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## Thinking outside the circle: The Geistkreis and the Viennese "Kreis-Culture" in America

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THINKING OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE:  
THE GEISTKREIS AND THE  
VIENNESE “KREIS-CULTURE” IN  
AMERICA

OHAD REISS-SOROKIN

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CENTER FOR THE  
HISTORY OF POLITICAL ECONOMY  
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## Thinking Outside the Circle: The Geistkreis and the Viennese “*Kreis*-Culture” in America

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Abstract:

Besides their ideas and social-networks, émigré intellectuals bring with themselves practices for engagement with intellectual work. This article focuses on one such practice: the intellectual Kreis [circle]. It focuses on the Geistkreis, an interwar Viennese interdisciplinary intellectual circle. Based on archival research, the article uses a number of case studies to show that the Kreis was employed by the Viennese emigres as a mental scheme and as a recipe for action. It argues that the émigrés’ adherence to the Kreis-structure explains the friction between them and their hosts. By following the attempts of former Geistkreis members to create Kreis-like institutions in America, the article shows that the Kreis was more than mere organizational form. It represented an epistemical commitment to knowledge-making as a collective effort, and the preference of general theoretical knowledge over specialized research. It also entailed an intermingling of “work” and “life” that did not conform to American norms.

### 1. “The Stranger”

On January 6, 1943 it was Alfred Schutz’s turn to present his work in front of his colleagues in the “General Seminar” of the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research.<sup>1</sup> Five years had passed since the day he received the news that his native Vienna was annexed to Hitler’s Germany, and that he should find a shelter outside Austria.<sup>2</sup> Schutz chose New York City to be his new home, whither

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<sup>1</sup> “General Seminar: Problems of the Social Sciences, Fall Term 1942”, Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research Collection, NS.02.02.01, box 3, folder 26, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

<sup>2</sup> Michael D. Barber, *The Participating Citizen: A Biography of Alfred Schutz* (Albany, NY, 2004), 73.

he moved together with his family. Despite his impressive list of scholarly contributions, until late in his life Schutz was not a full-time academic. In Vienna he led a career as a legal consultant, while maintaining his involvement in serious intellectual and musical undertakings. Coming to New York, Schutz was lucky enough not only to win a position with Reitler & Co. Bank, his former Vienna employer, but also to become involved with the “University in Exile” of the New School for Social Research.

The “General Seminar,” the forum where Schutz delivered his lecture, was the crown-jewel of the New-School’s “Graduate Faculty”, where all the members could come together for a weekly discussion about themes of general relevance.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the seminar participants were German émigrés, who escaped Germany with the rise of Nazism, almost a decade earlier.<sup>4</sup> On the face of it, the “General Seminar” seemed to be the ideal audience for Schutz’s new lecture, which he titled: “The Stranger”.<sup>5</sup>

In this study Schutz intended to “...study in terms of a general theory of interpretation the typical situation in which a stranger finds himself in his attempt to interpret the cultural pattern of a social group which he approaches and to orient himself within it.” The term “stranger” according to Schutz refers to

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<sup>3</sup> Compare: Arthur J. Vidich, “Notes on the History of the General Seminar”, Arthur J. Vidich Papers, NA.0009.01, box 8, folder 15, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

<sup>4</sup> Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research*, trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (Amherst, 1993), chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Schutz, “The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology,” *American Journal of Sociology* 49/6 (1944), 499-507. Alfred Schutz was a philosopher and a sociologist. In his work he adapted Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology to the study of methodological and empirical questions about the nature of social reality and the social sciences. In his most celebrated work, *The Phenomenology of the Social World (Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt)*, originally published in Vienna in 1932), he provided a phenomenological grounding to Max Weber’s theoretical concepts. In America, Schutz, together with his Geisteskreis friend Felix Kaufmann, was a part of the revival of phenomenology in the New School. Schutz influenced many sociologists, the most famous of them being Harold Garfinkel who adapted Schutz’s teachings into what he calls *Ethnomethodology*, an approach that remains influential in the world of ethnography and STS. For biographical studies on Schutz see Helmut Wagner, *Alfred Schutz: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago, 1983), and Barber, *The Participating Citizen*. On Schutz’s role in the New School and the New School phenomenologists see Lester Embree & Michael D. Barber, eds. *The Golden Age of Phenomenology at the New School for Social Research, 1954-1973* (Athens, OH, 2017). On Schutz’s influence on ethnomethodology see Martyn Hammersley, “Alfred Schutz and ethnomethodology: Origins and departures,” *History of the Human Sciences* 32/2 (2019), 59-75.

“...an adult individual of our times and civilization who tries to be permanently accepted or at least tolerated by the group which he approaches.” The paradigmatic example for such a stranger is, according to Schutz, the immigrant.<sup>6</sup> While the immigration experience was hardly foreign to any of the participants in this conversation, Schutz’s presentation was ill received. Schutz, taken aback by the harsh criticism, reported about it to his surprised close friend, the political scientist Eric Voegelin. In the letter, Schutz expresses his doubts regarding the desirability of publishing the article “...because I am a stranger myself and, in this regard, I am confronted with a rather delicate situation.”<sup>7</sup>

In order to understand the negative reaction to Schutz’s presentation we will have to pay attention to a conference that was held in the New School a few years prior to Schutz’s lecture, on the occasion of the Graduate Faculty's fourth anniversary. The conference focused, similarly to Schutz’s lecture, on the question of immigration.<sup>8</sup> Both the diagnosis and the prognosis of the 1936 conference, however, could not have been more different. The bottom line of the 1936 conference was that the conditions of immigration have no substantial effect on the intellectual. The intellectual, they argued, is, by definition, a stranger in his own home.<sup>9</sup> The philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich, for example, declared that “[T]here is [...] an essential relationship between mind and migration”. The experience of immigration, he explained, is a necessary step in the intellectual’s liberation from the national parochialism and, therefore, essential to the production of universal knowledge.<sup>10</sup> Schutz, in his lecture, took the opposite

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 499.

<sup>7</sup> Letter: Schütz to Voegelin, January 12, 1943, in Gerhard Wagner and Gilbert Weiss, eds., *A Friendship that Lasted a Lifetime: The Correspondence between Alfred Schütz and Eric Voegelin*, trans. William Petropulos (Columbia, 2011), 27.

<sup>8</sup> “Forward”, *Social Research*, 4/1 (1937): 263-4; Thomas Mann, “The Living Spirit”, *Social Research*, 4/1 (1937): 265-72.

<sup>9</sup> It is safe to assume that both Schutz and his German colleagues were familiar with Georg Simmel’s famous account of “The Stranger” (1908), that first established the notion that the stranger is characterized by their “objectivity” and only through the relationship with the stranger the general category of humanity is discovered. Simmel’s paradigmatic example for a stranger is the Jew, an example that is not mentioned in the later contributions, despite the fact that a majority of the contributors, like Simmel himself, were of Jewish origin. Georg Simmel, “The Stranger,” in: *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, Donald N. Levine, ed. (Chicago, 1971), 143-9.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Tillich, “Mind and Migration”, *Social Research*, 4/1 (1937), 295-305. at 295-8..

approach. Immigration, according to him, is nothing less than an existential crisis. The assimilation of an adult into a new culture is, for several different reasons, impossible. The immigrant, he argued, will have to compromise on essentially inadequate translations, and to get used to an incessant state of frustration. The cause for the immigrant's frustration is the impotency of the "recipes" that were perfectly adequate in the native culture but when implemented in the new context fail to provide the expected results.<sup>11</sup>

Two fundamental questions stood in the center of this debate. The question about the repercussions of the immigration process was entangled with the question about the nature of intellectual work, and its representation. Both parties, so it seems, could only answer the first question, through the perspective set by their answer to the latter. Schutz did not think of the intellectual as transcendent to society, but as an integral part thereof. The intellectual, he believed, is as entangled in language and the practicality of every-day life as any other person. From the perspective of his German colleagues, who saw in their forced exile an opportunity to transcend into a higher realm of culture and morality, Schutz's approach might seem petty.<sup>12</sup> Schutz, nevertheless, had to agree with Voegelin who explained the German grandiosity by referring to their sheltered existence. "As a result of their isolation at the New School," he argued, "[they] have not yet gotten through the transition period you speak of and, for that reason are overly sensitive about it."<sup>13</sup>

In his lecture Schutz argues that in order to navigate in society, to do things, to understand others, and to be understood by them, one employs "recipes" that guarantee that a specific set of actions will yield desired results. When those "recipes" become "unworkable", as it happens in the process of emigration, "...a 'crisis' arises."<sup>14</sup> In normal situations those "recipes" are understood by the member of the in-group

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<sup>11</sup> Schutz, "The Stranger", 501.

<sup>12</sup> Tillich, "Mind and Migration", 304-5.

<sup>13</sup> Letter: Voegelin to Schutz, September 28, 1943, in: Wagner and Weiss, *Friendship that Lasted a Lifetime*, 44.

<sup>14</sup> Schutz, "The Stranger", 502.

as *the* way in which things are being done. “We may say”, Schutz argues, “that the member of the in-group looks in a single glance through the normal social situations occurring to him and that he catches immediately the ready-made recipe appropriate to its solution.”<sup>15</sup> Intellectual work is no exception in Schutz’s world. The practicality of the everyday life of the intellectual is also composed by a plethora of recipes. The present paper will focus on one of them: the formation and participation in “intellectual *Kreise* (circles)”.

Participation in intellectual *Kreise* was integral to the life of the intellectual in interwar Vienna.<sup>16</sup> This article argues that the Viennese *Kreis*-culture continued to play a role in the émigrés’ lives even after they emigrated to America. In line with Schutz’s description, we will see how the émigrés attempted to use this “recipe” in order to “act” as intellectuals in their new homes, and to make sense of their recipient culture. As Schutz predicted, the attempts to use this old recipe in new environments have resulted, many times, in disappointments and misunderstandings. In other cases, however, the émigrés were able to come to terms with the demands made by their new environment, and to contribute to it. Successes or failures notwithstanding, the group of Viennese émigrés we will follow here shared a specific worldview. They all shared the ideal of an involved-intellectual that exists *in* culture and society rather than *outside*, or *above* it. To be sure, the leisure to participate in intellectual *Kreise* reflects a relative freedom from mundane obligations, to the same extent that it reflects the value they ascribed to intellectual and cultural engagement that extended beyond their professional engagement. Unlike Schutz’s German colleagues, his Viennese friends believed that the life of the mind should not be done in isolation and in separation from the social process, and that “objective” world view should be observed from the ‘inside’ rather than by gaining distance. The participation in intellectual *Kreise*, as a *sine qua non* of intellectual life, I suggest, is both a symbol and a manifestation of this worldview.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

<sup>16</sup> See for example: Erwin Dekker, *The Viennese Students of Civilization* (Cambridge, 2016); Edward Timms, "The Cultural Field", in: *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist: The Post-War Crisis and the Rise of the Swastika* (New Haven, 2005), 103-22.

In Vienna, Schutz was a member of the *Geistkreis*, an interdisciplinary intellectual circle. This essay argues that the *Geistkreis* members can serve as an example of a distinct type of intellectual life that is focused on the *Kreis*. The participation in a *Kreis* was, for them, more than a luxury. It was their way to satisfy a certain need they felt. Both this need and the recipe for its satisfaction were not properly understood or recognized by their new colleagues in the United States, who often refused to participate in the *Kreis*-like endeavors initiated by the former *Geistkreis* members. In certain cases, the American institutions subscribed to the intellectual ideals brought from places like Vienna but could not replicate the social and cultural contexts that made these ideal both realizable and desirable.

The *Kreis* – as a practice, a concept, a model, and a tradition – makes an interesting case study for transnational intellectual history because it captures a mid-register between individuals and institutions; between the personal and the public spheres; and between formal and informal forms of sociability. The *Kreis* was, on the one hand, not an established institution that could travel as an institution.<sup>17</sup> But, on the other hand, it was interpersonal by nature, i.e., it demanded a cooperation between the émigré and his new environment.

The study of intellectual life in motion usually focuses on ideas, texts, knowledge-production practices (both explicit and tacit) and so forth.<sup>18</sup> One aspect that is often lost, however, in the study of inter-cultural

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<sup>17</sup> Compare with the immigration of the Frankfurt School, the Kiel School, or the Warburg Institute. Compare: Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950* (London, 1973); Krohn, *Intellectuals in Exile*; Norman Bentwich, *The Rescue and Achievement of Refugee Scholars: The Story of Displaced Scholars and Scientists 1933-1952* (The Hague, 1953), esp. 42-61; Martin Seiler, “The Vienna School of Art History in Exile and the Warburg-Institute in London,” *Vertreibung der Vernunft: The Cultural exodus from Austria*, Peter Weibel and Friedrich Stadler, eds. (Wien, 1993), pp. 214-221.

<sup>18</sup> The literature on transnational intellectual history and émigré scholars in particular is vast, and dates back to the aftermath of World War II. For examples of recent methodological contributions see David Armitage, “The International Turn in Intellectual History,” in *Rethinking Modern Intellectual History*, Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds. (Oxford, 2014), pp. 232-252; Edward Baring, “Ideas on the Move: Context in Transnational Intellectual History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77/4 (2016), 567-587; Peter Burke, *Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge, 1500-2000* (Waltham, MA, 2017); Samuel Moyn & Andrew Sartori (eds.), *Global Intellectual*



translations, is the role of the *scholarly persona*. Gadi Algazi defines persona as “...a cultural template of a codified social role,” i.e., sets of ideas, practices, and forms of presentation and socialization that are shared in specific intellectual communities and define them.<sup>19</sup> Algazi reminds us that the persona – as a cultural model – is not fashioned by the actors but reflects a compromise among diverse external forces.<sup>20</sup> In Vienna, participation in *Kreise* was embedded into the shared notion of scholarly persona and thus became essential to both the self-understanding and self-fashioning of individuals as scholars. This feature of intellectual life, however, relied on external forces and conditions, such as the meager opportunities for pursuing an academic career in Vienna, the antisemitic hiring policy at the university, the light workload of white-collar workers, the domestic division of labor of the bourgeoisie family that enabled men to spend long hours outside the domestic sphere, and even the density level of the urban space.<sup>21</sup> After the emigration, the émigrés still defined themselves as intellectuals using their old cultural templates, and acted according to their old recipes. Those models and recipes, however, were not recognized by their new peers, and did not sit comfortably with the external forces that were in play in their new society. The *Kreis* is of a particular interest to the study of scholarly personae in motion and translation because it is, by definition, presupposes an active collaboration with others. The necessity to cooperate with others, who do not necessarily share the émigré’s image of scholarly life, raised the

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*History* (New York, 2013); Emma Rothschild, “Arcs of Ideas: International History and Intellectual History,” in *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Ganz, eds. (Göttingen, 2016), pp. 217-26; Frank W. Stahnisch, “Learning soft skills the hard way: Historiographical considerations on the cultural adjustment process of German-speaking émigré neuroscientists in Canada, 1933 to 1963,” *Journal of the History of Neuroscience* 25/3 (2016), 299-319.

<sup>19</sup> Algazi distinguishes between three different meanings of the term “persona”: 1) a crafted image, cultivated by a famous person and projected into the world; 2) a set of regulative ideals that dictates how the best version of a philosopher, a historian, a scholar and so forth is supposed to look like; 3) a cultural template for a codified social role. In this article I use Algazi’s third definition. See: Gadi Algazi, “*Exemplum* and *Wundertier*: Three Concepts of the Scholarly Persona,” *Low Countries Historical Review*, 131/4 (2016), 8-32 at 9-16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-3.

<sup>21</sup> This is by no means an exhaustive sociological explanation for the *Kreis*-culture phenomenon. Such an explanation deserves a separate discussion. I will, however, return to some of these explanations below.

tension between the émigré and his surroundings, and, thus, revealed the underlying forces that shaped the different scholarly personae both in the origin- and the receptive- cultures.<sup>22</sup>

Different Geistkreis members resorted to the Kreis in their life as émigrés in the United States in a variety of ways. By exploring a number of case-studies I show that that, after the emigration, the Kreis served three distinct roles in the lives of the Geistkreis members: First, the émigrés remained in touch. The Kreis was, for them, a *social network* on which they could rely; secondly, the Kreis was an *idea* through which they interpreted the new intellectual world they encountered; finally, the Kreis was a *model* that they tried to adapt to their new social contexts.<sup>23</sup> Their experience with the Kreis-culture of interwar Vienna, I argue, is key for understanding their later engagements with the American intellectual world. Therefore, before we can proceed to the case studies we should acquaint ourselves briefly with Kreis-culture in general, and with the Geistkreis in particular.

## 2. The Geistkreis and other Kreise

The Kreis was a popular form of organization in the modern German-speaking world. Kreise were gathered around political, artistic, and intellectual causes. In most cases, Kreise were assembled around charismatic leaders.<sup>24</sup> In interwar Vienna, the best-known Kreis is, undoubtedly, the “Wiener Kreis” (The Vienna Circle). Mortiz Schlick and his Kreis, however, worked in a very dense network of overlapping intellectual, artistic, and political Kreise that penetrated every corner of the public, intellectual, and

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<sup>22</sup> In different contexts Kreise can also achieve the opposite result – segregation rather than cooperation. For example: in his study on the Russian kruzok (circle) in Heidelberg, Michael Gordin argues that it served as a shelter for the Russian students, who were not accepted into the German circles. See: Michael D. Gordin, “The Heidelberg Circle: German Inflections on the Professionalization of Russian Chemistry in the 1860s,” *Osiris* 23, 2008, 23-49.

<sup>23</sup> I would like to thank Gadi Algazi for suggesting to me this fruitful distinction between the Kreis as an ‘idea’ and the Kreis as a ‘model’.

<sup>24</sup> Frank-Michael Kuhlemann and Michael Schäffer eds., *Kreise -- Bünde-Intellektuellen -- Netzwerke: Formen bürgerlicher Vergesellschaftung und politischer Kommunikation 1890-1960* (Bielefeld, 2017), 8-9.

cultural life of Inter-war Vienna.<sup>25</sup> There is no single explanation for this booming culture of intellectual Kreise. Possible explanations include: the long tradition of intellectual and artistic novelty organized outside formal institutions, the existence of a large and affluent middle-class centered in what used to be the capital of a vast empire and did not shrink in proportion to its loss, or, in some disciplines, the limited capacity of the local university, which could not contain the bubbling intellectual scene (especially considering its antisemitic hiring policy).<sup>26</sup> Either way, Vienna's intellectual Kreise became, by the late 1920s, central hubs for intellectual exchange. For aspiring intellectuals participation in such Kreise was essential for sharpening their scientific arguments and their social skills alike.<sup>27</sup> In Vienna, we might say, it was not that the intellectuals assembled themselves into Kreise, it was the participation in those Kreise that made them intellectuals in the first place. It was an essential component of their intellectual persona.

The intricate network of Kreise in Vienna enabled and supported a robust intellectual and artistic scene that far exceeded the limits of the university or similar official institutions. Many of the great artistic, intellectual and political projects and movements since the turn of the century – such as logical empiricism, psychoanalysis, the secession, the Austrian school of economics, Zionism to name only a few notable examples – took shape around such Kreise. Frequent personal contact helped to maintain the creative spirit and to push those movements forward. Hansjörg Klausinger, for example, points out that one of the reasons for the decline of the Austrian School of Economics was the loss of its “home base,” i.e. the dissolution of the Kreise that kept it alive.<sup>28</sup> The many points of intersection between the different

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<sup>25</sup> Timms, in his biography of Karl Kraus, drew an overwhelming diagram portraying over fifty different circles: Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist*, 108. In a short and enlightening piece he interprets these diagrams, see: „Die Wiener Kreise: Schöpferische Interaktionen in der Wiener Moderne,“ In Jürgen Nautz and Richard Vahrenkamp eds. *Der Wiener Jahrhundertwende: Einflüsse, Umwelt, Wirkungen* (Vienna, 1993), 128-143.

<sup>26</sup> Compare: Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1981), xxv-xxvii; Earlene Craver, “The Emigration of Austrian Economists”, *History of Political Economy*, 18/1 (1986), 1-32, at 2; Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist*, 106-7; Hansjoerg Klausinger, “Academic Anti-Semitism and the Austrian School: Vienna, 1918-1945,” *Atlantic Economic Journal* 42 (2014), 191-204.

<sup>27</sup> Erwin Dekker, “The Vienna Circles: Cultivating Economic Knowledge Outside Academia”, *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 7/2 (2014), 30-53, at 44-8.

<sup>28</sup> Hansjoerg Klausinger, „In the Wilderness“: Emigration and the Decline of the Austrian School,” *History of Political Economy* 38/4, 617-664, at 622-627.

Kreise, and especially those individuals who participated in multiple Kreise, created, according to Timms, the unique Viennese flavor of interdisciplinary cross fertilization, that could not be found in comparable metropolitan centers.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the coming together of professional scholars and other white collar workers (lawyers, businessmen, bureaucrats etc.) in those Kreise expanded the ranks of contributing amateur scholars and intellectuals, who, nevertheless, made important contributions in their respective fields. In sum, the intellectual infrastructure of interwar Vienna emphasized cross-disciplinarity, was based on lively discussion among peers, did not equate intellectual work with the professor's job and in general did not see the university as having a monopoly on the production of knowledge. The Geistkreis members had their formation as young men and aspiring intellectuals in such an environment. This intellectual upbringing, this article shows, led to the development of a set of expectations, tastes, needs, and habits of mind which proved difficult to implement and satisfy in a foreign intellectual environment.<sup>30</sup>

In this dense network of intellectual Kreise, the Geistkreis was, in more than one way, an outlier. The Geistkreis was formed in 1921 by Josef Herbert Fürth and Friedrich Hayek, university friends who decided to form their own *interdisciplinary* Kreis, with the intent of bringing together the “best representative” (among their peers) from each discipline.<sup>31</sup> The Geistkreis met regularly, once a month, until the *Anschluss* eighteen years later.<sup>32</sup> The monthly meetings were held in the private apartments of

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<sup>29</sup> Edward Timms, „Die Wiener Kreise“, 131-2.

<sup>30</sup> Timms argues that the Kreise took a different shape after World War I. In the first decades of the twentieth century the Kreise members held an elitist world view and, accordingly, stayed away from politics or other public-facing initiatives. The war and the turmoil in its aftermath created more politically engaged Kreise, and intellectuals who were highly involved in party politics and public-facing activities (Timms, “Wiener Kreise”, 139-43). For further discussion on the political involvement of Viennese intellectuals and artists see: Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*; Deborah R. Coen, *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty: Science, Liberalism and Private Life* (Chicago, 2007), and Janek Wasserman, *Black Vienna: The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918-1938* (Ithaca, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Engel-Janosi, *...aber ein stolzer Bettler: Erinnerungen aus einer verlorenen Generation* (Köln, 1974), 116-117.

<sup>32</sup> The most complete contemporaneous account about the membership in the Geistkreis is a memo, which was probably handed out in one of the meetings, titled “Zehn Jahre ‘Kreis’” (“Ten Years ‘Circle’”) (Memo: “Zehn Jahre ‘Kreis’,” u.d., in: Correspondence: Herbert Fürth, Felix Kaufmann Papers, *Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis*.) According to this document the founding members of the Geistkreis were Walter

the members, and consisted of a paper presentation followed by vigorous discussion.<sup>33</sup> As a rule, the paper's topic was supposed to be other than the lecturer's central professional or intellectual interest, i.e. his "hobby", rather than to conform with the main theme or purpose of the seminar.<sup>34</sup> The list of the topics included: specific questions in economics, legal theory, political science, philosophy, and mathematics, general questions on methodology, discussions of current events and pressing social questions, papers on both recent developments in and the history of the fine arts, music, and literature, and reports about trips they took, especially to the United States.<sup>35</sup>

Another, not less important, distinctive structural difference was that unlike any of the abovementioned Kreise, the Geistkreis did not have a charismatic older leader. Therefore, it was not structured on the model of the university seminar and did not replicate its teacher-student relationship. The Geistkreis was by design an opportunity to form close friendships, and, therefore, not a professional space *per se*.<sup>36</sup> All these distinctive features – interdisciplinarity, lack of an older charismatic leader, uni-generationality, and being located on a social rather than a professional space – not only set the Geistkreis members apart from their immediate intellectual environment, but also had an impact on their process of emigration, and the kind of experience they sought to recreate in their new environments.

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Fröhlich, Herbert Fürth, Friedrich Hayek, Felix Kaufmann, Maximillian Mintz, Alfred Schütz, Erich Voegelin, Friedrich Eder, Hans Heller, Robert Meyer, Georg Schiff, and Hans Seyfert. In the first decade they were joined by: Friedrich Engel-Janosi, Gottfried Haberler, Friedrich Machlup-Wolf, Oskar Morgenstern, Friedrich Thalmann, Johannes Wilde, Emanuel Winternitz, Franz Glück, Karl Menger, Franz Stiasny, and Konrad Zweig. From various sources we know of a couple more people who joined the Kreis after its tenth anniversary: Robert Wälder and Otto Benesch.

<sup>33</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, Elias Sandoz (ed.), *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* Vol. 34 (Columbia, 1989), 34-5.

<sup>34</sup> Engel-Janosi, *...aber eine stolzer Bettler*, 117.

<sup>35</sup> Many of the lecture titles can be found in Engel-Janosi's memoir (Engel-Janosi, *...aber eine Stolzer Bettler*, XX). Engel-Janosi's list, however, is not complete. The missing titles can be found in: Memo: "Zehn Jahre 'Kreis'," u.d., in: Correspondence: Herbert Fürth, Felix Kaufmann Papers, *Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis*; and in: "J. Herbert Fürth's Personal Notebooks," *Fürth Private Archive*.

<sup>36</sup> J. Herbert Fürth, "Erinnerungen an Wiener Tage," *Wirtschaftspolitische Blätter* 2 (1989), 247-53 at 249-51; Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, 35.

### 3. The Kreis After the Emigration

It was the *Anschluss* that put the final nail in the Geistkreis's coffin and led many of its members to look for shelter overseas.<sup>37</sup> The members who emigrated to the United States found themselves scattered around the continent. Almost overnight, this group of friends had to adjust to living a considerable distance from one another, and to treating their rare meetings as a precious luxury rather than a regular daily occurrence. Nevertheless, the former Geistkreis members remained in touch. In some cases, it was only through the occasional letter or Christmas card, but in many others the written communication was very extensive and touched on every aspect of both their professional and personal lives. Setting aside the personal bilateral ties, this section discusses the different ways in which the Kreis, *qua* Kreis has remained relevant in the lives of the past-Geistkreis members. We can count at least three distinct ways in which this group of people remained relevant in each other's lives after emigration: as an audience for the development of their respective intellectual projects; as a network for mutual aid; and finally, despite the geographical distance, the Geistkreis former members have tried to arrange (small- and large-scale) "reunions".

The story of Eric Voegelin can serve as an example of the vicissitudes of the emigration process, and the cushioning role the Geistkreis offered. If one is to believe the testimonies of his friends -- who were impressed with his mastery of ancient languages and texts as well as with his knack for interpreting them in a way that is relevant to contemporary political and philosophical debates -- Voegelin was a genius.<sup>38</sup> A founding member of the Geistkreis, he was also its most prolific member. After the annexation, Voegelin who "...had never made any secret of my anti-National Socialist attitude,...", was fired from

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<sup>37</sup> Hansjörg Klausinger provided a detailed description of the escape routes of each and every member, see: "The Austrian Economists, Hayek and the Anschluss" *Conference Paper read before The Annual Meeting of the European Society for the History of Economic Thought*, Paris 2016 (a German version is forthcoming).

<sup>38</sup> See for example: Letter: Furth to Loring Allen, March 25, 1984, Gottfried Haberler Papers, Box 88 Folder 77, *Hoover Institutions Archives*.

the University of Vienna, and prepared his escape route.<sup>39</sup> After countless attempts to find a university position, he finally secured a one year fellowship at Harvard, a post that led eventually to a permanent position at Louisiana State University.<sup>40</sup> While he was considered for positions at Yale (an “intellectual slum”, in his words), Harvard (an “intellectual brothel”), and the New School, he remained at LSU until 1958, when he was invited to take Max Weber’s former chair and to establish the Institut für Politische Wissenschaft at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich.<sup>41</sup>

During his time in Baton Rouge Voegelin felt particularly secluded. Unlike many of his friends who found themselves in larger and more central metropolitan areas, where they had other Viennese émigrés around them, Voegelin had to make do with what he found in the Deep South. And in his opinion, it was not much.<sup>42</sup> More than any of his friends, Voegelin found himself reliant on the Geistkreis-network in order to find an audience and a critical eye as his work progressed. Perloff describes how her father, Maximilian Mintz, another prolific contributor to the Geistkreis, read and commented on Voegelin’s manuscripts.<sup>43</sup> Other close collaborators were Alfred Schutz, the lawyer turned musicologist Emanuel Winternitz, and the historian Friedrich Engel-Janosi. Their correspondence sometimes seems like an academic workshop, where all the parties to the conversation dissect and criticize each other’s works. This close network of collaborators suggests that though he moved to Louisiana, Voegelin “brought” his original Viennese network with him.

This long-distance academic relationship, however, was anything but seamless. A case in point: on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1951, Voegelin wrote to Schutz that a long time had passed since the he heard from him last,

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<sup>39</sup> Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Voegelin’s papers contains countless letters to deans and professors, Eric Voegelin Papers, *Hoover Institution Archive* (hereafter, EV Papers).

<sup>41</sup> Wanger and Weiss, *Friendship that Lasted a Lifetime*, p. 120, 186.

<sup>42</sup> Compare: Monika Puhl, *Eric Voegelin in Baton Rouge* (Munich, 2005), 44-50.

<sup>43</sup> Marjorie Perloff, *The Vienna Paradox: A Memoir* (New York, 2003), 125-7.

and indeed Schutz's last letter was sent to Voegelin on June of the previous year.<sup>44</sup> Four months later, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, Voegelin sent another letter asking Schutz whether he should interpret his long silence as a sign that something bad had happened to either him or his family. In response, a week later, Schutz writes that he "...got the impression from some of your earlier letters that in your opinion our ways had parted and that you no longer wanted to have me participate in your work." He admits that "...this impression was very painful to me." Schutz tells Voegelin that he tried to write him several times, but each time refrained from sending the letter because he was afraid that it would just make the situation worse. "I didn't want to play the role in your life that Felix Kaufmann did", he refers here to their mutual Geistkreis friend, "who, with his way of looking at science and the world, got on your nerves over a period of years."<sup>45</sup> Thus, Schutz reveals to us one of the many difficulties of maintaining a long distance critical correspondence on intellectual matters; the communication from distance, and the reliance on the written word, makes this difficult walk a fine line that cut between the brand of harsh criticism that the Geistkreis members were so proud of, and mere personal animosity, almost impossible.

Unlike other intellectual Kreise, the Geistkreis was never meant to be a mere professional intellectual circle. The mutual reliance of the old Geistkreis friends exceeded the relief of the immediate repercussions caused by the sudden flight from Europe and penetrated into other aspects of their lives. A clear example is a circular letter dated April 27, 1945, sent by Alfred Schutz to the Geistkreis members concerning the financial state of one of their friends – the lawyer and economist Walter Fröhlich. A chronic illness of Fröhlich's wife drove his family to financial hardship that Schutz tried to rectify by collecting funds from their Geistkreis friends.<sup>46</sup> The Geistkreis came together not only in support of the living, but also in order to pay tribute to the dead. Felix Kaufmann passed away in New York in 1949. A

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<sup>44</sup> Letter: Voegelin to Schutz, January 2, 1951, in: Alfred Schütz and Erich Voegelin, *Eine Freundschaft, die ein Leben ausgehalten hat: Briefwechsel 1938-1959*, Gerhard Wagner and Gilbert Weiss, eds. (Konstanz, 2004), pp. 380-1.

<sup>45</sup> Letter: Schütz to Voegelin, April 22, 1951 in Wagner and Weiss, *A Friendship that Lasted A Lifetime*, 135.

<sup>46</sup> Letter: J. Herbert Furth to Helmut Wagner, January 18, 1975, Correspondence, Josef Herbert Furth Papers, Box 2, Folder 191, *Hoover Institution Archive*.



year later, Furth wrote to the former members of the Geistkreis asking them to contribute an article for a special issue of *Social Research*.<sup>47</sup> This initiative did not come to fruition, probably due to the journal's misgivings, but signifies the kind of mutual responsibility the Geistkreis members felt towards one another, both in life and in death.

Meetings in larger groups were rare. On June 1, 1944, however, Engel-Janosi wrote to Voegelin to finalize the latter's traveling plans to come visit him in Washington D.C. In the letter Engel-Janosi asked Voegelin if he would be able to give a "kind of English 'Geistkreis' talk" during his visit. Engel-Janosi promised Voegelin a distinguished audience that would include, in addition to the "largest part of the Geistkreis" a number of other prominent intellectuals.<sup>48</sup> Voegelin's reservations in his response to Engel-Janosi's request opens a window for us to the cultural differences between Austrian and American intellectuals, as it was reflected in Voegelin's mind. Voegelin answered that "...he is not sure that such a thing [a Geistkreis style lecture] would be much appreciated by Americans." Voegelin tells Engel-Janosi that he participated once in such a talk at Harvard, delivered by the German historian Eugen Rosenstock-Hussey. The American audience, Voegelin reports, had many comments about the "...insolence of the Europeans, who believe that everybody has waited for them; who believe that everybody should listen to them."<sup>49</sup> While he would be happy to meet their Viennese friends, he refused to have a Geistkreis-style talk with Americans, because "...this can make you quite unpopular."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> E.g.: the influential Austrian literary critic Leo Spitzer, the American medievalist Fredric C. Lane, the German social theorist Goetz Briefs, and the American sociologist Talcott Parsons, and many others, see letter: Engel-Janosi to Voegelin, June 1, 1944, Box 11 Folder 7, *EV Papers*.

<sup>49</sup> Letter: Voegelin to Engel-Janosi, June 5, 1944, Box 11 Folder 7, *EV Papers*.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Another famous example for an Austrian "reunion" was the celebration of Ludwig von Mises' 80th birthday at Princeton University, organized by Fritz Machlup. Machlup invited the members of the Miseskreis, many of whom were also members of the Geistkreis. For details see Janek Wasserman, *Marginal Revolutionaries: How Austrian Economists Fought the War of Ideas* (New Haven, 2019), pp. 233-5.

Perloff describes in her memoir a rather less formal occasion for small scale *Geistkreis* reunions – her mother’s *Jause* (“...that Austrian cross between a cocktail party and high tea”). The parties took place in their Riverdale apartment. Schutz, Kaufmann, Winternitz and others who happened to be in New York City were invited, together with their wives, kids and other Austrian émigrés to share wine, champagne, tea and *Brötchen*. The luxury of meeting each other semi-regularly was reserved to the emigres who settled in the Big Apple. Perloff reminds us, however, that for her parents, the convenience of having a considerable part of their old social circle around made their assimilation into American culture more difficult.<sup>51</sup>

#### 4. The Kreis as an Idea

The encounter of our Viennese protagonists with the American university system was confusing for them, to say the least. The American academic system was very different from the system they knew from back home. Voegelin, then a research fellow in Harvard University, described to Schutz his new institution:

“...I have been intensely exploring the new milieu [Harvard University]. It is a very curious world, in which one must proceed cautiously in order not to give offense. A myriad of groups and circles [Kreisen und Gruppen] ... The main thing I learned is that there is a taboo against asking questions. It is not polite to ask questions, and one doesn’t get any answers. One acquires information only indirectly through incidental remarks in conversation and must put bits and pieces together oneself. The most extensive circle [Der weiteste Kreis...], the one to which everyone belongs, is that of the university ‘officers’,... This is subdivided into ‘departments’. Each department is a society in itself. For me this found expression in the fact that the dean’s wife visited us and invited my wife to the department teas... As far as the exclusively male side is concerned, its center

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<sup>51</sup> Marjorie Perloff, *The Vienna Paradox*, 153-4.

is the 'Faculty Club'. [...] Within each department there is a small circle [engerer Kreis], the 'faculty', which meets for faculty dinners. In particular, it seems to me, a certain differentiation takes place owing to the fact that in an organization of this size there is always a larger number of people whose scholarly qualifications are modest and whose intellect does not rise much above the mentality of a schoolteacher. It seems that a natural affinity brings this type together, ..., naturally all of these relationships and connections extend in all directions into circles [andere Kreise] that reach beyond the university...".<sup>52</sup>

Voegelin's depiction of Harvard is utterly confusing. Voegelin himself was confused by the institutional structure of the university. He reports to his friend about a taboo against asking questions regarding the structure of the university and argues that such information can only be acquired sporadically and indirectly. Later on, Schutz will argue that the "stranger"'s inability to blend in the new culture lies exactly there; nobody is able to present to the stranger the culture as a comprehensive and a consistent whole, not due to bad hospitality, but because, for the insider, culture, or any part thereof, does not appear as a coherent, spelled out whole. This embedded perspective is the very thing the stranger is trying to learn and to imitate, i.e. the "thinking-as-usual" of the insiders, their intuitive understanding of their culture and its institutions and their ability to effortlessly navigate them.<sup>53</sup> The "stranger", on the other hand, is bound by his attempts to *understand* the situation and to gain a *clear and general representation* thereof, to remain locked out from the world of the insider.

Admittedly, the Harvard of that period was a particularly difficult institution to navigate.<sup>54</sup> I suggest, however, that Voegelin's repetitive use of the word 'Kreis' in this description amounts to more than a mere linguistic (mis-)appropriation, it is a key for understanding his (mis-)understanding of the

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<sup>52</sup> Letter: Voegelin to Schütz, October 25, 1938, in: Wanger and Weiss, *A Friendship that Lasted A Lifetime*, 12-13.

<sup>53</sup> Schutz, "The Stranger", 504-5.

<sup>54</sup> See for example Joel Isaac's discussion on Harvard's "Interstitial Academy", Joel Isaac, *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), pp. 31-62.

institution. Two things are particularly striking in Voegelin's description: first, instead of turning to a 'vertical' model that implies hierarchy, he chooses to talk about the university in a 'horizontal' manner, as a "[A] myriad of groups and circles...". Second, Voegelin treats equally elements that we would consider 'professional' with elements we would consider 'personal'. These two themes: the 'horizontal' rather than a 'vertical' understanding of the university as an institution, and the ignorance in regard to the clearer demarcation between the professional and the personal, refer back to Voegelin's Viennese experience. The permeability of the Kreis-culture and the intellectual scene in Vienna which came alongside a different family formation, especially in regard to men's household obligations, contributed to the misunderstandings between the Viennese émigrés and their new American colleagues.

##### 5. The Kreis as a *Model*

As noted in the first section, Schutz argues that one of the sources for frustration and anxiety in the process of emigration is the impotency of the "recipes". The "recipes" that served the émigrés well in their native culture, when put to use in a new context not only fail to deliver the expected outcomes but come across as strange or inexplicable. Schutz emphasizes that these "recipes" are not explicit rules of conduct, but more immediate and implicit maxims, that the subject performs, unwittingly, as if these were the only way in which a certain outcome could and should be achieved. A perfect example for the immediacy of the "recipe" can be found in the personal diary of the economist, and former Geistkreis member, Oskar Morgenstern.

On December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1956, eighteen years after he made Princeton his new home after the emigration, Morgenstern noted to himself in his personal diary that:

“I [have], unfortunately, an intellectual hunger. I do not know how I should change it. I want to have a circle soon, that will come here sometimes in the evenings, for example Gödel, Hempel, Quine, Wigner. – many. That can be set up. The Geistkreis was nice, ...”.<sup>55</sup>

The most striking feature of this quote is how quickly Morgenstern jumps from the definition of the problem (“intellectual hunger”), to the proposed solution (“I want to have a circle soon...”). As if the latter is the most obvious and natural solution for the former. This short journal entry, however, should be read not as a mere personal story, but rather as a diagnosis and a prognosis of a situation shared by a specific group of émigrés. Other Geistkreis members found themselves suffering from the same “intellectual hunger” and prescribed for themselves a similar cure “...to have a circle...”. Unlike Morgenstern, however, some of the past-Geistkreis members took steps to make such Kreise a reality. The remainder of this article will focus on two case studies: Fritz Machlup’s unhappy experience with the “Economics Reading Club” at the University of Buffalo in the 1930s, an episode that was partly remedied with his tenure as the president of the “History of Ideas Club” at Johns Hopkins in the early 1950s and the “experiment” Friedrich Hayek conducted at the University of Chicago in the academic year 1952-53.

(I) Fritz Machlup, Work-Life Balance, and the Place of Ideas:

In Vienna Fritz Machlup was the heir of his family business that included a number of cardboard mills. His interest, however, from an early age was in the study of economics. Machlup did whatever he could in order to land an academic job in Vienna. He was soon to discover the low ceiling that was waiting for a young Jew who was taking his first steps in the University of Vienna. While his application for a *Privatdozent* status was ignored, Machlup was an active in the Viennese intellectual scene. He served as Ludwig von Mises’s personal assistant and was invited to participate in his *Privatseminar*, and the

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<sup>55</sup> 1956-12-27, “Oskar Morgenstern Tagbuchedition”, see: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/archive/objects/o:ome.b55-57/methods/sdef:TEI/get?mode=1956-12-27&context=pers>; I have found no evidence for the existence of this Princetonian Kreis, nor that Morgenstern tried to put it together.

Geistkreis. An academic career in Vienna, he reckoned, was well beyond his reach. The recession that hit Austria in the early 1930s, he recounts, was for him a blessing in disguise. His plummeting business could no longer serve as a good enough justification to reject the Rockefeller fellowship he was offered, and in 1933 he was headed to the United States.<sup>56</sup> After two years as a Rockefeller fellow, Machlup won his first job as a Professor of Economics at the University of Buffalo. Machlup sold his business and made Buffalo a home for himself as well as for his wife and their two children. Not even a year passed before Machlup tried to form, in Buffalo, his own intellectual Kreis.

The first year of the “Economics Reading Club” was quite successful. The group consisted of the faculty of the economics department, and a small group of selected students. They met in the professors’ homes, and each meeting was led by a different professor and focused on a single book. The participants were expected to have read the book, and to address certain themes in accordance with Machlup’s suggestions.<sup>57</sup> In the academic year of 1936-1937 the club convened six times. The first four meetings counted a steady audience of a dozen members. Attendance peaked in the fifth meeting which was led by Machlup himself and dealt with Keynes’ *General Theory*, which had been published the same year.<sup>58</sup> The sixth and last meeting of the inaugural year of the Economics Reading Club was a bust, with only six members showing up.<sup>59</sup>

In 1938, after spending a year at Cornell, Machlup was more determined than ever to build a Kreis for himself. In a letter to the faculty he declares that “enthusiastic economists have resolved to give every Friday evening to economic discussion.”<sup>60</sup> He also suggested to changing the format: no longer a lecture

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<sup>56</sup> "Interview on the Austrian School conducted by Axel Leijonhufvud, 1977 March 16," Fritz Machlup Papers, Box 113 Folder 6, *Hoover Institution Archive* (hereafter, *FM Papers*).

<sup>57</sup> Memo: Machlup to the Economics Reading Club, November 6, 1936, Box 274 Folder 5, *FM Papers*.

<sup>58</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London, 2007 [1936]).

<sup>59</sup> See: Figure I.

<sup>60</sup> Letter: Machlup to the Economics Department, Sept. 9, 1938, Box 274 Folder 5, *FM Papers*.

to an unprepared audience, but a meeting to which everybody should come prepared. This format, he hoped, would yield a more fruitful discussions than the previous iteration of the club.<sup>61</sup>

The rest of the faculty was far less “enthusiastic” than Machlup. Machlup had to count himself in in order to report that only three faculty members have attended the first instantiation of his Friday night economic theory Kreis. Machlup, however, was not the kind of person to believe that you can catch more flies with honey. On the contrary, he added an “extra-curricular” meeting on the next Friday night. “In order that the faculty may not get out of the habit of attending each and every Friday” he added sardonically.<sup>62</sup> On a second thought, however, considering Machlup’s background and intellectual upbringing, the prospect of yet another discussion-group meeting might have been as attractive to him as honey is for flies.

Judging from their reactions, his Buffalo colleagues did not seem to share his taste. It took Machlup only eight days, and most probably one additional poorly attended meeting, to realize that his big plans to dedicate Friday nights to his “Club” would not materialize. On October 4<sup>th</sup> he sent out a poll asking his colleagues to choose between different time slots in order to establish a regular meeting time. The results revealed a consensus – (almost) no member of the faculty wanted to dedicate their Friday nights to meet his colleagues and discuss general themes in economics with them. Some of the responders added an explanation to their refusal. Some suggested that Friday nights should be dedicated to the family, others insisted that the demands of their specific field forbade them from venturing into neighboring fields or discussing overarching themes of the discipline.<sup>63</sup> These two lines of explanation must have sounded equally foreign to Machlup’s Viennese ears. That was the end of Buffalo’s “Economic Reading Club”.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Machlup suggested to discuss both: A.W. Marget, *The Theory of Prices: A Re-examination of the Central Problems of Monetary Theory*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1938); J.R. Hicks, *Value and Capital: An Inquiry into some Fundamental Principles of Economic Theory* (Oxford, 1939).

<sup>62</sup> Letter: Machlup to the Faculty, Sept. 27, 1938, Letter: Machlup to the Economics Department, Sept. 9, 1938, Box 274 Folder 5, *FM Papers*.

<sup>63</sup> “University of Buffalo; Econ. Read. Club”, Box 274 Folder 5, *FM Papers*.

Buffalo, despite its rich German-speaking and Catholic heritage, was nothing like Vienna. Three major lines of difference between the two cities can serve as an explanation for the failure of the “Economic Reading Club”. The first distinction, that jumps out from Machlup’s colleagues’ responses to his initiative, is the difference in the gendered division of domestic labor. In Vienna, men were not expected to spend almost any time with their children, especially if they dedicated their free time to intellectual or artistic pursuits. Middle-class children were raised by a *Kinderfräulein* (nanny) who was under the supervision of the mother. The fathers did not have time to spare between their professional obligations and their intellectual pursuits. Perloff, for example, remembers her father as “a distant figure” in her early childhood.<sup>64</sup> Machlup himself and his wife Mitzi left their two children with another, childless, couple for the two years Machlup spent as a Rockefeller fellow, and reunited with them only after he secured the position in Buffalo.<sup>65</sup> American professors, we learn from the correspondence, did not enjoy the same kind of freedom. Or, seen from a different perspective, framed their intellectual activities as their “job”, that should thus be carefully distinguished from their family life, that was at least equally important to them.<sup>66</sup>

Secondly, Machlup’s intellectual upbringing, both as a university student and later as part of the different *Kreise*, led him to value general methodological and theoretical debates over the nitty-gritty details of specific studies. In his private correspondences with Mises and Hayek, Machlup discloses his low opinion of American economists who “...have not the slightest ideas of the essential things”.<sup>67</sup> In a later work he explicitly justifies his long incursions into the realms of philosophy and methodology by his “unbounded

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<sup>64</sup> Perloff, *Vienna Paradox*, 94-5.

<sup>65</sup> Letter: Machlup to Professor Jon Chipman, November 17, 1977, “Fritz Machlup – Correspondence,” Gottfried Haberler Papers, Box 23, *Hoover Institution Archive*.

<sup>66</sup> Compare with William Clark’s discussion on the separation of the home and the office as part of the professionalization of the university. See: William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Letter Machlup to Mises, 8 June 1934 Box 53 Folder 27 *FMP*, quoted in: Klausinger, “In the Wilderness’,” p. 632.



intellectual curiosity” that has to do with his background “as an immigrant from continental Europe...”.<sup>68</sup> The story of the economics department at Buffalo, however, could not have been more different. Since its foundation in 1846 and up until the 1910s, the University of Buffalo was nothing but a loose administrative connection between several professional schools.<sup>69</sup> The study of economics was introduced into the university in 1917 as a part of the dentistry school curriculum. The local dentists did not fare well financially at the time, and the university, as a remedy, introduced an economics class in order to hone their skills as businessmen.<sup>70</sup> The department still showed a practical bent when Machlup joined it in 1935. It was still a part of the Business Administration School until the 1960s when the Economics department was excluded from the school because it drifted too far into the realm of theory, and thus failed to give proper guidance in business to its students. Machlup, so it seems, joined the department at the beginning of this process. Ralph Epstein, the first full-time economics professor at Buffalo University, joined the faculty in 1927. He was the one who hired Machlup in 1935.<sup>71</sup> The first textbook that Epstein compiled, *Supplementary Readings in Economics*, introduced his students to a large variety of readings of both orthodox and unorthodox economists (the Austrian School was represented by Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk).<sup>72</sup> Later on, Epstein showed a greater affinity to Keynesian economics.<sup>73</sup> In his survey of the intellectual trajectories of several Austrian economists after the emigration, Klausinger argues that Machlup withdrew from the larger controversies of the discipline and specialized in international monetary theory and later in the economics of the knowledge industry.<sup>74</sup> From this we learn that Machlup

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<sup>68</sup> Fritz Machlup, *Knowledge: Its Creation, Distribution, and Economic Significance, Vol. I: Knowledge and Knowledge Production* (Princeton, NJ, 1980), pp. 11 and 18.

<sup>69</sup> Marianne E. Partee, “The History of the State University of New York at Buffalo Department of Economics, 1917-2000” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, SUNY Buffalo, Buffalo, 2003), 44.

<sup>70</sup> Partee, “The History of SUNY Buffalo”, 48.

<sup>71</sup> See Mises’s recommendation letter; Letter Mises to Epstein, March 27, 1935, “Letters of Recommendation for F.M. Ludwig von Mises”, Box 7 Folder 6, *FMP*.

<sup>72</sup> Ralph C. Epstein, *Supplementary Readings in Economics* (New York, 1929).

<sup>73</sup> Partee, “The History of SUNY Buffalo”, 61.

<sup>74</sup> Klausinger, “In the Wilderness”, 657.

eventually shaped his intellectual output to the requirements of the new environment. Perhaps his bitter experience with the Economics Reading Club was a first step in this process of disillusionment.

A third line of difference between Buffalo and Vienna that impacted Machlup's initiative is the difference in the respective urban geographies of the two cities. In Vienna, all the *Geistkreis* members lived in a walking distance, or a short tram ride, from one another. The university was located in a remarkable Renaissance-style building on the famous Ringstrasse, close to many restaurants, cafés, and other public meeting spaces that are scattered throughout the city.<sup>75</sup> Hayek, Haberler, Morgenstern, and Machlup, for example, worked in the same block and had lunch together frequently. "There," Machlup recalls, "the discussions were so close that we never knew who said what, or who had originated something."<sup>76</sup> In Vienna the integrity of space supported a form-of-life that did not require a clear separation between "work" and "home" and between the "personal" and the "professional". The integrity of space in Vienna was designed to serve the bourgeoisie citizen.<sup>77</sup> It was achieved by a mixed-use of space that blends residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, private, and public uses together in the same, continuous and well-connected, urban territory.<sup>78</sup>

The Buffalo that Machlup found in the 1930s was nothing like that. We can learn something about Machlup's life in Buffalo from his friend Winternitz's memoir. In March 1940 Winternitz prepared himself to take his first trip out of New York City to visit Machlup in Buffalo. "Fritz Machlup", he recalls, "wanted to show me his university and his home on the outskirts of Buffalo."<sup>79</sup> As a typical

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<sup>75</sup> Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Leijonhufvud, 23.

<sup>77</sup> Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 24-115.

<sup>78</sup> Perloff provides an excellent case study. She tells how her mother and grandmother tried to copy the patterns of Viennese family life, where they saw each other daily, onto the considerably larger grid of New York City. See: Perloff, *Vienna Paradox*, 196.

<sup>79</sup> Emanuel Winternitz, *The Luggage of an Immigrant* (unpublished manuscript, 1982), 277. ([https://www.academia.edu/27719276/The\\_luggage\\_of\\_an\\_immigrant](https://www.academia.edu/27719276/The_luggage_of_an_immigrant), entered: May 26, 2021)

Geistkreis member, Winternitz also suggested giving a “small” talk (“On Rhythm and Symmetry in Visual Art and Music”) to “friends or university-circle (Universitätskreis)” had Machlup found the appropriate crowd.<sup>80</sup> Winternitz reports that Machlup’s home was on the outskirts of the city. After a tiring night train ride from New York City, Winternitz was still eager to see the sights. Mrs. Machlup (Mitzi) drove him to visit the “Niffels” (Niagara Falls) and later the Albright Art Museum (“which impressed me to no end by the number and quality of its exhibits, particularly compared to the expectations I had for a ‘provincial’ museum”).<sup>81</sup> Machlup, we learn, lived in the suburbs. He, and his wife, relied on automobiles for their transportation. The university itself was also located at the edge of town (on Main Street) before it was transferred to Amherst (a suburb of Buffalo) in the 1960s. The university resided in an old almshouse that was surrounded by vast green areas. Unlike the university of Vienna that was a part of city, the University of Buffalo was meant to serve as a refuge from one of America’s largest industrial centers.<sup>82</sup> Machlup, and presumably many of his colleagues, drove to work.<sup>83</sup> After Machlup moved to Johns Hopkins he bragged to his friends that in his new institution, unlike the older one, “... the faculty parking space is really reserved for the faculty...”, and after counting some other perks he found in his new university (the balanced lunches for fifty-cents or the fact that he received the filing cabinets which he requested) he adds “I hope that these pieces of information will not destroy the morale of my academic friends at Buffalo...”<sup>84</sup>

Machlup’s letter opens a window to the kind of life he led when he moved to Baltimore and to his preferences that presumably were shaped in Buffalo. Machlup found downtown Baltimore “repulsive in

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<sup>80</sup> Letter: Winternitz to Machlup, March 15, 1940(?), “Correspondence: Winternitz, Emanuel, Box 74, Folder 19, *FMP*.

<sup>81</sup> Winternitz, *The Luggage of an Immigrant*, 277-8.

<sup>82</sup> Compare with Veysey’s argument that the American university model was meant to be a middle-ground between the cloister and the businessmen office. Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 439-444.

<sup>83</sup> We learn that from a circular letter that Machlup sent to his friends following his move to Baltimore and the start of his position in Johns Hopkins University. “Circular Letter. November 1, 1947” Box 2, Folder 11, *FMP*.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*.

its ugliness,” and preferred the suburbs which he found “very pretty, with plenty of parks, parkways, and tree-lined streets”. His apartment, a part of a two-family house, was located in one of the suburbs, a 25-minute car ride from the university. He found the people in Baltimore “awfully nice,” but complained about his and his wife’s loneliness several times. He mentions a long list of theatrical and musical events that they intend to attend in order to remedy the loneliness caused by the empty nest (his youngest daughter, Hannah, started college at Swarthmore and his son, Stefan, started school at the Sorbonne after graduating from Swarthmore) and the distance from their old friends. This letter – that starts with the declaration that he “...have not yet found anything to gripe about...” and ends with somber notes of loneliness and boredom – exemplifies the internal tension of the suburban experience. In Vienna, I argued, the integrity of space supported a continuous form-of-life with no clear boundaries between the “work” and “life”. The segregated spaces of suburbia achieved the opposite result: they created clear demarcations between the different realms of life that could only be bridged by rather lengthy car trips. I do not think it will be preposterous to argue the “Economics Reading Club” failed, partly, because nobody wanted to drive all the way to the university on a Friday.

The correspondence between Machlup and his colleagues exemplifies the differences between these two intellectual personae and cultures, that were developed under different cultural, social, and even geographical pressures. As Schutz describes in his article, it is almost impossible for an émigré to see that the values and ideas they take for granted — the desirability of intellectual discussions held between equals (rather than hierarchical teaching), the primacy of general and methodological discussions over the particular research topic of each professor, and the freedom of the (male) “intellectual” from family obligations — are not shared by his recipient culture. In Machlup’s correspondence with Buffalo’s faculty, he comes across as someone who fails to understand his own situation, as a “stranger”.

Less than a decade later, Machlup took a position at Johns Hopkins University. In 1950-51 he served as the chair of the famous “History of Ideas Club”. The club was founded by Arthur O. Lovejoy in 1923 and

became, over the years, one of the most celebrated American intellectual institutions. It is hard to imagine that in joining the Club in the late 1940s, Machlup was not reminded of the *Geistkreis*; after all if the structure and the topics were not enough, his old *Geistkreis* friend Engel-Janosi was also a member.<sup>85</sup> In Machlup's short tenure as the Club's president he managed to do two things: to introduce a "constitution" for the Club, and to commission the writing of an article about the Club's history. The debate that surrounded the writing of this piece emphasizes a fundamental disagreement about the proper understanding of the relationship between ideas and the institutions that produce and maintain them.

The Club's constitution, presented and approved in the first meeting of Machlup's tenure, defines the Club's scope and purposes.<sup>86</sup> The document gets into the nitty gritty details about the rules regarding membership, and the process of nomination of new members. In this sense the Club, at least under Machlup's reign, was run in a similar way to a Viennese *Kreis*; it was exclusive, and the right to nominate new members was reserved to the current members; no formal process of application was put in place, and therefore, an outsider could not access the Club without a personal invitation.<sup>87</sup> The need of a formal and detailed constitution (that did not exist, as such, in *Kreise* such as the *Geistkreis*) reveals, perhaps, the difference between reliance on a longstanding tradition and the adaptation of such tradition in a new context.

The introduction of the Club's constitution can be seen as more pertinent to our purposes when considered alongside Machlup's second contribution to the History of Ideas Club: commissioning an essay about the Club's history. This was the first essay about the Club as an institution, and the members

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<sup>85</sup> The similarities between Lovejoy's vision of interdisciplinary cooperation and the ideas behind the *Geistkreis* are striking and deserve a separate study. On Lovejoy's vision see: Anthony Grafton, "The History of Ideas: Precept and Practice, 1950-2000," in: *Worlds made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 188-215 at 193-4.

<sup>86</sup> "Constitution of the History of Ideas Club", Box 243 Folder 12, *FM Papers*.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*.

were excited about it. In 1950 some of the Club's original members were still active, and they saw in this publication an opportunity to reflect upon their contribution to the intellectual world. It was Bruce W. Wardropper, the literary scholar, who suggested that Dorothy Stimson, a historian teaching at Goucher College and a Club member, author the piece, and Machlup approved.<sup>88</sup> The choice of Stimson was particularly interesting since she was a historian of knowledge-making institutions, focusing on the Royal Society.<sup>89</sup> Stimson's intellectual background explains her emphases in the interpretation of the historical materials. Her approach, however, created turmoil in the Club.

Machlup received the final draft of Stimson's article on October 21, 1952 and was happy with it.<sup>90</sup> The other readers, however, did not share Machlup's opinion, and their criticisms were harsh. What came to symbolize the major problem they had with the article was the "50 cents question". All the readers but Machlup saw in Stimson's description of the deliberations that led the Club to raise its membership fees from 25 cents to 50 cents, as not only an irrelevant part that should be cut out from the article, but also a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to write a "history of ideas". An anonymous reviewer captured this attitude best:

The current essay contains interesting matter but it is too much like the old settler's account of Pleasantville before the Greyhound Bus began to go through. It is all right to talk about the 'good old days' but in this account they should be remembered as they would be by a dispassionate historian. Accounts of the appearance of distinguished foreigners, Ames' lecture, the failure of Beard to ring the bell, the minutes of Boas and Malone, Welch's eloquence, chatter in the halls,

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<sup>88</sup> Letter: Wardropper to Machlup, February 11, 1952 and Letter: Machlup to Stimson, February 19, 1952, Box 243 Folder 12, *FM Papers*.

<sup>89</sup> Up until the essay's publication Stimson had delivered three lectures in front of the History of Ideas Club: "Comenius and the 'Invisible College'" (January 11, 1934), "Some Reflections on Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*" (February 12, 1942), and "The Critical Years of the Royal Society, 1670-1703" (February 13, 1947). See: George Boas, ed., *Studies in Intellectual History* (Baltimore, 1953), appendix.

<sup>90</sup> Letter: Machlup to Stimson, October 21, 1952, Box 243 Folder 12, *FM Papers*.

the rise of the dues from 25c to 50c, [...] etc. seem too much like the memoirs of the Class of 1902 [...] Most of the things that have happened at the H. of I. Club are really not unique; they could be duplicated at many other universities. To present them as different or as extraordinarily important gives the essay a tone of sentimental provincialism.<sup>91</sup>

The debate between Stimson and Machlup, on the one hand, and the majority of the Club members, on other hand, does resemble, to a certain extent, the differences between Schutz and his colleagues. The majority of the members of both distinguished intellectual fora insisted that intellectual activity exists in a realm separated from the day-to-day dealings of the persons and institutions that engaged in it, and therefore that a detailed description of everyday life is, at best, irrelevant. Schutz, Machlup, and Stimson insisted that those two realms, if distinguishable at all, are inseparable. Machlup, like Schutz, was an “immanent” thinker, i.e. a believer in the inseparability of thinking and life.

No wonder then that in his presentation in front of the “History of Ideas Club” (April 14, 1949) on the topic of “The Idea of Private Property in Ideas,” Machlup argued that there is no such a thing as “purely intellectual products”. Ideas, he suggested, become protected only when they are “...in a form in which they enter commerce...” rather than in their solipsistic existence in the mind of their author. An idea, he argues, can only be “yours” when you are prepared to share it with others.<sup>92</sup> This understanding of intellectual work, and the emphasis given to the concrete institutions in which it takes place, I argue, is part of Machlup’s Viennese legacy, a legacy his American colleagues found hard to understand or accept.

## (II) Hayek’s Chicago “Experiment”

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<sup>91</sup> Anonymous Review of Stimson’s article, u.d., Box 243 Folder 12, *FM Papers*. In the final version of the article, we find only a few mentions of the issues that the Club members found so upsetting. The “50 Cent problem,” for example, is mentioned only in one sentence. It is unclear whether Stimson changed the article after reading the criticisms or rather that these few short remarks were enough to cause such a turmoil. Dorothy Stimson, “The History of Ideas Club” in: *Studies in Intellectual History*, Gorge Boas ed. (Baltimore, 1953), pp. 174-96.

<sup>92</sup> “Abstract: The Idea of Private Property in Ideas (abstract)”, u.d., Box 243 Folder 12, *FM Papers*.

In a letter to his colleague Milton Friedman (September 1952), Friedrich Hayek describes his plans for the coming academic year:

I am endeavoring to arrange, as an *experiment* in interdivisional cooperation, a series of discussions about the character of the scientific method in the different disciplines and more particularly about the differences between the natural and the social sciences. [...] I am of course fully aware that no single specialist can adequately deal with all the problems that will arise and my hope is that these discussions can be conducted as a series of colloquia by members of the different divisions held in front of a selected group of students [...] *I am sending this letter to a limited number of members of the faculty* who I hope might be interested and whose participation I should particularly value.<sup>93</sup>

Hayek's "limited number" of faculty members turned out to be higher than fifty - the biggest names the University of Chicago could offer. They were all invited to take part in Hayek's "experiment". This "experiment", which Hayek recalled as "one of the greatest experiences of my life", will be at the center of the present section.<sup>94</sup> The "experiment", I argue, was conceived under the inspiration of Hayek's experiences in Vienna and to some extent also London in terms of both its content and its structure.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Letter: Hayek to Friedman, Sept. 1952, Friedrich A. Hayek Papers, Box 63 Folder 14, *Hoover Institution Archives*. (the emphases are mine; hereafter, *FAH Papers*)

<sup>94</sup> Friedrich Hayek, interviewed by Leo Rosten 15 November 1978 (Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles, <http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/>); The best description of Hayek's "experiment" can be found in: Bruce Caldwell, *Hayek's Challenge: An Intellectual Biography of F.A. Hayek* (Chicago, 2003), 298-9. The purpose of this section is to shed a new light on the story of Hayek's "experiment", from the perspective of the Viennese 'Kreis-culture' legacy. Compare: Janek Wasserman, *Marginal Revolutionaries*, 206.

<sup>95</sup> Since I already presented Hayek's Viennese influence, I would dedicate here only a few words for his relevant experience in the London School of Economics. As a professor at the LSE Hayek ran, together with Lionel Robbins and Arnold Plant, a departmental graduate seminar colloquially known as the "Grand Seminar". Between the years 1933 and 1938, the Grand Seminar met weekly every Monday afternoon for a lively discussion about various themes in economics (e.g., cycle theory, trade theory, capital theory, collectivist economics, theory of value, international trade etc.). Each meeting started with a brief presentation by a graduate student that led to a lively discussion between graduate students and the faculty (Hayek remembered that the seminars attracted 30-40 students and a dozen faculty members including foreign visitors; see: Susan Howson, *Lionel Robbins* (Cambridge, 2011), 250-5). In his Chicago experience, however, Hayek took one step further, and hoped to congregate experts from a variety of different fields



Consequently, the reactions of the majority Hayek's colleagues to his experiment were mixed. In order to understand the intellectual, personal, and institutional background of Hayek's experiment we should follow Hayek's intellectual development during and after World War II, and also learn about this unique institution which hosted Hayek's experiment – the “Committee on Social Thought”.

Hayek's experiment was in line with his war-time effort to locate the origins of the disasters of the day in the history of Western thought. Hayek pinpointed the origin of modern-day totalitarianism in the “scientific hubris” of the Parisian *École Polytechnique*.<sup>96</sup> The successes of classical mechanics in solving both technical and theoretical challenges, Hayek argues, led thinkers, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to infer that the same methodologies that made the separation between physics and metaphysics possible, could also be employed in the study of society. This was the “engineering mentality”, which embraced such beliefs as that: all tasks have a single end; that tasks can be performed ‘in the mind’ before being executed; that one can have all the ‘data’ at once, and produce a ‘blue print’; that the “engineer” does not take part in the social process, but lives in a world of his own; and that the “engineer”'s knowledge remains identical regardless of context. As an alternative, Hayek presents the archetype of the “Trader” or the “Merchant” who is social, “..., i.e. interwoven with the free activities of other people”; not concerned with end-results, but rather with doing the best with the means at her disposal; and well versed in the local and particular circumstances of his existence.<sup>97</sup> In his preference of the “merchant” over the “engineer”, Hayek aligns himself with Schutz and Machlup as an “immanent” thinker. Fighting the “engineering spirit” was for him both an intellectual and a political cause of the highest importance. Therefore, he

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in order to discuss topics that far exceeded the limits of economic theory or any other specific field. The conversation *inter pares* of experts in different fields, I argue in this section, became, for Hayek, more than a nostalgia to the Geisteskreis days, but a methodological necessity.

<sup>96</sup> F.A. Hayek, “The Source of the Scientific Hubris: *L'École Polytechnique*”, in Bruce Caldwell, ed., *Studies in the Abuse and Decline of Reason: Text and Documents, The Collected Works of F.A. Hayek, Vol. XIII* (Chicago, 2010), 169-87. For the best account of the genesis and scope of Hayek's “Abuse of Reason” project see Bruce Caldwell, “Introduction”, *ibid*, 1-45.

<sup>97</sup> Friedrich A. Hayek, “Scientism and the Study of Society, Part III”, *Economica* 11/41 (1944): 27-39 at 34-7.

aimed to rethink scientific methodology and to suggest a way to think about science that could compete with the positivist program.

The University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought was an excellent auspice to Hayek's aspirations. He was invited to join the Committee by the founder of the Committee the economic historian John Ulric Nef, and arrived in 1950.<sup>98</sup> The Committee was founded by Nef in early 1940s as an attempt to fight the balkanization of the disciplines and to promote interdisciplinary conversations about the future of humanity.<sup>99</sup> The Committee promoted exactly the kind of wide ranging intellectual projects that Hayek pursued in the 1940s - from both sides, it was a match made in heaven.<sup>100</sup> Hayek used his time in the Committee to complete his transformation into a multi-disciplinary intellectual. Hayek's "experiment", therefore, was an important stepping stone in these three processes: Hayek's intellectual project; Hayek's aspiration to establish himself as a multidisciplinary intellectual in line with the intellectual giants of Chicago; and Nef's aspiration that the Committee would to bridge the gaps between the disciplines and overcome the fragmentation of knowledge prevalent in the modern University.

Hayek allowed himself to think big. What he had in mind with his "experiment", which was listed in the University's course offerings as a "Seminar on Scientific Method and the Study of Society", far exceeds the "normal" seminars he offered both before and after. Hayek wanted to bring together professors from the four corners of the campus to participate in a weekly discussion, in which he would pose the core questions of his intellectual project and would let the intellectual elite of Chicago to discuss it. No wonder then that in the invitation to the seminar he registered his methodological tractate "Scientism and the

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<sup>98</sup> Letter: John U. Nef to Hayek, October 26, 1948, Box 55 Folder 1, *FAH Papers*.

<sup>99</sup> Compare: Ross B. Emmett, "Specializing in Interdisciplinarity: The Committee on Social Thought as the University of Chicago's Antidote to Compartmentalization in the Social Sciences," *History of Political Economy* 42 (annual suppl.) (2010): 261-87, at 262-5.

<sup>100</sup> "It [the Committee] is a scholar's dream..., it comes at a moment when I need just such environment if I am to hope to complete the program of work I have mapped out for myself." (Letter: Hayek to Nef, November 6, 1948, Box 55 Folder 1, *FAH Papers*).

Study of Society” and his forthcoming contribution to physiological psychology *The Sensory Order* as background readings.<sup>101</sup>

Hayek realized that his “experiment” was unusual, and so did the invitees.<sup>102</sup> In what follows I argue that there are some important similarities between Hayek’s proposed experiment and the Viennese Kreise in general and the Geistkreis in particular. The similarities appear in both the organizational structure of the seminar and in its intellectual structure and content. The remainder of this article will touch on both aspects in order to show that what appeared so unusual to Hayek’s colleagues, was, as a matter of fact, an adaptation of an old “recipe” into a new, and foreign, environment.

Two things stand out in Hayek’s organizational plan for his seminar. First, all the parties involved were expected to join the seminar voluntarily. No credit was offered to the students, and the invitees among the faculty were not offered any sort of compensation.<sup>103</sup> Secondly, the gargantuan list of invitees, the diversity of their disciplinary affiliations and intellectual approaches, and the sheer number of heavyweight names it included, promised to deliver a meeting of minds that not many places in history have, or could have, offered. He invited future- and past- Nobel laureates, immigrants and Americans, scientists and humanists, metallurgists and philosophers, city planners and physicists to join his seminar.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Letter: Hayek to Friedman, Sept. 1952, Box 63 Folder 14, *FAH Papers*.

<sup>102</sup> In the invitation for the seminar he wrote: “I believe you will agree with me that the exceptional opportunities which the University of Chicago can provide for such interdepartmental co-operation are hardly enough used...” (Letter: Hayek to Friedman, Sept. 1952, Box 63 Folder 14, *FAH Papers*). An example for such response: “...I feel certain that your experimental seminar will be a big step toward utilizing the unusual opportunities this school has to offer.” (Letter: Cyril Stanley Smith to Hayek, October 7, 1952, Box 63 Folder 14, *FAH Papers*).

<sup>103</sup> “‘Committee on Social Thought Seminar on Scientific Method and the Study of Society’, September 25, 1952” in Box 63 Folder 14, *FAH Papers*; John U. Nef to Hayek, October 26, 1948, Box 55 Folder 1, *FAH Papers*.

<sup>104</sup> In the list of over fifty names one can find: the philosopher Rudolf Carnap; the physicists Enrico Fermi, James Franck, Robert S. Mulliken, Leo Szilard, and Edward Teller; the economists: Milton Friedman and Tjalling C. Koopmans; the psychologists: Heinrich Klüver and James G. Miller; the neurologist Robert W. Sperry, the political scientist: Leo Strauss, the Egyptologist: John A. Wilson; the Metallurgist: Cyril Smith; and his colleagues from the Committee on Social Thought: John Nef, Edward Shils, and Yves Simon. For a full list of the seminar’s invitees, see: Box 63 Folder 16, *FAH Papers*.

The responses to Hayek's invitations were not slow to come.<sup>105</sup> Hayek received dozens of written responses that were nothing but supportive, congratulating him for the fascinating topic, and his vision to bring together experts from all the fields, a much needed vision, they said, in the present-day fragmented intellectual climate. Many of the responders, however, indicated that the coming quarter is too busy with inter- or extra- curricular activities. Others told Hayek that they prefer to dedicate the little time they have to stay in their laboratories or to work on their own materials, and, therefore, they cannot afford to spend energy outside their principal commitments. That is not to say that nobody showed up. Some, like the Viennese-born economist Bert F. Hoselitz, responded positively to Hayek's invitation.<sup>106</sup> We know that the famous physicist Enrico Fermi agreed to give a guest lecture without committing to the full schedule.<sup>107</sup> And it is safe to assume that Hayek's colleagues in the Committee answered his invitation orally and perhaps participated in the seminar. The seminar, we learn from Hayek's recollections, was a success, even if it was not a realization of Hayek's initial plan.

The responses to both Hayek's and Machlup's initiatives reveal their inability to comprehend the reigning cultural and institutional norms. Hayek and Machlup, however, were familiar with a different socio-intellectual world, a world in which such initiatives were not peripheral to the intellectual's main calling, but an essential part thereof. The juxtaposition of these two worlds not only emphasizes the differences between them, but also reveals the internal contradiction in institutions such as The Committee on Social Thought. Hayek's experiment epitomized what the Committee was supposed to support, at least in spirit. In the material world, however, the institutional framework was ill suited to such initiatives. The Committee was one of several American institutions which adopted intellectual ideals that were integral

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<sup>105</sup> All the existing responses can be found in Box 63 Folder 16, *FAH Papers*.

<sup>106</sup> Letter: Bert F. Hoselitz to Hayek, September 18, 1952, Box 63 Folder 16, *FAH Papers*.

<sup>107</sup> Letters: Hayek to Fermi, October 28, 1952 & Fermi to Hayek, October 13, 1952, Box 63 Folder 15, *FAH Papers*.  
UCLA Oral History Project.

to the Viennese “Kreis-Culture”, but often failed to replicate the socio-cultural structure that made it possible.

In this “experiment” Hayek brought to the fore not only a “Viennese”-style structure, but also the questions and intellectual sensitivities that were discussed in the Geistkreis days.<sup>108</sup> The syllabus for the Fall Quarter teaches us that, on the one hand, Hayek turned to his Viennese friends: Karl Popper’s *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* and Felix Kaufmann’s *Methodology of the Social Sciences* are included in the syllabus. But, on the other hand, Hayek gave his “enemies” the full light of day. The syllabus contains works by Rudolf Carnap, Hans Reichenbach, and even J.B Watson.<sup>109</sup> On the face of it, it seems like Hayek was looking to continue, in a Chicago seminar room, debates that started in interwar Vienna about the nature and definition of science.

A somewhat cryptic table (figure 2) he kept together with the rest of his seminar materials can serve as a window to Hayek’s thoughts about the nature of science, as he worked them out in the seminar.<sup>110</sup> This chart describes what I believe to be Hayek’s attempt to work out a meaningful picture of the relationship between the disciplines. Each line in the table is dedicated to a different “level of organization” in

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<sup>108</sup> Hayek did not contribute to broader methodological discussions before he moved to London, but we know that he was aware of the major debates of the day. His friend from both the Geistkreis and Mises’s *Privatseminar*, Felix Kaufmann, was also a member of the Vienna Circle, gave his Kreis-members debriefs about the happenings in the other Kreis. Caldwell hypothesized, based on Hayek’s reluctance to mention Kaufmann’s name in this context, that Kaufmann was sent to the Vienna Circle as a “spy” (Caldwell, *Hayek’s Challenge*, 195).

<sup>109</sup> The complete syllabus is: John O. Wisdom, *Foundations of Inference in the Natural Sciences* (London, 1952); Karl R. Popper, *Logik der Forschung* (Vienna, 1935); Hans Reichenbach, *Experience and Prediction*, (Chicago, 1948); William H. George, *The Scientist in Action* (London, 1936); Morris R. Cohen, *Reason and Nature* (New York, 1931); Rudolf Carnap, “Logical Foundations of the Unity of Science,” Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap and Charles Morris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Unified Science 1* (1938), 42-62; Percy Williams Bridgman, *The Logic of Modern Physics* (New York, 1927); Herman Weyl, *Philosophy of Mathematics and Natural Science* (Princeton, 1949); Arthur S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge, 1929); Émile Meyerson, *Identity and Reality* (London, 1928); Joseph Henry Woodger, *Biological Principles* (London, 1928); Felix Kaufmann, *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1944); John B. Watson, “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It,” (1913) reprinted in Wayne Dennis, ed., *Readings in the History of Psychology* (New York, 1948), 457-71. (“University of Chicago – Seminar Materials: “Scientific Method” outline”, Box 63 Folder 14, *FAH Papers*).

<sup>110</sup> See: Figure 2; (“University of Chicago – Seminar Materials: “Scientific Method” notes”, Box 63 Folder 13, *FAH Papers*).

descending order. The top level is 'Biota' (the entirety of life in a particular region, habitat, or geological period), and after that, in a descending order, "Society", "Interbreeding Population", "Individual", "Cell", and "Gene". Most levels of organization are in themselves split into two "secondary" levels of organization. The category "Society", for example, is divided into two categories: "Traditional Society: Mankind, Nation, Special Groups" and "Instinctive society". The rest of the table is dedicated for the specification of the disciplines (or sub-disciplines) that study each aspect of the said "level of organization". All in all, there are six different aspects for most levels. Two descriptive aspects: one describes the "Climax Phase" (a "static phase" in which all that have developed can be seen and described) while the other describes a "Secular Change and Reproduction". In the case of (human) "Society", to continue with the example, it is Cultural Anthropology that describes the "Climax Phase" and History that describes the process of "Secular Change and Reproduction". The next pair of aspects is titled "Dynamics" and is divided into "Persistence" and "Secular Change". In the case of human society, the relevant disciplines would be Sociology and Economics to describe the former, and Philosophy of History to describe the latter. From the different examples we can learn that with "Dynamics" Hayek refers to forms of knowledge that articulate general laws rather than descriptive forms of knowledge which focus on particulars. The two remaining aspects are "Reproduction" and "Genetic Aspect". Not all levels of organization are capable of reproduction, "Biotas", for example, do not reproduce. Human societies, however, do. And their reproductive mechanism is, according to Hayek, "Cultural Cleavage".

This handout is found alongside a handful of index cards that suggest that Hayek occupied himself with different attempts to organize scientific disciplines into meaningful constellations.<sup>111</sup> The constellation he eventually chose has at least two interesting features: it omits any reference to the physical sciences and the study of matter, and it places the social sciences and even a branch of philosophy (Philosophy of History) at the heart of the life sciences.

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<sup>111</sup> "University of Chicago – Seminar Materials: "Scientific Method" notes", Box 63 Folder 13, *FAH Papers*.

In his interpretation of Hayek's oeuvre, Bruce Caldwell attributes a pivotal role to this Chicago seminar. According to Caldwell, this mimeographed table is the first sign that Hayek began to take interest in biology in relation to the social sciences. This newfound (or, rather, rediscovered) interest led Hayek, eventually, to forgo his early methodological commitments and to substitute the clear demarcation between the natural- and the social-sciences with a differentiation between sciences that deal with "relatively simple-" and "complex-" phenomena.<sup>112</sup> For the purposes of this article it suffices to say that, as I mentioned before, in his early methodological work "Scientism and the Study of Society," (1942-4) Hayek argued against the tendency in the social sciences to take after the methodologies of the natural sciences. He argued that the goal of the natural sciences is to challenge our perceptions, ideas, and opinions of the world and to replace our picture of the world with one that fits reality better. The social sciences, however, take our ideas and opinions as their data, and ask to explain how the unintended consequences of our actions (which are guided by those ideas, concepts, and opinions) create complex social mechanisms.<sup>113</sup> For Hayek, the difference in both objects and objectives between the two branches of science calls for a clear demarcation between them. By 1955, however, Hayek changed his mind. In his "Degrees of Explanation" Hayek relies on Warren Weaver's "Science of Complexity" to argue for a completely different demarcation between the sciences that is based on the complexity level of their respective objects. The study of "organized complexity" warrants different methodological tools and provides different kind of predictions, when compared to fields that study "simple phenomena" (e.g.,

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<sup>112</sup> Caldwell, *Hayek's Challenge*, 297-306. Caldwell hypothesizes that Hayek's meetings with natural scientists in the seminar nudged him to take more interest in biology and to consider a more unified picture of the sciences (p. 299). This might be the case, but, as Caldwell indicates, since we do not know who actually participated in the seminar, we cannot know this for sure. We do know, however, that Hayek had some background in biology. His father, a botany enthusiast, introduced him to botanical research as a child. In his autobiographical notes Hayek recalls that since he preferred theory over taxonomy, his father gifted him August Weismann's *Vorträge über Deszendenztheorie* ("Lectures on the Theory of Evolution," 1904). Had his father given him that book a few years later, when he was old enough to understand it, Hayek continues, he perhaps would have pursued biology rather than economics (F.A. Hayek, *Hayek on Hayek: An Autobiographical Dialogue*, Stephen Kresge and Leif Wenar, eds., (Chicago, 1994), p. 43.

<sup>113</sup> Hayek, "Scientism and the Study of Society," 270-84. For a thorough interpretation of Hayek's essay see: Caldwell, *Hayek's Challenge*, 241-60.

classical mechanics) that still dominates our image of science.<sup>114</sup> The study of organisms or physiological psychology (a subject that Hayek dealt with extensively in his *The Sensory Order*) are examples for (natural) scientific fields that should be considered alongside economics or sociology as sciences of complex phenomena rather than being bunched together with science of “simple” phenomena such as classical mechanics.

In 1952, in all likelihood, Hayek was still in the process of figuring out his “simple phenomena” / “complex phenomena” dichotomy. The invitation to the seminar, as well as the reading list, still reflects his old commitments, while the mimeographed table hints towards the ideas he would present in print three years later.<sup>115</sup> Hayek’s “experiment,” so it seems, was planned, and executed at a decisive crossroads of his intellectual journey. What is pertinent to our interest in the Kreis as a model is that Hayek chose the model of conversation between equals, experts in different fields, in order to test and reconsider his methodological commitments.

In the invitation to Friedman, Hayek writes: “I am of course fully aware that *no single specialist* can adequately deal with all the problems that will arise...”.<sup>116</sup> This sentence echoes a line from *The Sensory Order* which was published later that year:

Perhaps such an effort [the one he extended in the book] ... requires a combination of qualifications which nobody possesses to a sufficient degree and which the specialist who feels

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<sup>114</sup> F. A. Hayek, “Degrees of Explanation,” *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 6/23 (1955), 209-25; Warren Weaver, “Science and Complexity,” *American Scientist* 36/4 (1948), 536-44. Compare: Caldwell, *Hayek’s Challenge*, 301-6.

<sup>115</sup> Even though it seems like the mimeographed table makes a stronger argument than the one Hayek will eventually present. From the way the different “levels of organization” are layered one on top of the other it may seem that Hayek argues for an ontological continuum between the different levels and not only for methodological affinity between the different fields of knowledge.

<sup>116</sup> Letter: Hayek to Friedman, “University of Chicago – Seminar Materials: “Scientific Method” outline”, Box 63 Folder 14, *FAH Papers* (my emphases).



sure in his own field therefore hesitates to undertake. To do it adequately one would indeed have to be equally competent as a psychologist and as a physiologist, as a logician and as a mathematician, and as a physicist and as a philosopher. [...] A satisfactory execution of the thesis which I have outlined would probably require the collaboration of several specialists in the different fields.<sup>117</sup>

These quotes, read in light of Hayek's intellectual project, reveal the inadequacy of the tentative distinction I introduced earlier between the "organizational" and "intellectual" aspects of Hayek's experiment. In Hayek's opinion, which was molded in countless hours of Kreis-discussions about methodology, the *egalitarian* Kreis was a preferred forum to discuss the kind of questions he set out to discuss. He, himself, was committed to this idea, to the same extent that he was formed by it. To be sure Hayek in 1952 was significantly older than Machlup was at the time he attempted to form his "Economics Reading Club", he was also more used to being an émigré, having left Vienna in 1931, and in a different intellectual and social status.<sup>118</sup> That can explain the differences in tone and levels of self-consciousness between Hayek's and Machlup's attempts. Hayek, to be sure, was fully aware that his colleagues might raise an eyebrow to the reading of his invitation, and therefore labeled his seminar as an "experiment". But in his eyes, I argue, it was the "natural" move, the "recipe", rather than a step into the unknown. Unfortunately, other than Hayek's enthusiastic recap of the seminar, we have no further documentation on what actually happened in that seminar room.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Hayek, *The Sensory Order*, vii.

<sup>118</sup> See: Hayek, *Hayek on Hayek*, 137.

<sup>119</sup> Caldwell reports that he asked Gary Becker who told him he has no real memory from the seminar. (Caldwell, *Hayek's Challenge*, 299, fn. 14). Among Hayek's papers no further documents were found; further research in the collections of the attendees, to the extent that we can know who they were, might help to rectify this problem. One of Hayek's students, Shirley Robin Letwin, portrays a lively picture of Hayek's seminars in Chicago. The description, I suppose, refers to no seminar in particular, but captures the general spirit of those meetings. From the description we learn that Hayek did attract a number of heavy hitters to his seminar, even if they did not commit to his full program. Compare: Shirley Robin Letwin, "The Achievement of Friedrich A. Hayek," in: *Essays on Hayek*, Fritz Machlup (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 147-67 in: 147-8.

## 6. Conclusion

Unwittingly perhaps, Schutz stumbled into a turmoil. His account of “The Stranger,” the immigrant, did not fit well with the hegemonic narrative in the New School that glorified the experience of immigration. In order to articulate the disastrous effect of immigration on the individual, Schutz coined the term “recipe”. Recipe, he argues, is the tacit knowledge that ensure the coordination of both meanings and expectations between the person and its social environment. Not only that these recipes do not travel well, because they are culture specific, Schutz argues, they are also extremely difficult to learn (in adulthood), because they are tacit and hence cannot be spelled out even by the natives.

We know from the many important works in the history of science and intellectual history that tacit knowledge plays a decisive role in the life and work of scientists and intellectuals.<sup>120</sup> This article examines a specific aspect thereof, that of the scientific persona, which Algazi defines as a cultural template of a codified social role. In the home culture of our protagonists, I argue, the participation in *Kreise* was integral to the persona of the intellectual. That was not necessarily true for the American academic culture in which they all found themselves after the emigration. I suggested that *Kreis*-participation and *Kreis*-building recipes are particularly potent case studies for exploring the vicissitudes of intellectual life in motion for two main reasons. First, the *Kreis*' structured informality emphasizes the tacit dimension that can be found in every social interaction. The less formal an institution is, the more it relies on implied rules and pre-coordinated preferences. Secondly, *Kreise* require cooperation among individuals, thus, when performed in a foreign environment, they inevitably reveal the incompatibility of different intellectual personae, and, as a result, make them more visible for the historian of intellectual life.

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<sup>120</sup> See for example: Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London, 1958); Harry Collins, “What is tacit knowledge?” in: *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (eds.) (London and New York, 2001), pp. 115-128; Harry Collins, *Tacit and Explicit Knowledge* (Chicago, 2010);

I coupled the concepts ‘recipe’ and ‘persona’ because each of them emphasizes a different aspect of the story of the Kreis in America. The term “recipe” brings to mind an algorithm that one could follow in order to achieve a desired result. But, as Schutz explains to us, “recipes” are not as transferable as they seem to be. They cannot function without the right “ingredients” (that can be different in different cultures) and the result would not necessarily be pleasing to every palate (as Voegelin warned Engel-Janosi when the latter asked him to give a Geistkreis-like lecture for Americans) or satisfy every “hunger” (as Morgenstern noted in his diary). I turned to “persona” specifically because it emphasizes that the ways and trajectories of intellectual life are not necessarily shaped by the intellectuals themselves, but rather by “larger and diverse forces”.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, it gives us the opportunity to consider factors such as the gendered division of domestic labor, urban density, geographical distance, and the incentive structure of the university as part of the story. Finally, the final discussion about Hayek’s “experiment” suggests that the form of the Kreis (and especially its egalitarian, Geistkreis-like, version) infiltrated into Hayek’s way of thinking. In *The Sensory Order* he states that some difficult problems -- such as the mind-body problem -- require a cooperation between different experts, and immediately after that he tried to form such a group to discuss another pressing problem – the nature of the scientific method.

The story of the Geistkreis in America gives us a glimpse to the influence of the Kreis -- both as a model and as an idea -- on intellectual life in America. In order to provide a more complete picture, however, further research is needed. One strand of such a work should focus on the story of the Wiener Kreis.

Those members of the Wiener Kreis who emigrated to America reached more prominent positions in their discipline but, contrary to the Geistkreis, were also instrumental to the professionalization of American philosophy and thereby (some would add) to the closing of its horizons.<sup>122</sup> Collecting and analyzing

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<sup>121</sup> Algazi, “*Exemplum and Wundertier*”, 12.

<sup>122</sup> Compare: Scott Edgar, “Logical Empiricism, Politics, and Professionalism,” *Science and Education* 18 (2008), 177-89. I am aware that this claim is highly controversial, and this article is definitely not the proper place for solving this controversy. A comparative study of the different usages of the Kreis as a model and idea by different groups of different intellectual and social statuses should take up this question.

additional stories about the after-lives of different Kreise in the aftermath of World War II would enable us to discern the idiosyncrasies of the Geistkreis from the common traits of the general Kreis-culture and promote our understanding of its influence on our intellectual landscape.

Figure 1

## Economic Reading Club

Members: Bidwell, Grumbough, Burton, Epstein, Froman, Livemore, Machlup, McGarry, Norton, Riegel, Smith, Sumner, Widener  
1936-1937

No.	1936	Host	Speaker	Subject	Chairman	Other People present	Topic
1.	Oct 14 Wednesday	Machlup	Sumner	A.P. Burns, Decline in Competition	Smith	Bidwell, Grumbough, Burton, Epstein, Livemore, McGarry, Widener, [Goldstein]	10 Prof 11
2.	Oct 30 Friday	McGarry	Froman	Janis Fisher, 100% Money	Machlup	Grumbough, Burton, Norton, Riegel, Smith, Sumner, [Bender, Holder]	9 Prof 11
3.	Nov. 18 Wednesday	Burton	Livemore	Eli F. Heckscher, Mercantilism	Sumner	Bidwell, Grumbough, Machlup, McGarry, Norton, Smith, Widener, [Corcoran, Goldstein, Kibler]	10 Prof 13
4.	Dec. 5 Saturday	Grumbough	Smith	Douglas Copland, Australia in the World Crisis 1929-1933	McGarry	Bidwell, Burton, Epstein, Livemore, Machlup, Riegel, Sumner, [Holder, Ep. Goldstein]	10 Prof 12
5.	Jan. 15	Sumner	Machlup	John M. Keynes, The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money	Epstein	Bidwell, Burton, Livemore, McGarry, Norton, Smith, Bender, Goldstein, Holder, Lueder, Melt, Nelson	9 Prof 15
6.	Jan. 29	Epstein	Norton	Eveline M. Burns, Towards Social Security	Meyers (guest)	Bidwell, Machlup, [Corcoran]	4 Prof 6

Figure 1: "Economic Reading Club" Box 274 Folder 5, FM Papers. Copyright Stanford University

Figure 2

Level of Organization		Description			Dynamics		Genetic Aspect	
Primary	Secondary	Climax Phase	Secular Change and Reproduction	Persistence	Secular Change	Reproduction	Genetic Aspect	
Biota	World	Bio-geography	Paleontology	Theory of Biotic Evolution				
	Local	Descriptive Synecology	History	Dynamic Synecology				
Society	Instinctive Society	Cultural Anthropology	History	Sociology Economics	Philosophy of History	Cultural Cleavage	Genetics of Behavior	
Interbreeding Population	Species group Species Subspecies Deme	Taxonomy	Phylogeny	Theory of Evolution	Speciation	Population Genetics		
Individual	Colony Individual Organ	Anatomy	Descriptive Embryology	Statics	Transformation	Physiology of Reproduction	Developmental Genetics	
Cell	Tissue Cell Cell relationships	Histology	Differentiation	General Physiology	Physiology of Differentiation	Physiology of Cell Division	Physiological Genetics	
Gene	Linkage System Gene Gene	Genie Chemistry	Genetics Nature of Mutation	Physiology of Persistence	Physiology of Mutation	Physiology of Duplication	Theory of the Gene	

Figure 2: "University of Chicago – Seminar Materials: "Scientific Method" outline", Box 63 Folder 14, FAH Papers.