfully be left to one side.<sup>6</sup> For Husserl, unlike, for example, Kant and Hume, the enterprises of epistemology and ontology do not separate off from one another, and one result of Adorno's emphasis on the limitations of epistemology as *Erkenntniskritik* is to draw attention to this. A poietic epistemology, then, is one which is by no means neutral with respect to ontological commitments, nor yet to the efforts of individual inquirers to make sense of transmitted and invented meanings. The two main aims of this chapter, then, are to propose a re-reading of Husserl; making out a case for considering the term 'poietic epistemology' as capturing what is distinctive about Husserl's work.

'Poietic' is then intended as a reprise of the Greek notion of innovative making, each time for the first time, as opposed to a notion of collectively constituted praxis, of repeatable actions. The emphasis is on a difference between an activity, *poiesis*, for which the rules are not pre-formed and are coextensive with the activity itself, and a practice, *praxis*, for which there are externally valorized criteria of what counts as well formed within the practice. In this sense of *poiesis*, there is no problem with distinctive modes of formulation, for example the register of Hölderlin's writing,

or indeed that of Samuel Beckett. Indeed, the point at issue is that which resists interpretation and appropriation, whereas, when both are subordinated under some more general term such as 'poetic writing,' there is a loss of the distinctive point of either, in an analysis of the rules of formation of some such generic practice. My thought then is that knowledge and meaning are more fully revealed for what they are in such practices of writing, where the commonalities between writers are less important than their distinctiveness, than in practices like rowing a boat, where isomorphism of movement is normative for the practice.

While Adorno emphasizes Husserl's alignment to *Erkenntniskritik*, he is also in the habit of running a reading of Husserl and of Heidegger together, and while this too might be contested, it does have the virtue of preventing a split between an ontological and an epistemological phenomenology setting in. He treats the ontological emphasis of the phenomenology of Heidegger and the epistemological emphasis in that of Husserl as complementary, intertwined, and equally unsatisfactory. My view is, rather, that Husserl is no less concerned with ontology than Heidegger is, and that Heidegger is as concerned with the modes of presentation to awareness as Husserl is. Indeed, the analyses in *Being and Time* of the modes of everydayness, of indifference, and of ecstatic exteriorization are nothing less than diagnoses of such different presentational modes.<sup>7</sup> Neither Heidegger nor Husserl, of course, is a classical metaphysician in the style of Leibniz, nor yet a theorist of knowledge in the style of Hume, or indeed in the mode of any of the twentieth-century positivists. Thus Adorno's attempt to read Husserl as an exponent of epistemology is significantly distorting, all the more so if, instead of 'epistemology' or 'theory of knowledge,' '*Erkenntnistheorie*' is translated more restrictedly as 'theory of cognition.' For this elides the role of the methodology of reduction, in guaranteeing evidence, and that of imaginary variation and of fantasy presentation in the articulation of Husserl's analyses of meaning.<sup>8</sup> The attempt to foreclose Husserl's writings under such a rubric is significant, and is to be explored and transformed in the following remarks. It is undermined by Adorno's own insistence on the continuity between Husserl and Heidegger. Thus I shall attempt, in part, to mobilize one part of Adorno's critique of Husserl against another, and, in part, to give Husserl the right of reply to Adorno's critique. This is legitimated by the posthumous publication of lecture

notes, to some although not all of which Adorno could not have had access. My thought is that Husserl's phenomenology is less caught up in the constraints of his historical moment than Adorno supposes.

Adorno has one line of argument with Husserl, and another with Hegel, about how to think dialectically. By contrast to the notion of suspended dialectics, explored by Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* (1966), Husserl has a rather different proposal to make concerning a movement from thinking to thought, and back, which, although not strictly speaking dialectical, captures some of the force of what Adorno seeks to retrieve from Hegelian dialectic while avoiding more effectively the absolutist tendency of any attempted appropriation of Hegelian dialectic, as a completed accomplishment.<sup>9</sup> Adorno disputes the notion of a Hegelian dialectic as a historically completed accomplishment in the labyrinthine complexities of *Negative Dialectics*, under the slogan "Philosophie, die einmal überholt schien, erhält sich am Leben, weil der Moment ihrer Verwirklichung versäumt ward." ("Philosophy, which once seemed overcome, remains alive since its moment of actualisation was missed").<sup>10</sup> Husserl would, of course, dispute both parts of this remark: he would dispute that philosophy could ever have been overcome, and he would also dispute that its moment of accomplishment could be thought to be unique, and could therefore have been missed. The attempt to use Hegel's notion of dialectic against Husserl, when Husserl is in dispute with Adorno about how to reinterpret it, is thus illegitimate.

Adorno fails to appreciate the nuance in Husserl's writings with respect to differences between natural and transcendental meaning, which recalls the better-known parallel between empirical and reduced pure consciousness. Natural meanings are given in historically specific contexts, and are subject to erosion and to what Husserl comes to call sedimentation; ideal transcendental meaning is given as limit condition for any such historical meaning, as its unspoken condition of possibility. Adorno also misses Husserl's nuance with respect to the accomplishments of thinking in relation to time, temporal process, and the constitution of a pure time, which does not, as Adorno supposes, deny a specificity of historical circumstance nor yet the workings of duration. For these are irreducible in the invention, preservation, and indeed distortion of meaning, which takes place in sedimentation. I shall argue that Adorno's challenge to Hus-

serl is worthy of close attention, but mainly in order to dispute various common misrepresentations of Husserl's phenomenology. It is spread out over three phases: in the 1920s, with his doctoral work; in the 1930s, when he reads the *Cartesian Meditations* (1931) in French, and wrongly deduces from it that Husserl was simply endorsing a return to a Cartesian dualism; and in the 1950s, when he publishes his *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, taking Husserl as exemplary of a certain historical foreclosure in theorizing knowledge.

Oddly, Adorno does not foreground the historical constraints within which each of these phases of his engagement with Husserl are to be placed, and he does not modify the critique in the light of the different aspects of Husserl's phenomenology, available to him in, respectively, the 1920s, the 1930s, and the 1950s. Born in 1903, Adorno could have, but appears not to have, attended Husserl's *Lectures on Passive Synthesis* from 1920–21, repeated in 1923, and in the winter semester, 1925–26.<sup>11</sup> He could also have attended the lectures of 1923–24, *First Philosophy*, parts one and two, on the Critical History of Ideas, and on the Phenomenological Reduction.<sup>12</sup> He is thus precluded from grasping what Iso Kern calls the threefold route into Husserl's phenomenology—that of a historical retrieval of the Cartesian intervention, that of descriptive intentional psychology, and that of reduction—all of which are designed to arrive at the same result: a retrieval of the task of philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Adorno rather seems to shift between the descriptive phenomenology of *Logical Investigations* and the Cartesian moves of the later texts, precisely failing to grasp their systematic intent. Nor does he mark the impact of Eugen Fink's publication in 1939, in the first issue of the *Revue internationale de philosophie*, of Husserl's now-famous essay "On the Origin of Geometry," in which he begins to elaborate publicly the notions of genesis and of history, towards which he was still working at the time of his death in 1938.<sup>14</sup> After the defeat of Nazism, Eugen Fink returned to teach in Freiburg im Breisgau, from 1946 on, and Adorno returned to Frankfurt am Main from exile in the United States.<sup>15</sup> I shall attempt to draw attention to the manner in which the changing historical and political conditions from the 1920s to the 1930s to the 1950s might have changed the manner in which Adorno approaches Husserl.



## Stylistic Specificities: Introducing Poietic Epistemology

The remark from Adorno with which I began seeks, as might be expected, to pick out something philosophically distinctive about Husserl's prose style. It is not, however, entirely clear which of the various artistic movements of the early twentieth-century Adorno is identifying Husserl with. The intended comparison is probably with the Bauhaus School of architecture and with the Second Vienna School of composition. In these, there is to be found a reduction of the components of composition to a minimum, along with the development of a rigorous set of rules for the use and arrangement of those components. This undoubtedly captures a feature of Husserl's inquiries. I take the suggestion to be that there is in Husserl's writings a bare economy of style, with the form of a modernist minimalism, which indeed contrasts strikingly with the baroque flourishes of Adorno's struggles with language, and contrasts both to a *fausse naïveté* of Heidegger's later style and to the neo-scholastic tone, in the earlier writings, in evidence both in the Marburg lectures and in *Being and Time*. For Husserl, form follows function, and function is determined by a commitment to analyzing how meaning works. It would then be necessary on another occasion to show how latter-day phenomenology has complemented, or supplemented, this with attention to an unworking of meaning, where the uncertainty and indeterminacy of notions of world and horizon disrupt the terms regionalized within the wider context, with Samuel Beckett, Maurice Blanchot, and Jean-Luc Nancy to the fore. In the interests of concision and focus, I shall have to leave this now to one side.

In terms of style, then, Husserl is a philosopher who manages to arrive in the twentieth century, for good or ill, whereas Adorno and Heidegger, in my view, are locked in struggle with their respective debts to German idealism and Marxian terminology, to Christian dogmatics and Greek thought, and with what has to be an ever-present sense of inferiority in relation to Nietzsche's way with words. Husserl, by contrast, is intimidated neither by Greek thought nor by a Christian inheritance, and, while perhaps a reader of Nietzsche, he is sufficiently a man of his own world not to be robbed by Nietzsche of the capacity to write. Reading Husserl, in the various redrafting of his texts, and in their various degrees of incomplete-

ness, reveals a craftsman of great skill, with respect to both words and concepts, with respect to both syntax and the articulation of argument. He arrives at an expression of thought of the highest order and the utmost rigor, saying neither more nor less than is licensed by his own protocols, in the twisting together of words and concepts, syntax, and line of argument. A diagnosis of a supervenience of mind, of intellectual processes, on physiological electrical brain states is a well-known conceit; an analysis of a supervenience of ideal concepts on the words of natural language, and of rigorous argument on arbitrary syntactical sequence is philosophically more telling, and is made available by Husserl's writings from *Logical Investigations* on. Pure logical grammar supervenes on the grammar of natural languages but is not identical to that of any one natural language.

As indicated, poietic epistemology imposes on each postulant bearer of knowledge the task and effort of forming apparently inchoate streams of sensory material into patterns and configurations, which can then be deployed to make a claim on conceptual status. In Husserl's case this then retrospectively reveals that there are transcendental structures implicit in those streams, given in advance of analysis, and holding these classificatory possibilities in place, in accordance with a logic of parts and wholes and a practice of imaginative variation. These structures play an irreducible role in permitting these patterns and configurations to come into form and to be held in place, for the attention of natural consciousness. Indeed, they ground the orderliness both of natural consciousness and of its contents, as presentations of what there is. These structures are then expressed and transmitted in natural languages, but those languages become alienated and alienating forms of transmission of meaning when the activity of forming meaning and identifying patterns is surrendered to the mechanisms of stabilizing meaning in definitive, not provisional, determinations of meaning. An open-ended process of writing concepts and rigorous orderliness into existence is what the term 'poietic' in my title is intended to capture, and it seems especially apposite to attend to this process, in its rather different guises, in the writings of Husserl, of Heidegger, and of Adorno. For each is in process of generating a distinctive philosophical intervention, by a refinement and transformation of the available resources for linguistic expression.

The word 'generation,' here, is to be preferred to a word such as 'pro-

duction,' for all the usual reasons: that production suggests working in accordance with a pre-given schema. By contrast I seek here to draw attention to these various attempts at invention of new possibilities of schematization, in response to reconfigurations of spatio-temporal relations, in relation to the kinds of entities that are identified within them, and in response to corresponding intensifications and distentions of sensibility. Roughly speaking, these developments call for a recasting of the account of transcendental aesthetics, as first set out by Kant, in the first *Critique*, to which I read Husserl as making a major contribution, but that would be a topic for another, much longer paper.<sup>16</sup> I already have here then three unfulfillable promissory notes: on an unworking of meaning, to be thematized with the help of Beckett, Blanchot, and Nancy; on supervenience, a notion borrowed from analytical philosophy, for an account of a logic of sense, in relation to natural language; and on a reconfiguration of transcendental aesthetics, to be explored as a reception of, and reworking of, the meanings bequeathed to philosophy by Kant's transcendental innovations. These three mark the as-yet-unclaimed strengths of a Husserlian inheritance, and they provide the three main strands of a proposed defense of Husserl's phenomenology, from the combined critiques, and random combinations of themes, in which such critiques often consist, from Adorno and Bergson; from Heidegger and Sartre.

There is of course an irony in the fact that it is Heidegger who draws attention to the proximity between such *poiesis* and thinking, in his reflections in the later writings on the word *Dichtung*, and on the poetry of Hölderlin; and that Adorno analyzes the possibilities and restrictions imposed by stylistic difference, while also engaging in polemics against Heidegger about Hölderlin. I suggest, however, that, between them, Adorno and Heidegger split word from flow of thought, concept from its embedding in syntax; they are, in short, caught in the toils of an all-too-Kantian set of antinomies, which Husserl—by starting again from the beginning, and by rethinking imagination, intuition, synthesis, transcendentalism, apriorism—can turn around. Husserl, then, is the thinker with whom these antinomies of a philosophical inheritance are to be resolved. This, of course, again, has its comic edge against Adorno's critique of Husserl, as developed in the 1930s, which is predicated on the presumption that the antagonisms of the real cannot be registered in the unmediated insights

postulated by Husserlian intuition.<sup>17</sup> I shall, however, deploy the notion of antinomy in support of Husserl and as a defense against Adorno's critique. Nevertheless, Adorno does have a serious reading of Husserl, which is not simply to be put to one side, even if it is somewhat selective in its choice of texts to read, and overburdened by an uncritical commitment to the rightness of certain Hegelian notions: the concept, dialectics, and mediation, just for example. Adorno's reading repays careful scrutiny, not simply because of the scope of its influence, and only a sketch of this can be attempted here.

### Three Stages in Adorno's Reading of Husserl, Three Points of Contestation

The three stages of Adorno's reading of Husserl are made up of the work going into the doctoral dissertation of 1924, already mentioned; the papers written in Oxford in the 1930s; and his *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, from 1956. The pieces from the 1930s—one written in 1937, which forms the basis of part four of *Zur Metakritik*, and another published in 1940, in, of all places, the *Journal of Philosophy*—are extensively commented on in Adorno's exchange of letters with Walter Benjamin, making clear the degree of Adorno's investment in his critique.<sup>18</sup> The texts read by Adorno are principally *Logical Investigations* and *Cartesian Meditations*, to which he had access in the French translation by Emmanuel Levinas, from 1931. To a lesser extent, he draws on the 1913 first volume of *Ideas*. In 1955, he could but appears not to have consulted the recently published volumes of the complete Husserl edition, *The Idea of Phenomenology* (HUA II), the second and third books of *Ideas* (HUA IV and V) and the critical edition of *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (HUA VI).<sup>19</sup> Striking is the layered nature of Adorno's *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, and the manner in which the focus for critique shifts. The emphasis is on a theory of cognition and of transcendental systematics early on; the notion of antinomy and the use of the Hegelian concept of mediation comes to the fore in the 1930s; and a refusal to distinguish between Kantian and Husserlian apriorism, and transcendentalism, comes out most clearly in the reframing of the analysis in the 1950s. The doctoral dissertation of 1924 was prepared under the direction of Hans Cornelius, who

had famously found Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragic Drama* to be "an incomprehensible morass." It is then legitimate to wonder what sense he may have made of Husserl, and what degree of agreement with his own position he expected of his doctoral students. It would be instructive to read Cornelius's critique of Husserl, to discover how much of Adorno's reading is determined by the moves made in it.<sup>20</sup> While in the 1930s Adorno reads Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* in Emmanuel Levinas's French translation, when it comes to publication in 1956, he makes use of the German edition, which has in the meantime appeared, for some but not all of his citations. It is just one of those ironies of intellectual history that Levinas here gives comfort to the Hegelian onslaught against Husserl; it also raises the question what Levinas might have made of the welding together of Husserl and Hegel by Eugen Fink. The fraught relation between Husserl and Heidegger must also remain to one side, since their various mutual accusations of anthropologism lead into difficulties and complexities well beyond the compass of this chapter.<sup>21</sup>

There are two problems with Adorno's reading, one concerning his notion of logic and another concerning his notion of consciousness. Adorno refuses the notion of a transcendental logic, and reads Husserl's notion of logic as if it were a discursive logic and a logic of argumentation. However, both Husserl and Kant have a richer notion of logic, to which Adorno is reluctant to do justice, since it competes more strongly than a discursive logic of argumentation with the residual notion of dialectical logic that he, Adorno, extracts from the remnants of Hegel's system. Here it would be necessary to interpolate a reading of Husserl's *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and of the sections published as appendices to that in the German edition in 1974, now translated into English as the introduction to the 1920–21 lectures, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, by Anthony Steinbock.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Adorno's commitment to a kind of philosophy of consciousness, which is refracted through the trickery of false consciousness, leads him to miss the manner in which Husserl has a thinking of consciousness as giving access to the structure of reality itself. Where, for Adorno predication and objectivity can come apart, for Husserl the conditions of meaningfulness just are the conditions for the constitution of objectivities in their ontological independence. What distinguishes Husserl from the naïveté of ordinary

language philosophy is that he distinguishes between empirical and transcendental meaning, between *Bedeutung* and *Sinn*; thus his conception of meaning is not mortgaged to the constraints of any particular natural language. Husserl has a theory of meaning, not a theory of cognition, and is thus not restricted to the limits set out by a theory of knowledge nor to those of any particular natural language. Adorno identifies this Kantian moment in Husserl's thinking, but rather than also identifying the differences between Husserl and Kant, especially on the question of the status of a thinking of time and space, in relation to the constitution of what there is, Adorno seems to presume that since Hegel is an improvement on Kant, so Hegel must also be an improvement on Husserl. One of the aims of this reading then is to reopen the question of the connection between Husserl and Hegel, who, for Adorno of course, are entirely distinct, whereas, as noted, for Eugen Fink, they are oddly close. The distance between Frankfurt and Freiburg is undoubtedly greater after the World War II than before.

For Husserl, by contrast to the Hegelian enmeshing of consciousness in an account of freedom and history, consciousness is articulated along the lines of a transcendental logic, which simultaneously maps the contours of consciousness, and the contours of what there is. In so far as any empirical thinking fails to measure up to the structure of reality, and fails to attend to the things themselves, it has remained anchored in natural prejudice, and failed to attend to the intimations of this rigorously given logic of possible meanings. Thus for Husserl there can be no split between thinking what there is, and analyzing the contents of consciousness, whereas of course, for Adorno, it is these gaps between thinking and what there is that generate antinomy, political delusions, and social catastrophes, the genesis of which he seeks to trace out. These differences point up the importance of a properly conceived transcendental logic, and point up the gap not just between what Husserl intends with 'consciousness' and what it means for Adorno, but also between Kant and Husserl on the notion of the transcendental. On this topic Husserl is loquacious from *Logical Investigations* onwards, so it is, to put it mildly, odd that Adorno refuses to distinguish sharply between them, and then, perversely, prefers Kant.

Adorno thus misses the point of Husserl's innovations and fails to understand the importance of the stylistic specificity of Husserl's thinking,

even while pointing it out. He also manages to be quite alarmingly offensive, in his deployment of sexual innuendo and political diatribe, in ways that on reflection are rather more comically apposite against their author, sheltering in Oxford during the dark days of Nazism, rather than against Husserl, who seems to me to be one of those rare figures who are as admirable as they are self-absorbed. Writing for publication in 1956, Adorno claims in part four of *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie* that Husserl was “already surpassed before the arrival of Hitler,” thus oddly agreeing with Martin Heidegger, whose views on the inadequacies of Husserl’s phenomenology are a matter of ungracious record. Adorno is skeptical with respect to Husserl’s attempt to re-establish philosophy as a systematic, organized discipline, and to align it as rigorous *Wissenschaft*, in the phrase of the 1911 *Logos* article. Adorno reads this attempt as a failure to grasp the historical conditions for philosophical work and as a failure to take up the inheritance of dialectical thinking, a discussion of which forms the third part of his meta-critique of Husserl’s philosophy.

There are then connections between these three aspects of Husserl’s thinking, as contested by Adorno: the identification of Husserl as concerned with *Erkenntnistheorie*, already opened up for discussion; the scope of the concept of rigorous science; and a problem concerning the interpretation of Husserl’s commitment to idealism, which, as noted, is over-swiftly identified with a certain view of Kant’s idealism. The contestation concerning what it means to claim philosophy to be *Wissenschaftlich* also turns on a question of translation, for it can mean ‘scientific’ and it can mean ‘systematic’ but perhaps in this context it is best translated as ‘having the form of rigorous disciplinarity.’ The point is most swiftly made by noting that mathematics is the standard appealed to by Husserl most often, and that mathematics is no more a natural science than historical inquiry is. The appeal to mathematics gives access to a notion of transcendental meaning, neutral between natural languages, with no ontological regionalization. Adorno seems to assume that the commitment to a rigorous disciplinarity must mean that there is no room for a role for, and understanding of, historical difference, and this Husserl contests, even and especially in relation to geometry. This indicates Adorno’s commitment to a misguided notion of scientificity, affirming some neo-Kantian dualism concerning natural and historical science. It also secures as unchallenged Hegel’s no-

tion of rigorous disciplinarity, as in a “*System der Wissenschaften*.” One of the various disservices rendered by Eugen Fink is a covering over of this contestation between Husserl and Hegel on the topics of the status of both logic and *Wissenschaftlichkeit*.

Adorno’s critique of Husserl in the 1920s takes as its focus the supposedly undecided status of the inquiries between idealism and realism. This criticism highlights Adorno’s impatience with Husserl’s project of developing an idealism, compatible with a materialism, about the nature of what there is, and with a realism, of some kind, about the contents of knowledge claims. Adorno focuses attention on the supposition of an interdependency of immediately given contents, as the first presumption of transcendental method, and seeks to put pressure on the notion of immediacy. He remarks that this emphasis leads to a relative neglect of the notion of an insight into essences (*Wesensschau*) and of the theory of abstraction through which Husserl seeks to explain how, from the empirical definiteness of particular experiences, it is all the same possible to form general ideas, under which such particulars may be subsumed. Unlike Heidegger in the introduction to the lectures *The Phenomenology of Religion*, Adorno does not identify as a strength Husserl’s distinction between the processes of a generalization of ideas from particulars, and of a formalization of ideas, each on the basis of their givenness, in concrete meaning contexts. This distinction is implicit in *Logical Investigations* and is made explicit in section 13 of *Ideas I*, through the development of the phenomenological reduction, prior to demonstrating, in a second reduction, their transcendental and, for Husserl, ontologically determinate status.<sup>23</sup> Adorno also queries the distinction in the formulation of the ‘Principle of all Principles’ from *Ideas I*, between the phenomenal givenness of original perceivings, and the supposition that nevertheless access is thereby given to ‘things.’ This I think shows a misapprehension concerning the purpose and function of phenomenological reduction, which does not so much deny the existence of things in the world as deny their relevance in the process of explaining how there comes to be access to and knowledge of things, without simply presupposing knowledge of what there is to be accessed. Husserl not unreasonably supposes that it is a mistake to presume knowledge of things in the world by which to measure the adequacy of the knowledge supposedly to be derived. The phenomenological reduction then is to be understood as



eliminating assumptions about that which is to be known rather than denying its status as independent of empirical consciousness. The next stage of the argument proceeds to a reduction of these phenomenally and phenomenologically given contents of consciousness, to reveal their transcendental conditions, given as the orderliness of what there is.

Adorno's reading of Husserl in the 1920s focuses on the status of the 'thing,' a theme for Kant but not for Husserl, and it generates a series of perplexities connected to the distinction between the 'thing' and the '*noema*.' However, this distinction and the perplexities generated by it can occur only when Husserl's own distinction between empirical or psychological givenness and determinate meaning relations has been undercut.<sup>24</sup> This reading reveals a failure to understand the point and nature of the project of reduction, whereby both empirical contingency and the opacity and unreachability of the Kantian thing in itself are eliminated in favor of an analysis of the possibility of determinate meaning. The engagement with Husserl culminates towards the end of the second section of Adorno's treatment with the following remark: "It is evident that the opposition between *noema* and *noesis* cannot be made the leading principle for a theory of knowledge; the leading principle is much more the opposition between thingly and phenomenal being."<sup>25</sup> Adorno thus both refuses the shift of domain of inquiry brought about by Husserl's neologisms, *noesis* and *noema*, and refuses the program of reduction that would make him hesitate to invoke as neutral between things and appearing this term 'being.' He continues: "Concerning '*noema*' in the sense in which we are allowed to use the word, as the content of all mediated givenness, we know of it only through intentional lived experience, in which it comes to givenness; *noesis* and *noema* are thus inseparable. We can then for the rest of our investigation do without the term '*noema*.'"<sup>26</sup> It is again, to put it mildly, odd that Adorno should rehearse against Husserl's distinction the very feature that Husserl supposes to be its strength, indeed the very point of inventing it: the inseparability of *noesis*, as act, and *noema*, as determinate content of conscious activity. Furthermore, their identity conditions are not the same, since a number of distinct acts can intend the same meaning content; nor do they display the same temporal properties. It is furthermore the task for a transcendental logic to regulate the relation between intending and intended, at this transcendentially reduced level, and to guarantee that the

determinate specifications of contents of *noemata* set a standard for distinguishing between misleading and adequate designations of *noeses*.

In the 1930s, perhaps unsurprisingly, Adorno deploys Hegelian terminology more emphatically against Husserl, identifying a problem with the lack of mediation between an ego pole, and a pole of what is attended to in intentionality. Adorno complains that these two are subordinated arbitrarily to an enforced sameness, in the imposition of the notion of a 'pole.' This however disregards the differences with respect to *noeses* and *noemata* pointed out above, and he himself goes on to identify the distinction between these two poles with the subject-object distinction. He then proceeds to prove to his own satisfaction that there can be no direct access between them of the kind that he supposes Husserl labors to demonstrate. The lack of dialectical mediation is, however, an objection to a formulation, in terms of subjects and objects, but not to Husserl's formulation, which is precisely not caught up in an unresolved oscillation between mutually exclusive modes of conceptual idealism and material actuality. It is also remarkable that Adorno has to have been unaware of Husserl's attempts in the papers and lectures written during the 1930s to come to terms with a genesis and historical determination of certain, if not all, ideal essences. Some of this material was published in 1954, as *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*, following up the 1939 essay on geometry.<sup>27</sup> For Husserl, ideality is not to be opposed to historicity, while Adorno overhastily identifies these Husserlian essences as Platonic and as external to history. Husserl, from beginning to end, is clearly in this respect anti-Platonic and aware of the emergence of ideality in historical time. The publication of the essay "On the Origin of Geometry" by Fink in 1939, in the first volume of the *Revue internationale de philosophie*, does not seem to have informed Adorno's reception here, or rather only seems to have confirmed his mistaken thought that for Husserl all essences exist mathematically in pure space time.<sup>28</sup> For the upshot of Husserl's essay is to show that even for these essences, there are questions of genesis, sedimentation, and erosion of meaning to be explored.

There is undoubtedly an open question about precisely what the connection between philosophy, as rigorous discipline, and history, as the context for actual meaning fulfillments, might have been thought by Husserl to be, but Adorno does not pursue it all that far. Instead, he substitutes

the long discussion in part three of *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, of the lack of dialectics in Husserl's phenomenology; in part four, through a congruence between Husserl and Heidegger on phenomenology, he seems to attribute to Husserl responsibility for Heidegger's affirmations of Hitler. In Husserl's favorite observation concerning the universal plague leading to the extinction of human life, without bringing the slightest danger to that phenomenological remainder, the pure ego, Adorno appears to trace the precursor of that nihilism which he attributes to Heidegger. This nihilism can be understood to develop out of the being towards death of *Being and Time*, into the nihilating nothingness of the inaugural lecture "What Is Metaphysics?" (1929) and the Rectoral Address of 1933, and on into the alarming tone of the analysis of violence in the lectures *Introduction to Metaphysics* from 1935–36.<sup>29</sup> The reference concerning the universal plague is to section 49 of *Ideas I*, where absolute consciousness is adduced as the residuum of the abolition of the world (*Weltvernichtung*). This supposed continuity is, however, entirely spurious, even within Heidegger's texts, which rather form a critique of nihilism, and certainly with respect to any supposed continuity between Husserl and Heidegger. There is, however, at least a consistency in the failure to consider that Husserl may have a notion of history, in parallel with his notions of logic, and of rigorous disciplinarity, separate from and in contestation with those of Hegel. There is throughout a problem with Adorno's presumption that the idealisms of Kant and of Hegel exhaust the possibilities for idealism, and with his refusal to allow for a third idealism that is less irreducibly opposed to an inheritance of empiricism and positivism than his reconstructions of Hegel's and Kant's views.

### Excursus on Kant

My view is that Husserl's transcendental philosophy, even when still only implicit in the *Logical Investigations*, provides much more than a theory of cognition; and that it is to be distinguished from Kantian transcendentalism, to the point of promising an alternative account of transcendental aesthetics, not separable from cognition, and not privileging the space-time of theories of knowledge, or indeed of mathematics, above the space-time of making sense of human existence. For specific human ex-

istence is predicated of all Husserl's inquiries about thinking, and this is why there must always be a repetition of a reduction to an ideal ego, in the attempt to neutralize the effects of such specificity. The confirmation or refutation of such neutralization lies in the possibility and impossibility of re-enacting reduction. Adorno identifies in Husserl an adoption of a timeless transcendentalism, direct from Kant, and to this he returns in his 1959 lectures on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1995).<sup>30</sup> In the writings of the 1930s, however, it emerges that Husserl is committed to a drastically revised notion of transcendentalism, for which *apriorism* is not to be opposed to the thought of ideas developing in time, in specific historical circumstances, and is not separable from an articulation of time. Thought for Husserl is thus subject to the vicissitudes of historical process, and sedimentation. This is re-thematized by Heidegger, as a process of erosion and erasure, which is then subjected to the Heideggerian absolutization as the forgetting of being, *Seinsvergessenheit*, memorably culminating in an oblivion of being. Husserl's own position is rather more nuanced, and deserves to be pursued through the 1920s in the lectures on active and passive synthesis and on transcendental logic.

Adorno declares in his first lecture on Kant: "Thus this interest in synthetic *a priori* judgments is connected with the fact that Kant really does require truth to be timeless."<sup>31</sup> This notion of a 'timelessness' of truth requires careful examination, for Kant hypothesizes several forms of time, even in the first *Critique*. There are the conceptions of time and space set up, in advance of the analytic of concepts, as pure forms of intuition, which provide the backdrop for a determination of time on each occasion of a schematization of concepts, when sensibility and reason are set to work, together to produce knowledge of repeating patterns, as re-identifiable entities. There is then a categorial determination of time, in the analytic of principles, in the discussion of the analogies of experience, with time there determined as permanence, succession, and co-existence. There is then an indication of further dimensions of time, which cannot be determinately thought, in relation to the Ideas of Reason, intimated in the postulates of empirical thought. There is finally the surmised time, in which the task of transcendental critique is to be developed. However, the time of moral judgment is a quite other time, and only the eschatological time of divine judgment provides the horizon of reflection required for

secure and incontrovertible moral judgment. Human beings, by contrast, get their moral judgments wrong, and even if right, cannot know that they are right. Famously, the chasm between pure reason and practical reason is to be bridged by the third *Critique*, but even more importantly, the gap between the time of human judgment and the time of divine judgment is intimated as a problem in the third *Critique*, in the analytic of the sublime, and again in the separation of an idea of divine providence from that of a human prognosis. This last is developed in the essay on whether the human race is improving, deteriorating, or remaining on an even keel, in "The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Faculty of Law."<sup>32</sup>

The relation between the orderly forward directed time of causal sequences, and the interrupted time of judgment is set out in outline in an interruption of the harmonious order of judgments of taste, in a drawing out and slowing down of time, in the formation of judgment, and in a suspension of time, in the experience of magnitude and might introduced in the analytic of the sublime.<sup>33</sup> It is important first to mark a disagreement with Adorno's reading of Kant; and, second, to refuse his elision of the differences between Husserl's transcendental inquiries and Kant's *apriorism*, which with somewhat more reason, although still not without the possibility for challenge, can be thought to be ahistorical and timeless. As a marker for the manner in which it might be important to attend more carefully than Adorno does to differences between Husserl and Kant, I should in conclusion like to draw attention to an ambiguity in the 'Principle of All Principles', from *Ideas I*, section 24, which is invoked by both Adorno and by Derrida in *La voix et le phénomène*. Neither of them marks a significant shift in Husserl's sentence, in part because each is influenced by Kant's determination of the notion of intuition, thus concealing from them both the change in the scope of intuition resulting from Husserl's innovations. I shall give first the German and then the English:

Doch genug der verkehrten Theorien. Am Prinzip aller Prinzipien: daß jede originär gebende Anschauung eine Rechtsquelle der Erkenntnis sei, daß alles, was sich uns in der 'Intuition' originär (*sozusagen in seiner leibhaften Wirklichkeit*) darbietet, einfach hinzunehmen sei, als was es sich gibt, aber auch nur in der Schranken in denen es sich da gibt, *kann uns keine erdenkliche Theorie irre machen*.<sup>34</sup>

But enough of such misdirected theorizing. As principle of all principles, no such suspect theory can make us go wrong: that every originally given intuition

(*Anschauung*) forms a justified source for knowledge, all of that which offers itself in 'intuition' (*Intuition*), that is in a living reality, is simply to be accepted as what it gives itself out as, however, only within the limits within which it gives itself.

It would of course be worth pursuing the differences between these limits, which are determined on each occasion of givenness, and the limits, set out once and for all by Kant, which sustain and mark out the reliable application of concepts. Neither Adorno nor Derrida however draws attention to the shift from *Anschauung* to *Intuition*, and neither considers its significance. It is the shift from passive synthesis, a habituality in a surrounding world, to active cognizing, in a clarified horizon of lived reality, and from a passive givenness, to a positing of the evidential status of the evidence. This is a shift from the active existentially committed German form to the neutral or suspended Latin form, marking for Husserl a shift from a level of phenomenological psychology to that of a reduced transcendental phenomenology, which speaks Latin. Now it might be possible to challenge this shift, and to argue for the greater philosophical potency of the ordinary language use, uncorrected by any attempt at a pseudo neutrality, but what is revealed is a process of detecting in the ordinary language use the transcendently given, but perhaps linguistically inarticulable, neutral form. Granted Adorno's attention to and satire with respect to the workings in Husserl's text of notions like "*erledigende Arbeit*" (tasks to be accomplished, rather like a shopping list) and "*Innerlichkeit des Leistens*" (interiority of achievement), it is odd that this more obviously philosophically inflected modulation should pass unnoticed.

Through Heidegger's reading of Husserl, as summarized in the 1925 lectures *History of the Concept of Time*, the themes of transcendental, or categorial, intuition; of apriorism; and the innovation of the concept of intentionality come to the fore.<sup>35</sup> What is repressed is the role of reduction; the insistence on the parallelism between phenomenological psychology and transcendental phenomenology; and the evolution of the analysis of internal time consciousness into a questioning of a connection between thinking time and thinking essential structure. This last might have been developed into an analysis of temporal and historical indices for all ideal essences, not so far from Benjamin's proposed theory of knowledge, which both Benjamin and Adorno conceive as oppositional to that of Husserl. There is then the hidden cargo of Adorno, in writing *Zur Metakritik der*

*Erkenntnistheorie*, attempting to do justice to Benjamin's critique of phenomenology, although without Benjamin's gift for transforming critique into affirmation. Through Adorno's readings of Husserl, what emerges is more negative than Benjamin's passing remarks about Husserl. In their over-determination these readings reveal the challenge that Husserl's notions of scientificity, of logic, and even of ahistoricity, pose to Adorno's presumption that Hegel is best on logic and science. My proposal by contrast is to read Husserl as providing an open ended thinking of time, resistant both to Adorno's critique and to Heidegger's appropriation. It may be developed into an understanding of a fluctuating role for conceptions of history in thinkings of time, which, with Heidegger, gets blocked by the appeal to the opacities of the *Ereignis* and *Enteignis* of being, and, with Adorno, turns into a petrification of time in a naturalized history, embalmed by the movements of commodity fetishism. This intensified notion of commodity fetishism is in my view opposed to a political reading of Benjamin's notion of natural history, which might rather be aligned to Husserl's account of historical aprioris. By contrast the petrification of time, analyzed in critiques of capitalism, seems to have something oddly in common with Heidegger's notions of an enframing technicity, as a stalling of the ebb and flow of history.<sup>36</sup>

### Polemical Last Paragraph

There is something startlingly irrelevant about the arrival of Hitler's name on the scene in Adorno's discussions of Husserl, a brutality that Adorno performs, without regard for Husserl's own experiences as a convert Protestant, pursued even in his manuscripts by Hitler's minions. There is something also rather desperate about Adorno's attempts to prove that everyone else in the world, except himself, is contaminated by proximity to a black-shirted heritage, when even Heidegger seems to have drawn the line at brown shirts. As remarked, there is something distasteful about Adorno's observations on Husserl, drafted in the 1930s in the safety of his Oxford exile, when Husserl was in there, in Prague, well into his seventies, trying to contribute as best he could to the formation of a spiritual and intellectual resistance to the coming disaster. It ill behoves the philosopher to abandon the name 'rigorous science' in favor of cheap polemics, and

it is Husserl, not Adorno, who takes up the task of thinking, not in the name of humanity, or in the name of Auschwitz, or even in the name of truth, but in his own name, painfully signing and owning every twist and turn, every grammatical inflection and hard-won insight. These twists and turns, as is now known, drove Heidegger, with his task of redaction, to the irritated expostulation that Husserl had got lost in his own manuscripts, but it is this care, this detailed work, this personalized craftsmanship, that I seek to draw attention to here, and for which I seek to justify the name 'poietic epistemology.'