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SEARCHING FOR THE
CONCRETE SUBJECT

ON THE EPISTEMIC ROLE OF LIVED-EXPERIENCE
IN PAUL NATORP'S CRITICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

NICOLÁS ALEJANDRO TRUJILLO OSORIO

Searching for the Concrete Subject.
On the Epistemic Role of Lived-
Experience in Paul Natorp's Critical
Epistemology

Nicolás Alejandro Trujillo Osorio

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On the Epistemic Role of Lived-Experience in Paul Natorp's Critical Epistemology

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Introduction

The Research Problem, Hypothesis, Contribution, Aims

The following dissertation deals with Paul Natorp's *General Psychology according to the Critical Method*. Whilst Natorp never completed the entire project of formulating a philosophical psychology, I show that the final outline of this project does contain a novel and systematic enlargement of the neo-Kantian transcendental foundation of objective knowledge. In this respect, I argue that Natorp makes a significant critical-epistemological (*erkenntniskritisch*) contribution to the main problem of the Marburg School of neo-Kantianism, namely, the question of the a priori conditions of validity (*Geltungsbedingungen*) of objective knowledge. What is this particular contribution of the general psychology? In which sense does the general psychology enlarge the research programme of the Marburg School? Throughout this dissertation, I will hold that Natorp's critical-psychological project attempted to systematically explain the immanent and necessary relation between validity and *lived experience* (*Erlebnis*). By doing so, Natorp advanced towards a preliminary epistemology of the epistemic agency of concrete subjects, that is, an epistemology that explains and describes the epistemic role of lived experience in the production of objective determinations. Thus, by emphasizing the epistemic character of lived experience, my dissertation aims at demonstrating that Natorp's general psychology offers a novel transcendental description of the a priori conditions of the process through which individuals may become rational agents, that is, promoters of a rationally-engaged epistemic life.

The common approach to the general psychology has focused upon what I call the negative contribution, namely, Natorp's critique of the dispute over psychologism. Regarding this, however, I defend the idea that Natorp's philosophical psychology also develops a positive contribution. The project of a general psychology consists in the systematic construction of a non-empirical or idealist philosophical psychology

(*philosophische Psychologie*).¹ As such, I claim that Natorp's philosophical psychology from 1912 can be understood as the last systematic effort to define the epistemic role of perceptual lived experience in the production of objectively valid knowledge. Concretely, my hypothesis holds that perceptual lived experience can be understood as the a priori subjective condition for the recognition (*Anerkennung*) and appropriation (*Aneignung*) of the objective validity of contents of thought by any concrete subject. Thus the principal goal of this dissertation is to analyse the epistemological meaning and contribution of this statement.

It is well-known that the problem of lived experience is not new in the context of transcendental philosophy. Thanks to the early works of Wilhelm Dilthey and then to Hans Georg-Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (Dilthey 1922; Gadamer 2010), we know that this concept was first interpreted around 1790, following publication of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Despite the fact that many philosophers and poets – among them Goethe, Schiller, the Schlegel brothers, and Novalis – made use of the concept to refer to the transcendental meaning of creativity and the facticity of knowledge, regarding art and science, none developed a systematic interpretation of its epistemic role in the production of objectivity. As (Cramer 1972) explains, the concept of lived experience was used in particular to refer, in a wide and diverse sense, to the subjective dimension of knowledge. Thus, from the viewpoint of this philosophical and academic context, I think that Paul Natorp's philosophical psychology is one of the first systematic analyses to revive and deal with the epistemic role of lived experience in the production of objective knowledge. In the final version of his treatise, Natorp explains the epistemological relation of lived experience to objectivity through the concepts of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*), content (*Inhalt*), and perception (*Wahrnehmung*). Systematic analysis of these concepts is undertaken in chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this dissertation. However, let me illustrate here

¹ In the coming chapters I will refer to Natorp's neo-Kantian psychology as 'general psychology' or 'philosophical psychology'. Natorp defines it as 'general' because it analyses the a priori logical fundamentals of the object of any psychology, namely, the *psyche* or subjectivity as such. Insofar as it deals with the a priori fundamentals of the problem of the psyche, Natorp also calls it 'philosophical' psychology, for the task of transcendental philosophy is precisely to analyse the a priori principles of objective knowledge (Natorp 1912a, 1–2). In his 1913 essay *Philosophy and Psychology*, Natorp suggests another definition, namely, 'psychology of the philosophical', adding that this psychology is not a 'philosophical psychology' (Natorp 1913, 200). This sentence seems to introduce a clear contradiction with the 1912 definition. Nevertheless, Natorp maintains the definition of general psychology as the analysis of the a priori principles of objective knowledge from the viewpoint of subjectivity. Since the expression 'psychology of the philosophical' may sound a little odd to contemporary readers, I choose to speak of 'general psychology' or, which is the same, 'philosophical psychology'.

Natorp's main argument in general terms. During the second half of the 19th century, the distinction between knowledge as an *act* and knowledge as a *content* was a commonplace for philosophy and experimental psychology. While the former was mainly, although not always, defined using the concept of cognition (*Erkennen*), the latter was defined using the concept of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*). Whilst this distinction served many philosophers to define cognition in terms of a psychological act, Natorp claimed that the distinction cannot be maintained in the context of philosophy if we aim to analyse the epistemic role that lived experiences play in the production of objective contents of thinking. Natorp's argument is that the lived experience of knowledge is a particular kind or class of content of thought. The lived experience of knowledge cannot be different from its contents, for it cannot take place independently of contents themselves. Lived experience is not something we feel or enact before or after we define the content of an objective concept. Rather, it is something that occurs with, or in, contents of thought. In Natorp's view, lived experience is that which we, as concrete knowing subjects, *do* or *realize* whenever we undertake the task of forming the objective concepts that determine the object of experience.² As I explain in the following chapters, Natorp holds that lived experience expresses the epistemic process by means of which we recognize, adhere to, and finally justify for ourselves and other rational subjects the objective validity of our contents of thought. For this reason, Natorp identifies the concept of lived experience with the concept of consciousness. Consciousness defines the subjective direction of objective thinking, which Natorp also calls 'subjectivation' (*Subjektivierung*). The lived experience of objective knowledge, therefore, is the subjective-epistemic way in which consciousness is fulfilled in and by any concrete subject. In this respect, Natorp aims to demonstrate that lived experience is a general epistemic capacity that takes place in perception (*Wahrnehmung*) and that it contributes to two fundamental moments of the

² Let us consider, for example, the following passage, which Natorp reproduces in most of his texts on philosophical psychology: "Es ist daher eine Täuschung, wenn man, daß wir beim Wahrnehmen, Vorstellen, Denken usw. außer dem Bewußtsein des wahrgenommenen, vorgestellten, gedachten Inhalts noch ein besonderes Bewußtsein unseres Aktes des Wahrnehmens, Vorstellens, Denkens hätten, z. B. beim Hören eines Tons 1. ein Bewußtsein des Tons, 2. ein Bewußtsein des Hörens. Der Ton ertönt mir' und 'Ich höre den Ton', dies sind nicht zwei Tatsachen, sondern eine, nur auf zweierlei Art ausgedrückt nach den beiden daran unterscheidbaren Momenten, dem Dasein eines Inhalts, und seiner Beziehung auf das Ich. Der Inhalt ist, als Bewußtseinsinhalt, gar nicht da ohne sein Verhältnis zu dem Ich, für welches er da ist; und ebensowenig ist dies Verhältnis da ohne den Inhalt, der zum Ich in diesem Verhältnis steht. Die in der Psychologie vielfach behauptete Unterscheidung zwischen der Vorstellung eines Inhalts und der Vorstellung dieser Vorstellung beruht auf dem [...] Fehler, daß man die Bewußtheit oder Beziehung zum Ich vom Dasein des Inhalts zu isolieren und für sich gegenständlich zu machen versucht." (Natorp 1910a, 4–5).

process of knowledge: the concrete epistemic *realization* (*Erfüllung*) of objective contents, and the epistemic formation of the necessary condition of objective apperception (*Apperzeption*).

Whilst neo-Kantianism in general has become of interest in recent years, Natorp's philosophical psychology in particular has not been the object of systematic interpretation, specifically in view of the transcendental question of the conditions of validity of objective knowledge. On the one hand, the first revival of neo-Kantianism that took place during the second half of the 20th century focused mainly upon the logical contributions of Cohen and Cassirer, and to a lesser extent upon Natorp's transcendental logic. On the other, contemporary scholars have begun to address issues that go beyond the scope of systematic questions about the many versions of neo-Kantian philosophy. New questions about the history, the academic context, the political role of neo-Kantians, and specially the philosophical relation between neo-Kantians and other, more famous, German philosophers of the 20th century have increasingly been posed. Yet in this context, again, the question concerning Natorp's transcendental philosophy and particularly his philosophical psychology still requires attention.

It is not my aim here to offer an exhaustive review of the literature, which the reader can consult and judge herself. However, a general view of the way I understand the state of the art may help to accommodate my reading in the current academic landscape. I think that recent – and not so recent – literature on philosophical psychology can be divided into four general classes. First, literature concerned with historical and systematic issues regarding the Marburg School. On the one hand, (Marx 1964; Wolzogen 1984; Holzhey 1987; Renz 2002; Gigliotti 2005b; Heinz and Krijnen 2006; Pringe 2017; Edel 2010a; Luft 2015b) have contributed a great deal by analysing the systematic meaning and place of psychology in regard to Kant's and Cohen's transcendental philosophy. On the other, (Lembeck 1994; Gigliotti 2005b; A. Kim 2015; Lembeck 2019) have analysed the relation between Plato and Natorp in detail and contributed to our understanding of the historical reconstructions behind Natorp's general psychology, particularly his interpretation of the ancient word *psyche* and the early development of the concept of subjectivity (Natorp 1912a, 1–22). In general, I think these scholars have offered overall accounts of the systematic *place* of philosophical psychology in the system of philosophy. In this respect, it is possible to see that they all embrace the idea that Natorp understood

philosophical psychology as a *reverse* logic (Lembeck 1998). I agree with this thesis but I think that it needs to be clarified. Thus, in regard to this literature, my dissertation aims to further explain the content and contribution of the ‘reverse’ approach to psychology. Finally, (Edel 2002; Goubet 2010; Witzleben 2010; Pätzold and Krijnen 2002; Edel 2010b) show the conceptual relation between Natorp’s and other idealist philosophies, particularly those of Hegel and Fichte. All these contributions are significant if we are to understand the philosophical context in which Natorp produced the general psychology. Nevertheless, these interpretations address systematic and historical questions that exceed the horizon of the present research. When necessary, however, I refer to this literature to inform the reader of some idealist references in Natorp’s texts.

Second, scholars interested in the historical and philosophical relation between Natorp and other philosophers of his time. This kind of literature is the most copious by far. (Heidegger 2007; Pos 1925) are the first documented publications on this issue. Both philosophers analyse Natorp’s concept of consciousness and his method of reconstruction in comparison with Husserl’s phenomenology. Despite both recognizing the Natorpian and Husserlian projects as “pure science of subjectivity”, they tend to disregard the specific meaning and function of Natorp’s philosophical psychology. This hermeneutical tendency is reproduced by many scholars. (Kern 1964), for example, laid the foundation for interpreting Natorp’s psychology in comparison with Husserl’s genetic phenomenology advance the relation between Natorp and the phenomenological tradition, especially in regard to alleged similarities between the method of reconstruction, Husserl’s method of reduction, and Heidegger’s method of destruction (Y.-H. Kim 1974; Arlt 1985; Zahavi 2003; Luft 2010; Zahavi 2013; Dahlstrom 2015; Warren and Staiti 2015). In general, whilst these scholars discovered or emphasized many interesting historical links, they all assume without further ado that Natorp’s psychology is a sort of proto-phenomenology, the aim of which is to reconstruct lived experience as the immediacy of knowledge. This interpretation rests on a false assumption produced by the phenomenologically-motivated interest in Natorp’s work.³ In Chapter 3 I present a

³ In this respect, I consider the following passage to be the most exemplary result of this line of thought: “While Natorp is critical [toward] his own method and in the last step of his philosophical development moves toward a ‘general unifying logic’ –a doctrine of categories that unifies both objectifying and ‘subjectifying’ tendencies– it is, ironically, *Husserl* who actually carries out Natorp’s ‘grand vision’ of a truly philosophical psychology. Natorp’s method and conception of psychology proved a dead end for Natorp himself, but had a lasting importance for Husserl’s late conception of subjectivity, which needed to be framed in a genetic register in order to capture subjectivity’s ‘full concretion’. Husserl’s mature

different, even contrary, interpretation of the object and the method of reconstruction. Briefly, I argue that the object of psychology – lived experience – is neither the immediacy of something given nor the immediacy of a temporal lived experience of the given. On the contrary, the lived experience of neo-Kantian philosophical psychology is the epistemic capacity to form conceptual connections (*Verbindungen*) that makes possible the recognition of, adherence to, and commitment to the objective validity of our contents of thought.

Third, there are those scholars who trace the relation of analytical epistemology (particularly the so-called ‘Pittsburgh School’) back to Marburgian neo-Kantianism (Crowell 2009; Dewalque 2010; Renz 2011; Palette 2018). In particular, (Renz 2011) shows the epistemological correspondences between Cohen’s critical epistemology and Wilfrid Sellar’s conceptualism of mind and perception. (Dewalque 2010), on Sellar’s behalf, argues that Natorp’s transcendental logic of knowledge can be understood as a historical antecedent of analytical conceptualism. (Palette 2015; 2018) analyses the epistemological roots of the critique of the myth of the given in Natorp’s early psychology and philosophy, particularly in Natorp 1887). (Crowell 2009) does not deal with Natorp but he demonstrates the close relation between Emil Lask’s and John McDowell’s conceptualism. So, in view of this context, the interpretation I present may bring Natorp’s philosophical psychology closer to contemporary discussions of the conceptualism of perception. My aim, however, is not to demonstrate but to suggest. For this reason, throughout the dissertation I make reference to some similarities between critical epistemology and contemporary conceptualism in order to evoke or awake in the reader’s mind the proximity between philosophical psychology and the contemporary so-called ‘weak conceptualism’.⁴

phenomenology, thus, can rightfully be considered phenomenological *as well as* neo-Kantian [...] Husserl was able to adopt Natorpian elements because both shared in principle the same goal –to [analyze] the concreteness of subjectivity *without* succumbing to a pre-transcendental, naïve philosophy of ‘existence’. (Luft 2010, 62).

⁴ In this respect, I recommend considering John McDowell’s weak-conceptualism, the purpose of which is to define the proper content of perception (McDowell 2007; McDowell 2011; 2013a; 2013b; Bäckström 2017). In this respect, I invite the reader to compare the following passage with Chapter 3 of this dissertation: “A potential for discursive activity is already there in an intuition’s having its content. And one can exploit some of that potential in a knowledgeable judgment that redeploys some of the content of the intuition [...] When the ‘I think’ accompanies some content provided in an intuition, that yields a knowledgeable judgment that I am confronted by an object with such-and-such features. But being in a position to make such a judgment is being in a position to judge that there is an object with such-and-such features at such-and-such a location. One need not explicitly refer to oneself in a judgment whose status as

Finally, specific contributions in regard to Natorp's general psychology.

Two contributions are relevant here. On the one hand, A. Kim (2019) analyses Natorp's psychological concept of *consciousness*. I disagree with his interpretation for three reasons. First, the conceptual distinctions he develops makes things much more complicated than they really are. Second, Kim does not consider that Natorp's main texts on psychology follow the same problem (Natorp 1887; 1888b; 1912a), but interpret significant concepts in different and sometimes even contradictory ways. By contrast, I offer a systematic reconstruction of these texts that clearly shows how central concepts change, sometimes dramatically, from 1887 to 1912 – namely, 'lived experience', 'consciousness', 'time-consciousness', and 'connection'. Third, and this is the main reason why I disagree with Kim's interpretation, he misinterprets Natorp's concept of lived experience. Kim writes: "For Natorp, it is intentional consciousness that forms the basis of 'experience' (*Erfahrung*), in virtue of its objective intention. By contrast, 'minimal consciousness' exemplifies the limit-case of what he calls '*Erlebnis*', i.e., consciousness in its lived, subjective immediacy." (Kim 2019, 250). Kim goes on: "Critical psychology is the Penelopean project of undoing the knots and nodes at which determinate objects have been stitched into the tapestry of experience in order to reconstruct the antecedent stage of relatively indeterminate *Erlebnis*. I stress the word 'relatively' to indicate the narrow limits within which such an enterprise is possible" (259). As I show in §2 and §3 of Chapter 3, Natorp does not interpret the concept of lived experience in terms of the 'immediacy' of consciousness. Hence Natorp does not develop the concept of a 'minimal consciousness'. Furthermore, Natorp says quite the contrary to what Kim argues: critical psychology is *not* a "Penelopean project". Rather, as I explain in Chapter 3, critical psychology is the systematic definition of lived experience as the epistemic capacity of *forming conceptual connections* in order to construct *determinables* (*Bestimmbares*) for the production of possible objects of experience (Natorp 1912a, 80–81). On the other hand, (Christensen 2007) analyses the concept of 'self-consciousness' in Natorp's philosophical psychology. Christensen argues that Natorp's thesis about the impossibility of having objective knowledge of the I agrees with contemporary analytical interpretations of intentionality, particularly those of Davidson, Dretske, and Fodor.

knowledgeable depends on its being a discursive exploitation of some of the content of an intuition." (McDowell 2013a, 266).

Whilst Christensen offers a thorough analysis of this thesis, he is more interested in using Natorp's thesis to analyse the contemporary debate about intentionality, than in reconstructing Natorp's systematic arguments in view of the transcendental method. In this respect, my interpretation provides a detailed understanding of the critical-epistemological fundament of Natorp's concept of self-consciousness that may well contribute to Christensen's reading.

I believe that the current state of art invites and also makes it possible to address Natorp's philosophical psychology in order to clarify its epistemological contribution to the critical-epistemological (*erkenntniskritisch*) foundation of objective knowledge. Thus the principal aim of my dissertation is to reconstruct the critical-epistemological function of Natorp's *General Psychology* in view of the neo-Kantian project of transcendental philosophy. The reconstruction I offer can be further organized into three specific aims. First, to clarify the philosophical posture of Natorp's psychology in view of other psychological approaches of the time. Second, to show that the a priori-subjective conditions of perception are epistemic conditions for the recognition of, and commitment to, the validity of knowledge. Third, I argue that general psychology does promote an action-oriented epistemology of objective knowledge. In this respect, I believe that the ensuing dissertation may lay the foundation for future research on neo-Kantianism and its epistemological contribution to contemporary debates. In this, I agree with Wilfrid Sellars who claims that: "the history of philosophy is the *lingua franca* which makes communication between philosophers, at least of different points of view, possible. Philosophy without the history of philosophy, if not empty or blind, is at least dumb". (Sellars 1968, 1).⁵

The Methodology and Structure of the Dissertation

My analysis of philosophical psychology is based on the historical and systematic reconstruction of the concepts and texts that gave life to Natorp's *General Psychology according to the critical Method* from 1912. In particular, my reconstruction focuses upon

⁵ Natorp himself was of the same mind: "Das Tun der *Geschichte* scheint auf die Vergangenheit gerichtet; doch zielt es in Wahrheit vielmehr darauf, den lebensfähigen Gehalt der Vergangenheit für Gegenwart und Zukunft zu retten. Sie ist nicht — wie jener „Historismus“, gegen den Nietzsche streitet — beschäftigt, selbst als ein totes Ding, die Toten zu begraben, sondern vielmehr den tätigen Kräften des Lebens einen gewaltigen Zuwachs zu verschaffen, indem sie alle die „potentielle Energie“ lebendig zu machen strebt, die in der bisherigen Arbeit der humanen Kultur aufgesammelt worden ist.“ (Natorp 1908, 564).

the main argument behind this project – that about the epistemic role of lived experience – and it considers three significant aspects. First, the description of the *General Psychology* in view of its immediate context, namely, the context of academic discussion and debate about knowledge theory (*Erkenntnistheorie*) and experimental psychology during the second half of the 19th century. Second, the explanation of the main frame of philosophical psychology, namely, Natorp's critical epistemology of objective knowledge and, in particular, his interpretation and systematic appropriation of the so-called 'transcendental method'. Third, the systematic comparison and complementation of the argument of the 1912 treatise with other texts in which Natorp develops psychological themes, especially his academic lessons and his *Social Pedagogy*. In order to make things clear to the reader, each methodological step, as well as each particular aim of the dissertation, can be found in a particular chapter.

In sum, this dissertation is composed of four chapters. In regard to its form, all the chapters share the same structure. The first paragraph is an introduction, in which I offer a panoramic view of the main sections and arguments of the chapter. The middle paragraphs correspond to the conceptual elaboration of arguments and, in some cases, to the narration of historical information that I think is relevant to present the problem. The final paragraph concludes the chapter. The conclusion always consists of two parts: a brief summary of the argument and sections and the formulation of a question that invites the reader to the following chapter. In regard to the footnotes, they have three main purposes. Some shed light on significant debates in the contemporary epistemology of perception. Other footnotes refer to relevant literature in regard to systematic problems about Marburgian neo-Kantianism. Finally, there are footnotes that make explicit the contexts of the concepts I interpret or analyse, whether through quotes in the original language or references to other relevant texts.

Chapter 1 is entitled *The Era of the Critical Epistemology* and presents the historical and philosophical context of the Marburg School. I characterize the original development of the transcendental method by comparing Cohen's early epistemology with Hermann von Helmholtz' scientific epistemology of perception. I also explain in detail the mature development of the transcendental method, in order to introduce the question of a philosophical psychology. In this chapter, the reader will find the historical and philosophical elements to understand the emergence of neo-Kantianism and the

epistemological meaning and function of the transcendental method for the study of objective knowledge. Chapter 2 is entitled *The Possibility and Necessity of Philosophical Psychology* and it explains the first systematic formulation of philosophical psychology in regard to the transcendental method. First, I deal with Natorp's 1887 essay on the subjective foundation of knowledge. Thereafter I explain that the last development of this project is based on Natorp's genetic logic of 1910. Here the reader will find an accurate analysis of the transcendental argument of philosophical psychology. Also, through analysis of the Natorp-Husserl correspondence, I explain the philosophical reasons behind the unfortunate reception of Natorp's texts on psychology. Chapter 3 is entitled *The Epistemological Role of Philosophical Psychology* and it is the decisive chapter of the dissertation. Here I focus upon Natorp's systematic psychological reconstruction (*Rekonstruktion*) of the concept of lived experience. First is a detailed analysis of the relation between perception and lived experience. Then I explain that the epistemic role of lived experience is defined through the concept of 'potency' (*Potenz*). Unlike the standard literature, I argue that the introduction of this concept is the fundamental key to understanding the epistemic role of lived experience for the production of objective knowledge. Finally, I explain that the method of reconstruction consists in analysis of two structural epistemic functions of potency: the a priori levels in the epistemic production of potencies, and the a priori levels in the epistemic production of empirical and transcendental apperception. Chapter 4 is entitled *Social Pedagogy and the Complementation of Philosophical Psychology*. Here I argue that the first section of Natorp's *Social Pedagogy* contains a significant psychological analysis of the concepts of lived experience and potency. In particular, I hold that these analyses shed light on the epistemic subjective formation of a priori levels of apperception in any knowing subject. I call this the 'a priori-subjective formation' (*Bildung*) of the epistemic commitment to the a priori principle of thinking. Finally, the conclusion is entitled *Towards an Action-oriented Epistemology of Objective Knowledge* and it offers a brief final reflection on interpretation of the dissertation. As the title indicates, these concluding remarks aim to suggest that Natorp's critical epistemology may be understood as a transcendental analysis of the a priori conditions of the epistemic agency of rational beings.

“Hätte man Platon gefragt, was für ein ‘Bewusstsein’ das sei, auf welches für den Menschen alles ankomme, nämlich das Bewusstsein wovon? —er würde geantwortet haben: das Bewusstsein der Ideen, der idealen objektiven Werthe. Das *subjective Erlebniss* *bloss als solches, abgesehen von der Frage der objectiven Geltung des Erlebten, lag eigentlich ausser dem Gesichtskreis seiner Philosophie, die ja wesentlich Ideenforschung sein wollte und war.* Nur aus Anlass der *Frage der Erkennbarkeit der Idee* gelangt er zu einzelnen, allerdings sehr wertvollen Bestimmungen, welche eben die subjective Seite des Erkennens betreffen; aber doch eben nicht zu einer allgemeinen Begriffsfassung des Bewusstseins, der Subjektivität als solcher.” (Natorp, 1888, p. 8. My emphasis).

Chapter 1. The Birth of Critical Epistemology in the Age of Science

Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the epistemological problem of a philosophical psychology in accordance with critical epistemology (*Erkenntniskritik*).⁶ It is well-known that Marburgian neo-Kantians argued time and again that the employment of experimental psychology in philosophy leads to many forms of psychologism. Less known, however, is how have they justified and defined the particular contribution of a critical psychology to transcendental philosophy. Whilst neo-Kantians, Paul Natorp in particular, developed introductory and systematic plans for a philosophical psychology, two main reasons have impeded our understanding this project in the right terms. On the one hand, common and current unfamiliarity with the object and method of the critical epistemology in view of its academic and scientific context. On the other, the highly technical but incomplete development of philosophical psychology. Here I deal with the first issue. In order to understand the epistemological relevance of a neo-Kantian psychology, it is necessary to raise awareness of the general epistemological goal of critical epistemology in its own terms. Therefore, in this chapter I offer a historically informed and systematic explanation of the neo-Kantian version of transcendental philosophy – i.e., its philosophical framework and goal. The correct understanding of the neo-Kantian community of work (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) may benefit from an explanation that takes into account the academic and institutional relevance of a critical epistemology, for it emerged in response to epistemological debates in the second half of the 19th century around the foundation of objective knowledge that took place in the context of the emergence and development of scientific discourse. Thus this chapter is divided into three main sections. In §1 I contrast two forms of neo-Kantianism: Hermann von Helmholtz’s theory of perception (§1.1), and Hermann Cohen’s early and later critical epistemology (§1.2, §1.3). My aim here is to show that Cohen’s idealist epistemology was oriented towards the solution of an epistemological riddle for the then-emerging physiology and experimental psychology:

⁶ I translate ‘*Erkenntniskritik*’ as ‘*critical epistemology*’. I chose this expression for it resembles the epistemological interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism as ‘critical idealism’. In this respect, see (Guyer and Horstmann 2015). Furthermore, in the course of this dissertation I will use the expressions ‘philosophical psychology’, ‘critical psychology’, and ‘transcendental psychology’ interchangeably, depending upon the context of explanation.

the transcendental foundation of the objective certainty (*Gewissheit*) or validity (*Geltung*) of knowledge. In §2 I explain the fundamental concepts of Cohen's critical epistemology. My aim here is to offer a picture of the so-called 'transcendental method' and its object of analysis. In §3 I conclude by introducing the question of a philosophical psychology in accordance with critical epistemology. My aim here is to demonstrate that neo-Kantian epistemology has an epistemological need to develop a complementary philosophical psychology, the main question of which is how and in which sense a concrete subject may recognize or adhere to the validity of objective knowledge. Thus Chapter 1 contributes to my argument with a historically informed and correct assessment of critical epistemology and, in particular, to the preliminary understanding of one of its least known projects to date: the epistemological project of a philosophical psychology.

§ 1. The Age of Critical Epistemology

When Cohen published *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* in 1871, he defined the purpose of the book in terms of a new foundation for Kant's theory of apriority (Cohen 1871, I).⁷ The novelty of his interpretation consists in recovering the *historical* Kant by means of a systematic and philological analysis of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cohen 1871, III).⁸ In this way, Cohen claims, he aimed to confront the many distortions and misinterpretations of transcendental philosophy by reasserting Kant's own authority (Cohen 1871, V). For this reason, Cohen was immediately aligned to the neo-Kantian movement. However, the fact that he focused on the systematic role of apriority reveals that Cohen's motivation was different from that of early neo-Kantians. In fact, interest in

⁷ In this respect, it is important to consider that Cohen's prologue to the first edition of *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* from 1871 has a controversial tone. For example, in regard to the empirical interpretation of Kant, Cohen writes: "Und doch schien es mir unglaublich, dass Kant, von dem Alle ausgehen wollen, anders, im Grunde und Wesen anders verstanden werden könnte, als die stimmführenden Männer vom Fache ihn lehren und deuten. Nun gestehe ich zwar dankbar, dass diese Autoritäten-Instanz erheblich geschwächt wurde durch die Thatsache, dass sogar unter den Empiristen von gebietender Seite das Recht Kants hochgehalten wird; und ich glaube, die Zeit sei nicht fern, in der man es Helmholtz insgemein danken wird, dass er oftmals und nachdrücklich auf Kant hingewiesen hat" (Cohen 1885, V).

⁸ The following passage is famous and it runs: "Mir aber lag es an, den historischen Kant wieder darzustellen, ihn in seiner eigenen Gestalt, so weit sie mir fassbar wurde, seinen Widersachern gegenüber zu behaupten. Bei dieser Kärrnarbeit, der ich froh war, gewährte ich nun je länger je deutlicher, dass die Widerleger den urkundlich vorhandenen Kant sich nicht zu eigen gemacht hatten: dass ihre Auffassung durch schlichte Anführungen widerlegt werden könne. Ich sah, wie systematischer Gegensatz und historischer Irrthum wechselweise einander bedingten. Auf diesem methodischen Wege, durch die Verbindung der systematischen und der historischen Aufgabe, habe ich mich von dem Zweifel an der Richtigkeit meines Untermehmens endlich befreit" (Cohen 1885, VI).

the theory of apriority sprang from a new and novel necessity: to define philosophy clearly, particularly in its task and method as an academic discipline.

By 1830, German universities had already taken their traditional form which consisted in the institutional organization of faculties. As (Clark 2006) explains, German universities set the historical and institutional model for academic research and education for the entire 19th century all over the globe, to the extent that our current research universities still owe much of their organization to the German model of disciplinary faculties. Thus when the Kantian turn began around 1830, its immediate setting were the faculties of arts and philosophy in which natural sciences rapidly gained adepts and advocates, due to the virtuous alliance between university, industry, and technology that shaped the German context and also to the effective entrance of scientific knowledge into the most important spheres of society, that is, the military, public health, and the education of civilians (Cahan 2003; Fyfe and Lightman 2007). Due to its academic context, the Kantian movement encompassed scientists and philosophers with different readings and agendas. Nevertheless, they all agreed that the academic discipline of philosophy should be understood in terms of a “theory of knowledge” (*Erkenntnistheorie*) oriented, first and foremost, towards understanding the psycho-physical capacities and mechanisms of human cognition. Despite the variety of interpretations current at the time, most of Kant’s academic readers agreed that Kant’s theory of sensibility is the most suitable model with which to tackle this question. A common assumption among natural philosophers was that Kant has correctly defined space and time as conditions for our knowledge of objects. In particular, his theory of sensibility proves that objective knowledge cannot be defined as the mimetic impingement of the external world on our senses. Quite the contrary; natural philosophers believed that representations of space and time could be understood as mechanisms of consciousness, whose nature and structure lie deeply in the organization of the human brain. Almost every early neo-Kantian alleged, however, that Kant’s theory of sensibility still lacked a better foundation. Kant identified space and time as necessary representations of knowledge but this did not explain the *origin* of these representations. This problem became the core issue of the *Erkenntnistheorie*. It not only revived the debate about the nature of the a priori intuitions –whether space and time are subjective or objective properties of our knowledge of objects— but it also focused the debate exclusively upon Transcendental Aesthetics. Based on the investigations of Johannes Müller, several neo-Kantians assumed that recent discoveries in the physiology

of perception may improve the ideas advanced by Kant. Thus by 1860 Kant's transcendental philosophy was inflamed by empirically motivated research on the physiological mechanisms of our knowledge of objects. In this regard, Hermann von Helmholtz, a prodigious student of Müller and college friend of Emil du Bois-Reymond, developed what became one of the most accepted empirical epistemologies of perception and cognition in this academic landscape.⁹

§1. 1. *Hermann von Helmholtz: From Nerves to Symbols*

Helmholtz's epistemology is far from being among his most significant contributions to the development of natural science. However, the epistemology he advanced is a good example, if not the best, if we are to understand why scientific epistemologies were so compelling to academic philosophers. As with any other epistemology of the time, Helmholtz's theory aimed to explain how our intuitions and thoughts can produce objective reports or, as Helmholtz indicates, how it is that our *representations correspond to actuality* (*Wirklichkeit*) (von Helmholtz 1977, 117). Whilst this has been a common problem in both philosophy and natural science since Kant, Helmholtz believed that these disciplines now represent different approaches. While philosophy considers ["what belongs to the mind's own working"], natural science considers the laws of: "what belongs to the world of actuality". As a scientist, Helmholtz claimed that the only way in which we can describe the "mind's own working" is on the ground of empirical mechanisms that constitute our sensations, that is, the physiology of intuition and thought. Thus he presents his theory in a form that nowadays is common, namely, as an epistemology of perception. This epistemology, Helmholtz indicates, aims to explain both the physical infrastructure and the psychological performance of the capacity of perception. As we will see, Helmholtz defines perception as a complex epistemic capacity, composed by physical as well as psychological activities of cognition. In his famous lecture *The Facts of Perception* from 1878, which is considered a schematic exposition of his epistemological work, Helmholtz summed up his theory in the following terms:

⁹ Helmholtz's theory of spatial perception is briefly analysed in Cohen's *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* from 1885. Natorp also comments on Helmholtz's theory of spatial perception in his *Allgemeine Psychologie in Leitsätzen zu akademischen Vorlesungen* from 1904. In particular, they interpret Helmholtz's epistemology as an *empirical* description of space (Cohen 1885, 202–4; Natorp 1910a, §16, §35, §36.).

“Our sensations are indeed effects produced in our organs by external causes; and how such an effect expresses itself naturally depends quite essentially upon *the kind of apparatus* upon which the effect is produced. Inasmuch as the *quality* of our sensation gives us a report of what is peculiar to the external influence by which it is excited, it may count as a *symbol* of it, but not as an ‘image’. For from an image one requires some kind of likeness with the object of which it is an image – from a statue likeness of form, from a drawing likeness of perspective projection in the visual field, from a painting likeness of colors as well. But a sign need not have any kind of similarity at all with what it is the sign of. The relation between the two of them is restricted to the fact that like objects exerting an influence under like circumstances evoke like signs, and that therefore unlike signs always correspond to unlike influences.” (von Helmholtz 1977, 121–22. My emphasis).

At first sight, the passage presents an empirical theory of knowledge in the sense that “external causes” produce the “sensations” in our sense organs. The particularity of this theory, however, relies upon the idea that our sensations do not give us an *image* of ready-made things. Sensations, the effects of external causes, are not *copies* because they depend upon the “kind of apparatus” that our sense organs are. In other words, the *quality*, that is, the content of our sensations is determined by such an apparatus and it is this determination which gives us an objective report of the sensible causes. In this sense, Helmholtz indicates, the quality of our sensations registers as a “symbol” or “sign” of that which appears in our sensible impressions. In brief, Helmholtz’s epistemology of perception consists in the systematic explanation of this thesis, since it explains both the formation of sensible “qualities” and their “symbolic” contents. In order to do so, Helmholtz divides his epistemology into two general theories: the physiology of sense organs and a theory of signs. Helmholtz believed that both theories can explain the epistemic function of our perceptual capacities. But they do so in view of different executions.¹⁰ While the former focuses upon the mechanism or “apparatus” of sensory perception, the latter focuses upon the mental process that transforms the qualities of sensation into symbols that furnish us with objective knowledge.

¹⁰ Here we see that Helmholtz’s distinction between natural science and philosophy is bequeathed to us in his own theory. For a general description of the relation between philosophy and natural science at the beginning of the 19th century, see (Cahan 2003).

As we have seen, the physiology of the senses is based on a causal theory of sensory perception. According to Helmholtz, the impingement of sensible impressions on our senses is facilitated by the nervous system. Since different sense organs perceive the “same ether vibrations” in different ways (von Helmholtz 1977, 120), then, Helmholtz claims, the sensations we have of external things directly depend upon the activity of our sensory nerves. Helmholtz calls this nervous activity “innervation” and holds that it has two structural features. On the one hand, each sense organ has a “quality range” that determines our sensations. This quality range determines the intensity with which an impingement is engraved on our sense organs. Helmholtz believed that the intensity can be measured, therefore defined in mathematical terms by taking into account the tension of the muscles that are in play in the performance of our sensory capacities. In his *Handbook of Physiological Optics* Helmholtz outlined most of the analyses to support his view. On the other hand, innervation is also defined by the “difference of modality” between our sense organs (von Helmholtz 1977, 119). By ‘modality’, Helmholtz understood the kind of sensation that different sense organs can produce. For example, our eyes give us colour perceptions, while our taste buds give us flavours. For Helmholtz, the modality of sensation is the most distinctive difference between sensations, since it: “exclude[s] any transition from the one to the other, any relationship of greater or lesser similarity” (von Helmholtz 1977, 119). Thus the process of innervation lets us understand that the world-view we have is always mediated by the performance of our physiological constitution. However, this does not explain how this physiological process can give us a truly objective report of the world, rather than, shall we say, a mere glimpse of subjective illusions.

For Helmholtz, it is clear that physiology is only one side, since perception does not occur without our being conscious of that which is perceived by us. The fact that we are conscious of what we perceive suggests that perception enjoys capacities that exceed the demands and possibilities of our physiology. These capacities, however, are not so easy to accommodate in the empirical picture Helmholtz depicts, for it entails other faculties besides sensibility, namely, the faculties that Kant called ‘imagination’, ‘understanding’, and ‘reason’. At that time, the common assumption among scholars was that these capacities were *psychological*, owing to the relation they have with rational thinking. Rather than following Kant to describe these capacities, Helmholtz was inspired by

Lotze's empirically based theory of *local signs*.¹¹ Like Lotze, Helmholtz aims to explain how our sensations inform our judgments about the world by providing the necessary contents to make an objective representation of our surroundings. He does so by interpreting perception as an *unconscious inference* (von Helmholtz 1977, 132). In general terms, the unconscious inference is the mental process by means of which we learn to interpret our sensations in terms of reliable and non-reliable "perceptual properties" of an environment of objects at rest. Perceptual properties, Helmholtz indicates, are representational features that we deduce or "infer" from the automatic, therefore "unconscious", performance of our senses, in particular from observation and the kinetic movement of our bodies. As we know, observation and bodily movements are determined by innervation. The movement of our eyes or hands, the way we stand up or move forward and backward, Helmholtz claims, determine every impulse and counter-impulse of the sensory apparatus (von Helmholtz 1977, 125). But this kinetic oscillation of our limbs and senses also triggers automatically our instincts and memory –or, as Helmholtz phrases it, an "impulse of the will" (von Helmholtz 1977, 136)— which prompts a "process of association" or "representational combinations" in which different sensations are categorized and connected. Thus when movements are standardized, we discover that certain perceptual properties became permanent or temporary, more real or more delusional etc. Now, Helmholtz believed that this whole process is structured as an inductive inference.¹² The "major premise" corresponds to the "observation of the senses" that endures in our memory. In this sense, the first premise of this sensory inference corresponds to "the obscure background of our memory" (Helmholtz 1867, 582), where the perceiver stores the associative group of sensations that construct the conditions of presentation for every particular or individual sensation. For Helmholtz, these conditions work as laws and, therefore, he calls them the 'presentables' (*Präsentabilien*) of perception. The "minor premise", on the other hand, corresponds to every "new sense impression" that enters into perception. Helmholtz calls it "the present" of perception since it represents the individual event that the perceiver wishes to comprehend. Every new impression is perceived in accordance with the presentables unconsciously established, so the information it carries is evaluated in analogy with the laws of the major

¹¹ For Lotze's theory of the sign, see. (Hatfield 2003, 158). For the neo-Kantian critique of the theory of local signs, see (Natorp 1910a, 46–48). For a contemporary interpretation of the Cohen-Helmholtz's debate, see Francesca Biagoli's paper "Cohen and Helmholtz on the Foundations of Measurement" in (Damböck 2018a, 77–100).

¹² In this respect, see (De Kock 2018, 51–54).

premise. Finally, the result or conclusion is the inference, that is, the application of the major premise to the minor premise. This application makes it possible to distinguish the perceptual properties of a given sensible event in view of a coherent group of sensations. On the ground of this theory of perception, Helmholtz believed that it was possible to translate Kant's definition of space and time as the *forms of intuition* into scientific, that is, psychophysical terms. Thus science, and not philosophy, is destined to solve the Kantian paradox of the apriority of sensibility, namely, that something sensible can be simultaneously necessary for knowledge. We cannot perceive the world in any other way but through the process of innervation, thus the properties we ascribe to the world always depend upon the kind of connections we establish between several sensations. Among these connections, there are two –namely, space and time— that do not define representations of things but the way in which we represent the relations among them. Whilst these relations are deduced from innervation and, for this reason, they are empirical, by experience we learn that they take place in every range of sensations we have. Thus space and time are necessary perceptual properties. In this sense, Helmholtz claims, the projection theory of perception, as it has been called, teaches us how the facts of perception are empirically constructed by our psycho-physiology.

Finally, it is worth recalling some significant conclusions Helmholtz drew from his theory. These conclusions concerned the role of science and explain the motivations behind his theory, as well as the insights that, later, Hermann Cohen aimed to amend. In the first place, there is the relation between Helmholtz and the neo-Kantian tradition of the time. Helmholtz's empirical theory of perception seeks to make sense of Kant's apriority of sensibility. Furthermore, Helmholtz's theory, eloquent and detailed especially in his *Handbook of Physiological Optics*, is presented in the essay of 1878 as the only possible confirmation of Kant's philosophy of knowledge (von Helmholtz 1977, 119), and so was understood particularly by philosophers who sought to inform their ideas with the advances made by scientists.¹³ In the second place, another significant conclusion that

¹³ In another essay, entitled "On the Origin of the Planetary System", Helmholtz claims that he understood Kant as a "natural philosopher", that is, as a scientist rather than a philosopher: "Looking at the writings of this first period of his scientific activity, which lasted to about his fortieth year, we find that they belong mostly to Natural Philosophy, and are far in advance of their times with a number of the happiest ideas. It cannot be denied that the Kant of early life was a natural philosopher by instinct and by inclination; and that probably only the power of external circumstances, the want of the means necessary for independent scientific research, and the tone of thought prevalent at the time, kept him to philosophy, in which it was only much later that he produced anything original and important; for the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* appeared in his fifty-seventh year" (von Helmholtz 1908, 140–41).

Helmholtz draws from his empirical research is what has been called the idealism of perception. We have seen that the mental or cognitive representations that take place in perception are not mere *copies* of ready-made objects given to our senses. Rather, the unconscious inferences triggered by innervation teach that sensations cannot be objective or non-objective properties of things unless we learn to interpret them in view of the laws we discover through our experiences. Thus, for Helmholtz, the capacity to distinguish between features that function as laws and other sensible features that can be accommodated in view of those laws is as essential as innervation itself. And, in fact, Helmholtz sees both processes as the two dimensions of one and the same mental activity. This idea implies, however, that objective perception is not possible unless we learn to read certain sensible features as *laws* and others as cases of laws. At the end of the essay, Helmholtz claims:

“I need not explain to you that it is a *contradictio in adjecto* to want to represent the real, or Kant’s ‘thing in itself’, in positive terms but without absorbing it into the form of our manner of representation. This is often discussed. What we can attain, however, is acquaintance with the lawlike order in the realm of the actual, admittedly only as portrayed in the sign system of our sense impressions (von Helmholtz 1977, 140–41).

Helmholtz concludes radically: we do not perceive *things in themselves* but only *signs* or symbols.¹⁴ Whomever does not recognize the symbolic character of perception falls victim to a mere contradiction. The reason, for Helmholtz, became clear via the idea of the unconscious inference. Comprehension, that is, “the method whereby our thought masters the world, orders the facts and determines the future in advance” (von Helmholtz 1977, 142), is not possible unless we perceive the *law-likeness* of our own sensible experience. It is this law-likeness, and not the sum of isolated impressions, that presents the environment to us as a coherent and unitary experience, that is, properly speaking, as a world. Finally, this theory of knowledge played a significant role in the empiricism – nativism debate. Ewald Hering, a contemporary physiologist working on perception and colour vision, was against the idea that perception requires intellectual capacities, such as inductive inferences, to achieve objective knowledge. Rather, he claimed, perception is

¹⁴ In this respect, I recommend the introduction to (Ferrari and Stamatescu 2013, 3–32).

the result of innate capacities for cognition, whose functioning depends exclusively upon the physiological mechanisms developed through biological evolution. The debate between Helmholtz and Hering is well-documented and we do not need to repeat it here.¹⁵ Rather, I wish to put aside the insults and discussions about physiology, miscalculations, and wrong equations to measure nerve activity, and focus upon the philosophical question here implied. In particular, we can see that the debate concerned the question of the nature of perception and, to a certain extent, Helmholtz and Hering recreated the traditional dispute between idealism and empiricism. For Hering, the idea of inductive inferences was a by-product of an incorrect idealist conception of cognition, namely, one that falls victim to spiritualism. On the contrary, Helmholtz did not see any hint of spiritualism in the idea of unconscious inferences. Rather, the fact that our perceptions interpret sensations as symbols of a law-like world means that our capacity to achieve knowledge must be learned through exercise. By doing so, we necessarily stimulate rational capacities that exceed the biological mechanisms of our senses, without which we could not perceive impressions as reports of a coherent, therefore objective world. Rather than being inborn, objective knowledge is a skillfully *acquired* capacity. It seems clear that, unlike Hering, who was exclusively interested in physiological matters, Helmholtz was interested in drawing from physiology philosophical conclusions too. In fact, besides the description of sensory mechanisms, he aims to explain: “acquaintance with the visual field”. Acquaintance, as Helmholtz sees it, not only requires us to passively receive sense impressions. Rather, it demands that we comprehend what we perceive as such-and-such. It requires us to determine our sensations regarding the law-like relations that afford them a place in the context of experience. Thus Helmholtz proposes three arguments against nativism (von Helmholtz 1977, 134–35). First, nativists fall into a *petitio principii*. Rather than explaining how we gain acquaintance with the visual field, nativists simply assume that there must be a ready-made or pre-formed visual field in which we exercise our perception. Second, nativists do not seem to take into account the *law-likeness* of our worldly representations. Rather, they just consider the “organic mechanism” implied in the representation of objects. In regard to the question of acquaintance with objective representations, nativists present a dubious picture. They seem to trust in the fact that sense impressions become reliable representations: “without our doing anything about it”

¹⁵ In this respect, see (Turner 2014; Hatfield 2003, 179–94). For a brief and clear summary of the Hering-Helmholtz debate regarding scientific issues and its significance for contemporary psychology, see (Howard 1999).

(von Helmholtz 1977, 135). Third, Helmholtz believes that nativists do not offer enough arguments to support their claims regarding the problem of perceptual comprehension. The only seemingly valid argument is nevertheless inconclusive. Nativists claim that new-born animals learn to see and to walk with no delay. They rapidly begin to move in a way that confirms the hypothesis of the pre-given visual field as a space of things in themselves, through which the animal has nothing to do but grasp, follow, or avoid the objects in its environment. But this idea falls short in the case of human animals and even in the case of non-human animals, insofar as there is not enough knowledge about how their instincts and memory –i.e., their entire motor impulse— actually works. Furthermore, Helmholtz indicates, new-born human animals are extremely “inept”: it takes time to learn how to properly perceive and judge, not to mention how to learn to express in words what we do and do not really perceive.

In the light of these conclusions, we can see that Helmholtz’s scientific epistemology of perception aims to contribute both to natural science and to philosophy. On the one hand, his scientific epistemology opened the way to the empirical realm of physiology for several philosophers interested in Kantian philosophy. On the other, the idealist theory of unconscious inference renewed the question of the true meaning of the *apriority* of knowledge, especially in its epistemic dimension as the condition of objective validity. Unlike nativists, Helmholtz aims to explain in empirical terms how objective perception becomes possible. According to his theory, in perception sense impressions or sensations become symbols of a law-like context by means of the process of unconscious inference. It is precisely in this respect that Marburgian neo-Kantians seek to contribute to epistemology by defining a systematic role for philosophy. In particular, Hermann Cohen took the first and necessary step to properly understand the *idealism* of objective knowledge.

§1. 2. Hermann Cohen I: The Philosophical Way to Idealism and the Question of the Certainty of Knowing

The young Hermann Cohen was also a passionate follower of an empirically oriented epistemology. His first three papers on epistemological matters were published in the journal *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, founded in 1860 by his

mentor, Heymann Steinthal, and Moritz Lazarus.¹⁶ As the first volume informs us, the main goal of the journal was to present the *Völkerpsychologie* as a scientific method for the study of cognition in a wide sense, from religion to literature, art, and language (Lazarus and Steinthal 1860). This method assumes that human beings are determined by their living in communities. Therefore, it takes into consideration the anthropological and historical factors of human evolution. Since the main goal is to determine the causes behind these factors, the method is grounded in a psychological theory of most inner capacities that are in play in human communities. Study and definition of the inner “spirit” of human beings, that is, “the law-like movement and evolution of the inner activity”, takes the form of a “genetic” theory of knowledge, the main target of which is to define the evolutionary mechanisms of human consciousness (Lazarus and Steinthal 1860, 7).

In the three essays Cohen published, he explained for the first time his interest in the relation between philosophy and psychology. He does so by closely following Steinthal’s psychological method, from whom he borrowed in particular the definition of knowledge as a *procedural* function of the *mechanism of consciousness* that can be described not in separated faculties but in intertwined cognitive capacities or elements.¹⁷ In the first essay, from 1866 and entitled *The platonic Theory of Ideas, psychologically developed*, Cohen analyses Plato’s theory of ideas in terms of a cognitive “discovery”. This concept was coined by Steinthal to define the creative act of epistemic contents. Cohen seeks to demonstrate that Plato discovered the concept of *Eidos*. *Eidos* defines the emergence of a new kind of knowledge, namely, knowledge of the *essence* of things. Cohen believed that *Eidos* can be described in terms of a psychological mechanism. *Eidos* means, according to Cohen, *intuition of essences*, an innate psychological capacity to contemplate the essence of things. In the second essay, from 1869, *Mythological representations of God and Soul*, Cohen applies the genetic method of Steinthal’s *Völkerpsychologie* to explain the psychological cause of both concepts. Cohen shows

¹⁶ The three papers written by Cohen on the epistemology of cognition (*Erkennen*) were *Die platonische Ideenlehre psychologisch entwickelt* (Cohen 1867), *Mythologische Vorstellungen von Gott und Seele, psychologisch entwickelt* (Cohen 1868), and *Die dichterische Phantasie und der Mechanismus des Bewusstseins* (Cohen 1869).

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of Cohen’s interpretation and appropriation of Steinthal’s psychological method, see (Schmidt 1976, 19–33; Damböck 2017, 115–28; Köhnke 2001). For a historical and panoramic view of Cohen’s early philosophy, see (Beiser 2018, 21–39). For a historical and critical interpretation of Cohen’s relation to folk psychology and the “intellectual world of the 1860s”, s. (Sieg 2004).

that the concepts of God and the soul originate in psychological capacities, which do not determine the validity of their contents but only the emergence of these figures from empirical conditions. The third essay, also from 1869, entitled *The poetic Phantasy and the Mechanism of Consciousness*, is perhaps the closest to Steintal's psychology. Cohen also approaches these topics according to Steintal's psychological method. In general, poetic phantasy is explained as a refinement of myth. While myths depict a primitive cosmology that identifies the being of things with personified gods, poetry understands these personifications and attributions as metaphorical comparisons. The poetic phantasy is the capacity to produce metaphorical condensations to present things in their original cosmological relations. Cohen sees this capacity as the result of the mechanism of consciousness. This mechanism operates as an organic function composed of three cognitive elements: feelings, sensations, and representations. Each element contributes with different psychic events but all are combined in a process of psychic apperception, which generates relations between different contents on the ground of common features. Now, each essay contains wide analyses and reflections that display Cohen's early inventiveness. In general, we can see that Cohen's interest is guided towards understanding the creative capacity of human knowledge. Based on Steintal's psychological method, Cohen developed genetic descriptions of the a priori, in the sense of psychological conditions that make it possible to create objectively valid epistemic contents.¹⁸

Apart from his interest in the genetic account of cognition, from the very beginning Cohen was interested in the epistemological problem of the objective validity of knowledge. Traditionally, scholars have claimed that both problems differentiate Cohen's early philosophy from his late philosophy. His late, exhaustive, reading of Kant was the reason for his late change of mind regarding the problem of knowledge. According to this line of thought, Cohen would have made concrete the transition from the genetic problem to the validity problem in his 1877 paper *Plato's Theory of Ideas and the Mathematics*. Recent interpretations, however, no longer consider this reading to be fully trustworthy. Christian Damböck, in particular, has revitalized the idea that Cohen's early enquiries

¹⁸ Later in his career, especially in his *Logic of pure Knowledge*, we see that the question of the cognitive creation, that is, the creation of epistemic contents, returns with the concept of *origin*. Likewise, the problem of the creative production of epistemic contents is a common topic in Natorp and Cassirer. For example, let us consider Natorp's general logic of poesis and Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms.

into Plato's theory of ideas were rather determined by an early reading of Kant, developed from 1861 to 1865 and probably invigorated, in general, by contemporary academic interest in Kant and, in particular, by Steinthal himself, due to his understanding of *Völkerspsychologie* as the psychological *complement* of Kant's philosophy.¹⁹ Damböck's main argument is that there is systematic continuity regarding the *content* under consideration, namely, Plato's theory of an "idea" as the first exponent of the "apriority" of knowledge. In the same line of thought, Karl-Heinz Lembeck went further by stressing that Cohen's early academic formation in Berlin – in philosophy as well as in philology and physiology— played a significant role in his early and late reading of Plato and Kant.

“From this point of view, it may be said that it would be a false, too simplistic model to want to understand Cohen as a Kantian, who also devoted himself to the history of philosophy, and especially to Greek philosophy. Rather, it is the other way around: A man universally educated in the history of philosophy encounters in his studies (at the latest with Trendelenburg) on Kant and he aims to meaningfully classify this Kant now in his image of the history of philosophy” (Lembeck 1994, 19).²⁰

It follows that Cohen's early philosophy, which is characterized by a subjectively oriented method, and his late philosophy, characterized by his objectively oriented system of philosophy, must be seen as two different perspectives on one and the same problem. Lembeck claims that this problem is determined by the "image of the history of philosophy" Cohen aimed to construct. Since such an image is more encompassing than that of a "Kantian", it cannot be understood as the Kantian reading of Plato or a Platonic reading of Kant, as it has been traditionally defined. Rather, Cohen read both philosophers in terms of what he saw as their common background: idealism being the only philosophical fundament for a systematic and a priori explanation of the objectivity of knowledge. Thus this early work exemplifies the strategy we discovered there: to resort to idealism for the development of a systematic and scientifically informed epistemology. Like Helmholtz, Cohen perceived that any empirical account of cognition should be

¹⁹ In this respect, see (Damböck 2017; 2018b).

²⁰ In this respect, see Karl Heinz Lembeck's recent paper on the reception of Plato in the Marburg School (Lembeck 2019).

complemented, in one way or another, with an idealist explanation of the epistemic conditions for the truth and falsity of our judgments. We have seen that Helmholtz's theory of unconscious inference assumes that the innervation of our senses has the faculty to trigger certain mental capacities –namely, instincts and memory— which allow any subject to distinguish what is true from what it is not. Despite Helmholtz recognized that objectivity does not depend upon the biological mechanism of our senses alone, since it requires other faculties to discern the validity of judgments, thus he did not explain why these faculties give rise to valid knowledge. Unlike Helmholtz, Cohen did not pursue the empirical route any further. Rather, he aimed to go deeper into the idealist tradition. For this reason, from 1877 Cohen decided to pursue a strictly philosophical path. *Plato's Theory of Ideas and the Mathematics* is one of the first two texts in which Cohen initiated the construction of idealism as the only possible epistemology of objective knowledge, the other being *Kant's Foundation of Ethics*, also published in 1877.

The turn to philosophy and the idealist tradition becomes evident in this concise but challenging essay. As in his first essay on Plato, Cohen goes after the meaning of the theory of ideas through an exhaustive reading of the concept of *idea*. The first part of the article offers a brief historical reconstruction of the philosophical sources of the idea in the Eleatic concept of *not-being* and the Pythagorean concept of *void*. Cohen argues that the concept of idea has a philosophical relation to these concepts because they define an intelligible condition for objective knowledge. Cohen's reconstruction is, however, inconclusive and it does not seem to have found any confirmation. The second part of the essay, by contrast, provides a more solid and plausible reading. Cohen aims to define Plato's theory of ideas as the first 'mature' form of an epistemological idealism:

“for its [the theory of ideas] power, as one of the sparse fundamental forces in the world of the spirit, does not rest in the invention and endowment of so-called ideas, with which he bestows the mind in the diverse transformations of his fundamental thinking, and [with which] he has indeed fertilized the sense of the world, but it roots itself in that fundamental methodology, which arises from the question about fundaments for the certainty of knowledge.” (Cohen 1877, 1).

Cohen does not abandon his first interpretation of the idea as the psychological capacity to look (*Schau*) into the true being of things. However, he aims to demonstrate that Plato

did not defend a subjective idealism or, as he calls it, a ‘spiritualism’. Likewise, Cohen aims to separate Plato’s theory from its metaphysical interpretation, which he traces back to Aristotle’s *chorismos* between sensible things and intelligible ideas (Cohen 1877, 7–10). This interpretation, he indicates, is based on Aristotle’s confusion between being (*Sein*) and existence (*Dasein*). The being of the idea, Cohen explains, is understood as a kind of existence. This reading caused such a furore that it led modern scholars to the belief that the chief goal of Plato’s theory is to construct an idealist metaphysics of essence. Against the subjective and metaphysical interpretation of Plato’s idealism, Cohen holds that, rather, ideas define epistemic conditions for the “certainty of knowing” (*Gewissheit des Erkennens*) (Cohen 1877, 9).

In psychological terms, the idea is the capacity to look (*Schau*) at the true being or essence (*ousia*) of things (Cohen 1877, 12). Traditionally, this means that the idea is that which reveals the true being of things, that is, it presents what they are in their own existence. But what does this mean? Cohen highlights that, in fact, there is a philological aspect of the concept to be considered: the idea has a “verbal meaning”, for it defines something we, as cognitive agents, do (Cohen 1877, 12). When we look at the idea, Cohen argues, we “put or fix the being” (*Gelegensein*) of something that exists (*Dasein*). The idea does not define any *existence* in itself, which would be independent of the thing that is defined. Rather, the idea establishes a reference between something and an intelligible content that allows us to decide what that truly is, namely, the “idea of being” in general (Cohen 1877, 13). For Cohen, the referentiality (*Bezüglichkeit*) between something that exists (*Dasein*) and our thinking is the essential feature of Plato’s concept of the idea, for it shows that thinking poses the being of the thing as an “epistemic value”, as a *Wahrheitsgeltung* (Cohen 1877, 15). In this sense, Cohen claims that the “idea of being”, the “essence” that the Platonic idea defines, is not the “immanent” essence of a thing. Rather than being *ousia*, the idea is rather *aletheia*: the idea does not reveal a metaphysical entity but a truth condition, an intelligible content that fixes the epistemic value of something that exists (Cohen 1877, 13–14). Thus the idea consists as an epistemic relation to the sensible, namely, the relation between something *general* –the “idea of being” itself— and something particular –the sensible in view of, or toward which, we apply the idea. Thus far, Cohen has described the form of the idea. But how does the idea as a *Wahrheitsgeltung* emerge in someone’s mind? (Cohen 1877, 15–16). How does the idea –which always bears a subjective residue in its form (Cohen 1877, 11)— become

objective? In other words, why do we recognize the idea as an objective determination of something existent? For Cohen, this question can be settled through analysis of the “fundamental methodology” of Plato’s theory.

Cohen claims that Plato developed the theory of ideas in analogy with the method of mathematics. This becomes clear in several passages of Plato’s work but mainly in the sixth and seventh book of the *Republic*, where Plato explains his view of the different kinds of knowledge. Plato defines mathematics as “discursive knowledge” (*dianoia*) because it defines the sensible in accordance with presuppositions that allow us to establish the truth about the physical world. On the one hand, Cohen emphasizes, mathematics is sensible knowledge because it deals with the reports of our perception. Such is the case with arithmetic and geometry. On the other hand, however, mathematics moves beyond perception because it does not achieve knowledge by merely following perceptual reports. Rather, mathematics judges the reports of our senses in accordance with a non-sensible *complement* which comes from pure thinking (Cohen 1877, 17). Thus, Cohen infers, if our perception does play a function in mathematical knowledge, then it must be the function of a sort of “paraclete” for the establishment of pure thinking’s complement (Cohen 1877, 17). Now, the complement Cohen refers to is the basic object of mathematics: the number. According to Plato’s theory, the number defines an ideal criterion for the determination of perceptual contents. On the ground of numbers, it is possible to begin fixing parameters to define perceptual reports. Thus the mathematician constructs definitions, axioms, and theorems to reduce the physical world to ever more general and common laws. For example, mathematical reasoning makes it possible to define perceptions in accordance with measure, weight, height, longitude, width etc. Then it makes it possible to define the relations that determine the state of events, such as cause and effect, simultaneity, succession, reciprocity etc. Finally, by means of this method it becomes possible for the mathematician to achieve an increasingly encompassing image of the world, which tells us about the underlying order of reports of perception. All in all, for Cohen the most significant aspect of the mathematical procedure for the development of the theory of ideas is Plato’s description of its methodological *application*, traditionally known as the ‘hypothesis method’ (Cohen 1877, 25). The mathematician uses definitions, axioms, and theorems as *hypotheses* or presuppositions to determine the many variables involved in perceptual events. In view of these hypotheses, the mathematician can abstract from perception the features that are

consonant with the hypothesis in question. Thus Cohen specifies, the mathematician understands the reports of our senses as “images”, “examples”, “paradigms” or “schemes”. In other words, Cohen emphasizes that mathematical knowledge works with “ideas”, since they communicate in discursive terms what things truly are. Following Plato, Cohen now claims that, just like the mathematician, the philosopher also looks at ideas. What changes, however, is the way in which they look at them. Unlike the mathematician, the philosopher does not propose ideal hypotheses or presuppositions to establish the truth about what we may or may not know. Rather, the philosopher considers hypotheses just as the mathematician considers perceptual reports. Thus knowledge itself can be subjected to examination. There lies the difference between *dianoia* and *episteme*, between mathematics –and science in general— and dialectic. The dialectic method questions ideas in order to deduce the principles under which such ideas or hypotheses are constructed. Thus, unlike the mathematician, who begins with hypotheses to determine reality, the philosopher begins with hypotheses to find the last condition that supports the certainty of our ideas, namely, the *anhypotheton* that Plato defined as the “idea of the good”.

This reading makes it clear that Cohen does not develop an exhaustive or philological reconstruction of Plato’s philosophy. First, it should be noted that Cohen simply assumes that the *Sophist*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic* construct a coherent and single theory of the hypothesis method. Likewise, Cohen also seems to presuppose without much evidence that the *Republic* gives the clearest picture of this method, by placing it in a general theory of knowledge. Looked at closely, it is also worth mentioning that Cohen does not deal with the problem of the development of knowledge from the perception of a material world to abstract definitions of ideas. He only refers twice to this well-known topic. While the first reference claims that Plato did offer an evolutionary model of knowledge (Cohen 1877, 20),²¹ the second merely suggests that the recollection theory in the *Meno* may be read as an exemplification of the advantage of mathematical “evidences” (Cohen 1877, 25). All these characteristics reveal that Cohen did not address his interpretation specifically to Plato specialists. Rather, it seems more plausible that

²¹ See the following: “Yet he [Plato] seems incessantly to have been concerned with that idea, and to have designated in his oral lectures the step by step progressive development of the consciousness of the being of things, insofar as he considered it as the development of four stages, senses perception, imagination, science, and rational insight.”

Cohen's radical interpretation of Plato argues in favour of a new understanding of philosophy. As we have seen, the fact that Plato may have used the methodological model of mathematics to construct the theory of ideas demonstrates, in Cohen's view, that Platonic idealism cannot be reduced to a psychological or metaphysical theory of knowledge. Despite the "subjective rest" of the "idea", Cohen highlights that Plato's theory aims, for the first time in the history of philosophy, to define philosophy as an epistemological idealism, that is, a systematic and methodological inquiry into the fundamentals of the certainty of knowledge. That, behind this reading, Cohen's true aim is to develop a novel understanding of philosophy is proved by the reference to a "philosophizing history of philosophy" (Cohen 1877, 16). Briefly, this philosophizing history of philosophy proclaimed by Cohen means to read the tradition in view of the philosophical problems of the present.²² If we consider the relevance of scientific knowledge for the development of European society in the 19th century, its incipient but progressive penetration into the design of European societies, reaching even individual lives, then it becomes evident that the question of the conditions of scientific certainty must have been at the core of any systematic philosophy. In particular, Cohen saw in Plato an outstanding attempt to demonstrate that philosophy, in its idealist form, does allow us to understand the development of scientific knowledge from a fundamental viewpoint. In this respect, Cohen did not hesitate to follow Kant by defining the Platonic idea as the "birthplace of the *a priori*" (Cohen 1877, 11, 18). As I will explain, the problem that Cohen develops in his famous reinterpretation of Kant is that of a strictly epistemological idealism.

§1.3. Hermann Cohen II: The Kantian Systematization of Idealism

When Cohen published *Plato's Theory of Ideas and the Mathematics* the academic situation of philosophy was precarious. Natorp depicts the agony of philosophy with precise and distressing words: "At universities it [philosophy] was generally applied, completely outside, as a bustle beside the science, a poorly aimless and ambiguous, amateurish touch, which for the most part, it rather barely approached the real problems, without knowing how to determine them, let alone to cope with them" (Natorp 1918, 5).²³

²² In regard to the relation between philosophy and history in the Marburg School, see (Natorp 1908; Friedman 2008; Krijnen et al. 2013; Luft 2015a).

²³ "Sie galt fast allgemein an den Hochschulen, vollends draußen, als ein Treiben neben der Wissenschaft her, ein armselig ziel- und wegunsicheres, dilettantisches Tasten, das an alle höchsten, vielmehr kaum die

Due to the uncertainty behind Plato's theory, Cohen's first attempt to redefine philosophy in a systematic way, thus to overcome its institutional disarray, was not enough. Plato may have thought out the first "mature" outline in history for critical idealism, but he did not develop a truly systematic theory of his original insight. According to Cohen, the work of many was required—specially Descartes, Leibniz, Galileo, and Newton—to begin to understand the systematic consequences of idealism. But the second step in Cohen's philosophizing history of philosophy was finally given thousands of years later by Kant. Cohen gave his reader two different versions of his famous *Kant's theory of experience*. The first edition, published in 1871, was a brief but outstanding book on Kant's critical philosophy. Whilst Cohen aimed to "reconstruct Kant's own authority" in order to build a new future for philosophy, the book developed an ambiguous reading, sustained by Cohen's psychological background and by a philological judgment about Kant's philosophy. The second edition, however, published in 1885 and extended by almost 500 pages, is more explicit regarding Cohen's eagerness to show that Kant did systematize the epistemological idealism he found in Plato. In addition, the second edition is also more explicit in its intention to turn Kant's philosophy into a new systematic enterprise that would breathe new life into a discipline that seemed to be in the final days of its long and shifting voyage. Thus, unlike early neo-Kantians, Cohen argues that Kant developed a strict and coherent philosophical system, concerned with the definition of the rational conditions for the construction of scientific objectivity. In order to see this picture in all its clarity, he found it necessary to purify Kant from the partial interpretations that were common among his colleagues, inasmuch as they simply did not consider the entire edifice of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nevertheless, like his reading of Plato, Cohen's philological reconstruction of Kant's authority is a reading between the lines, for it aims to produce an original interpretation, which rapidly became a new and rigorous version of transcendental philosophy in the landscape of German universities. In this respect, in a famous talk given at the Kant Society's conference in Halle in 1912, Natorp gave one of the clearest images of Cohen's contribution to the academic definition of philosophy as an autonomous discipline.

echten Probleme sich heranmachte, aber keines von allen fest zu fassen, geschweige damit fertig zu werden wußte."

The predicament of philosophy described by Natorp guided Cohen through the riddle of Kant's philosophy, just as Kant was guided by the predicament of metaphysics. Cohen saw two main features in Kantian philosophy that were especially enlightening for his own project. Hence, Natorp claims, Cohen could lay the foundations for a *community of work*, inspired not as much by the doctrines as by the *spirit* of Kant's philosophizing (Natorp 1912b, 195). A closer look at these aspects will give us a historically and philosophically informed idea of Cohen's Kantian version of the epistemological idealism he planned to develop.

First, Kant bequeathed an orientation for philosophy that was relevant to the whole post-Hegelian context, namely, the relation of philosophy to natural and human science. As we know, the transformation of natural philosophy into specialized and autonomous disciplines such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology, as well as the emergence of new sciences such as geology, social sciences, and psychology, not only confirmed the effectiveness of scientific observation and experimentation but also reshaped the institutional and educational structure of German universities. Likewise, thanks to the creation of new academic communities of research, the natural sciences rapidly traversed the frontiers of academia to industry, society, and even daily life.²⁴ Like earlier neo-Kantians, Cohen aimed to find a place for philosophy in this new scenario. In order to do so, Cohen assumed, philosophy must follow the *path of science*, as Kant taught in his first critique. Against his colleagues, however, he did not believe that philosophy should turn itself into a scientific discipline. This was actually the case with the epistemology (*Erkenntnistheorie*) of his time, which, as I describe earlier, aimed to connect the content of cognition to physiological conditions and mental performances. Cohen, on the contrary, believed that to follow the path of science actually meant something different, namely, to start paying attention and further analyse the form or, more precisely, the *method* of the scientific construction of the world. Now, to penetrate the method of scientific knowledge, Cohen argues that Kant's philosophy also bequeathed a secure and methodological way to proceed. According to Natorp's

²⁴ For the impact of science on German society, see (Cahan 2003; Gregory 1977; Breidbach and Burwick 2013). For the impact of science on European society generally, see (Ellis and Kirchberger 2014; Schlager 2000; Olson 2008; Fyfe and Lightman 2007; Werrett et al. 2010; Snyder 2012; Lenoir 1989). For the impact of science in Kantian philosophy, see the classical book (Friedman and Nordmann 2006).

presentation at the Marburg School, this was the second and most important feature of Kantian philosophy: the transcendental method.

I venture to argue that the transcendental method is one of the greatest achievements of Cohen's deep thoughts about Kant's philosophical legacy. Cohen begins from the assumption that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the systematic discovery and description of what Kant defined as the a priori conditions of experience. In this sense, Cohen argues, Kant's philosophy should be read as a very particular "theory of experience". However, as Cohen knew, understanding the specific meaning Kant gave to this "apriority" of experience was problematic on several counts. On the one hand, whilst Kant defined different transcendental conditions – namely, space and time, the categories, the principles of understanding, and finally the ideas of reason — he did not make explicit why and in what sense they all constitute a priori conditions of experience. One way in which Kant explained this, Cohen writes, is by defining the a priori as a set of necessary and universal conditions for knowledge. The only problem with this definition, however, is that it is not actually a definition. 'Necessary' and 'universal', Cohen emphasizes, are mere designations and not proofs. Another way in which Kant explained this was by characterizing a priori conditions as original representations of different cognitive faculties or capacities. But the problem with this strategy, Cohen claims, is that it highlights the idea that the a priori are different kinds of mental representation that emerge from "innate", therefore "subjective", cognitive capacities. As I argued earlier, this gave rise to several fragmentary and partial treatments of the *Critique*, motivated more by similarities between the first part –the Transcendental Aesthetics— and academic advances on the physiology of the senses, than by Kant's own words. Finally, one last but significant problem of Kant's theory of apriority concerns the question of the systematic interrelation between the different a priori conditions Kant distinguished. The so-called 'synthetic method' of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which depicts knowledge as the outcome of different faculties from sensibility to reason, presents such a heterogeneous picture, that it is not clear how all the a priori conditions actually cooperate with one another in order to guide us to experience the world. Certainly, anyone who is willing to understand the system offered by the *Critique*, cannot begin by following these troublesome hints. For this reason, Cohen rather recommends starting by gaining some clarity concerning the case study of the whole critical enterprise, namely, the concept of experience. Cohen argues that most interpreters had not pondered the specific definition

of experience Kant established as his starting point. In the first critique, Kant does not present the concept of experience as the daily and common impression we get from our surroundings. On the contrary, Kant constructs a very specific concept for experience. Experience, he argues, is the result of synthetic judgments, the principle of which are a priori synthetic judgments, as in the case of what we call 'causality' (Kant 1900, Bd. III:B 12-B 14). Thus, for the critical philosopher, experience does not mean our daily perception of pre-given things, as we frequently assume when we rapidly scrutinize the collection of our perceptual reports. More precisely, experience is more like a coherent context defined by objectively valid statements or judgments. According to Cohen, Kant made this explicit in the *Prolegomena* by distinguishing between judgements of perception and judgments of experience. The latter, Cohen claims, are the kind of judgment made in *natural science*. Based on this reading, Cohen claims that to put this notion of experience at the heart of the critical enterprise constitutes a methodological decision, for it warns us that analysis of the apriority of experience must consist in analysis of the apriority of the *factum* of science. Thus the so-called 'a priori conditions of experience' become, in Cohen's view, those that are universally necessary for the articulation of scientific discourse. For this reason, Natorp claims that the way in which scientists perform experiments is actually very important for the transcendental philosopher; it illustrates how the context of experience is produced and constantly fixed by rational thinking or, as Natorp argues, it illustrates that experience is, first and foremost, a *venture of thinking* (*Wagnis des Denkens*) (Natorp 1912b, 206). This does not mean, however, that the transcendental philosopher will be interested in the particular contents of science. Rather, the transcendental method, as Cohen presents it in his reading, takes the *factum* of science as a point of departure to unveil how *observation*, *experimentation*, and *conclusions* are systematically constructed. What matters, then, is not the content but the *form* of our objectifying thinking.

This interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* had two substantial and lasting effects on the neo-Kantian project of transcendental philosophy. The first concerns the strict elucidation of the meaning of the *apriority* of experience. In *Kant's Theory of Experience* from 1885, Cohen presents the a priori conditions of objectivity in accordance with Kant's a priori intuitions, the categories, and the a priori principles. However, as we will see in the following section, these a priori conditions become a systematic and intertwined

network or set of logical contents.²⁵ Taken together, Cohen claims, they are the most general and necessary logical contents thinking produces in order to erect objective determinations. All in all, the definition of apriority as the systematic sum of logical contents does not mean that Cohen reduced transcendental philosophy to a sort of formal logic (Natorp 1912b, 209–10). Rather, Cohen, and the transcendental method in general, aim to exhibit (*Aufweis*) the most general logical contents that contain the synthetic unities for the basic forms of synthetic proposition, which have their template in the logical forms of judgment. Thus Cohen conceives of a priori contents as the a priori synthetic *fundaments* of objectivation. In this sense, another way in which Natorp defines the a priori contents is by using the concept of *law* (Natorp 1912b, 193). They can be described as *laws* because they define immanent epistemic functions in order to synthesize perceptual reports as objective unities in the context of experience. In other words, they express the *laws* under which our perceptual reports can be transformed into objective determinations. Finally, insofar as the transcendental method enquires into the unity and systematicity of these laws, it aims to express and define the last grounding *legality* of thinking, that is, the unitary *logos* of a rational life oriented to know the world as a systematic and law-like unity, that is, as nature.

As I have indicated, this interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* has two decisive effects in Cohen's project. The second concerns distinguishing the transcendental method from other versions of idealism. Every form of idealism begins from the assumption that *thinking* determines *being*. Natorp explains that Cohen's transcendental method redefines this relation in a new and distinct way:

“This is precisely what philosophy as [transcendental] ‘method’ tells us: all fixed ‘being’ must fall into a ‘gait’, a *movement* of thought. Only in this way can the Eleatic, and in general the idealistic equating of being with thinking lose its seemingly bleak tautology, which grounds being in thinking only by means of freezing thinking into a new thing-like being. True idealism is certainly not that of Eleatic ‘being’, nor of the rigid ‘Ideas’ (still Eleatic) of Plato's early period. Instead, it is that of ‘movement’, of the ‘transformation’ of concepts, the ‘limiting of

²⁵ In regard to the problem of the systematicity of the categories, see (Holzhey 1986, 92–127).

unlimited’ of Plato’s *Sophist*, the eternal ‘becoming towards being’ of the *Philebus*.” (Natorp 1912b, 199).

Whilst Natorp refers to the ancient figures of idealism, in this passage he indirectly contrasts the transcendental method with two particular versions of idealism. As becomes evident later in the text, these versions are subjective idealism and absolute idealism. According to Natorp, both versions reduce the relation of being and thinking to a: “bleak tautology, which grounds being in thinking only by means of freezing thinking into a new thing-like being.” Without doubt, they do so in different manners, therefore, they fall prey to two different but significant problems: Natorp calls them *absolutism* or *metaphycism*. Let me explain both problems separately and see how the transcendental method overcomes them.

Subjective idealism starts from the metaphysical assumption of the dualism of subject and object respectively. Briefly, it holds that knowledge is the result of the encounter of a cognitive subject and an external, ready-made object. If the subject provides an adequate representation of such object, then we can claim that the former *knows* the latter. For this perspective to work, the problem of knowledge consists in understanding the mental capacities involved in the representation of the object by the subject. As we know, subjective idealism has many derivate versions but one was of particular concern to Cohen: psychologism. It claims that knowledge must be grounded on psycho-physical capacities shared by rational agents. Thus whatever the laws of thought are –whether logical, biological, normative etc.— they must all be in principle psychological laws.²⁶ Hence psychologism, and any other form of subjective idealism, risks misconstruing the discussion about the a priori conditions of knowledge as a discussion about psycho-physical, and even chemical, mechanisms of our limbs and organs. Absolute idealism, on its behalf, defines the “bleak tautology” of being and thinking in another sense. First, it understands it as a relation of complete identity: every being is ultimately a position of thinking, for it is the result of thought-determination. Second, it understands thinking as an enclosed and finite process of self-determination, since everything we may know – being— is the result of a stratified process of determinations over determinations,

²⁶ For a detailed analysis of psychologism and its many 19th century versions see (Kusch 1995; 2015; Gonzalez Porta 2010; González Porta 2010).

abstractions over abstractions, and so on. Thus absolute idealism ends up sustaining the complete identity between being and thinking by recognizing the overwhelming and self-contained power of the latter.

Against these misleading but common paths, the transcendental method constructs a sharper and stricter understanding of the relation between being and thinking. As we have seen, Cohen assumes that experience, or the *factum* of science, is the result of an act of objectivation. Here, this act is defined as a: “‘movement’, of the ‘transformation’ of concepts, the ‘limiting of unlimited’ of Plato’s *Sophist*, the eternal ‘becoming towards being’ of the *Philebus*”. Behind this eloquent description,²⁷ it underlies the idea that the act of objectivation is a dynamic procedure characterized by two poles or moments. While “being” defines the pole of objective determinations, “thinking” defines the methodical and dynamic process of producing such objective determinations. Therefore, being and thinking have a strict and close relation: if thinking means to objectify, it does so because it means to determine something as a case or, which is the same, to judge what is the case and what it is not. Thus against the psychologistic version of subjectivism, Cohen retains the idea of thinking as a capacity but only in the sense of a logical act or condition, that is, as the tendency to fix and to determine our surroundings as a provisory but systematically justified context of different delimited beings. We can say that Cohen asserts the same change of sense he applies to the definition of the Platonic idea: from the idea as the psychological capacity of *Schauen* to the idea as hypothesis. Likewise, the relation being-thinking now amounts to the pure and universal capacity of reasoning, of making use of reason to construct a coherent picture of our surroundings in terms of a law-like context, whether we call it ‘experience’, ‘nature’, ‘the world’, and so on. It is clear, then, that Cohen does not define the capacity to think as a psychological faculty. Rather, he defines it in view of its epistemic performance. In this particular sense, Natorp further clarifies, it is possible to claim that Cohen’s definition of thinking draws upon Kant’s concept of “spontaneity” (Kant 1900, Bd. III:A 51/B 75). Thinking is conceived of as a creative action (*Handlung*) of determination, or a law-like function (*Funktion*) to synthesize different contents of a case—in Kant’s terms, the manifold—into an object of knowledge—a synthetic unity or concept. Natorp defines the movement of thinking in another way by means of the concept of *method*: “The word ‘method’, *metienai*, does not

²⁷ In this respect, see Natorp’s famous 1903 book on Plato’s theory of ideas (Natorp 2004c, 278–354).

only imply a ‘going’, a moving oneself forward, nor, as Hegel thinks, a mere going along with or alongside; rather it means a going towards a goal, or in any case going in a secure direction: a ‘going after’” (Natorp 1912b, 199–200).

Based on this reading of the relation of being and thinking, the transcendental method also overcomes the *metaphysicism* of absolute idealism. The transcendental method does not conceive of knowledge as an enclosed, self-contained process of self-determination of the Spirit. Rather, it conceives of it as a “progressive, evolving, and infinite” development of ever-new possible determinations (Natorp 1912b, 199), inasmuch as it always remains open to the demands or requests of an irrational factor, namely, the undetermined “x” or case to be determined. In this sense, knowledge – by extension, experience— is the *infinite task* of bringing “x” to its objective determination. Again, for Natorp, this is what the scientific method, its particular way of observation and experimentation, teaches us. The “x” of knowledge is not: “an absolute irrational element, in other words, a negative absolute, something that is absolutely *not* cognizable, and yet is still given” (Natorp 1912b, 207). Rather, the “x” of knowledge is the very “matter of knowledge”, in the sense that it is that with respect to which the infinite task performs its task of determination. Thus, insofar as the transcendental method deals with the *method* of knowledge, that is, the pure rational procedure to achieve an objective determination of such “x”, it delivers simultaneously true idealism and true authentic empiricism (Natorp 1912b, 206).

To sum up, we have seen that Cohen’s transcendental method can be conceived of as a particular kind of idealism, the main problem of which is the apriority of experience. Apriority is defined as a set of synthetic contents of judgment that make it possible to conceptualize perceptual reports as objective determinations that partake in a law-like context. In this sense, Cohen transforms Kant’s apriority of experience into a system of logical conditions, which is the a priori condition of possibility for the construction of possible experience. The system on which these conditions rests is the very “method” or “form” of thinking, or in Kantian terms the true “transcendental subjectivity”. Now the task of defining and grounding the system of a priori conditions is what Cohen would call the project of a *critical epistemology* (*Erkenntniskritik*) (Cohen 1883, 6). In what follows, I will explain the system of a priori conditions as Cohen presents it in the second edition of *Kant’s Theory of Experience*. In particular, I will show that the model of critical

epistemology can be viewed as a *conceptualist* interpretation of Kant's transcendental philosophy.²⁸

§2. The Fundamental Concepts of Critical Epistemology

So far, we have seen that the restitution of Kant's authority not only means considering the theory of experience in all its parts. Likewise, it also means that Cohen's interpretation of the apriority theory aims to found a whole new research programme that goes beyond Kant's own work. As we saw at the end of the previous paragraph, this programme is called *critical epistemology* (*Erkenntniskritik*). Now I place certain emphasis on the fact that the Marburg School is a community of work. For this reason, this research programme varies in the work of Natorp and Cassirer. As we will see in the next chapter, especially in Natorp's case, both philosophers seek to redefine and broaden the limits of critical epistemology. Notwithstanding this, it seems necessary to characterize and delineate the set of specific fundamental concepts that give shape to Marburg's epistemological idealism. Furthermore, the reconstruction of Cohen's system of a priori principles that I will offer aims to demonstrate the claim made in the previous paragraph, namely, that Cohen's transcendental method can be seen as an antecedent of so-called 'conceptualist' interpretations of transcendental philosophy.

The rationale behind the immense re-edition of *Kant's Theory of Experience* is the construction and application of the transcendental method.²⁹ While in the considerably shorter first edition Cohen simply follows Kant's synthetic method of the *Critique* (Edel 2010a, 23–33, 71–77), in the second he re-arranges the whole architecture of the book on the ground of this new methodical procedure. Thus we could say that the second edition passes through the synthetic method of the *Critique* merely in a formal way. In fact, in a kind of philological effort, Cohen rectifies sections of the *Critique* according to a theoretical scheme delineated in view of the transcendental method, namely, the so-called

²⁸ In this respect, I follow recent contemporary interpretations that link neo-Kantianism with conceptualism. For example, see (Crowell 2009; Dewalque 2010; Renz 2011).

²⁹ To reconstruct the fundamental concepts of Cohen's critical epistemology, I follow Helmut Holzhey's classical study but, above all, Geert Edel's systematic and historical analysis of Cohen's transcendental philosophy. In this respect, I do not intend to offer a new interpretation but only to suggest the 'conceptualist' direction of Cohen's transcendental method. Thus, for a detailed and exhaustive interpretation of Cohen's transcendental method, see (Holzhey 1986; Edel 2010a). For other classical studies of Cohen's philosophy, see (Poma 1997; Marx and Orth 2001; Munk 2005).

theory of the triple apriority (Edel 2010a, 34, 303–13). Another reason why the book is enlarged is that Cohen now interpolates the reading of the sections of the *Critique* with extensive and historically relevant interpretations of his contemporaries, mainly Fries, Herbart, Trendelenburg, and Helmholtz. And he even dedicates a whole chapter to criticizing Schopenhauer's misinterpretation of the transcendental deduction. Undoubtedly, behind these remarks and critiques Cohen always sets up the transcendental method as the most accurate interpretation. But what does the transcendental method tell us about Kant's philosophy?

In the first place, with the transcendental method Cohen aims to establish the *transcendental* meaning of Kant's theory of apriority. In the case of mathematical natural science, the transcendental method holds that, for experience to be a law-like objectively valid context that can be expressed in objective judgments, there must be epistemic conditions that control and justify the construction of experiential contents. Furthermore, since knowledge is a synthetic construction, insofar as its path continuously progresses towards new and more accurate determinations, then these conditions must also be synthetic. More precisely, these conditions must be *synthetic* in an eminent sense. Finally, these conditions of knowledge must be in systematic relation with each other. As Cohen argues, the different a priori conditions must be defined as *members* of an interconnected system (Cohen 1885, 137). And as Natorp explained in his 1912 conference on Kant and the Marburg School held at the Kantian Society, to demonstrate the systematicity of the conditions was one of the main aims of the transcendental method. Only in this sense, Cohen explains, can we understand Kant's definition of the transcendental as the: "a priori concepts of objects in general" (Kant 1900, Bd. III:A 85/ B 117-118). Thus, behind Cohen's transcendental method there is a single and strict criterion to evaluate the meaning of apriority: the epistemic function performed by these conditions. He understands the epistemic function as the achievement and assurance of the act of objectivation. The conditions are, in this sense, the necessary methods to fulfill this epistemic act, which we can see and evaluate in the case of science. Simultaneously, this criterion allows Cohen to relegate –not without justification—any definition of the a priori that does not correspond to its transcendental meaning. As we will immediately see, Cohen distinguishes in the *Critique* three different meanings of the apriority of experience. Undoubtedly, Cohen believed that the transcendental meaning of the a priori is the real treasure that lies in the abyss of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nevertheless,

as we may surmise, discovery of this treasure comes with a fierce redesign of Kant's building, so to speak. In order to explain both consequences clearly enough, I will present them separately, although Cohen does not distinguish between them in the course of his analyses.

In principle, Cohen claims that the main defect of the *Critique* is the ambiguous meaning of the a priori as the "necessary and universal" conditions of knowledge. "Necessary and universal" does not explain anything by itself (Cohen 1885, 215). Actually, Cohen claims that it is possible to distinguish three different meanings of the a priori, particularly in the *Transcendental Aesthetics* and the *Transcendental Logic*: a metaphysical, a psychological, and finally the transcendental meaning. On the one hand, the metaphysical meaning of the a priori, developed in the metaphysical exposition of space and time and the metaphysical exposition of the categories, consists in the demonstration of the *non-empirical* origin of these representations. In the case of space and time, the originality means that neither representation can be defined as properties derived from things, nor as representations of the relation between such things (Cohen 1885, 132–33). Rather, space and time are recognized as the intuitive representations that we presuppose in any other sensible representation. In this sense, space and time are original forms of consciousness (Cohen 1885, 198); they are intuitions that precede every other intuition we may have of external things. In the case of the categories, the originality means that the category, as a kind of representation, is not derived from external things, as is the case of Aristotle's categories (Cohen 1885, 241). The category, Cohen explains, is not derived from the ideas of a thinking substance or a collection of habits (Cohen 1885, 250). Following the rationalist tradition, Kant derives the category from the act of judgment (Cohen 1885, 262). The category defines the general form of judging: the form of the synthetic unity. In this sense, the category does not define properties of things or general entities but, like space and time, a *form of consciousness* (Cohen 1885, 241).

The metaphysical a priori gives rise to another possible interpretation of the apriority of experience. This is the second level of apriority. According to Cohen, in the *Critique* the psychological level takes place in the metaphysical exposition of space and time and in

the transcendental deduction of the categories.³⁰ According to Cohen, psychological apriority consists in definition of the a priori in terms of *forms* of sensibility and understanding. Following Herbart, Cohen claims that the concept of form serves to define the a priori in terms of psychic processes or mechanisms of consciousness. In this sense, the psychological level identifies a priori representations with elements or powers of the faculties of knowledge. Certainly, for Cohen the psychological definition of the a priori has been the main cause of misunderstandings concerning the purpose and sense of the critical enterprise. In the case of sensibility, the psychological explanation turns pure intuitions into psychic events. In the case of the understanding, the psychological explanation interprets the pure concepts or categories as mere psychological contents]. For Cohen, however, the only positive contribution of the psychological level is to make possible a hypothetical frame to construct psychological analysis, whose objective unity would be the concept of a psycho-physical organism (Cohen 1885, 210).

But neither the metaphysical nor the psychological levels of the a priori explain the true critical meaning of the apriority of experience. This is only achieved with the third level: *transcendental apriority*. This does not mean that the first two levels of the apriority should be judged as simple misconceptions. Rather, Cohen interprets them as necessary *pre-investigations*, *pre-conditions*, or *preparations* to discover the true meaning of apriority (Cohen 1885, 73, 74, 583). Both levels reveal that the a priori conditions actually have a non-derivative origin. In this sense, Cohen seeks to justify, to a certain extent, the metaphysical and psychological vocabulary that Kant employed in the *Critique*. At the same time, however, clarification of these levels serves a bigger purpose: to purify the a priori in view of its epistemic function. By putting aside metaphysical and psychological meaning, Cohen aims to explain that space, time, and the categories receive transcendental meaning from their relation to the a priori synthetic principles of experience. Against Kant, Cohen emphasizes that the transcendental system of experience is not explained in the *First Critique of Pure Reason* by the transcendental deduction of the categories but by the deduction of the synthetic principles (Edel 2010a, 360–86). As Edel explains, Cohen understands the transcendental deduction as the exposition (*Aufweis*) of the a priori logical conditions of the law-like validity

³⁰ In regard to the transcendental deduction as a psychological explanation, see (Edel 2006; 2010a, 343–59).

(*Gesetzesgeltung*) of objective knowledge (Edel 2006, 33). Kant, however, developed the transcendental deduction of the categories in terms of an explanation of the connection between a priori concepts of understanding and a priori intuitions of sensibility. In other words, Cohen claims, Kant confused the demonstration of objective validity with explanation of the possibility and necessity of the cooperation of the faculties and, consequently, with explanation of the difference between the pure and the empirical I (Edel 2010a, 343 ff). According to Cohen, the transcendental meaning of the categories is the logical “unities of thinking” (*Denkeinheiten*) for the construction of a priori synthetic judgements. Since these judgments are analysed in the section on the a priori synthetic principles, true transcendental deduction corresponds to analysis of these a priori principles.

At the transcendental level, Cohen reconstructs the a priori conditions as a system of three interconnected layers crowned by a common and fundamental principle. Cohen defines the highest principle as the “unity of consciousness” (Cohen 1885, 141, 298, 317, 326, 589). This principle consists in a necessary presupposition for the construction of knowledge. It prescribes that whatever experience may be, it must be a law-like context in which each part maintains necessary connection with the others. The principle is, therefore, a “unity” in the sense of *unification*: it establishes that the form of all objective knowledge is the demand and recognition of legality. In this sense, Cohen interprets Kant’s formulation of the highest principle of the synthetic judgments (Kant 1900, Bd. III:A 158/B 197). But the a priori fulfillment of the task of determination is not secured by this principle, which only defines the most abstract form of objective knowledge. Unity of consciousness is further fulfilled by two different but complementary kinds of principle. On the one hand, there are the *ideas of reason*, the function of which is to be heuristic principles to preserve the systematic construction of experience. On the other, there are the a priori *principles of synthetic judgement*. Unlike the ideas of reason, they are the most general a priori contents we employ to construct every other possible experiential content. In this sense, the a priori synthetic principles define the very possibility of objective contents. In Cohen's words, each a priori principle constructs a perspective of objectification or object in general (Cohen 1885, 413); each a priori principle poses the necessary content to construct an object in general. For this reason, Cohen characterizes the system of principles as the “handles” of experience (Cohen 1885,

406). According to Cohen, the principles operates on the grounds of two distinguishable instruments or methods of thinking: the categories and the pure intuitions.

The pure concepts of understanding are defined as the second layer. According to Cohen, it is possible to find the transcendental definition of the concepts in the second edition of the *Transcendental Deduction*. In their transcendental function, the categories must be defined as *methods of unification* of the multiple of intuition or phenomenon. The categories define the logical instruments needed to construct conceptual unities of determination. In this sense, Cohen explains, the categories are necessary to apply mathematical determinations to physics, insofar as they prepare the concepts that are necessary to define natural objects.

Finally, the third layer corresponds to the pure intuitions of sensibility. According to Cohen, it is possible to find the transcendental definition of space and time in the additions to the second edition of the *Critique*, where Kant discusses the ideality and reality of these formal intuitions. In his transcendental function, pure intuitions must be defined as the methods needed to construct the *phenomenon* of experience. As Cohen judiciously emphasizes, the phenomenon is the abstract representation of something given. As such, the phenomenon does not define sensations, perceptions, or things in themselves. Rather, the phenomenon is the general form of something whose content is undetermined but whose sensible form can be fixed in accordance with general relations. Space and time are precisely the methods needed to define general relations. While space defines the possibility of determining the phenomenon in regard to its *simultaneity*, time defines the possibility of determining the phenomenon in regard to its *succession*. In this sense, Cohen further claims, the formal intuitions are constitutive conditions of knowledge because they establish the principles of order for every given thing (Cohen 1885, 249). Thus on the ground of space and time, the disciplines of geometry, arithmetic, and mechanics become possible.

§3. Conclusion: Critical Epistemology and Psychology: an obscure affair

To conclude this chapter, I will sum up the previous paragraphs and show in which particular sense the critical epistemology must confront the question of a philosophical psychology. In §1, I explain the historical context of the critical epistemology during the

second half of the 19th century. In §1.1, through analysis of Helmholtz' epistemology of perception, I show that the theory of knowledge (*Erkenntnistheorie*), developed by so-called Kantian philosophers and scientists was dominated by the empirical approach of the sciences of cognition (particularly, optics, experimental psychology, and the physiology of senses). In §1.2., I show that Cohen, at the beginning of his career, was influenced by the empirical approach of Lazarus and by Steinthal's folk psychology. Rapidly, however, Cohen found in Plato's theory of ideas, particularly in his concept of *Schau*, the possibility of developing a strictly critical-epistemological approach to knowledge, the contribution of which was to ask for the a priori conditions of the *certainty* of cognition. In §1.3, I explain that Cohen systematized his early Platonic approach through reinterpretation of Kant's transcendental philosophy. In particular, Cohen found in the Kantian tradition the necessary method to understand and analyse the epistemological grounds of certainty in terms of a priori conditions of the validity of objective knowledge. Likewise, I emphasized that Cohen's construction of the transcendental also responded to the institutional demand to secure an autonomous disciplinary task and place for philosophy among the new sciences in the 19th century German university. In this sense, the transcendental method defines an object –namely, the *factum of science* – and a methodical procedure –namely, the philosophical history of the problems and transcendental deduction of a priori principles— that cannot be reduced nor replaced by the emerging experimental psychology. In §2, I explain the fundamental concepts of Cohen's transcendental philosophy. I show that Cohen presented the transcendental method and its logical space of a priori conditions of validity as a refined version of Kant's transcendental idealism, inasmuch as he systematizes the scope of the transcendental analysis and isolates it from the metaphysical and psychological concepts employed by Kant. In this way, Cohen could present the question of the validity of knowledge as the main question of the research programme of critical epistemology.³¹ In this respect, Cohen defines the a priori conditions of validity as the system of epistemic logical functions that are necessary for the construction of objective validity. Thus, with Sellars, I would dare argue that Cohen depicts the transcendental apriority of experience as a “space” of rational conditions, in which the scope and limit of human rationality is

³¹ In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that Cohen aimed to apply the transcendental method to each and every form of objective knowledge, not only to natural science. For this reason, Cohen's transcendental philosophy is also a philosophical system. For detailed analysis of the meaning of the system in Marburgian neo-Kantianism, see (Renz 2002).

described in view of its a priori epistemic operativity, namely, as the transcendental space for the production of possible experience. For Cohen, the task of the *Critique* is precisely to expose the logical scope of human reason. And he does not define such scope as a negative limit but as the field of the possibility of experience: the scope of reason is the *horizon* in which every possible knowledge may become possible (Cohen 1885, 577).³²

Now the scope of critical epistemology seemed to other philosophers and scientists to be a kind of reduction, inasmuch as the question of validity seemed to close the perspective on other aspects related to knowledge production. In view of the context that I depict in previous paragraphs, it is possible to distinguish three kinds of critique, each of which was advocated by many different philosophers.

The first kind emerged from the problematic relation between critical epistemology and experimental psychology. In general terms, the critique consists in claiming that the critical epistemology, unlike the empirically-based epistemology, did not possess the necessary methods to understand the mechanism of cognition (*Erkennen*). Therefore, critical epistemology cannot truly construct the ground of knowledge. Against this critique, it is merely necessary to recall Cohen's sharp distinction between the role of empirical science and that of critical epistemology. While the former constructs objects of knowledge, such as the so-called 'mechanism' of cognition, to deal with what Kant calls the *quid facti*, the latter methodically unfolds the conditions for the production of objectively valid knowledge in different cases of objectivity, to deal with the *quid juris*.³³

The second kind of critique came from other transcendental philosophers. In general, it claims that critical epistemology seems to be a sheer logic of science, the disadvantage of which is that it cannot take into account the ontological and epistemological question of the knowing subject. In this respect, the two most important critiques were formulated by Martin Heidegger and Manfred Brelage. On the one hand, it is well-known that

³² At the end of *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* from 1885, Cohen sums up the critical epistemology in six main theses. The first concerns the meaning and object of critical epistemology: "Schon das Wort „Kritik“ macht den methodischen Unterschied gegen alle früheren Systeme. Kritik ist nicht Untersuchung der Erkenntnisvermögen, - das wäre Psychologie - sondern der Wissenschaft, der reinen Vernunft als reiner Wissenschaft. Philosophie ist nicht "Doctrin" sondern Kritik; sie erzeugt nicht selbständig die Wissenschaft von den Gegenständen der Natur, sondern lehrt Irrthum verhüten, und leistet was keiner Wissenschaft möglich sei: den „Horizont“ der Erkenntnis zu bestimmen" (Cohen 1885, 577).

³³ In the following chapter (§1.1), I explain this critique by analysing Natorp's critique of psychologism.

Heidegger criticized Cohen's transcendental philosophy because it was restricted to the fact of science. In his lessons on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Heidegger ascribed to the common interpretation, already held by Edmund Husserl and the circle of Southwest Neo-Kantianism, that saw Cohen's transcendental philosophy as a sheer epistemology of mathematical natural science (Heidegger 1997, 5, 46). In Heidegger's view, since the Marburgian interpretation reduces the entire critique to transcendental logic, Kant's transcendental project becomes a theory of science (Heidegger 1997, 53, 126). For Cohen, critical epistemology understands objective knowledge as a matter of logical computing: thinking (*Denken*) becomes an abstract operation of reasoning and determining. Thus, Heidegger argues, the model of critical epistemology cannot recognize that Kant's *Critique* dealt with a wider and deeper problem: the problem of a fundamental ontology (Heidegger 1997, 54). Against this reading, it must be stressed that Cohen is not suggesting that we understand philosophy as a theory of science. In the difficult passage in which he presents the thesis that science is the object of the transcendental method, he took the precaution of presenting this as a methodological *precision* of the sense in which transcendental philosophy must understand knowledge (Cohen 1885, 56).³⁴ We have seen in §2 that science is the factum from which the transcendental analysis starts because it is the clearest production of the kind of objective knowledge we call 'experience'. In scientific judgements, the a priori structure of possible experience makes itself clearer than the common judgements of everyday experience. Thus to focus upon science does not mean turning philosophy into a theory of science. Rather, it means establishing a methodological precision to distinguish the epistemological problem from the metaphysical and psychological dimensions of knowledge.

On the other hand, based on Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of transcendental philosophy, Manfred Brelage developed the most widely shared critique of Marburgian neo-Kantianism: critical epistemology is an idealism without a subject

³⁴ "Indem Kant dagegen auf die mathematische Naturwissenschaft die philosophische Frage richtet, so präzisirt er zu allernächst diesselbe als die Frage nicht nach der Erkenntniss schlechthin, - unter der Jeder etwas Anderes verstehen kann - sondern nach der mathematisch-naturwissenschaftlichen Erkenntniss. Bei dieser *Präcision* blieb nicht bloss nicht die Möglichkeit bestehen, auf andere Arten und Gebiete der Erkenntniss die philosophische Frage zu erstrecken, sondern aus derselben erst entstand die Möglichkeit, auf jene andern die *Präcision* der Frage zu übertragen. Durch die Vergleichung der Arten der Erkenntniss und die Abschätzung ihrer Gewissheitsarten aber erlangt die philosophische Erkenntniss selbst ihre Methode und ihr System" (Cohen 1885, 56).

(Brelage 1965, 97).³⁵ In fact, as we have seen, Cohen stresses more than once that critical epistemology must not pay attention to the cognitive enactment of the subject in order to understand the conditions of validity. Furthermore, Cohen also emphasizes that the idea of the knowing subject introduces metaphysical and psychological misconceptions about the a priori fundament of objective knowledge. In Brelage's words, the critical epistemology can only deal with a general and abstract "scientific consciousness" (Brelage 1965, 99), the name of which is the transcendental subject. For Cohen, this subject is nothing more than the entire system of a priori conditions (Cohen 1885, 589). Brelage, therefore, concludes that the methodological frame of critical epistemology makes it impossible to analyse knowledge from the viewpoint of the daily concrete I, that is, lived experience (*Erlebnis*) or the facticity of knowledge (Brelage 1965, 97, 100, 195).

Finally, this critique, which is beyond the scope of critical epistemology, brings us to the third kind of critique, namely, that which claims that critical epistemology does not possess the necessary concepts to describe the facticity or lived experience of objective knowledge. In view of the epistemological goal of the Marburgian community, it must be possible to explain the relation between the knowing subject and the conditions of validity, insofar as the validity must be recognized and understood by everyday human beings. The lived experience of knowledge, therefore, is not an alien topic but an inner problem for neo-Kantian philosophy. And, in fact, neo-Kantians dealt with this problem in an original but long forgotten way. Brelage himself recognized in his critical reading that Marburgian neo-Kantians dealt with the problem of the lived experience of objective knowledge from the epistemological view of the relation between the norm and what is thus *normed* (Brelage 1965, 100).³⁶ What he and other critics did not analyse, however, is the particular way in which neo-Kantians constructed a transcendental psychology in accordance with critical epistemology in order to define the epistemic sense and role of

³⁵ The definition of an "idealism without a subject" resembles Friedrich Albert Lange's definition of scientific psychology as a "psychology without a soul" (Lange 1881, 3:168–69). On the one hand, Lange was the first early neo-Kantian to criticize the metaphysical interpretation of the results of the causal research undertaken by experimental psychologists. In this sense, Lange was well-known to Cohen and Natorp. On the other hand, Lange also demonstrates that causal research on the physiology of senses cannot be understood as a naïve materialism, for the mechanical definition of the senses depends upon an "idealistic view", such as Cohen understood critical idealism to be (Lange 1881, 3:229–30). On Lange's contribution to the history of psychology and neo-Kantianism, see (Sieg 1994, 86–106; Teo 2002).

³⁶ In this respect, several philosophers, especially those who base their interpretations on the Kantian and post-Kantian tradition, have been inspired by the transcendental analyses of the *facticity* of knowledge and its relevance to what I call the *epistemic life* of rational beings. See, for example, (Haugeland 2000; Adams and Browning 2016; McDowell 2013c; Brandom 1998).

the lived experience of objective knowledge. In what follows, I will make the case that Natorp's philosophical psychology is precisely a systematic analysis of the concrete subject according to its *epistemological* meaning.

Chapter 2. The Possibility and the Necessity of the Philosophical Psychology

Introduction

In this chapter I explain the possibility and necessity of a philosophical psychology in accordance with critical epistemology. In Chapter 1, I explain that critical epistemology analyses the a priori conditions of validity of objective knowledge. In this chapter I examine the transcendental foundation of Paul Natorp's philosophical psychology of objective validity (*Geltung*), the purpose of which is to describe the a priori subjective conditions necessary to recognize the objective validity of knowledge. Whilst Natorp wrote several texts on philosophy and psychology, the highly technical and incomplete development of his General Psychology has impeded our correct understanding of it. My principal aim here is to argue that Natorp's psychology can be understood as the subjective foundation of the *normativity* of objective knowledge.³⁷ In order to understand how Natorp conceived of this subjective-transcendental foundation, it is necessary to analyse the systematic development of his project. Thus in §1 I present Natorp's early definition of philosophical psychology. My aim is to show that Natorp's original plan is composed of two correlated but distinguishable projects: the critique of psychologism (§1.1), and the systematic development of a transcendental psychology (§1.2). In §2 I review and clarify the two major philosophical problems attending the reception and understanding of the latest version of philosophical psychology from 1912. I seek to argue that a proper understanding of critical psychology requires a clear understanding of Natorp's genetic interpretation of the transcendental method. In §3 I explain the fundamental genetic-logical concepts of philosophical psychology. My aim is to offer a clear picture of Natorp's interpretation of the epistemic act of objectivation. In §4 I conclude by explaining the systematic place and necessity of philosophical psychology in detail. I wish to show that philosophical psychology must analyse the subjective conditions for the realization and recognition of the "fact of perception". Thus Chapter 2

³⁷ I take the concept of normativity from the contemporary epistemology of perception. In general, the concept of normativity is used to define the epistemic role of perception and the relation it bears with concepts and the justification of objective knowledge. In this respect, I consider the following epistemological discussions: (Doyon and Breyer 2015; McDowell 2013c; Siegel and Silins 2015).

sets out a historically informed and systematic explanation of critical psychology and, particularly, a contemporary assessment of its main task and method.

§1. The Possibility of Philosophical Psychology: The Essay of 1887

Two years after the publication of the second edition of *Kant's Theory of Experience*, Paul Natorp published the first essay in which he explores the possible meaning of concrete subjectivity in accordance with the transcendental method (Natorp 1981).³⁸ This text is significant for many reasons. First, it is the first to systematize the anti-psychologistic argument of the Marburg School. Second, it inspired several authors and, especially, Husserl's critique of psychologism. Third, this text outlines the first model of a philosophical psychology according to critical epistemology. The outline Natorp constructs remained intact in his future revisions from 1888 and 1912. In general terms, the text performs two significant tasks. On the one hand, it makes explicit the Marburg School's critique of the (mis)use of empirical psychology as a fundament for philosophical analyses of knowledge. On the other, it proposes a philosophical psychology that explains the epistemic role of lived experience in objective knowledge according to the transcendental method. I will now explain both tasks separately.

§1.1. Philosophical psychology as a Critique of Psychologism

Natorp begins his analysis with the definition of knowledge and logic developed by Cohen. However, he sets it out in its own terms.³⁹ Knowledge is the factum of science, the performance of which can be defined as the search for: "laws for a limited and determined range of phenomena" (Natorp 1981, 246). Science consists in the construction of a "unified network of laws", according to which every possible determination of phenomena is constructed. The law-like unity constructed by science not only secures the logical non-contradiction between series of determinations, but it also produces the object of knowledge. In other words, the laws of science do not define a formal truth but the objective truth of "the universal relation of knowledge to the object." In this way, Natorp claims that knowledge can be defined in analogy to the logical operation of mathematical

³⁸ In what follows, I will quote passages from the English translation of this essay. Whenever I make a change in the translation, I highlight it thus: "Translation modified".

³⁹ We will see that Natorp presents critical epistemology in *genetic terms*. This will prove to be significant for the development of philosophical psychology.

equations.⁴⁰ In any equation, "x" does not define something totally unknown and indeterminate, but something determinable, a not yet determined object. X is determinable in virtue of the pre-established relation it maintains with known components or quantities. Likewise, these quantities are determined by the same laws that construct the objective content of the equation. Thus objective knowledge consists in the determination of the relation of phenomena to law, because: "the interpretation of the phenomenon according to laws is taken as the objectively true interpretation" (Natorp 1981, 246–47).

The task of philosophy, and particularly of logic, is the foundation of objective knowledge. But logic cannot simply be a formal description of knowledge—that is, the description of the form of its propositions, premises, or axioms—but it must be transcendental. In Natorp's words, the transcendental foundation means defining the a priori functions that produce the: "legislation of the laws of knowledge, through which the relation of truth and knowledge to the object is originally determined with universal validity" (Natorp 1981, 246–47). Again, the transcendental foundation aims to exhibit the epistemic functions that construct the *validity* of what we call 'knowledge'.

From this perspective, Natorp explains, a central problem of the theory of knowledge has been to decide whether this logical foundation is objective or subjective. As is well-known, this problem became the cornerstone of *logical psychologism*.⁴¹ For Natorp, the perspective of logical psychologism is both plausible and coherent. Both neo-Kantians of the Marburg School and psychologists such as John Stuart Mill, Theodor Lipps, and Stuart Sigwart, hold that: "the law of the objectivity of knowledge must be thought, and sought in knowledge itself" (Natorp 1981, 248). But we can now see, from what I have said about the concept of knowledge of critical epistemology, that the concept of knowledge and, by extension, the concept of the law of objectivity may, and actually have, different meanings. Knowledge can mean cognitive activity, therefore, a subjective achievement, or it can mean objectively valid content, therefore, an objective achievement. In Natorp's words:

⁴⁰ In this respect, see (Servois 2009; Gonzalez Porta 2011; Garrido 2017).

⁴¹ As Martin Kusch has shown, there were many versions of psychologism during the 19th and 20th centuries. I focus upon logical psychologism in deference to Natorp's arguments regarding this topic.

“Must the law of objectivity lie exclusively in the contents of knowledge which are to be related to the object? Must the law be proved from these without taking any account of the relation to the subject? Or is it perhaps in precisely this relationship to the subject that the foundation of the laws of objectivity must be originally sought? In this case, it would be only secondary, in as far as the content of knowledge is somehow affected, that the ground could be recognized in the content.” (Natorp 1981, 248).

For Natorp, the psychologistic answer to these questions is clear: logic must be grounded in psychology because knowledge –the object of logic— is an act of the subject. There are many versions of this psychologistic argument but Natorp defines it as follows. Knowledge is an activity or event in the subject’s encounter with her surroundings. The content of knowledge, that is, the representation the subject makes of her surroundings, is a psychic event, the legality of which must be sought in her consciousness. Thus the cognitive act is the fundament of every content of knowledge. For psychologists, it seems correct to conclude that logical laws and contents must be subjective. Logic, therefore, must be grounded in psychology.

From the viewpoint of critical epistemology, Natorp opposes five arguments against logical positivism. The first, as we may expect, holds that psychologists misplace the question of logic in a context where it does not belong. While logic asks for the *objective content* of knowledge, advocates of psychologism refer to the *subject* of knowledge and its psycho-physical mechanisms. Thus psychologism is grounded on a *metabasis eis allos genos* (Natorp 1981, 249). This argument repeats Cohen’s explanation of the misreading of Kant’s *Critique*: empirical theories of knowledge confuse the *quid juris*, the question of *validity*, with the *quid facti*, the question of the psycho-physical fact of knowledge, that is, cognition.

Natorp’s second argument holds that psychologism does not take into account the general meaning of logic. Logic is traditionally defined as a theory of knowledge that explains the conditions of *truth* of our knowledge. In this sense, logic deals with necessary and universal laws of knowledge, therefore it is more general than any other particular science. Thus the task of logic cannot be realized by any particular science. In fact, every particular science must presuppose the objective laws and contents that logic defines

(Natorp 1981, 251). If any kind of psychology aims to ground these laws on psycho-physical laws, then it would commit nothing but a *petitio principii*. As Natorp writes:

“The science of knowledge must be the ground of all particular sciences. If logic treats the criterion of truth, if it treats that which determines the truth of an act of knowledge according to laws and so universally, then the validity of this criterion cannot be dependent on an act of knowledge which can only be asserted as true according to this criterion” (Natorp 1981, 251).

Natorp’s third argument holds that psychologism leads to epistemological relativism. With this argument, Natorp aims to prove that logic cannot be defined as a “particular application” of psychology to a kind of content that is ultimately subjective. If we accept the argument of psychologism, then the truth contents of logic would depend upon the psycho-physical mechanism of subjectivity: “One not only destroys logic, as the independent theory of the objective validity of knowledge, one also cancels out objective validity itself and changes it into purely subjective validity if one attempts to support it on subjective grounds and to deduce it from subjective factors” (Natorp 1981, 251). Hence it becomes evident that psychologism would have to deny the objective validity of every other science.

Natorp’s fourth argument can be defined as a variation of the others. This argument appears only implicitly and will be further developed in forthcoming sections of the essay. Natorp explains that there is an aspect of the objective content of knowledge that psychologism does not consider, namely, the fact that objective knowledge is valid *regardless* of the knowing subject (Natorp 1981, 251–52). This can be seen in any mathematical natural science. If we claim from a psychologistic perspective that the objective validity of every kind of science depends upon, or is the result of, subjective laws, psycho-physical mechanisms of subjectivity, then it becomes impossible to explain why objective knowledge is valid in the way it is, namely, necessarily and universally. One possibility open to psychologism would be to explain objectivity as the result of an original and institutionally established *social agreement* throughout history. In this sense, objectivity could be explained as a *social construction* whose validity is secured by social institutions and political interests, the ground of which, however, is found in the

mechanisms of consciousness. But if we adhere to this thesis, then psychologism, as we already saw with the third argument, may lead to cultural relativism.

Finally, it is possible to distinguish a fifth argument in this essay. Natorp suggests that the subsumption of logic by psychology seems possible and even necessary to his contemporaries for a historical reason, namely, the way in which the very concept of the subject or subjectivity has been constructed throughout history (Natorp 1981, 249). Here, Natorp limits himself to mentioning the confidence with which Fries presents his naturalist interpretation of Kant's theory of sensibility as a necessary amendment of the transcendental project –something that Cohen had already addressed several times in the second edition of *Kant's theory of experience*. A year later, however, in his *Introduction to General Psychology*, Natorp further elaborated on the conceptual development of the idea of subjectivity in the history of Western thought (Natorp 1888b, 3–10). Later still, in the last written testimony about philosophical psychology, the 1912 treatise *General Psychology according to the Critical Method*, Natorp presented the historical orientation as the introduction to his systematic project (Natorp 1912a, 1–21, 129–54). From the viewpoint of this historical orientation, Natorp aims to understand logical psychologism as an inevitable but mistaken consequence, rooted in the bosom of what he calls the: “systematic context of philosophical problems” (Natorp 1912a, 1–2).

The historical orientation of Natorp's philosophical psychology is quite brief but it plays a systematic role because it aims to show the intrinsic relation between the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity. Whilst its conclusions can be criticized in view of more refined results of recent philosophical history, its central thesis still proves to be relevant to evaluate current and even persistent misconceptions about the philosophy of mind and epistemology.⁴² Natorp claims that logical psychologism is the contemporary result of a systematic and historical process that has constructed the concept of the subjective by means of its *naturalization*. The historical explanation is brief mainly because Natorp focuses attention upon what he believes are the most significant moments in the construction of the concept of subjectivity. In antique philosophy, it is not possible to find explicit definitions of *psyche*. Rather, some testimonies, especially those of Heraclitus

⁴² In this respect, for a detailed history of the concepts of consciousness, soul, and subject, see respectively (Balibar 2014a; 2014b; Balibar, Cassin, and de Libera 2014).

and Protagoras, reveal that the question of the subjective is subordinated under the metaphysical problem of being. Subjectivity does not have any special or particular meaning. In fact, even after Plato, Natorp emphasizes, even after the conceptual distinctions between matter and form, life and lifeless, we see in the first treatise on psychology, that is, Aristotle's *De Anima*, that the *psyque* is understood in accordance with the metaphysical idea of natural being. Thus, *psyque* becomes the concept through which to design an organic "function", the "energy" that "animates the body", which later grounds the Aristotelian idea of the organism (Natorp 1912a, 4–5). Only with late ancient philosophy does the idea of the subjective gain a more specific meaning. The neo-Platonic distinction between conscious and unconscious representations suggests that the subjective is associated with a reflexive act, one that may or may not accompany the representations we make of our surroundings. The influence of this thought, along with Christian doctrine, facilitated Augustine's view of the subjective as the inner life of the soul. For Augustine, the subjective is, first and foremost, an inner lived experience which is common to everyone whose access is immediate but private. Natorp even suggests that Augustine might have understood the subjective in Cartesian terms: the subjective as the indubitable fact of our self-consciousness (Natorp 1912a, 12). Nevertheless, Descartes takes a step further in the construction of the concept of subjectivity. The subjective is not merely a name for the inner life of our thoughts but the point of departure, even the only and exclusive fact, for modern philosophy. Descartes distinguishes the subjective from the objective thus he gave birth to so-called 'Cartesian dualism'. The subjective and the objective are two different substances, two different metaphysical properties that constitute the thinking subject. However, Descartes defines the subjective, in other words, the psychic, in analogy with the physical. Thus the dualism mind and body defines two kinds of interwoven substance. In this way, Descartes laid the foundation for the emergence of the naturalist psychology of the coming centuries. For Natorp, the sensualist psychology of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume documents clearly that subjectivity was understood as a second-order objectivity:

"The gearing mechanism of the psychic processes presents itself to him [Hume] as a mechanism of associations, which at the slightest examination reveals itself as a palpable, albeit highly misguided, imitation of the mechanism of nature, as presented by Descartes and Newton for the corporeal world" (Natorp 1912a, 15).

For Natorp, the *Treatise of Human Nature* became the epistemological and metaphysical model for every empirically oriented psychology. In this sense, every change that took place in the coming years only replaced, amended, and conceptually refined the naturalist vocabulary of modern philosophy. For example, Natorp writes, Friedrich Eduard Beneke's psychology replaces the concept of association with the concept of disposition without changing, however, the mechanistic model of psychology. Modern philosophers understood the subjective dimension, or subjectivity as such, as a second nature:

“For this second nature, one sets up a system of laws, entirely in imitation of the laws of nature, indeed directly as the natural laws of consciousness; but, of course, in less satisfactory form, less favourable than the genuine, properly determined laws of real science” (Natorp 1912a, 17. Translation modified).

Natorp does not seek to criticize the naturalist perspective as such. He actually recognizes at the very beginning of his treatise that naturalism is the common and even necessary attitude of our rational and intentional orientation towards the world as a context of objects (Natorp 1912a, 2–3). Nevertheless, he does criticize the application of the natural attitude to the study and understanding of subjectivity for being based on a radical blindness (Natorp 1912a, 17), namely, for failing to consider that objective concepts, concepts oriented to the determination of objects, may not be adequate to the definition of the subjective. Thus Natorp's fifth argument holds that logical psychologism is based on this historically constructed blindness. Logical psychologism begins by defining the subjective as a kind of object, the nature of which is different from the physical regardless of the fact that its mechanism is defined in natural mechanistic terms. In this way, logical psychologism aims to perform a reduction of the psychical to the physical in more refined and contemporary terms, despite the psyche being something that cannot be objectified:

“On the other hand, the psyche, in contrast to all objects, rather wants to mean that to which something is an object, but which itself is not an object: either it is not at all, or at least not in the same sense as nature or that which belong to nature is an object for it. The psychic means, in other words and in one word, the subjective, pure as this” (Natorp 1912a, 8).

Thus far, Natorp has explained what a subjective foundation must not be in accordance with the critical method. He has not explained, however, how to analyse the subjective in its non-objectifiable aspect. The second part of the essay deals with this problem from a positive perspective.

§1.2. The Object and Method of Philosophical Psychology

We have seen that Natorp's five arguments prove the inadequacy of logical psychologism as a theory of knowledge. By not limiting himself to a merely negative exposition, which only argues in favour of an anti-psychologistic epistemology (Natorp 1981, 252), Natorp must still explain how the legality of knowledge, the *space of reasons* that constitutes its objective validity, can be the object of a subjective foundation. Natorp explains his proposal in two steps. First, Natorp shows that logic can construct an objective foundation of knowledge that is independent of every empirical science, if and only if logic is understood as a critical epistemology (Natorp 1981, §§4-6). Here, Natorp not only follows Cohen's transcendental method but also aims to define it in such a way that the transcendental method can make room for a psychology. Thus Natorp adopts a *genetic* perspective. Second, he shows that this very model makes it possible to construct a subjective foundation. In this respect, we will see that Natorp amplifies not so much the perspective as the horizon of critical epistemology, in order to incorporate into the critical analysis a new aspect of knowledge: the lived experience of objectively valid contents of thought. Certainly, the idea of knowledge as lived experience took hold in the years immediately following the publication of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, with the philosophical work of Goethe, Schiller, and mainly Novalis.⁴³ But Natorp develops a much narrower interpretation of this concept, inasmuch as he focusses attention upon the way in which we lived experience objectivity or, in other words, in the way in which we recognize, as concrete subjects, the validity of knowledge. Thus Natorp makes use of a psychological language—especially the language of the *Entwicklungsgeschichte* of his time—that respects the premises of the critical method. The incorporation of this vocabulary will prove to be crucial for the final development of philosophical psychology, as we will see in the next chapter.

⁴³ In this respect, see (Gadamer 2010, 61–75).

§1.2.1. Towards a Genetic Definition of the Transcendental Method

Natorp begins the analysis of knowledge following Cohen's critical epistemology, but he gives it a peculiarly genetic emphasis. Unlike psychologism, critical epistemology holds that knowledge is objectively valid when it *is*: "independent from the subjectivity of the cognitive agent" (Natorp 1981, 252). The knowing subject confronts an object, so to speak, when she recognizes the autonomy of the object, that is, when she recognizes the object as something that "opposes to herself" (Natorp 1981, 253). Certainly, recognition of something as external is not an adequate criterion to judge whether our perception is objectively valid or not, for: "the being in itself of the object is a riddle and hence it cannot serve as the solution to the present riddle" (Natorp 1981, 253). But we do not need to look far, Natorp claims, to understand the epistemic meaning of the "independence from the subject" of objective knowledge: both natural science and the natural attitude with which we experience the world teach us that something appears as an object, as something that *is* in a certain way, when we abstract the subjective representations that may appear in perception. This abstraction is not an intellectual effort to abandon our own subjectivity. Rather, Natorp defines it as the immediate and pre-reflexive act in virtue of which an object: "seems to be present from the very beginning" (Natorp 1981, 254). In this sense, abstraction consists in the process of posing something as being different from the subject. In its immediacy, this act of abstraction poses object and subject simultaneously as the two faces of one and the same relation. The next step is to explain how this process of abstraction not only makes it possible to recognize something as being different from the subject, as a *Gegen-stand*, but also as something objectively valid, something that necessarily is the way it is, namely, as an *Objekt*. How does the process of abstraction continue? How does the abstraction become a *valid* abstraction?

Negatively speaking, Natorp claims that a valid abstraction consists in the epistemic process of separating a feature from other features. He explains this process in both logical and psychological terms. From the viewpoint of logic, a valid abstraction means to *extract* a relevant feature over others. From the viewpoint of psychology, it means to *disregard* many features except for the relevant feature. Positively speaking, Natorp argues that the process of abstraction means to judge in accordance with reason: "When I focus my attention on one particular thing, I automatically exclude from the present examination whatever has no part in the *unity* of this consideration" (Natorp 1981, 254).

My emphasis). He also explains this from the perspective of logic and psychology. Psychologically speaking, this means to “focus the attention”. Logically speaking, this means to unify the attention in view of a perspective that brings different subjective representations into law-like connection. The unity of this context allows us to distinguish between contents concerning their validity, hence to subsume and order them in this nexus of law-like connection. Thus a valid abstraction consists in the epistemic act of *reducing to law*, which in its turn consists in the act of determining a given manifold or appearance, its “mode of being”, according to the legal connections that govern in a given context. If a given manifold *is* such-and-such, that is, if we can answer questions such as “why?”, “what?”, “when?”, “where?”, “what for?”, “in relation to?”, and so on, then we can justifiably say that what we perceive as something that happens here and now is an object, not merely the fiction or illusion of a personal opinion or belief.

In his description of knowledge as the epistemic act of the “reduction to law” Natorp not only reduces the objectivity of knowledge to the a priori legality of thinking, but he also aims to show the epistemic place of the subject of knowledge. Both the object and the subject are defined as “moments” of the process of knowledge. Subjectivity, in particular, is the moment that must be abstracted to construct the object. In this sense, Natorp defines subjectivity as lived experience because it is the content that maintains an: “immediate relation to the I” (Natorp 1981, 256). Lived experience defines the appearance as such of the phenomenon:

“The appearance is multiform and changing precisely for the multiple and changing states of subjects. The ultimate immediate appearance, however, the *phenomenon of ultimate authority*, is nothing other than what is given on each occasion to a determined subject in a determined situation.” (Natorp 1981, 256).

The reduction to law is, therefore, an objectifying process composed of two levels. The first is the abstraction of the appearance as such, in order to bring its “multiform and changing” contents into the form of a determinable manifold, namely, the phenomenon. In this respect, it is correct to say that the appearance as such or lived experience never appears as a *Gegen-stand* because it is the mere and pure act of experiencing (*erleben*) the appearance (Natorp 1981, 257). The subjective moment of the process of knowledge, therefore, defines the hypothetical but concrete “phenomenon of ultimate instance”, that

which fades away in every objectivation. The second level, on the other hand, abstracts the phenomenon according to a law. In this way, it consists in the transformation of the determinable manifold into an object. Thus Natorp redefines subject and object as the two structural moments or directions of the reduction to law.

Based on this model, Natorp explains that the traditional dualism of subject and object is not suitable to describe the legality of knowledge in epistemological terms. Whether we explain knowledge subjectively as the result of psychophysical events, or objectively as the impingement of sensible data coming from a ready-made object, we do not explain why knowledge is valid in the way it is for rational agents. Rather, the dualism of subject and object reduces knowledge to a mere imitative mediation between two metaphysical poles. On the contrary, the *monism of experience* reveals that the legality that gives validity to our thoughts is an immanent rational process of thinking, the moments of which always remain correlative to each other in every stage of the process: “Just as at this first level the opposition of subjective and objective rests on a relationship of particular and universal, this same relationship of particular and universal, this same relationship also controls every further objectification” (Natorp 1981, 257). Thus Natorp aims to show that the legality of knowledge is a more original relation than that of the subjective and the objective. These two are not the immutable poles of the relation we call ‘knowledge’. Rather, they are the virtual or hypothetical moments of the original relation that is the rational legality, whose structural form Natorp defines as the relation of the particular and the general (Natorp 1981, 258).

The concepts of the particular and the general have played a significant role in the metaphysical and epistemological debate about knowledge. However, Natorp emphasizes that the question of the relation they define has been completely overlooked. Thus positivism, which Natorp characterizes as the “consistent realization of medieval nominalism”, sets the particular as the fundament of truth and reality: “the universal has significance in knowledge only in as far as it signifies the particular whose universal it is; it borrows all the validity which it can claim in knowledge from the particular. In itself it has no original claim to validity” (Natorp 1981, 259). On the other hand, subjective idealism establishes the general as the fundament of truth and reality: “the particular has significance in knowledge because of the universal whose particular it is; it borrows all the validity which it can claim in knowledge from the universal. In itself it has no original

claim to validity” (Natorp 1981, 259). Nevertheless, two clarifications stipulated by Kant enable us to understand the true meaning of these concepts. First, Kant teaches that the particular and the general are not properties of an entity. Rather, such as they are employed in natural science, these concepts define the idea of the law and its application: “As Kant concisely summed up the basic result of modern science since Galileo, things have dissolved into mere ‘relationships’, although among these there are some which are ‘independent and constant’ and which from now on must represent things for us. From now on it is primarily and essentially a matter of the universality of *relation* (which gives the concept of law).” (Natorp 1981, 258). Second, the concepts of the particular and the general define epistemic or ideal representations in order to characterize stages or levels of determination. The particular, Natorp says, defines any “absolutely particular subjective representation” in comparison with the general, which defines: “that which has somehow already been raised to universal and so objective significance” (Natorp 1981, 258–59). These two clarifications show that knowledge is based neither in the particular nor in the general but in the law-like relation they construct: “What is the particular, if it is not the particular instance of the universal? The particular is no more for itself, apart from and in addition to the universal (*choris para ta katholou*) than the universal is for itself, in addition to and apart from the particular (*choris para ta kath’hekasta*)” (Natorp 1981, 260). In themselves, the particular and the general are formal moments generated by the very legality of knowledge to fulfill the endless task of determination. Thus the relation as such defines the form of knowledge. This form, which has been defined as the idea of legality, consists in the rational process of positing and determining every possible content of thought in view of the relation of the particular and the general. The object of knowledge, therefore, is neither the particular in itself nor the general in itself. Rather, it is a specific fixed point in the endless chain of relations that is constructed by the law-like progress of knowledge. Thus every object of knowledge contains in itself the reflex of this process, every object of knowledge can be described whether in subjective or objective relation, inasmuch as one or the other aspect is taken into consideration.

In this way, Natorp concludes his demonstration of the independence of logic from every empirical science: “The demand for the autonomy of knowledge has been fulfilled, for grounding occurs through knowledge’s own law.” (Natorp 1981, 264). Knowledge is grounded in the form of legality, the structural moments of which are the particular and the general. Furthermore, Natorp proves that these moments mutate in accordance with

the progression of knowledge. In later texts, Natorp develops this genetic perspective with the transcendental deduction of the a priori logical functions or categories that are responsible for the unfolding of the principle of legality. Finally, Natorp not only places scientific knowledge under this conceptualist model but also every relation to the world that involves cognitive performance: “the basic scientific unities attempt to fulfill in a more developed and durable way the same tasks which language fulfills sufficiently for the immediate purposes of practical life” (Natorp 1981, 263).⁴⁴

§ 1.2.2. The Transcendental Method and Lived Experience

Natorp’s definition of logic makes clear the primacy and autonomy of logic, that is, of the critical epistemology. Logic is not a natural science because it studies the conditions of scientific validity as such. In other words, logic is not an empirical science because it inquires into the conditions that make knowledge possible, that is, the conditions that turn our cognition into scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, the genetic definition that Natorp develops in this essay also aims to show the possibility and necessity of a psychological analysis of knowledge according to the transcendental method. This is the main topic of the last sections of the essay.

In Natorp’s model, critical epistemology defines the a priori legality of knowledge as the rational relation of the particular and the general. Furthermore, Natorp characterizes the particular as the pole of the subjective and the general as the pole of the objective and claims that both poles are structural and correlative moments of the process of knowledge. According to this model, logic consists in analysis of the conditions of validity from the viewpoint of the general. A philosophical psychology, therefore, must consist in analysis

⁴⁴ In this respect, it is possible to claim that Natorp’s transcendental philosophy is a precedent of contemporary conceptualism. Briefly, conceptualism is the epistemological position according to which every content of experience has a conceptual nature. This thesis is particularly controversial in regard to the question of the content of perception. The most famous version of perceptual conceptualism is that of John McDowell, who develops this thesis from a Kantian perspective. From Natorp’s viewpoint, the conceptualist argument can be defined as follows. Since the process of objectivation depends upon a priori logical functions of determination, it is not possible to claim that there is a kind of content that can be non-conceptual. As a content of experience, perception must be capable of offering a determination of our surroundings that is at least formally objective, regardless of whether this content ends up being false or true. If the content is false, then we say that a certain perception was a mistake or an illusion. But if the content is true, then we say that the content of perception is effectively objective. And in order to have objective content, it is necessary to perform a logical act of synthesis, the a priori content of which is a pure concept or category. In Chapter 3 I will explain how philosophical psychology offers a transcendental argument to support the conceptualism of perception. In this respect, see (Dewalque 2010; McDowell 1996).

of the validity of knowledge from the viewpoint of the particular. Thus a first formal definition of a philosophical psychology presents it as the *reverse* or *other side* of logic.

In order to advance a preliminary clarification of this project, Natorp develops a definition of the object and the method of this philosophical psychology. First, concerning the object, Natorp has already claimed that knowledge is only possible in view of the general, the application of which is performed through conceptual operations of thinking:

“every answer which can ever be given to the question what is the here and now appearing is only possible in universal expressions, universal determinations of quality and quantity, universally expressed relations to other already known objects” (Natorp 1981, 261).

It is not possible, therefore, to define the particular without making use of concepts. For this reason, the moment of the particular as such, which Natorp identifies with the subjective, cannot be known by us, without distorting its own meaning. According to the levels of objectivation previously defined, the particular or subjective corresponds to the first level of objectivation: it is the undetermined content, the manifold that, once it becomes the target of the first objectivation, will become the phenomenon. As such, the subjective can only be defined by the idea of the *appearing as such*, which is so immediate and spontaneous that it vanishes as soon as it is brought into the unity of the general. In this respect, contemporary research emphasizes that the Natorpian definition of subjectivity consists in the recognition of this impossibility.⁴⁵ However, Natorp also offers a positive definition of subjectivity, which respects the basic premise of its unobjectifiable character: “That this concept of subjectivity is the only tenable one should be proven in more detail in another place” (Natorp 1981, 256). This ‘other place’, which explains the meaning of subjectivity in detail, is precisely the philosophical psychology. Now, Natorp explains his proposal as follows:

“But what does “given” mean here? Known? Perceived? That would again include the determination which one must admit is only possible through concepts. The concreteness of the appearance is only “given” in the act as a *determinable X which*

⁴⁵ In this respect, see (Zahavi 2003; Luft 2010; Kern 1964).

is now to be determined, like an Aristotelian potential being. It is given only in the sense of an appointed task, not as a datum of knowledge through which other unknowns could be determined” (Natorp 1981, 262).

Whilst the appearing as such cannot be objectified without losing its own subjective character, it appears as something given which does not simply remain out of the conceptual space of thinking. The “concreteness” of the given consists in being given as an “x”, namely, as something undetermined but determinable. The appearing as such, therefore, is the motive for the task of determination. The givenness (*Gegebene*) is the givenness of a task (*Aufgegebene*), as Natorp claimed a few years later (Natorp 1910b, 386; 1910c, 7). In this respect, Natorp seems to rescue one of Cohen’s main definitions of the subjective capacity of perception. In the introduction to the second edition, particularly in the paragraph on Plato’s contribution to the history of critical idealism, Cohen defines perception as the *motive* (*Veranlassung*) of thinking (Cohen 1885, 12). Perception, Cohen explains, is not the *cause* of thinking but that which *gives rise* to the epistemic act of thinking. Natorp aims to go deeper into this definition in order to show how the conceptual takes place from the viewpoint of the subjective. Thus perception does not give us a “datum” of knowledge but the task of bringing what appears—the manifold—under the unity of the law, in order to turn it into an object. The appearing as such is not the event of something completely undetermined. Rather, it is the very lived experience of the task of determination. This lived experience of the task, therefore, is the subjective motivation to fulfill the a priori demand of determination. As such, Natorp conceives of the lived experience of the task as a subjective condition with which to understand or recognize the manifold as something determinable, rather than as a mere chaotic illusion. In its subjective character, the lived experience of the task coincides with the epistemic capacity of perception. For this reason, Natorp can further explain why perception is the motive of the conceptual. Since the perceptual lived experience of the task of determination operates as the subjective motivation for recognition of the demand for objective determination, perception plays an epistemic role in the construction of the conceptual determinability of the manifold, prior to the determination as such, the meaning of which is to be the objective content of the object of experience.

Thus Natorp’s definition of the appearing as such as the lived experience of the task of determination does not exceed the conceptualist framework of critical epistemology, but

it certainly amplifies it. By attending to the lived experience of the manifold, Natorp aims to define the subjective condition of the act of objectivation, so to speak. In terms of the a priori structure of the principle of knowledge, namely, the legality, the subjective condition consists in the “purposiveness” without concept between the particular and the general, as Kant explains in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. But the “without concept”, as I have explained, is not a mere indetermination. Rather, it is the subjective possibility of any act of conceptualization, that is, the recognition by the knowing subject of the determinability of the manifold. The first level of objectivation, namely, the construction of the determinable manifold or phenomenon, becomes possible only if the manifold contains the *potentiality* of determination. For this reason, as Natorp claims in the aforementioned passage, the lived experience of the task is: “like an Aristotelian potential being”. Philosophical psychology, therefore, is the systematic explanation of the subjective construction of potential determinations. Precisely in this sense, psychology becomes the “other face” of logic: while logic explains the unity of the manifold, psychology explains the manifold of the unity, that is, the subjective awareness of potential determinations. It is a philosophical, not empirical, psychology of the lived experience of the conceptual.

However, if we do not have immediate and pure access to the subjective, how should this philosophical psychology proceed? How does philosophical psychology describe or explain the lived experience of conceptualization? This is the second preliminary clarification Natorp sets out and it concerns the problem of the method. In principle, critical epistemology defines thinking as the epistemic act of objectivation. For this reason, there is nothing we can think of that is not already the result of this objectifying act. Whilst this premise constitutes the very possibility of the logical side of critical epistemology, one might think that it constitutes a limitation for philosophical psychology, as in the case of the object of psychology. But Natorp claims that the psychological analysis must be based on analyses of logic, since the subjective is a pole or moment of the process of knowledge, or the lived experience of the conceptual:

“The *constructive* objectifying achievement of knowledge always comes first; from it we *reconstruct* as far as possible the *level* of original subjectivity which could never be reached by knowledge apart from this reconstruction which proceeds from the already completed objective construction (Natorp 1981, 263).

Psychology works as a reverse logic, since it reconstructs the subjective from the objective. Against this methodological definition, some philosophers emphasize that the reconstruction would result in an new objectivation of the appearing as such, hence, it would not overcome the challenge posed by Natorp himself.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Natorp anticipates this objection and claims that it does not contradict the plan of a critical psychology.⁴⁷ In fact, these critiques presuppose that the philosophical psychology should reconstruct subjectivity as such, that is, that which appears when the knowing subject perceives the manifold for the first time. However, they do not recognize that philosophical psychology does not need to deal with this “fiction”, as Natorp defines it. For the appearing as such is not an original thing that comes before any position of thinking. Rather, it is also a position of thinking, namely, the position of the lived experience of the conceptual. Thus philosophical psychology reconstructs the subjective as a position, specifically, as the position of the particular in relation to the general. And, as logic is the explanation of the objective conditions of the validity of knowledge, then psychology must explain the subjective conditions that allow us to experience this objective validity. In other words, philosophical psychology explains the epistemic conditions that make it possible to focus my attention, in order to recognize in the chaotic manifold a determinable content of thinking.

Finally, one last relevant contribution of the 1887 essay is its explanation of the *necessity* of philosophical psychology for critical epistemology. Thus far, we have seen how Natorp adapts the objective foundation of knowledge to make room for a subjective foundation. But why is a subjective foundation necessary? It is possible to distinguish two reasons. The first is topological because it concerns the place of psychology in the system of critical epistemology. As I have explained, Natorp defines knowledge as the infinite task of objectivation. This is grounded by the intrinsic normativity of knowledge, or as Natorp calls it, its legality. The a priori structure of the legality, its *form*, is the relation between the particular and the general. As we have seen, logic is an objective foundation because

⁴⁶ In this respect, see (Heidegger 2007, 130ss; 1999, 100ss).

⁴⁷ “In this reconstruction we, so to speak, objectify subjectivity as such. This objectification of subjectivity deserves to be called a *constructed fiction* much more than does that construction of which ‘objects’ rest, which grounds reality and overcomes all fiction. [...] Now objectivity shows itself so impossible to overcome that it appears much more difficult to salvage a proper *non-fictionous* significance for subjectivity” (Natorp 1981, 263. My emphasis).

it explains the a priori conditions that make possible the infinite overcoming of the subjective through the conceptual operations of thinking. From the viewpoint of philosophical psychology, the overcoming of the subjective is explained as the lived experience of the conceptual. In this respect, critical epistemology does not describe the subjective from the viewpoint of the objective, as something that must be overcome in view of the unity of the concept. Rather, it describes the subjective as the infinite task of producing the determinable, that potential determination that makes possible the actualization of the logical functions of determination. In this sense, philosophical psychology is necessary because it constructs the counterpart of logic, namely, the subjective process through which the general may take place in the particular. Thus Natorp explains the place of psychology in the system of critical idealism in a radically different way from Cohen's own version of psychology.⁴⁸

The second reason for the necessity of the psychological analysis is *functional* and it reveals the true contribution of philosophical psychology to the research programme inaugurated by Cohen. The fact that psychology has a place in the system does not explain its significance yet all we know is that psychology seems to be a *subjective* logic. In fact, traditionally, a subjective logic deals with the problem of knowledge from the viewpoint of the concrete subject. In this sense, it is possible to think that critical epistemology does not exclude the question about the empirical subject, hence it is not an idealism without subject, as I have mentioned. But, again, why is the concrete subject relevant to critical epistemology? Why is it necessary for a research programme dealing with the conditions of the validity of knowledge to consider the concrete subject?

Despite all I have said so far, it goes without saying that Natorp does not understand the problem of the concrete subject as an ontological problem. Philosophical psychology does not explain *who* the concrete subject is. Nor does it explain *what* the psychophysical mechanisms of the transcendental subject are. Owing to the idealist framework of critical epistemology, the concrete subject becomes an epistemic function, more precisely, a necessary moment of the legality of thinking. Thus, if logic explains the normative conditions of propositional knowledge, to use contemporary terms, psychology aims to

⁴⁸ In this respect, see (Cohen 1914, 17; 1912, 3:432) Also, see (Zeidler 2018, 45–66; Moynahan 2018; Marx 1964; Schmidt 1976; Pringe 2017).

explain the subjective force of this normativity. In this sense, Natorp defines psychological analysis in a way that is original and contemporary. Why is knowledge valid as it is? Natorp not only thinks that it is necessary to answer the question with the objective analysis of logic. It is also necessary to explain how we *adhere* and *recognize* the validity of objective knowledge. Both paths are distinguishable, insofar as the former deals with the a priori logical functions of knowledge, while the latter must deal with the a priori structure of the recognition of validity. Whilst the 1887 essay does not probe the contents of philosophical psychology, the way in which it delineates its programme lays the foundation for coming developments in the psychological project.

§2. The Construction of Philosophical Psychology (1888-1912): An Overview

The chronology of Natorp's texts on psychology is interesting in itself. They not only offer fruitful information about the development of neo-Kantianism but also a clear image of the academic development of philosophy and psychology at the turn of the 20th century. Natorp wrote these texts between 1887 and 1913. During these 26 years, Natorp maintained the monography of 1887 as the systematic base for psychology. Thus, on the one hand, the general psychology consists in a radical critique of psychologism, which maintains the arguments we considered in the first chapter and, particularly, enlarges the argument which I call the *historical argument*. On the other, Natorp also seeks to further clarify the content and function of a philosophical psychology according to the critical method. These aspects enable us to classify the texts into two groups. One is composed of critical reviews of contemporary texts that deal with philosophy and psychologism. Despite the heterogeneity of topics and authors, Natorp usually denounced psychologism as a misinterpretation of the philosophical meaning of subjectivity. The most exemplary texts of this group are the reviews of Johannes Volkelt, Theodor Lipps, and Edmund Husserl.⁴⁹ The other group is composed of the texts in which Natorp aimed to explain the programme and content of his philosophical psychology (Natorp 1888b; 1901b; 1910a; 1912a; 1913). In particular, these texts are: one academic lesson on critical psychology, one academic lesson on pedagogical psychology, two treatises on general psychology,

⁴⁹ Most of the reviews that Natorp wrote appeared in reports on knowledge theory in the journal *Archiv für systematische Philosophie* (Natorp 1897b; 1897c; 1897a; 1900b; 1900a; 1901a). Furthermore, Natorp wrote particular reviews on Volkelt, Siebeck, Lipps, and Husserl (Natorp 1893; 1885a; 1885b; 1901c; 1917).

and an essay on the difference between philosophy and psychology. Also, noteworthy on their own are the reflections on subjectivity that belong to Natorp's so-called 'late philosophy' (Natorp 2004a; 1980). Whilst these works distance themselves from the model of the critique of knowledge, Natorp explicitly recognizes that they were possible on the ground of his General Psychology (Natorp 1923).

Although his critical reviews were well-received by the German academic community, the treatises on general psychology received no more than a few comments. The second treatise Natorp published in 1912 was meant as a restitution of this project. However, like the first version of the *Einleitung*, the second version received only a few reviews and comments.⁵⁰ There were several reasons why this project was overlooked. Certainly, historical reasons, such as the emergence of phenomenology, the debates on philosophy of life, the development of empirical psychology in England and the US, and the strictly logical image of the Marburg School, made Natorp's psychology an unpopular candidate to address the problem of subjectivity. And even today we can see how powerful the influence of these branches was; it is almost impossible to find in contemporary companions and histories of philosophy any mention of neo-Kantian psychology.⁵¹ But above all the uncertainty about the proper content and function of Natorp's psychology contributed to its unfruitful reception in the academic environment. While the *negative* contribution of the general psychology was clear, and shared by most transcendental philosophers of the time, the positive contribution was diminished for two obvious reasons.

§2.1. The Pre-investigation Problem

The first reason is what I call the 'incompleteness problem'. Neither of the two treatises on philosophical psychology are, properly speaking, a philosophical psychology. Both in

⁵⁰ The reviews of Natorp's *Introduction* of 1888 are (Ziegler 1889; Gvln 1890; Wreschner 1893). The reviews of Natorp's *General Psychology* of 1912 are (Paulsen 1913; Frischeisen-Köhler 1913; Mason 1913; Seidler 1916; Reinach 1914). Other relevant public contexts of discussion consisted of books on psychology and philosophy and academic seminars. Books that mention Natorp's psychology include (Binswanger 1922; Husserl 1975; Heidegger 1999; 2007). Husserl and Natorp held seminars in which the critical psychology was discussed. In this respect, see Natorp's response to objections, published in Chapter 9 of his *General Psychology* (Natorp 1912a, 214–29). Husserl's seminars are mentioned in (Kern 1964; Luft 2010). In general, most of the reviews and remarks on Natorp's psychology emphasize that the psychology seems to be a *logic* of psychology, which is difficult to evaluate for it is incomplete.

⁵¹ The only recent exception is Alan Kim's article on Natorp's psychology for a companion to the philosophy of mind in the 19th century (A. Kim 2018).

the 1888 version and the 1912 version of the *General Psychology*, Natorp presents what he calls ‘pre-investigations’ for the development of a programme of philosophical psychology. As Natorp explains, the pre-investigation is concerned with the definition of the object and the method of a philosophical psychology. The 1888 edition is quite explicit in this regard since it develops the investigation into two sections, each dedicated to one of the pre-questions of psychology. The 1912 edition also maintains these pre-questions, while adding new remarks on the history of psychology, the dispositions of psychology and, finally, a whole new section with critiques of other contemporary approaches. The main purpose of these treatises is to afford a definition of consciousness as the object of psychology and reconstruction as the method for the philosophical psychology that fits or accommodates the transcendental logic of the critique of knowledge. The strategy to define the object consists in distinguishing between three possible meanings of consciousness: the I, the *conscienciality* (*Bewusstheit*), and content. The strategy used to define the method, as we have seen, is to invert the process of objective construction by means of a reconstruction of the lived experiences involved in the process of objectivation. The problem with these definitions is that they seem more logical than psychological. From a letter to Husserl of Friday 22 September 1922, we know that Natorp aimed to continue the project of a general psychology. However, from this letter it is not possible to deduce that Natorp still understood the project as he envisioned it from 1887 to 1912.⁵²

§2.2. *The Logical-Ground Problem*

This leads us to the second reason for the unfruitful reception of neo-Kantian psychology, which I call the ‘logical-character’ problem. The Natorp-Husserl correspondence illustrates exceptionally well the meaning of this problem. From 1897 to 1924, Husserl

⁵² In the letter, Natorp says he is working on the second volume of the *General Psychology*. However, as he explains, the task seems to overcome both his physical and intellectual capacities: “My big work is still not as advanced as I thought. I have now decided - with a heavy heart - not to hold the lecture already announced for the winter semester, in order to concentrate completely on the book. It has to be finished, and the years forbid me to postpone it any longer. By the way, I am exceptionally well and quite ready to work. Above all, this work demands freshness and freedom. I must rescind then the academic activity, although it is so worthy for me. This is the only way I can hope to start developing the *General Psychology*, as I conceived it. By the way, I consider it a special [favor] of fortune that the part of the task which is the most difficult for me, and for which I find myself, after internal preparation and preliminary studies, least prepared, has been taken by your stronger shoulders, not quite in the same way of course, but in a closely related sense, and it will be better promoted, in a richer way than I ever could.” In this respect, see (Gigliotti 2005a) interprets this passage as a proof of Husserl’s influence on Natorp’s late conception of philosophical psychology. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I defend a different interpretation.

and Natorp exchanged more than 62 letters. In these documents, Husserl's interest in the Marburgian philosopher is expressed in many, even contradictory, ways. Let us consider the following examples. The first letter Husserl sent to Natorp regarding the project of a critical psychology is from 1897. Here, Husserl wrote: "But considerable differences remain. Consciousness – act – content – object (possible and real): these are the keywords. I still want to reflect about it a bit longer, though. I also have consulted and read your beautiful *Introduction*, and I have thought: that is the same to me. How I envy you for the resolution of your viewpoint, the certainty of your convictions. How gladly would I follow you and your Kant, if only I could."⁵³ (Husserl 1994, V:48). Eleven years later, however, Husserl no longer identifies himself with Natorp's insights: "Let me also add that my -in any way psychological- problems do not coincide with those of the Marburg circle. And my *transcendental* psychological method (not psychologically - neither genetically nor descriptively psychological) is, according to the goal and the essence, different from the transcendental *logical* Method in your sense."⁵⁴ (Husserl 1994, V:103). In a letter of 1909, Husserl expresses this again in the following terms: "but phenomenology in no way requires a *transcendental philosophy* which comes before it, whereas your psychology must follow after the transcendental philosophy: as you yourself have remarked" (Husserl 1994, V:111. My emphasis). In a 1918 letter to Heidegger, Husserl defines Natorp's psychology as: "a very vague premonition of a problematic stratum of my phenomenology, which is philosophically *veiled by constructions*" (Husserl 1994, V:133–35. My emphasis). Later, in a letter to Natorp dated February 1 1922, Husserl defined the breaking point between them in more precise terms: "your conceptual way of thinking, your *logico-theoretical way* of objectifying is **foreign** to me. However, while others took from you that which is relatively external to you, I have at all times heard you and already seen you, you yourself" (Husserl 1994, V:148. My emphasis). Finally, in a letter to Karl Bühler from 1927, Husserl flatly denies the fruitfulness of neo-Kantian philosophy (i.e. Natorp's philosophy of psychology) for empirical psychology: "The transcendental philosophy of neo-Kantianism, however,

⁵³ "Doch es bleiben erhebliche Differenzen. Bewußtsein – Act – Inhalt – Gegenstand (möglicher – wirklicher): dies die Schlagwörter. Doch ich wills noch mehrfach überlegen. Ich habe mir auch Ihre schöne *Einleitung* zur Hand genommen, sie gelesen und überdacht: da geht mir's ähnlich. Wie beneide ich Sie um die Festigkeit Ihres Standpunktes, die Sicherheit Ihrer Überzeugungen, wie gerne würde ich Ihnen und Ihrem Kant folgen, wenn ich es nur vermöchte".

⁵⁴ "Ich bemerke noch, dass meine –in keiner Weise psychologischen— Probleme sich nicht decken mit denen des Marburger Kreises. Und meine *transcendentalpsychologische* Methode (nicht psychologisch – weder genetisch noch descriptiv psychologisch) ist nach Ziel u Wesen eine andere als die *transcendental logische* in Ihrem Sinn."

could not offer much help, either methodologically or objectively, to the scientific research of psychologists. In its a priori-constructivist method, *distanced from intuition*, the highly eloquent but never concrete researched subjectivity remained in empty abstraction. The thought of the possibility of a concrete systematic and yet a-priori analysis and description of the essence of subjectivity, its structures of consciousness, the a-priori correlations between intentionality as constitutive sense-giving and constituted sense, that is, true being, was completely remote from neo-Kantianism (even in the form of the philosophy of values), as well as from the previous philosophy."⁵⁵ (Husserl 1994, V:135. My emphasis).

From this brief survey of the Husserl-Natorp correspondence, we can observe how Husserl's opinion of Natorp's critical research radically changed from 1908 onwards. While early exchanges were full of detailed and critical judgments about their ideas, imbedded in close collaboration regarding their papers and epistemological queries, in later letters Husserl adopted a chatty, personal tone, mainly to ask about institutional affairs. Thus, while Husserl's personal impression of his colleague adopted a friendly and at a certain point positive tone, his philosophical interest in neo-Kantian philosophy became hesitant and even vague over time.⁵⁶ It is not difficult to see that the reason Husserl had to distance himself from Natorp is the logical ground of his critical psychology. According to Husserl, the 'logical method' Natorp employs fills his psychology with theoretical "constructions" that distance his analysis "from intuition", which is the main field for any psychological account of knowledge. Needless to say, the reviewers of Natorp's texts on psychology had the same impression, encountering trouble with deciphering the exact content and function of psychology. In particular, the problem of the logical character of the general psychology appears in all its clarity in the main definition of lived experiences as "consciousness".

⁵⁵ „Die Transzendentalphilosophie des Neukantianismus konnte der erfahrungswissenschaftlichen Forschung des Psychologen freilich wenig Hilfe bieten, weder methodisch noch sachlich. In seiner anschauungsfernen konstruktiv-apriorischen Methode blieb die vielberedete, aber nie konkret untersuchte Subjektivität in leerer Abstraktheit. Der Gedanke an die Möglichkeit einer systematischen konkreten und dabei doch apriorischen Wesensanalyse und -deskription der Subjektivität, ihrer Bewusstseinsstrukturen, der apriorischen Korrelationen zwischen Intentionalität als konstitutiver Sinngebung und konstituierten Sinn bzw. wahren Sein lag dem Neukantianismus (auch in der Form der Wertphilosophie) sowie überhaupt der bisherigen Philosophie völlig fern.“

⁵⁶ Nevertheless, despite his growing distance from Natorp, Husserl dealt with his psychology throughout his life, as these letters prove, along with the unpublished seminars he dedicated to Natorpian psychology, first in the winter term of 1904/05 and in the winter term of 1921-22. In this respect, see (Kern 1964; Luft 2010; Gigliotti 2005a).

In the 1887 essay, as we have seen, Natorp claims that psychology must analyse the act of objectivation from the viewpoint of the particular, which implies the field of the lived experiences involved in the process of objectivation. In the treatise of 1888 and later in its second edition of 1912, Natorp clarifies this psychological characterization of knowledge using the concept of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*). Natorp employs the concept in a controversial way, to distinguish between what he sees as three possible interpretations of the object of psychology. Since the 18th century, Natorp claims, consciousness has been understood in a threefold way, as the idea of the I, the act of consciousness, and the relation between a subject and an object or *conscienciality* (*Bewusstheit*). Natorp's main argument against these interpretations of the concept is that they all force us to develop philosophical psychology from a dualistic viewpoint. Whilst dualism may work for a scientific approach, it does not for a philosophical psychology concerned with the epistemic function of "the subjective" direction of objective knowledge. At the beginning of the *General Psychology*, Natorp claims that a psychology in accordance with the transcendental method aims to define the logos of the psyche. The idea of the I, as well as the idea of consciousness as an act, by contrast, leads us to a metaphysical investigation of the mind. Thus, in order to avoid the misconceptions of dualism, Natorp proposes to define consciousness as the general structure of the subjective direction of knowledge. In this sense, Natorp claims that consciousness must be understood in the same way as the fact of science is understood, namely, as a content of knowledge.

It is not difficult to see two contributions Natorp's definition of consciousness makes. The first is negative because it consists in the critique of any empirical approach to the problem of consciousness. In this sense, Natorp's psychology resembles, and in a certain sense, enlarges the well-known critique of rational psychology in Kant's *Paralogisms* in *KrV*. The second contribution is positive because the definition of consciousness as content should lay the foundation for the systematic definition of knowledge from the viewpoint of philosophical psychology. But this is exactly what is insufficiently clear in the unfinished project of the general psychology. First, it is not clear in what sense consciousness as a lived experience sheds light on the transcendental foundation of knowledge. Second, it is not clear what the specific contents of the subjective direction of knowledge are. If we do not clarify the true meaning of this definition, then Natorp's

psychology will seem to oscillate between negative remarks on empirical approaches and logical definitions of the process of objectivation, as it seemed to his contemporaries. Contrary to Husserl, I believe that it is necessary to pay attention to the logical method behind psychology, before concluding that it is a logical misconception of what an authentic philosophical psychology should be. Thus I will now interpret Natorp's general psychology from the viewpoint of his logic of knowledge. This strategy will enable us to successfully overcome the incompleteness problem, and to properly understand the use Natorp makes of the concept of lived experience to characterize the general content of consciousness. In particular, this interpretation will lead us to understand that consciousness defines a necessary *epistemic act* that is presupposed and not explicitly analysed by the logic of perception (§4). It is precisely the task of a philosophical psychology to systematically define this act.

§3. The Logical Foundation of Philosophical Psychology

The 1887 essay, as explained in §1.2.1, presents a genetic definition of knowledge. Genetic logic defines knowledge as the epistemic act of objectivation, the main characteristic of which is to be a logical process of *law-like* determinations. According to Natorp, we say something is 'objective' if we successfully accomplish the task of abstracting certain notes from merely subjective determinations. Natorp illustrated the task of objectivation with the example of mathematical operations or equations (*Gleichung*) (Natorp 1981, 247). Let us take the proposition $2 + 2 = 4$ as an example of what Natorp means. This mathematical operation, as we all know, is not the expression of a merely subjective relation to the world. It does not claim that I believe or guess that the result of adding two units to two other units is equal to four. Rather, the equation or proposition $2 + 2 = 4$ defines a necessary relation between two variables. Hence its content depends upon a certain law-like context of logical determinations (Natorp 1910c). In this case, the logical determinations that give sense to the proposition are expressed by mathematical symbols that define the variables and their relation. Thus the mathematical operation expresses, in the particular logical and symbolic arrangement of its parts how the operation must be re-enacted in order to obtain an objectively valid result. In the case of $2 + 2 = 4$, we read, for example, that the variables receive their meaning from the mathematical system of integers, in which each numerical symbol defines a precise unit in a scale from 0 to 9. Second, we can also read that the result (4) comes from a particular

relation between these variables, namely, addition (+). Thus mathematical operations such as this are independent of any subjective view because they define a logical procedure for constructing objective determinations in a given law-like context. Briefly, Natorp's insight in the 1887 essay is that knowledge in general, and especially in mathematical natural sciences, works as mathematical operations do. Not only are mathematical symbols but also linguistic expressions, such as concepts, judgments, and syllogisms—that is, the traditional objects of logic—determined by general logical “acts” of objectivation. In the same essay, as I explain, Natorp claims that such logical acts are grounded by a systematic network of transcendental logical functions that are determined by a highest principle, namely, the so-called: “law of legality itself” (Natorp 1981, 264. Translation modified).

Straight after the publication of this essay, Natorp began to develop his transcendental logic in several monographs and academic lessons (Natorp 1891; 1903; 1910c). The aim of these works was to deduce and explain the a priori logical functions that compose such an a priori network. Among these texts on logic, the first two chapters of his *Logical Foundations of Exact Sciences* offer a definitive systematic development of his original genetic logic of objective knowledge, the main structure of which I will explain below. Adhering to Cohen's transcendental method, Natorp defines logic as the deduction of the a priori validity conditions of the factum of science (Cohen 1885, 66–79; Natorp 1910b, 5, 11, 12). But he does not simply aim to imitate or improve Cohen's transcendental logic in some detail. As we know, Cohen had already published his own version of a transcendental logic in his 1902 *Logic of Pure Knowledge*. Using his own logic, Natorp aims for a significant change of perspective. In fact, his genetic logic enlarges the scope of the transcendental method by tackling a seemingly banned question for critical epistemology, namely, that about the genetic production of knowledge (Natorp 1910b, 11). It is well-known that since Kant's epistemological distinction between *quid facti* and *quid juri* (A84/B116), genetic analyses were associated with empirically based descriptions of cognition (*Erkennen*), mainly oriented to explain the psycho-physical emergence of psychological states of mind.⁵⁷ Against this long-standing tradition, however, Natorp believed that there is a transcendental aspect in the genetic question that must be regained for transcendental philosophy. As we have seen with the 1887 essay,

⁵⁷ In this respect, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Natorp defines knowledge production as an act of objectivation. In this respect, the validity of this act depends upon the epistemic achievement (*Leistung*) of thinking, one which cannot be confused with, or reduced to, psychological states, inasmuch as it is rather grounded on the immanent epistemic operativity of thinking. As we will see, Natorp's genetic logic is precisely the transcendental foundation of this epistemic operativity, the main task of which is to produce and secure the validity of objective knowledge. In this sense, genetic logic is not the analysis of the empirical genesis of cognition but that of the a priori logical functions necessarily involved in the making of objective validity. In this sense, therefore, Natorp's genetic logic constructs a strictly critical-epistemological approach to the genetic problem of knowledge-production (Natorp 1910b, 13–14).

Natorp's idea that a genetic account is necessary for a transcendental analysis is grounded in the definition of the factum of knowledge as an "act of objectivation". In particular, Natorp claims, it is necessary to understand two main characteristics of this objectifying act: its dynamism (Natorp 1910b, 44–51) and its systematicity (Natorp 1910b, 52–97).⁵⁸ These features can be brought to light by attending to the historicity of objective knowledge. First, the kind of knowledge we finite and rational animals produce has never been static but *dynamic*: it changes through time, therefore, it produces a history or tradition of its own. Second, despite the historical changes of knowledge production, its dynamic march is not an arbitrary series of multiple motley propositions about the world. This does not mean that the formation of knowledge cannot be conditioned by contingent and external factors. In fact, knowledge has always been influenced by sociological, historical, and even subjective conditions that may or may not promote certain lines of thought, such as ideologies, doctrines, preconceptions, and even emotionally motivated fears. Nevertheless, as science exemplifies, knowledge has the power to unfold in accordance with an immanent rational legality (*Gesetzlichkeit*).⁵⁹ Kant's most important discovery, according to Natorp, was to demonstrate that knowledge is a *rational* process (Natorp 1910b, 82–83). Now, according to Natorp, the "systematic dynamism" that characterizes knowledge must come from the very form of knowledge. For Natorp and

⁵⁸ In this respect, it has been emphasized that Natorp's logic seems to criticize the static character of Cohen's analysis of the transcendental conditions of knowledge. For a general picture of this debate, see (Holzhey 1986, 67, 114, 201; 1987; Stolzenberg 1995, 84ss).

⁵⁹ In this respect, a contemporary approach to the problem of knowledge from a similar epistemological view is that developed by Hans Jörg Rheinberger. See (Rheinberger 1997).

all neo-Kantians, the form of knowledge is the way in which thinking logically operates. Natorp defines the form with the concept of synthesis (Natorp 1910b, 44). The basic assumption of the transcendental method is that the synthetic form of thinking is a stamp that can be observed and traced back in every cognitive formation of objects, as well as in any linguistic expression –from single concepts to entire series of syllogisms (Natorp 1910b, 51). Thus, in order to reveal the a priori principles that inform or produce objective knowledge, we must ensure the *facts* of knowledge are logically generated.

Since Natorp understands objective knowledge to be an act of objectivation, he redefines Cohen's *factum* as a *fieri*. In this respect, Natorp explains, science, and every process of objectivation, no matter how objective it may or may not be, is not a fixed or static object, a given 'something' with immutable properties defined once and for all. Rather, facts of science are logically constructed results of a law-like process of *creation-of-wisdom* (*Wissenschaftens*) (Natorp 1910b, 10).⁶⁰

“Thus, it is not possible to speak of a "fact" in the sense of finished knowledge. Rather, every knowledge that closes a gap of the current wisdom will create new and greater problems. The progress, the method is everything; in the Latin word: the process. Therefore, the "fact" of science may only be understood as "fieri". What matters is what is being doing, and not what has been done. The fieri alone is the factum: every being that science seeks to "establish" must dissolve itself in the stream of becoming. Only about this becoming, and lastly only about it, may be said: it is” (Natorp 1910b, 14).⁶¹

The task of the genetic logic, Natorp explains, is to deduce the legality of this *Wissenschaftens* as such. More precisely, Natorp holds, a genetic logic in accordance with the transcendental method must deduce the last a priori conditions that make possible the production of objectively valid determinations, such as the propositions of science. By

⁶⁰ A similar interpretation of knowledge as a *fieri* may be found in Daston and Galison's historical reconstruction of the concept of objectivity in the 19th century. In this respect, see (Daston and Galison 2010).

⁶¹ “So kann von keinem "Faktum" mehr im Sinne fertigen Wissens die Rede sein; jede Erkenntnis vielmehr, die eine Lücke des bisherigen Wissens schließt, wird neue, größere Probleme hervortreiben. [...] Der Fortgang, die Methode ist alles; im lateinischen Wort: der Prozeß. Also darf das "Faktum" der Wissenschaft nur als "Fieri" verstanden werden. Auf das, was getan wird, nicht was getan ist, kommt es an. Das Fieri allein ist das Faktum: alles Sein, das die Wissenschaft "festzustellen" sucht, muß sich in den Strom des Werdens wieder lösen. Von diesem Werden aber, zuletzt nur von ihm, darf gesagt werden: es ist.”

looking at the *fieri*, therefore, the transcendental method does not fall into a sort of relativism, for its aim is still to deduce the a priori conditions of validity. Unlike Cohen's logic, however, Natorp's genetic logic seeks to describe the very *making* of the transcendental legality of the *fieri*. In this respect, Natorp holds, the logical functions that produce the legality itself hence the "object" of knowledge must operate in a *systematic* way. The systematicity of the logical functions of thinking can be revealed by demonstrating the interconnection or *correlation* between the logical functions of thinking (Natorp 1910b, 26). And the correlation must be such that they do not operate as a closed system but as an open and progressive path of determination. In Natorp's words, these logical functions must operate as a *Systase* (Natorp 1910b, 24). To demonstrate this systematicity, Natorp reformulates the Kantian deduction. He does not use formal logic as a leading thread and the main problem of the Kantian deduction, namely, to explain how concepts can be applied to intuitions, disappears, for Natorp does not make use of the dualistic model of faculties. Natorp's transcendental deduction aims to demonstrate the apriority of the categories as conditions of validity by showing how they emerge, as an interconnected system of logical functions, from the highest principle of legality, the genetic concept of which is Kant's "synthetic unity" (Natorp 1910b, 35). Hence as I will now show, Natorp designed the transcendental-metaphysical deduction as a top-down network of logical functions or, as I emphasize above, a logical-synthetic operation grounded in epistemic capacities that are necessary for the production of objectively valid determinations of thought.

Synthetic Unity as the Principle of Legality

The most original and, so to speak, immediate act of thinking is at the same time the highest, which Natorp, following Kant, defines as the principle of *synthetic unity* (*synthetische Einheit*) (Natorp 1910b, 28). Synthetic unity consists in the epistemic act of simultaneously unifying and differentiating. It is the act through which thinking establishes something as different from something else, hence it poses it as a unitary, self-identical something. The main character of this act, however, is not to isolate contents to pose them as single unities without further ado. Rather, synthetic unity is the very movement of this positing act, therefore its epistemic function is to differentiate and connect, that is, to bring contents into increasingly precise relations (Natorp 1910b, 46). As an epistemological movement of thinking, synthetic unity is the highest condition

needed to bring what is separate into a unity and what is unified into differences that further clarify the encompassing context in which such differences take place (Natorp 1910b, 26). For synthetic unity is not simply the act of posing two pre-given things as separated or unified. Rather, it is the very production of what is distinguished or unified, it is the logical origin of any unifying or separating act that makes it possible to endlessly specify and unify contents in increasingly determined ways (Natorp 1910b, 23). In Natorp's words, synthetic unity is the highest principle of knowledge, the principle of principles, for it is the highest: "determinability of the 'that', which is precisely what the original act of knowledge as the act of determining must generate" (Natorp 1910b, 47). Without the principle of synthetic unity, therefore, the whole process of objectivation would not be possible and, therefore, neither the experience of nature we actually do, namely, the experience of nature as a law-like context of possible determinations.

But how does the movement of synthetic unity achieve objective validity? How does synthetic unity construct, out of its original act of unification and separation, the mere possibility of the object of knowledge? For, certainly, without such an epistemological achievement we could not call the endless chain of determinations and variations initiated by synthetic unity 'knowledge of objects'. For Natorp, this question is at the core of the correct interpretation of Kant's original insight. The traditional interpretation held that the validity of this epistemological movement of thinking does not come from the principle itself but from the things that are distinguished or unified under one or another perspective. Even Kant, Natorp claims, followed this interpretation, against his own discovery, when he claimed that at the bottom of the synthetic movement there must be sensations, representation, in sum, sensible fixations of a pre-given unknown manifold, which is the last matter of all possible knowledge (Natorp 1910b, 47). But not only Kant, but also representatives of modern logic interested in the question of the fundament of the objectivity of knowledge have also followed this path, inasmuch as they assume that the objective value of linguistic expressions such as words, sentences, and judgments depend upon the referential function that allows us to pose and catch objective properties of a supposed given nature in symbolic systems of reference and definition. Whilst this perspective has been useful for many scientific disciplines, it has not been so for critical epistemology, the task of which is precisely to demonstrate the immanent rationality of the synthetic process of knowledge-production. Against the common view, Natorp claims that linguistic expressions do not generate the value of rational determinations in virtue

of their referential function. Symbolic systems of definition cannot construct an objective claim if they lack the capacity to re-produce or re-enact the epistemic act of synthetic unity (Natorp 1910a, 61). In this sense, it is not language but thinking itself that is the condition under which objective validity can be epistemologically constructed. According to Natorp, then, it is *in* the very movement of synthetic unity in which the production of objective validity takes place. In this respect, Natorp's hypothesis is that the achievement of objective validity consists in the logical unfolding of its synthetic movement. The movement of thinking as the movement of the original act of synthetic unity has an immanent systematicity, which Natorp aims to describe as the law-like unfolding of the network of logical functions or categories (Natorp 1910b, 49–52).

For Natorp, the categories are the dynamic and systematic unfolding of the principle of synthetic unity. In this sense, Natorp understands the categories to be the necessary moments of the synthetic movement of thinking. The categories are not external to the synthetic unity. Rather, they are the inner steps through which it must go in order to achieve or produce objectively valid content of thought. In other words, the categories are the epistemic rules that must be performed or actualized in any act of objectivation. As such, Natorp claims, the categories define the immanent logical operativity of thinking and they have, therefore, a systematic relation between them. As we will see, the relation Natorp ascribes to the categories constructs a kind of stratified structure of synthetic unity, in which the first layer corresponds to quantity and quality, the second to relation, and the third layer to modality (Natorp 1910b, 49).

Quantity, Quality, and the objective Magnitude

Quantity and quality are the first fundamental moment of unfolding or development of synthetic unity because they are the logical functions necessary to produce something objectively determined. In Natorp's words, these categories are the first logical production of the "unification of a manifold". While quantity is the function that produces the a priori determination of an extensive magnitude, quality is the function that produces the a priori determination of an intensive magnitude (Natorp 1910b, 52). Since quantity and quality constructs the same object of knowledge from two correlative perspectives, namely, an external or peripheral perspective and an internal or centripetal perspective,

Natorp defines them as *correlative* or *congruent* moments: “the quantum is only the quantum of qualia, the qualia is only the qualia of quantum” (Natorp 1910b, 53).

Each of these logical functions consists in three fundamental epistemic moments. Their moments are equivalent and what changes is the kind of content they make possible. The first is the position of a manifold as something to be unified. More precisely, it is the position of a manifold as something that can be further determined. In the first moment, thinking does not construct any particular content but only a general determination of something as a unitary “point of departure” for the task of determination (Natorp 1910b, 54). This point of departure is the construction of a hypothesis in the sense of “the position of a fundament”: it is the pure and abstract “base for the relation of comparison” and the: “base for the relation of counting (*Zählung*)” (Natorp 1910b, 60). In quantitative terms, this first logical position is the “numerical unity”. In qualitative terms, it is “the identical” or the being-thus (*Sosein*) (Natorp 1910b, 60).

The first moment of quantity and quality also poses the possibility of the second moment. The fundament that is posed is that for a logical progression (Natorp 1910b, 55). By posing something identical, thinking also poses something that is different from it (Natorp 1910b, 61). Likewise, with the position of the numerical unity, thinking also poses that which goes beyond this unity, namely, a plurality (*Mehrheit*). The second moment of quantity and quality consists in the “renovation of the position” of a new unity (Natorp 1910b, 55). This renovation now poses the first and second unity as different from each other. But the epistemic function of the second moment is not simply to produce endless pluralities but to make of the position (*Setzung*) a progressive addition (*Zusetzung*). The second moment, therefore, shows that every first position (*Erstgesetzes*) always refers to an additional position (*Zugesetztes*). This new position, therefore, constructs the series or *serialization* (*Aufreihung*), in the sense of a disclosure of a path of possible quantitative or qualitative relations between single or identical unities.

The second moment opens up, once again, the original logical demand of synthetic unity, namely, to bring undetermined plurality into a more comprehensive unification, to look for the unifying legality of the series of differences and pluralities. The unification of the series under a higher perspective cannot be performed by the second moment itself. The infinity of the process demands a new, higher, unification of the process itself. The third

moment of quantity and quality is the epistemic function of unifying the series in view of a logically encompassing viewpoint or perspective (*Schau*) (Natorp 1910b, 56, 62). The collection (*Zusammennehmung*), or reunification of the quantitative plurality or qualitative difference under a new unity, does not consist in simply adding separated parts. Rather, the unification of the third moment is the logical fundament for the *construction of addition* (*Summenbildung*) itself (Natorp 1910b, 57). From the viewpoint of quantity, this process of unification generates the determination of totality (*Totale*) (Natorp 1910b, 56). From the viewpoint of quality, it generates the determination of the genre (*Gattung*). In both cases, therefore, the third moment consists in the production of the unity of the process under the concept of a “magnitude” (*Soviel*) (Natorp 1910b, 56), which is the formal concept of something that is determinable in view of the unifying perspective of the series.

Finally, Natorp emphasizes that the third moment cannot be misunderstood as a final or conclusive moment in the quantitative-qualitative process of determination of the object of knowledge. Once we achieve the concept of a magnitude, whether as a totality or a genre, the process gains a particular perspective or viewpoint (*Schau*) of determination, not a final solution. Thus the three moments that compose the categories of quantity and quality reveal their dynamicity: they define the endless logical cycle (*Kreislauf*) of the first layer of synthetic unity, namely, the layer on which the object of knowledge is produced as a quantitatively or qualitatively determinable magnitude (Natorp 1910b, 59).

Relation and the Context of Experience

The next structural layer of the logical unfolding of synthetic unity is the category of relation. As we have seen, the quantitative-qualitative layer defines the condition of possibility of the magnitude. In order to further define it, it is necessary to produce a law-like context in which such magnitude can receive a particular determination: “[p]erhaps we have the object, but not yet the objects, precisely according to their mutual relations of dependence, that is, not as they are merely conceived as determined for themselves, but in the way in which they are *recognized* as determined between each other in one experience” (Natorp 1910b, 65–66). The logical production of a law-like context in which magnitudes may be determined according to “relations of dependence” is based on a new kind of epistemic capacity, because such relations cannot be produced by the epistemic

performance of quantity and quality. Since these two categories are the first layer of logical syntheses, then the second layer or the category of relation is the logical construction of a “synthesis of syntheses” (Natorp 1910b, 66).

According to Natorp, Kant already distinguishes between *Relation* and *Beziehung*, in order to define the second layer of logical syntheses (Natorp 1910b, 67). While *Beziehung* may refer to any kind of synthesis, *Relation* refers to the higher potency of thinking to construct the “dynamical interconnection” of the synthetic magnitudes of quantity and quality. These dynamical interconnections or relations of dependence, as Natorp calls them, are general law-like or functional relations that make possible the: “unity of a dynamical context (*Zusammenhang*)” (Natorp 1910b, 67). The epistemic contribution of the category of relation, therefore, is to make possible this unitary context by providing a priori logical conditions to construct the “system of orders” in which the determinability of magnitudes may be secured (Natorp 1910b, 67). These conditions, Natorp explains, provide “syntheses of order” (*Ordnungsynthese*). In the language of mathematics and biology, such syntheses of order are the fundament for the concepts of function and law. Therefore, just as functions and laws determine what is possible in a given particular context of determination, so the category of relation determines the possibility of a context in the sense of a context of possible experience. In other words, the category of relation makes it possible for thinking to move from the determination of magnitudes to the determination of nature as the most general and encompassing system of order (Natorp 1910b, 68). In fact, the category of relation provides the methodical instrument to bring the individual series of magnitudes to a more specific determination, inasmuch as the incorporation of each series will now depend upon the increasingly precise and encompassing law-like context of determinability. Thus the method of relation, Natorp further clarifies, is the necessary logical instrument to fulfill the synthetic unity’s demand of legality in the context of possible experience (Natorp 1910b, 69). Finally, as the first structural layer of quantity and quality, the second layer of relation is also composed of three distinguishable moments or epistemic capacities, the order of which depends upon the logical development of the synthetic unity. Thus the first moment corresponds to the position of an *ansatz*, a fundament or general measure for the construction of syntheses of order. The second corresponds to the logical instruments that make possible the law-like progression of relations of dependence. The third moment corresponds to the relative

conclusion of the process, the position of a “general order” (*Gesamtordnung*) that is at the same time the *ansatz* for new questions (Natorp 1910b, 70).

This first moment is the position of the *ansatz* or *fundamentum relationis* (Natorp 1910b, 70). It consists in the epistemic law of “substantiality”.⁶² Natorp defines the law of substantiality as the position of a “referential fundament” for any series of orders. As such, substantiality is the functional measure (*Maß*) of a constant and unitary “substratum” for any logical series of determinations. In this sense, the law of substantiality does not define a real or pre-given entity but a logical functional referent for the construction of a “system of positions” or “scale”. As such, the epistemic function of substantiality is to make possible the determinability (*Bestimmbarkeit*) of individual series of magnitudes in view of a unitary context of determination (Natorp 1910b, 71). Thus the law of substantiality is the position of a constant referent or a fundamental relation. For example, Natorp writes, the scientific presentation of nature always depends upon functional substrata such as mass and energy (Natorp 1910b, 72), the particular value of which will depend upon the computation (*Rechnung*) of possible determinations in a certain series of logical relations.

The second moment of relation makes possible the law-like logical development of such computations. The methodical instruments for this logical progression are the methods of space and time.⁶³ Space and time are logical parameters or modes of order (*Ordnungsweisen*) to construct the general logical relations between series of magnitudes. Time is the most fundamental mode of order because it defines the most “common,

⁶² Aware of the metaphysical meaning of the concepts of substance and accident, Natorp develops a critical remark about the so-called ‘naïve’ interpretation of substance and accident. The origin of this interpretation is Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. There, Natorp explains, Aristotle constructs his concept of *ousia* from the grammatical fact that every sentence (*Satz*) needs to establish a permanent point in order to refer to and organize changeable predications. According to this logic, Natorp argues, Aristotle infers the concept of a *substratum*, an immutable subject with mutable properties. Rather than interpreting the concept of substance and accident as logical instruments for thinking, Aristotle understands these concepts to be real entities. Consequently, he defines metaphysics as the theory of *being as being* and bequeathed to the occidental tradition the presupposition that all our knowledge is always referred to and ground on a last subject, a last being in respect of which our knowledge is directed. Natorp’s interpretation of Aristotle is far from accurate from the viewpoint of current standards. In this respect, see (Natorp 1888a; 1888c; 2004b, 341–94; Lembeck 1994, 223–31; Bressan 2013).

⁶³ From a Kantian perspective, it seems surprising to find the pure intuitions of sensibility under the category of relation. However, we have to bear in mind that Natorp deals with these intuitions in strictly logical terms. He does so by following Cohen’s interpretation of pure intuitions as *formal intuitions*, that is, rational methods for the epistemic application of the a priori principles of judgment. In this respect, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

grounding, and uniform order of succession” of series of magnitudes (Natorp 1910b, 73). The temporal order makes possible two fundamental modes of logical relation: succession and *simultaneity*. Succession defines a common and uniform order for magnitudes and series of magnitudes in the form of a law-like series. Simultaneity is generated by the temporal order but it corresponds to the function of space. In fact, unlike time, which is a unidimensional mode of order, space is a multi-dimensional mode of order because it makes it possible to define series of magnitudes as separated or associated in a given time (Natorp 1910b, 74). Thus space and time are general parameters for the construction and determination of the law-like progression of series of magnitudes. As such, the logical progression based on both methods makes possible the concepts of “movement” and “permanence”. Permanence, Natorp explains, is the conceptual fundament for the determination of a series of magnitudes as that which lasts in a given time. Movement, on other hand, is the conceptual fundament for the determination of a series of magnitudes as that which changes in a given space (Natorp 1910b, 74–75). Thus the second layer of synthetic unity makes possible the scientific determination of nature as an encompassing context of series of events.

Finally, the third moment of the logical function of relation are the a priori principles of causality and reciprocity. According to Natorp, these principles are already presupposed in the second moment; temporal succession presupposes the principle of causality and spatial simultaneity presupposes the principle of reciprocity (Natorp 1910b, 78). The epistemic contribution of these principles of thinking makes possible the reunification of the spatio-temporally determined series of events in an encompassing and single context, namely, the context of possible experience. In other words, the principles of causality and reciprocity are epistemic functions that satisfy the infinite demand of legality, inasmuch as they unify relations of dependence between events and series of events in view of a complete system of possible determinations.

Natorp claims that causality and reciprocity are the two aspects of one a priori logical principle (Natorp 1910b, 79). The Kantian definition of these principles, Natorp argues, only indicates that they must be employed as general a priori premises or presuppositions for objective knowledge. On the one hand, causality states that for every successive order it must be possible to distinguish the cause from the effect, that is, the events that operate as *conditions* from events that operate as *conditioned* (Natorp 1910b, 80). Thus, on the

ground of the principle of causality, it becomes possible to transform temporal series into causal series. In this sense, the principle of causality: “only holds a legality of general classification of a consequent with an antecedent” (Natorp 1910b, 80). On the other hand, the principle of reciprocity states that, for every law-like series of events, it must be possible to determine the “legality of coordination” with other parallel series of events (Natorp 1910b, 81). Thus, Natorp concludes, with these a priori principles the concept of nature becomes possible, that is, the concept of a “unitary functional context” or a “dynamic system” of possible law-like events (Natorp 1910b, 81).

Modality as the general Objectuality of Knowledge

The third and last structural layer of the development of synthetic unity is the category of modality. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant defines modality as the category that defines the way in which we know an object of experience (Kant 1900 A 219/B 266). Our knowledge can be characterized by three modes - possible, effective, and necessary. These are expressed by three different kinds of judgement - problematic, assertoric, and apodictic. This said, Kant further explains that the a priori principles of modality are nothing more than an “explanation” of the concepts of possibility, effective reality, and necessity in their empirical use. In this sense, Kant clarifies, the category of modality is distinct from the other categories, for it is not a fundamental determination of the object of knowledge. Rather, modality concerns the fundamental determination of the knowledge of objects (*Gegenstandserkenntnis*). For this reason, Natorp says, it seems that the system of logical functions is completed with the deduction of the synthesis of first-order (quantity and quality) and the synthesis of second-order (relation). A third-order synthesis such as that described by modality does not seem necessary from the view point of the transcendental foundation of the object of knowledge (Natorp 1910b, 82). Notwithstanding, Natorp immediately reminds us that the modal concepts of possibility, effective reality, and necessity are still relevant to logic and transcendental logic. Whilst modality does not play a constructive role in the formation of the object of knowledge, it must, however, play a role in the way in which knowledge of objects is determined. Moreover, since transcendental deduction shows that the object is epistemologically grounded on the legality of thinking, then it makes sense to hold that modality must play an epistemic role in the process of knowledge production as well (Natorp 1910b, 83). For Natorp, modality, as the logical fundament of the modal character of the knowledge of

the object, is the a priori determination of the relation between knowledge and its object. More precisely, modality is the epistemic fundament of the “objectuality” (*Gegenständlichkeit*) of the synthetic determinations of thinking. Objectuality does not concern the object as such but the grade of validity of objective determinations. The objectuality or validity of an “effective” object is different from that of a merely possible object. In the first case, Natorp writes, there is a “complete” objectuality, while in the second there is only “possible” validity (Natorp 1910b, 83). Thus the category of modality defines the epistemic “establishment” (*Feststellung*) of synthetic determinations. While quantity, quality, and relation define the logical instruments or methods for the construction of the object of knowledge, modality provides the methodical conditions on which those instruments may establish the object itself. Now, since the object of knowledge is constructed in accordance with the general levels of synthetic unity, then knowledge of the object is a priori determined by the same three levels of ansatz, progression, and relative conclusion. Moreover, Natorp goes on, the modality is simultaneously the general form of the development of synthetic unity. Natorp even finds it surprising that Kant, having discovered that knowledge is, first and foremost, an epistemic process of synthetic unity, failed to see the direct relation between this process and the levels of modality. Modality, Natorp concludes, is the clearest and most decisive expression of the ideality of the object of knowledge (Natorp 1910b, 85).

The first moment of the category of modality is possibility (Natorp 1910b, 87). The epistemic role of possibility is to set an ansatz to initiate the process of determination. As such, the ansatz establishes a thesis that, in its mere possibility, only constructs a venture (*Wagnis*), a statement that is closer to the question or to the problem or project (*Vorwurf*). In this sense, in order to initiate the epistemic process of determination, the ansatz poses the necessary epistemic coercion or demand (*Forderung*), namely, to demand a decision (*Entscheidung*) in view of the undetermined. In itself, the ansatz has a provisional consistency (*Festigkeit*) and it only serves to establish the demand for a law-like and progressive determination, in which this first thesis must be transformed into a hypothesis to be determined (Natorp 1910b, 88).

The second moment is the realization (*Durchführung*) of the process initiated with the ansatz. The epistemic role of this realization is to construct an essay (*Versuch*) to demonstrate the objective value of the ansatz (Natorp 1910b, 88–89). As such, the essay

establishes a law-like process of determination, a methodical self-controlled procedure of experiential demonstration (*Erfahrungsbeweis*), whose acutest scientific presentation or epistemological certificate (*Zeugnis*) is the path of the experiment (*Fiat experimentum*) (Natorp 1910b, 89). In this sense, realization in the experiment poses the necessary epistemic procedure (*Verfahren*) to make a decision in regard to the established demand of determination, that is, the problem. In the path of the experiment, the decision is progressively made by closing the circle of possible determinations of the hypothesis step-by-step, until a further determination is no longer possible and the demand has ceased in a consistent (*festgestellte*) fact, the validity of which can be further determined from the new perspectives of other contexts of possible experience.

Finally, the third moment of the category of modality is the conclusion. The epistemic role of the conclusion is twofold. On the one hand, in view of the experimental procedure of demonstration that constructs the fact, the conclusion consists in the position of a necessary resolution, a final decision in the process. The epistemic result of this resolution is the establishment of the law that determines the fact and the entire experiential field in which it takes place (Natorp 1910b, 90). On the other hand, the conclusion consists in the position of a new point of departure, the value of which becomes once again provisory in view of new possible paths of determination, namely, the paths that are posed from the obtained results. In this last moment of modality, which coincides with the general form of the last structural moment of synthetic unity itself, the decision that satisfies the first demand releases new ventures with new demands, whose resolution will now depend upon new assays and experiments, the sense of which is nothing more than to realize the infinite task of thinking by following the endless movement of the principle of all principles: synthetic unity.

§4. Conclusion: The Necessity of Philosophical Psychology

To conclude this chapter, I will sum up the previous paragraphs and show in which particular senses genetic logic lays the foundation for critical psychology. In §1, I explain the possibility of philosophical psychology in detail, by analysing Natorp's first essay on this topic from 1887. My analysis shows that philosophical psychology had two general goals: the critique of psychologism and the construction of a transcendental psychology. In this respect, the analysis explained that, in this essay Natorp grounded his psychology

on the genetically designed objective foundation of the act of abstraction or objectivation and offered a preliminary definition of the object and method of psychology, namely, the reconstruction of the lived experience of this epistemic act. In §2, I proposed a critical overview to tackle Natorp's final model of philosophical psychology. My analysis shows that two main issues hindered the correct reception and interpretation of the work: the incompleteness of the treatise, and its unknown logical foundation. In order to illustrate the common misreading of Natorp's treatise and the necessity of knowing Natorp's logic of knowledge in order to understand his critical-psychological project, I offer a brief survey through his correspondence with Husserl. Finally, in §3, I explain Natorp's transcendental genetic logic. My analysis shows that genetic logic consists in a metaphysical-transcendental deduction of the a priori logical functions from the highest principle of synthetic unity. Now, part of the aim of §3 was to explain in which sense genetic logic lays the foundation of philosophical psychology. To conclude, I will explain how genetic logic grounds philosophical psychology and justifies the epistemological necessity of philosophical psychology in Natorp's transcendental philosophy of objective knowledge.

On the one hand, genetic logic constructs the epistemological framework for philosophical psychology. This framework provides the epistemological definition of knowledge as an "act of objectivation" and the system of logical functions that grounds its a priori operativity. Thus the genetic approach provides a suitable epistemological framework for a critical psychology, inasmuch as it looks at the logical a priori fabric or making of objective knowledge. On the other hand, Natorp's genetic logic, particularly the analysis of the category of modality, unfolds an epistemic aspect that cannot be solved with the synthetic instruments of the systematicity of synthetic unity. This aspect concerns directly the definition of knowledge as a rational "decision" (*Entscheidung*), the decision of following the demand of legality in accordance with the logical function. The genetic logic opens up this epistemic dimension by revealing the transcendental *ideality* of the object of knowledge. But how do we recognize such a demand? How do we even become aware of the demand of legality in a particular context and how do we resolve to make a decision in accordance with the legality of synthetic unity? The entire logic is directed to define the a priori conditions of validity of knowledge in its logical operativity but it does not explain, and actually cannot explain, the a priori conditions needed to recognize objective validity as objective.

Natorp elaborates on this issue in the last paragraph of his deduction (Natorp 1910b, 92–97). The idealist approach to objective knowledge shows that possible experience is the result of the epistemic operativity of thinking. But in regard to the question of effective reality (*Wirklichkeit*), Natorp claims that his interpretation may seem to fail or be wrong. For how can thinking recognize the proper singularity (*Einzigkeit*) of any “fact” (*Tatsache*), if such fact turns out to be a construction of thinking? (Natorp 1910b, 93). The trap of this and similar questions is that they presuppose and aim to save the existence *in itself* (*an sich*) of facts. It is a common mistake (*Fehlgriff*), Natorp acknowledges, to presuppose that what we call ‘facts’ are entities given in perception as such-and-such, that is, as determined in themselves, without any intervention of the act of objectivation. And it is the very idea of something “given” (*Gegebenes*) which invites us to think that the factuality (*Tatsächlichkeit*) of the fact actually comes from outside, through perception, to thinking consciousness (Natorp 1910b, 95). However, the such-and-such of the given is not possible without the a priori operation of the logical functions of thinking. Try to think of any thing, let us say a book on the table, without making use of the logical operations of quantity, quality, and relation. Thus the factuality of the fact is never a property of an object in itself. Rather, it is the particular determinability or objectuality (*Gegenständlichkeit*) of the knowledge of the object (Natorp 1910b, 93). In this respect, natural science is exceptionally clarifying. In any scientific experiment, Natorp writes, the fact is what is ‘done’, or taken as true (*Wahr-genommen*), through a technically constructed assay of logical interconnections between many conceptual contents. These interconnections –i.e., the particular way in which they are arranged, fixed, and built– are responsible for distinguishing between possible and impossible connections (*Verbindungen*) in a given context of possible experience. Once the causal effectiveness of certain possible connections is demonstrated, then it can be said that the experiment suggests or demonstrates – depending upon the stage of development of the experiment itself – a fact of perception. Factuality itself, therefore, only exists as the realization (*Durchführung*) or concretization of the a priori demand of legality (Natorp 1910b, 93), for the singularity of the fact –that which is perceived as such-and-such– is the objective result of the experimentally conducted response to the a priori demand (*Forderung*) of legality. In this respect, the transcendental ideality of the fact of perception demonstrates that in any epistemic context, that is, in any context in which

conceptual capacities are actualized in order to claim that something is such-and-such, the fact of perception appears or is given as the realization of the demand of legality.

Now the relevant point about this issue for the question this chapter poses is that the epistemic achievement of the objective fact occurs in perception as a rationally constructed decision (*Entscheidung*) about a previously established question or problematic context. In this respect, Natorp emphasizes that logic must presuppose recognition of the 'ought' that is posed by the principle of legality. The epistemic capacities that make possible such recognition, however, exceed the very scope of logic (Natorp 1910b, 93). Since logic only deals with the a priori conditions of being, of what can be stated as objectively valid, then the question of such epistemic capacities for the recognition of the ought must remain beyond the realm of transcendental logic. For this reason, it is possible to claim the necessity for a complementary transcendental investigation of such capacities. Since they take place in perception and concern the question of knowledge of the object or, as I will say from now on, the concrete epistemic agency of the knowing subject, then it goes without saying that such investigation must be Natorp's general psychology. This is what I will demonstrate in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. The Epistemological Role of Philosophical Psychology

Introduction

In this chapter I explain the object and method of the *General Psychology* in detail. While in Chapter 2 I described the genetic-logical foundation of critical psychology, here I show how Natorp conceives of the critical-psychological foundation of the act of objectivation. Despite the incompleteness of his 1912 treatise, I argue that it is still possible to find enough materials and guidelines to reconstruct at least its original sense and contribution in the context of Marburgian neo-Kantianism. My principal aim is to demonstrate that philosophical psychology provides an original and systematic explanation of the epistemic role of the lived experience (*Erlebniss*) of consciousness, because it describes the subjective epistemic capacities required to recognize the objective validity of knowledge-production. To do so, here I offer a systematic reconstruction of the plan of philosophical psychology from the viewpoint of its contents, namely, the object and method. The reconstruction I propose is divided into five paragraphs. In §1 I analyse the epistemic relation between perception and the ‘ought’ (*Sollen*) of legality, which in the previous chapter took us to the limit of genetic logic. Here I argue that the realization or concretization performed in perception presupposes that any concrete subject is in possession of the epistemic capacities to recognize the effective validity of the objectifying conceptualization of thinking. In this respect, I claim that philosophical psychology oversees the necessary change of perspective, from the object of knowledge to knowledge of the object, to systematically reveal these capacities. In §2 I offer a novel, critical interpretation of the object of critical psychology. Against the phenomenological interpretation that understands the object of psychology as the immediacy of the given, I claim that Natorp defines the object of psychology in terms of a critical-epistemological model of consciousness, the purpose of which is to clarify the epistemic form and function of consciousness. My aim here is to show that Natorp defines the epistemic form of consciousness as the law-like subjective ‘connection’ (*Verbindung*) of possible contents of determination. In §3 I focus upon the epistemic function of consciousness. My aim is to explain that every connection of lived experiences is part of an epistemic process of subjectivation (*Subjektivierung*), the main task of which is to turn such connections into the epistemic ‘potency’ (*Potenz*) necessary for the actualization of objectifying concepts. Thus with the Aristotelean concept of potency, Natorp re-interprets the problem of the

concrete subject in terms of necessary epistemic engagement with the a priori principle of legality. In §4 I analyse the reconstructive method of psychology. Against the common interpretation that defines the reconstruction as a kind of de-objectivation (*Ent-Objektivierung*) of the object of knowledge, I claim that the reconstruction rather describes the necessary subjective construction of the object of knowledge. The preliminary and general results of this construction constitute what Natorp calls the *disposition* of philosophical psychology (§4.1, §4.2). This section sheds light] on the a priori structure of the two main provinces of epistemic consciousness. First, it describes the epistemic levels for the construction of the potency of contents (§4.1). Second, it describes the egological levels of lived unities (*Erlebnisseinheiten*) for the construction of the necessary epistemic engagement, from the unity of personal consciousness to the unity of transcendental consciousness (§4.2). Finally, in §5 I conclude that philosophical psychology offers a systematic analysis of the a priori subjective conditions for the recognition of the normativity of thinking. Thus Chapter 3 contributes with a novel and correct interpretation of the systematic role of philosophical psychology as an epistemology of perception. In this way, this chapter also leads us to Chapter 4, in which I further explain the relation of philosophical psychology with the critical-epistemological contribution of Natorp's *Social Pedagogy*.

§1. Perception and the subjective Condition for the Concretization of Concepts

At the end of Chapter 2, I explain that perception is the result of the logical functions of thinking. Rather than defining perception as a passive response to the sensory properties of things, Natorp's idealist account defines it as an epistemic outcome of the infinite process of knowledge. As we know, 'thinking' means determining and 'knowledge' means the act that fulfills objectively valid determinations. According to his logic, Natorp defines three general levels of determinability: the quantitative-qualitative determinability of a magnitude; the relational determinability between magnitudes by means of spatio-temporal and logical relations, and the modal determinability of the objective validity of knowledge. In this epistemological description of knowledge, perception is a *modal* determination, namely, the concrete or effective content of determination. Natorp chose the concept of perception because it refers to the double aspect of effective reality. On the one hand, perception is the term we use to define an object of knowledge as a fact (*Tatsache*). A fact of perception, Natorp claims, is the final

unity that thinking achieves whenever it judges something in accordance with the law-like context of possible experience. In this sense, the fact of perception is not something positive because it is given before we know it. Rather, it is positive because it represents an effective determination grounded on already proven connections (*Verknüpfung*) between content. Perception, therefore, is also a connection of thinking, namely, a concrete or effective connection. On the other hand, the fact of perception defines a concrete or *effective* determination only from a relative viewpoint, namely, in a question the content of which was merely hypothetical before the fact gives a definitive answer (Natorp 1910a, 94). Since knowledge is an infinite process of determination, then every fact, every definitive answer to a question of knowledge, is also provisory. In this respect, perceptual contents also express the infinite demand for new determinations (Natorp 1910a, 96). This means that facts can always be further determined, inasmuch as the very process of knowledge requires it, whether by enlarging the field of research, or reformulating the question, or finding an error in the assumptions we work with, and so on.

With the idealist interpretation of perception, Natorp concludes the transcendental foundation of objective knowledge. However, perception unveils a problem that exceeds the limit and scope of logic. We can explain this by considering the three statements that sum up his conclusion (Natorp 1910a, 97). First, every perceptual fact is a determination of thinking, hence, a product of knowledge. In other words, it is not possible to perceive something as a determined thing unless our knowledge has determined it as such-and-such. Second, nothing exists *in itself*, unless our knowledge determines it from a particular law-like viewpoint. Third, every effective or concrete determination has relative validity inasmuch as knowledge is an infinite progression. Once knowledge has progressed or advanced to a new stage of determination, the perceived fact becomes a new starting point, a new question or hypothesis for further determination. Now I wish to draw attention to the point that Natorp's logic assumes that the normativity of thinking is somehow justified in perception. Perception not only comes to the scene as a relative conclusion of the whole process of thinking. Rather, it also *confirms* the objective validity of the series of determinations that led us to that which we now effectively perceive. For example, when we confirm a hypothesis, the arrangement of thoughts we generate is concretized in the result, and we can now say that we *see* the object we were looking for. In this respect, perception entitles us to claim that the determination we reached is not a

mere illusion, but rather an objectively valid determination. Thus, to ‘perceive’ something as such-and-such is not merely to believe in its existence. To perceive, Natorp claims, means to take a decision (*Entscheidung*), to follow a determination because we are justified or entitled to claim that it expresses a fact and not merely an opinion or a belief. To perceive, therefore, means to recognize the *Sosein* of the perceptual fact in view of a *Sollensein*, the content of which is constructed in accordance with the legality of thinking. In perception, a double relation takes place. On the one hand, we perceive the object of knowledge. On the other, we perceive the validity of our judgement. In this respect, in perception we also *aperceive* the knowledge of the object, we become aware that something is valid as an object. The fact of perception, therefore, is also a fact of consciousness. This does not mean, however, that we fall victim to a kind of subjectivism. Rather, perception instantiates a paradoxical movement: we reach the object of knowledge by abstracting from our subjective viewpoint. Only then is it possible to form a valid judgment, one that is no longer a personal opinion. The subject, in this sense, rises above herself to see the object of knowledge. Thus the knowing subject is no longer the empirical subject. The knowing subject feels or embodies the normative force of her experience of knowledge. Hence in perception the subject becomes a rational agent, so to speak. Certainly, transcendental logic says nothing of this normative force that takes place in perception, for this topic no longer concerns logic, but psychology. All in all, it is possible to claim that with the concept of perception Natorp not only offers an adequate conclusion to his logic. Moreover, the concept of perception also exceeds the very scope and orientation of logic, inasmuch as it introduces the necessity of a change of perspective, namely, from the object of knowledge to knowledge of the object, the objective foundation to the subjective foundation of objective knowledge.

This new complementary perspective, which is announced in the essay of 1887, is what Natorp describes in his *General Psychology*. In particular, it is a psychology of objectivation. It argues that the concretization of the legality of thinking is in need of subjective conditions that are necessary to recognize the validity of our judgements. The theoretical ground for this psychology is the relational system of synthetic unity. Unlike logic, however, it considers the way in which we ‘live’-experience (*erleben*), as it were, the logical construction of knowledge. In what follows, I explain that the result of this analysis is a general structure of consciousness, the aim of which is to define the

epistemological function and meaning of lived experience in the dynamic process of knowledge-production.

§2. *Penelope's Web*: The Definition of Lived Experience as the Object of Psychology

Any psychological investigation, whether philosophical or scientific, put the idea of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) at the heart of its enterprise. This notion is as old as philosophy itself and it has been employed, in many variations –psyche, soul, subjectivity, consciousness etc.— to hold that knowledge cannot be reduced solely to the logical understanding of experience –namely, experience as the law-like context of relations in which things are determined as parts or events of nature. In fact, not without reason, Natorp reminds us of this at the very beginning of his treatise in the epigraph of Heraclitus: “you will not find the boundaries of soul by travelling in any direction, so deep is the measure of it” (Burnet 1930, 138; Natorp 1912a). The soul or the *psyque* is deep, and maybe one of the deepest concepts we have coined, because it reveals knowledge as an intimately human capacity. Even more radically, it reveals knowledge to be an intimately and immediate human activity. Lived experience, therefore, defines the particular way in which humans inhabit the world, namely, by knowing it, hence, constructing, modifying, and transforming in the course of our learning in order to contemplate and manipulate nature. In this respect, the concept of lived experience bears a close relation to the concept of life itself. If knowledge, as I explain in the previous chapter, is the *infinite task* of thinking, then the idea of the psyche or lived experience becomes the very name for the *life* of such an infinite task. As life refuses any biological reduction that aims to understand it as a causal mechanism, lived experience also seems to refuse or escape every objectifying reduction.⁶⁴ And this irreducibility constitutes the principal reason for the difficulties that psychology has confronted since its emergence as a scientific discipline.

During the 19th century many efforts were made to determine the life of the infinite task of knowledge. As we know, the scientific progress of psychology has contributed to the conceptual and technical success of the current neuroscientific discourse, whose physiological approach enables us, among other things, to dissect consciousness as a

⁶⁴ In this respect, see (Garrido Wainer 2015).

complex and dynamic neural mechanism.⁶⁵ However, Natorp believes that psychology does not grasp the meaning of subjectivity correctly. By analysing several contributions to psychology of his contemporaries, especially those of Wundt, Lipps, the early Husserl, and Munsterberg, he concludes that psychology consists in a theoretical model that is grounded on a mistaken objectivation (*Verobjektivierung*) of subjectivity. Natorp reconstructs the main concepts and theoretical premises of the psychological model. This model conceives of knowledge as an intimate and immediate act or activity. This activity, usually defined as cognition (*Erkennen*), is commonly viewed as an *act in itself* or as an *act of the I* (Natorp 1912a, 24–27). In the first case, cognition is identified with *conscienciality* (*Bewusstheit*), that is, the relation between a given thing and a personal or individual subject. In the second case, cognition is identified with individual agency. These definitions can support different research programmes, but they both ask the same question, namely, what is the natural emergence or *genesis* of cognition? The psychological model guides its investigation with the idea that cognition is not simply a physical event but a *mental process*, whose concept is consciousness. Apparently, the psychological model does not encounter any difficulty in assuming that consciousness occurs in the physiology of the nervous system. But how does the psychological model bring mental processes into the context of the nervous system? Natorp claims that it does so with the idea of the ‘event’ (Natorp 1912a, 41–46, 255–60). The *event*, formulated in analogy with the one of the ‘natural event’ in physics, permits the fixation and differentiation of cognitive activities. Psychic events are analysed in view of temporal relations. On this ground, the psychological model can also fix, by making use of experimental techniques, the spatial location of certain events in the cerebral cortex. Time, Natorp claims, becomes the fundamental method that orders series of mental events in a law-like manner, more specifically, in causal relations. The causal relations of mental events are further defined with the idea of mental ‘powers’ (*Kräfte*) (Natorp 1912a, 256–59). On the ground of the psychological model, subjectivity, defined in terms of consciousness, can be represented as a mechanism in which different psychological events are dissected for their physiological and psychological properties, their causal powers, and their correlations to the effective agency of the individual (Natorp 1912a, 78–79, 191).⁶⁶ Thus Natorp concludes that the objective model of psychology succeeds

⁶⁵ For a detailed account of the history of the naturalization of consciousness, see (Breidbach 1996).

⁶⁶ Natorp’s characterization of scientific psychology is critical and controversial: „Beschreibung ist Abstraktion: (...) es ist Stillstellung des Stromes des Erlebens, also Erörterung des Bewusstseins, welches

in its attempt to reduce the life of knowledge to causal mechanisms, but it fails in its original aim of giving an account of the immediacy and vitality of the psyche.

For this reason, Natorp claims, the objectivation of subjectivity is not just odd wordplay. It is a chief problem in the context of philosophy and theoretical psychology (the true heir of the non-critical German *Erkenntnistheorie*), inasmuch as it encourages riddles that are as wrong as they are unnecessary. Subjectivity or consciousness, as Natorp claimed from his 1887 essay onwards, means that for which something is an object (*dass einem bewusst ist*) (Natorp 1887; 1912a, 24). Hence the very idea of being aware of something as an object is a non-objectifiable aspect of knowledge, the irreducible act or movement of our cognitive lives. The psychological model, however, motivates at least four assumptions about consciousness that obscure or misconstrue the nature and function of this peculiar lived experience. A brief survey of these assumptions shows us that here Natorp echoes –and in some cases repeats– the arguments against logical psychologism in his 1887 essay. First, by defining consciousness as an event –or better said, a sum of causally related events– the psychological model assumes that mental events take place in time. Even Husserl, Natorp emphasizes, who claimed that consciousness cannot be an object in the natural sense, speaks of it as an ‘object’ of second nature, attributing it a proper temporality, the meaning of which, however, is hardly distinguished from the time of natural events (Natorp 1912a, 35–37, 280–82). Time, however, as I show in Chapter 2, is a *method of order*, a methodical way of constructing series of syntheses of thinking. The psychological series of mental events, therefore, cannot take place in a time that pre-exists consciousness. Rather, time that takes place *in* consciousness (Natorp 1910a, 6; 1912a, 80–81, 260–62). Second, the psychological model aims to establish a ‘natural science’ of the psyche, the proper definition of which is not psychology but biology or optics (Natorp 1912a, 5, 63, 117.). To believe that the improvement of techniques and concepts required to conduct physiological research on cognition – which Natorp celebrates (Natorp 1910a, 12–15) – would explain subjectivity as such, means falling into a *metabasis eis allos*

in seiner Unmittelbarkeit und Konkretheit vielmehr ewig flutendes Leben, niemals Stillstand ist. Ist man darauf einmal aufmerksam geworden, so wird man beim Lesen fast aller Bücher über Psychologie einen Eindruck nicht los wie beim Durchwandern von Seziersälen: man sieht Leiche und Leiche, und hundert Hände beschäftigt, das schon Tote nur immer weiter auch des letzten Scheines von Lebendigkeit, auch der fernsten Erinnerung an sie zu entkleiden, die bei der unzerstückten Leiche, im Zusammenbleiben der Glieder nach ihrer natürlichen Verbindung, immer noch, erhalten blieb. Man subsumiert eben nicht den lebendigen Organismus der Psyche, sondern subsumiert die ihm entrissenen toten Einzelglieder unter vollends tote, starre, bewegungslose – Begriffe.“ (Natorp 1912a, 190–91).

genos. Third, the objectivation of subjectivity generates epistemological confusion: the dualism of the psychic and the physical. Based on this dualism, questions of the emergence of the psychical out of the physical tend to misdirect attention to pseudo-problems, for which there are no scientific or philosophical answers. Finally, it promotes, or at least encourages, a long-standing myth about subjectivity, namely, that subjectivity means the immediacy of knowledge. In order to build an approach to the immediacy of cognition, the psychological model defines a field of cognitive events that are commonly understood as ‘pre-objective’ or ‘non-objective’ (Natorp 1912a, 16–18). By analysing the field of irrationality, psychologists aim to unveil the immediate and intimate moment in which consciousness and self-consciousness emerge. Deception of the senses, errors, obscure and inexact feelings, private aspirations, appearances and opinions, ambiguities, and so on, seem to bring the researcher closer to the so-called ‘irrational’ origin of the rational (Natorp 1912a, 95–96). Nevertheless, psychologists do not pay attention to the fact that these psychological events are already definitions, expressions, in short, objectivations, to fix and observe the so-called ‘subjective’ in view of laws. The entire field of the irrational, therefore, is already an encompassing marker to determine (objectify) mechanisms, not the proper life of knowledge. Once again, the true value of these markers can be assessed by biologists, not psychologists.

In this way, Natorp adheres to Kant’s sentence: the only possible text of psychology is “I think” (Kant 1900, Bd. III:A 343/B 402). But he also sees the possibility of going a step further on the path towards understanding subjectivity. Whilst the scientific model of experimental psychology does not serve this purpose, this does not mean that a different model, namely, that of critical epistemology, cannot do the job.⁶⁷ He shows us the way in the following passage:

„Soll nun Psychologie die Erkenntnis des Subjektiven als solchen sein, so kann leicht die Vorstellung entstehen, als müsse sie also die von der objektivierenden Erkenntnis erreichte Bestimmung wieder preisgeben und zu der Unbestimmtheit, die durch die Objektivierung überwunden wurde, zu dem Chaos, aus dem der Kosmos der Gegenstandswelt hervorging, zurückkehren. Die Arbeit der

⁶⁷ Behind this gesture, of course, there is the well-known discussion of the disciplinary contribution of philosophy compared to psychology. In this respect, see (Natorp 1913; Kroner and Mehli 1913; Kusch 1995; Gonzalez Porta 2010).

Psychologie gliche dann nur zu sehr der negativen *Arbeit der Penelope, die nachts das Gewebe wieder auftrennte, das sie tags geschafft hatte*. Ich gestehe gern, dass meine frühere Darstellung in einigen weniger behutsamen Wendungen diese absurde Vorstellung nahelegen konnte: als solle das schlechthin Bestimmungslose, vor aller Bestimmung, also eben in seiner Nichtbestimmtheit, das Problem der Psychologie bilden. Dass dies *keine sinnvolle Aufgabe* wäre, ist freilich leicht zu sehen. Vielmehr den *Vollgehalt des Bewusstseins*, so wie dies überhaupt möglich ist, zur Erkenntnis zu bringen, ist die Aufgabe. Was überhaupt ‚einem bewusst ist‘ heißen soll, kann schon *nicht schlechthin bestimmungslos* sein. Der ‚Inhalt‘ des Bewusstseins soll ergründet werden, und zwar gerade *hinsichtlich seiner ‚Verbindung‘*; ‚Inhalt‘ aber wäre überhaupt nicht zu nennen, was schlechthin unbestimmt wäre und bleiben oder wieder werden sollte; vollends die ‚Verbindung‘ (Form) ist ja gerade das, was die Bestimmung ermöglicht und leistet.“ (Natorp 1912a, 80–81 My emphasis).

This passage has not been considered by the literature because most scholars tended to follow Natorp’s first, 1888, definition of the object of psychology, namely, the object as the immediacy of lived experience, the a priori form of which Natorp calls ‘time-consciousness’. As I will explain, there are several reasons to criticize this methodological approach. The most representative interpretations of this line of thought are the following. (Pos 1925), the first documented publication on this issue, emphasizes the difference between Natorp and Husserl but it suggests that both philosophers aim to develop a ‘science of subjectivity’. Later, (Kern 1964) laid the foundation for interpreting Natorp’s psychology in comparison with Husserl’s phenomenology. (Y.-H. Kim 1974; Arlt 1985; Zahavi 2003; Luft 2010; Zahavi 2013; Dahlstrom 2015) advance the relation between Natorp and the phenomenological tradition, especially in regard to the similarities between his method of reconstruction, Husserl’s method of reduction, and Heidegger’s method of destruction. Whilst these scholars have discovered or emphasized many interesting historical links, they all assume without further ado that Natorp’s psychology can be understood as a sort of proto-phenomenology that aims to reconstruct lived experience in terms of the original immediacy of knowledge. Unlike these readings, the interpretation I aim to develop here focusses upon Natorp’s definition of the *content* of the general psychology and aims to show its epistemological contribution to the contemporary interpretation of the epistemic validity of objective thinking. In particular,

the line of thought I propose enables us to connect the neo-Kantian tradition, and particularly Natorp's general psychology, with the analytical tradition of epistemology, particularly with the so-called 'Pittsburgh School',⁶⁸ a fruitful introduction to the definition of the object of psychology. The passage turns around what I call the 'myth of the immediate' (*Unmittelbares*). Natorp highlights three significant things. On the one hand, by comparing the idea of immediacy with the myth of Penelope, he wants to emphasize the non-sense of the psychological model. To return to immediacy, he claims, means to aspire to know the world before knowledge. To undo the laborious weave of objectivation, however, promises an impossible outcome: to return to an original chaos. But how could a science present the world of objects without objectifying it? On the other hand, Natorp confesses that his early sketch of philosophical psychology also fell victim to the myth of the immediate. To further clarify this point, let me take a brief though informative detour through his 1888 *Introduction to the General Psychology*.

In the first section of the *Introduction*, entitled "The Object of Psychology", Natorp aims to get rid of confusions about the psychological model and to discover a strictly epistemological definition of the object of his philosophical psychology (Natorp 1888b, 43). At the end of the section, from §5.4 to §7, he concludes that consciousness – the most suitable concept for the lived experience of knowledge – must be approached in terms of the connection (*Verbindung*) of contents of thought (Natorp 1888b, 23). The idea of connection, Natorp argues, is the only positive definition of consciousness because it avoids the presumption of a metaphysical dualism between mind and body, the psychical and the physical, as is contained in the ideas of the *act of the I* and *conscienciality*. In fact, to speak of the 'connection' of contents permits us to retain the idea of consciousness as a movement or process and simultaneously permits us to turn our attention from unitary content – the analysis of which is logic – to the synthesis or production of such unities, the analysis of which is psychology. In particular, Natorp understands the connection of contents as the subjective condition for the appearance of unities of determination in everyday effective consciousness (*jedesmaliges Bewusstsein*) (Natorp 1888b; 1910a).⁶⁹

⁶⁸ In this respect, see (Crowell 2009; Dewalque 2010; Renz 2011; Palette 2018), and also the Introduction to this dissertation.

⁶⁹ The concept of "every-day effective consciousness" (*jedesmaliges Bewusstsein*), which figures in the definition of consciousness in the treatise of 1888 and the academic lessons on psychology of 1904, is no longer employed in the treatise of 1912 to define the epistemic role of the knowing subject. It is possible that Natorp decided to abandon this expression owing its psychologistic connotation. In the treatise of 1912

For the connection, or rather, to connect contents, is necessary to the awareness of undetermined manifolds as “unities of a manifold” (Natorp 1888b, 24). According to Natorp, philosophical psychology is interested in defining the general subjective form (or a priori subjective structure) of the connection of contents as such. In this first sketch of his philosophical psychology, Natorp argues that such form is time (Natorp 1888b, 33, 36). Every connection of contents is a complex of representations (*Vorstellungscomplexe*), whose order depends upon the relation of succession. The distinction between past, present, and future contents makes it possible to become aware of series of manifolds in terms of different interrelated unities –whether as successive or simultaneous series. In this sense, the temporal form is necessary to perceive what appears now and to distinguish it from what came before or what will come. Furthermore, the temporal form also makes it possible to aperceive the private stream of consciousness in an ordered way. Time, therefore, is the formal but sensible parameter to present complexes as particular contents of a certain series of determinations of thought. Now, while presenting this argument, Natorp recognizes that to talk of succession may re-awaken an odd assumption, namely, the metaphysical dualism of mind and body. On the one hand, it could lead us to assume that there is a time that is more original and intimate than the time of nature, namely, a *Zeitbewusstsein*, in which contents of thought take place. On the other, and consequently, it also could lead us to assume that complexes of content are ultimately mental events or activities produced by causal powers (*Kräfte*) taking place in such *Zeitbewusstsein*. In this respect, Natorp claims, the contents of thought are conceived of as acts that have causal power over other acts, the last cause of which would be identified by a knowing subject who receives or modulates sensible impingements from the external world (Natorp 1888b, §6.4). To forestall this line of interpretation, Natorp emphasizes that time is neither a *Zeitbewusstsein* nor an external conditioning of consciousness. Consciousness does not take place in (any form) of time, but time in consciousness (Natorp 1888b, §7). Rather, time is a form of consciousness, more specifically, the form that operates when we experience contents of thought (Natorp 1888b, 37ss). This means that time has an intrinsic dependence-connection with the principle of synthetic unity, for this principle introduces the possibility of unifying the manifolds at our disposal in the temporal stream of contents. Time, as much as other

the concrete or knowing subject is identified with the definition of consciousness as the kind of content (*Inhalt*) that is generated in the direction of subjectivation.

methods of thinking, depends upon synthetic unity. Nevertheless, there is yet another presupposition motivated by this argument that was not abandoned in the *Introduction* of 1888 and that, actually, Natorp uncritically adopts to characterize the method of psychology in the second part of his treatise. It is this presupposition in particular that Natorp criticizes in the passage under consideration, in order to abandon it in the second edition of his *General Psychology*. The abandonment of this presupposition generates a major redefinition of the meaning of the task of philosophical psychology (§3). But first, about this third and last relevant aspect of the quoted passage.

The presupposition in question is a version of what is now known as the ‘myth of the given’ (Renz 2011), for it supports the idea of an original ‘appearing’ that is simultaneously an original moment in the lived experience of knowledge. This presupposition emerges from the thesis that time is the form of the connection of thoughts. If time is the original form of consciousness, then we must presuppose that psychological analysis would consist in the endless regress to the immediacy of the act of ‘objectivation’. Despite the precautions Natorp took regarding time as a form of the connection, at the end of his *Introduction* he embraces the idea of a regression to immediacy, to characterize the method of psychology as the reconstruction of ‘objectivation’ (Natorp 1888b, §14). The reconstruction may be described as an analysis that begins from the objective unity of the concept, passing through the temporal formation of the phenomenon, and finally arriving to the lived experience of the appearance as such of phenomenal content.⁷⁰ In this way, the 1888 version of the philosophical psychology gives the impression that the fundamental task of psychology is to go back (*zurückgehen*) to the moment of indeterminacy or non-objectivity, a moment that comes before any determination, hence it reveals the appearance of the world of objects in or to consciousness, in its chaotic nudity, precisely in the form of an immediate appearing as such.

Let us to the passage in question. We see that what remains from the sketch of 1888 is the concept of the connection of contents as the positive definition, or point of departure, for philosophical psychology. In the context of the 1912 version, however, Natorp argues

⁷⁰ An interesting second detour which I cannot pursue here is the relation between Natorp’s definition of time as the form of connection and Cohen’s interpretation of the Kantian doctrine of the inner sense in the second edition of his *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Cohen 1885, 328–47). That Cohen employed his unpublished psychology to construct the chapter on the doctrine of the inner sense supports this possible relation between the two interpretations. In this respect, see (Edel 2010a, 52–65).

differently. First, Natorp emphasizes that the task of psychology is to know how the entire content of consciousness is possible. Second, he recalls that consciousness, meaning the 'to be conscious of', bears an intrinsic relation to knowledge. Therefore, the entire content of consciousness is not indeterminacy. Rather, and this is the third point Natorp highlights, the 'entire content' means the content *regarding* its connection. The connection, Natorp explains, is that which makes possible and produces the determination. This means that the connection is understood as the a priori form of the subjective as such. Thus, returning to the metaphor of Penelope's web for the last time, I would argue that Natorp's philosophical psychology is not the *undoing* of the web but the analysis of the a priori-subjective making of the web.

§3. Lived experience as an Epistemic Capacity: Potency and Subjectivation

Why is the connection (*Verbindung*) the most suitable object of psychology? What does the idea of connection contribute to the understanding of consciousness? These questions, which I believe are not clear in the current literature, are the key to reconstructing the entire plan of the General Psychology, at least in its propaedeutic function as the *foundation of the foundation* of psychology or the logos of the psyche (Natorp 1912a, IV). As I point out, with the concept of connection Natorp defines the form of consciousness. I believe that Natorp chose this concept for it brings together three relevant aspects for a philosophical psychology: the Kantian definition of consciousness; the meaning of consciousness as the capacity of *becoming aware of* something, and the expansion, or reformulation, of the neo-Kantian definition of thinking as it is described in his logic, but now in psychological terms. I will briefly explain these three topics and then penetrate Natorp's analysis of the 'connection of contents' as the subjective form of knowledge. On the one hand, the concept of connection is not new in the context of transcendental philosophy. It is well-known that Kant employed it to define the a priori performance of understanding or, more precisely, the epistemic function of the transcendental apperception (Kant 1900, Bd. III:B 129-131). For Kant, this concept is relevant for it captures the *dynamic* character of consciousness as an 'act' or 'movement'. Natorp writes:

„Es handelt sich hier offenbar um jene Eigenheit des Bewusstseins, welche Kant (und nach ihm besonders Trendelenburg) durch den Begriff der *Bewegung* im

Bewusstsein bezeichnet und durchaus auf die ‚Spontaneität‘ zurückführt.“ (Natorp 1912a, 55, Footnote. My emphasis).

Here, Natorp refers to a passage of the first Critique] in which Kant describes the ‘movement’ of consciousness in terms of the Transcendental Schematism of productive imagination (Kant 1900, Bd. III:B152). In fact, Kant defines the connection as the logical performance or act of understanding. But Kant believes that it is necessary to add the theory of the triple synthesis, particularly the “successive synthesis of the manifold”, in order to further explain the transcendental act that makes possible the application of the categories to sensible manifolds. Natorp, and the entire Marburg School, categorically reject the supposed necessity of introducing a third faculty –the transcendental imagination– to explain the act-character and function of the connection, for it introduces the error of psychologism. Unlike Kant, Natorp shows that the connection is not the result of a third faculty but the subjective side or direction of the epistemic function of thinking. He shows this by highlighting the German word for consciousness (*Bewusst-sein*), and this is the second aspect I mentioned. According to Natorp, thinking is the continuous and infinite *relation* between contents and series of contents. This is what Natorp aims to grasp with the concept of consciousness: to be conscious-of means to become aware (*Bewusst-sein*) of the relations between different contents. Awareness, that described by *Bewusst-sein*, consists in the relational operation that puts different contents under the subjective unity of the manifold. These connections, Natorp explains, do not take place in a different faculty but in the midst of the process of objectivation. The connection between contents is as necessary as the unity of the contents under the concept of the object. This claim brings us to the third aspect that Natorp aims to grasp with the concept of connection. With the idea of consciousness, Natorp shows that thinking is not a unilateral process that goes from a self-evident or transparent thought to its concretion in the object of perception. In the infinite process of knowledge-production – the *Wissens-schaffens*, as Natorp says – knowledge must also be understood as the knowing subject. The merit of the concept of consciousness is that it describes the double direction of knowledge: to ‘be conscious-of’ describes the relation to the object, while to ‘become aware of’ describes the relation to the subject. For Natorp, the classic opposition between subject and object has been misunderstood on the ground of metaphysics. Subject and object are not independent entities but correlative directions of knowledge. In his 1887 essay, Natorp claims that this a priori correlation was first discovered by ancient

philosophers with the relation of the general and the particular. Only in modern times has the relation become the opposition of the objective and the subjective. This opposition describes the a priori epistemic structure of knowledge. Since knowledge is an infinite task, then this correlative structure can be found at every level or stage of the cognitive process. In every objective judgement, Natorp claims, we can reconstruct both the subjective side (to judge) and the objective side (that which is judged as such-and-such). To distinguish the epistemic meaning of the opposition of subject and object, Natorp speaks of the directions of subjectivation and objectivation of knowledge. The direction of objectivation, which describes the epistemic act of knowledge from the viewpoint of the unity, is the main topic of Natorp's logic. The direction of subjectivation describes the epistemic act of knowledge from the viewpoint of the *awareness (Bewusst-sein)* of the unity of contents. In this regard, we now see that the concept of connection is a suitable way to describe the subjective form of consciousness. Now the main contribution of the 1912 *General Psychology* is precisely to take a step further in the analysis of the connection as the form of consciousness.⁷¹

Philosophical psychology analyses the direction of subjectivation, whose general a priori form is the connection of contents. In this respect, philosophical psychology does not deal with the metaphysical notion of the empirical subject. Rather, it deals with that I call the 'epistemic subject'. Natorp understands the epistemic subject as the epistemic engagement with the act of objectivation. In the case of rational beings, that is, individuals capable of making use of reason, to become engaged with the act of objectivation means committing herself to the task of determination by following the demand of validity that is proposed by the very act of objective thinking. Natorp also calls this commitment to the claim of validity the *Einverleibung* of possible contents in the matrix of possible experience (Natorp 1912a, 70). Subjective engagement or commitment to the task of knowledge is a necessary condition because, as we have seen, the object of knowledge is not a self-evident or transparent content for thinking. Rather, the object is a laborious construction for it demands that we achieve objectively valid determinations. In this sense, assurance of the knowledge of the object is as necessary as the object of knowledge, for it requires subjective conditions to overcome the individual viewpoint of

⁷¹ In fact, Chapter 4 on the meaning of *subjectivation* and Chapter 10 on the *disposition* of psychology are two main developments of the *General Psychology* of 1912. For a schematic comparison between the 1888 and the 1912 versions, see (Servois and Dufour 2008).

our common beliefs, opinions, assumptions, and so on. The idea behind the epistemic subject becomes clear when Natorp explains how he conceives of the philosophical analysis of subjectivation, the name of which is ‘reconstruction’ or ‘reconstructive method’. Since the ground of philosophical psychology is the transcendental method, Natorp posits this as the point of departure of the *fieri* of knowledge. But rather than looking at the logical functions that make possible the *unity* of the *fieri*, philosophical psychology attends to the way in which the *fieri* is manipulated by any rational being committed to the demand of validity. In particular, Natorp bears in mind the epistemic attitude of scientists when dealing with the task of producing new knowledge out of experiments (Natorp 1912a, 69–70), although this attitude can be observed in the everyday life of rational agents. Natorp emphasizes that scientists do not achieve objective results only by following already established laws. A parallel epistemic function is also mandatory: to interrogate the achieved concepts and laws in view of their application or non-application to particular cases. Natorp aims to show that this particular questioning is not simply directed at objective contents themselves but also to the *manner* in which they are actually conceived of or manipulated in concrete contexts.⁷² Scientists usually look back at their procedures and methods when they do not get coherent results with what is known or results which do not seem to make sense and, consequently, force them to produce new determinations for their findings. In such cases, what they question is precisely what Natorp calls the ‘subjective’ side - previous determinations, possible errors, misconceptions, unsuitable assumptions, false steps, and so on. In this epistemic engagement or commitment to the objectifying task, scientists –and in general, every knowing subject– evaluate their knowledge through a movement of reflection or awareness (*Bewusst-sein*) that enables them to observe the connections they have constructed in view of the phenomena under investigation, that is, the unknown object that they seek to produce. Now, by taking the subjective relation to the *fieri* as a case study, and even as a methodological model, Natorp holds that the critical philosopher can construct the envisioned philosophical psychology, the main goal of which is to deduce the subjective conditions involved in the epistemic engagement of the knowing subject. In this respect, we now see that neo-Kantian psychology does not deal with an empirical individual. Rather, it deals with the direction of subjectivation as the field or dimension

⁷² For a contemporary approach to the problem of epistemic engagement with objective claims in science and laboratory experimentation, it is possible to compare Natorp’s critical psychology with (Rheinberger 1997; Polanyi 2009).

of the lived experience of the demand objective validity makes in the production of *a fieri*. This is what I describe here using the concepts of epistemic engagement or the epistemic subject.

Let us recall that philosophical psychology analyses subjectivation in view of what Natorp calls the “entire content of consciousness” or: “the totality of the lived experienced” (Natorp 1912a, 20, 70, 78, 81, 85, 190, 217). I have explained that these expressions refer to the object of psychology, namely, the form of the connection of contents. This form, which characterizes the general structure of the subjective side of the act of objectivation, runs parallel to the objective form, namely, the unity of objectivation. Now, Natorp describes the epistemic function of the connection of contents in a way that resembles a *phenomenology* of consciousness.⁷³ The main epistemic act or moment of the connection is the ‘incorporation’ (*Einbeziehung*) of contents in the stream of consciousness. Natorp understands incorporation as the deliberate or rational act of putting different contents (i.e., parts of a possible manifold) in the general web or context of possible experience. Incorporation is a necessary condition for the production of a unified manifold, that is, a manifold that is not simply a chaotic arrangement of contents but rather a sum or set of possible determinations. In this sense, Natorp distinguishes two structural moments in the act of incorporation. First, incorporation makes it possible to form *a* manifold, that is, to put together or relate heterogeneous contents in view of a law-like context that may or may not determine them further as a unity of the manifold. Second, since incorporation follows the path of objectivation, it fulfills the necessary task of securing the epistemic de-subjectivation of the knowing subject, from her immediate impressions to the recognition of objectively valid determinations, so to speak. I will explain in more detail when I discuss the results of the method of reconstruction both the lived-experienced moments through which a rational agent must go in order to go beyond her own subjectivity, so to speak. In the context of the analysis of the form of subjectivation, Natorp seeks to further clarify the epistemic contribution of the connection

⁷³ It is necessary to be cautious with this definition, for it has motivated misleading interpretations of Natorp’s original plan for a philosophical psychology (see footnote 5 of this chapter). In fact, Natorp takes the idea of phenomenology from Husserl (Natorp 1912a, 241). Nevertheless, if we attend to the content of Natorp’s so-called ‘phenomenology’, we discover that he did not develop a phenomenology of consciousness in Husserl’s terms. Rather, as I hold in this chapter, philosophical psychology is the systematic analysis of the a priori subjective structure of the objectifying act of conceptualization (*Begriffsbildung*). The a priori subjective structure of conceptualization is further analysed in §4 of this chapter.

as incorporation. As we have seen, this act makes it possible to produce a manifold that is not sheer indeterminacy but rather an ensemble or relation of contents that motivates a possible determination. To illustrate this point, Natorp interprets four different pairs of concepts traditionally used to define the subjective and objective. I think we can consider the pairs that offer the clearest explanation; being-appearance and determination-determinable.

Traditionally, these two pairs of concepts have been used to illustrate the contraposition (*Gegenstellung*) between the objective and the subjective. Natorp, on the contrary, aims to use them as conceptual tools to expose the positive opposition (*Gegenverhältnis*), reciprocity (*Gegenseitigkeit*), or original correlation (*Korrelativität*) of subjectivation and objectivation. With the first conceptual pair, Natorp offers an explanation of the subjective incorporation of contents in terms of the neo-Kantian theory of judgement. With the second, he aims to re-interpret what he judges as the metaphysical misconception of the subjective. The first school to understand being and appearance as a static contraposition consisted of Xenophanes, Protagoras, Parmenides, and the entire Eleatic tradition. While ‘appearance’ is subjective because it belongs to *doxa*, namely, that which is not “certain knowledge”⁷⁴, what is called ‘being’ is objective for it belongs to the essence of things, that which cannot be reduced to “the opinions of mortals in which is no true belief at all”.⁷⁵ For Natorp, Plato was the first to overcome this view, but not without embracing it in the first place.⁷⁶ In his dialogues, the entire development of the problem of subjectivity is reflected most clearly. In the early dialogues, Plato seems to accept the contraposition of being and appearance, because the appearing, in contrast with a supposedly fixed being that pre-exists in our knowledge of it, is seen as non-objective. At the highest development of his doctrine, however, Plato had a radical change of mind. With the theory of ideas, Natorp explains, Plato redefines knowledge as the infinite task of thinking (Natorp 2004c; 1912a, 18–21). Knowledge is no longer opposed to being. Rather, Plato recognizes now that knowledge is the process by means of which being can be produced by human thinking. As Natorp explains, the platonic ideas are not intelligible substances, but conditions of possibility to determine every particular being, they are the a priori conditions of ‘limiting the unlimited’, for they function as hypotheses, general

⁷⁴ Natorp paraphrases Xenophanes’ fragment 34 (Natorp 1912a, 88).

⁷⁵ Natorp paraphrases Parmenides’ Fragment 1 (Natorp 1912a, 88).

⁷⁶ In this section, Natorp follows his well-known 1903 interpretation of Plato (Natorp 2004c).

positions of a fundament (*hypo-these*) or, in other words, law-like positions of general conditions for objective determination (*Ge-setz*). Thus Plato's idealist philosophy conducted a radical redefinition of appearance (*das Erscheinen*) and being, consequently, of the epistemological meaning of the subjective for the objective. In particular, as the subjective side of knowledge, 'appearing' gains two positive values. On the one hand, appearing is recognized as that through which the objective being becomes something *for ourselves*. Appearing, in this sense, is the incorporation (*Einverleibung*) in consciousness of a known being (Natorp 1912a, 84). On the other, appearing is not something *for ourselves* in the sense of the arbitrariness of *doxa*. Since knowledge is an endless process of determination, in which the supposed true and final being is an ideal pole for the infinite task, then the appearing *for ourselves* is at the same time the concrete or particular "presentation of being *at a certain level* of the infinitely progressive knowledge" (Natorp 1912a, 90. My emphasis). In this way, Natorp seeks to emphasize that appearing is no longer opposed to being. Rather, they maintain a necessary correlation, for the former is the epistemological instantiation or concretization of the latter. According to Natorp, the true meaning of this conceptual pair then confirms that there is no definite contraposition between objective and subjective determinations. Appearing is both objective and subjective, for it reveals something as being such-and-such at a certain level of knowledge. Nevertheless, in as much as knowledge progresses infinitely, the being that is reached may become subjective in a new context of determination. Furthermore, in the concept of appearing Natorp also identifies a necessary moment of knowledge: it is both a *self-revelation*, for it defines the *becoming aware* of something as an objectively valid determination, and it defines the most concrete or highest determination that thinking may achieve at a given level of its endless path.⁷⁷ This becomes clearer with the second conceptual pair under scrutiny.

The second conceptual pair is more relevant to my purpose of explaining the epistemic function of the incorporation of contents as the general act of subjectivation. Here for the first time in his treatise, Natorp offers an explicit definition of the form of connection. The first relevant hint he gives is that subjectivation consists in the epistemic production of what he calls "subjective validity" (Natorp 1912a, 80). Subjective validity is the inner

⁷⁷ In Natorp's interpretation of the conceptual pair in Plato, it is possible to see that he repeats the neo-Kantian thesis I explained above, namely, that perception is the instantiation in the midst of our continuous lived experience of that which appears, precisely as something that appears *as* such-and-such.

movement by means of which several undetermined contents – subjective contents, broadly speaking– are re-assembled or put in relation in view of the main principle of thinking, namely, the *legality* or demand for objective validity. Thus subjective validity makes it possible for the knowing subject to recognize or adhere to certain subjective assemblies of contents as propositions or statements that may or may not serve the production of an objectively valid determination. To further clarify the epistemic function of this inner movement of subjectivation, Natorp makes use of Aristotle’s concepts of actuality and potency. Using Aristotle, Natorp characterizes the act of objectivation as the progressive and infinite ‘actualization’ of concepts. Whenever thinking actualizes a priori concepts in regard to a particular question, we gain knowledge of something as a *fact*.⁷⁸ The conceptual actualization is not a static achievement of thinking, for every new determination, every new object of knowledge, lays the foundation for new possible determinations: what is objective at a certain level becomes subjective at a new level. Thus for the conceptual actualization to be concrete and progressive, there must be, as Natorp suggests, a moment in the epistemic process in which we can become aware not of the final concept of an object but of the *possibility* of expanding, correcting, or changing the conceptual course of thinking. Natorp defines the epistemic function of this possibility using Aristotle’s concept of ‘potency’ (Natorp 1912a, 82–84). With this concept, Natorp aims to specify or distinguish the epistemic contribution of the connection of contents or manifold in the act of objectivation. By potentiality, Natorp understands the capacity of the incorporation of contents to turn awareness of the unknown into awareness of something determinable. Potentiality, therefore, is the result of the connection of contents, for it defines the moment in which the knowing subject becomes aware (*Bewusst-sein*) of what is determinable (*das Bestimmbare*) in a given context of possible experience. The determinable is a potency, Natorp explains, in the sense that it is not a determined content, that is, an objective statement of thinking. Rather, potency is an assemblage of contents (a manifold) that, in virtue of its specific connection, can reveal different possibilities of determination. In this manner, Natorp shows that the form of connection makes possible the potentiality of determination, that is, the fixation of something determinable to constitute the epistemic possibility for the actualization of concepts.

⁷⁸ In this respect, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

It may be helpful to sum up the conceptual elements I have analysed to present Natorp's definition of the object of psychology. I began my analysis by claiming that Natorp defines the object of psychology in critical-epistemological terms (§2). By following the transcendental method, Natorp posits the *fieri* of knowledge as the point of departure of his analysis. Philosophical psychology looks at the subjective side of the *fieri*. I explain that the subjective side is identified with contents that were present in the path of objectivation at previous stages, before thinking reaches an 'object of knowledge'. Natorp defines the field of these contents as subjectivation. By reconstructing Natorp's arguments, I aimed to show that subjectivation is the epistemic act or direction of thinking that constitutes the 'epistemic engagement' of the knowing subject with the demand of validity. Furthermore, I held that epistemic engagement is a necessary subjective moment in the act of objectivation because it plays an epistemic role in the production of objective knowledge. Natorp demonstrates the epistemic contribution of subjectivation by analysing its general form or structure, namely, the form of connection. Natorp's explanation resembles a kind of phenomenology, insofar as it aims to describe how subjectivation realizes the actualization of concepts. In this sense, it has been said that philosophical psychology is a sort of phenomenology of the *lived* experience of conceptualization (*Begriffbildung*). However, it is not possible to equate it with Husserlian phenomenology, for the epistemological model of Natorp's psychology is the critical method. In this respect, the main epistemic act of subjectivation is understood as the incorporation of contents in the stream of consciousness, the meaning of which is the a priori construction of the manifold as the conceptual potentiality of objectivation. Potentiality has the form of a judgment, namely, that of a determinable statement or proposition. As a determinable statement, potentiality is an assemblage of contents referring to something unknown in such a way that it makes possible to produce a determination in view of the law-like context to which it belongs. Thus Natorp aims to show that subjectivation makes it possible to transform something uncertain or unknown – the question, the object in its psychological form as a *Vorwurf* (Natorp 1912a, 66–67) – into something "that can be known". Now, in the course of my explanation some aspects of Natorp's so-called phenomenology remained implicit. The first concerns the 'place' in which subjectivation takes place. By following Natorp's logic of knowledge, I suggest that the potentiality takes place in perception, for it consists in the 'subjective' possibility of conceptualization (Natorp, 1912, XX). The second aspect concerns the sense in which potentiality contains not one but two structural moments in its epistemic realization. Apart

from the construction of the determinable, potency also contains an inner or *reflexive* movement, in which the subject can transcend her own subjectivity in a movement of *de-subjectivation*. I will now discuss the method of psychology, where these implicit aspects will become explicit.

§4. The Reconstruction and Disposition of Potency

The second introductory question of Natorp's "foundation of the foundation of psychology", as he also calls to his general psychology, is that about the method of psychology (Natorp 1912a, 91–129, 189–213, 229–62). As we have seen, Natorp developed a formal definition of the object, focusing upon the epistemic function of subjectivation. The description is formal in two senses. First, it presents the general a priori structure of subjectivation, namely, the form of the connection of contents. Second, it defines the process and outcome of subjectivation, namely, 'potency' as the general result of the incorporation of contents in the epistemic movement of consciousness. The sections on the method of psychology focus upon two main tasks. On the one hand, Natorp dedicates several chapters of the *General Psychology* to present and justify the definition of the psychological method as a reconstruction. On the other, Natorp outlines significant methodological guidelines to further define the results of the reconstruction. I claim that in these guidelines Natorp elaborates his analysis of potency in the two structural moments I presented earlier. I explain here that the disposition of psychology demonstrates that potency takes place in perception both as the necessary subjective manufacture of the manifold and as a process of de-subjectivation for the recognition of objective validity.

Most of the literature on Natorp's psychology focuses upon the meaning of the reconstruction, without paying much attention to its methodical result, namely, disposition.⁷⁹ Regarding the idea of reconstruction, most scholars have understood it as a

⁷⁹ Scholars interested in Natorp's philosophical psychology have overlooked Chapter 10 on the *disposition* of psychology, despite the fact that it is one of the two most significant contributions in the second edition of the *General Psychology*, the other being Chapter 4 on subjectivation. Apart from the fact that the idea of reconstruction has been more attractive to scholars interested in the history of transcendental philosophy at the beginning of the 20th century, I think that the following might also have played a role in the decision to disregard this important section. **First**, the disposition comes at the end of the entire analysis of subjectivation and it seems to offer only incomplete guidelines, as I claim above. In this respect, consider, for example, the reviews mention in Chapter 2, note 14 of this dissertation. **Second**, the development of the disposition, the entire book in fact, is labyrinthine. Indeed, for the development of my interpretation I had

return to the origin of knowledge in terms of a dissolution of all conceptual mediation. Whilst this interpretation has motivated several comparisons between the reconstruction, the Husserlian reduction, and the Heideggerian destruction, the idea of reconstruction as a dissolution or retrogression to a pre-objective foundation of objectivity is grounded in what I call, with Natorp, the ‘myth of immediacy’ (Natorp 1912a, 80–81). In order to avoid this misreading, Natorp usually contrasts the reconstructive method with the objective method of experimental psychology, arguing that scientific psychology is based on the contradictory movement I explain earlier: the idea of the subjective as a pre-given immediacy and the attempt to objectify it in its very occurrence. Against this reading, I essay another alternative, namely, that the object of psychology is the form of connection in its general epistemic result: the potency. Thus I hold here that the matter under reconstruction is not any immediacy but the general structure of potency. In favour of this reading, we can consider here Natorp’s claim that the act of objectivation is the very fundament of the reconstruction. In this respect, I explain above that psychology is the reconstruction of the *fieri* in its subjective direction (Natorp 1887; 1912a, 200–202). Now, in regard to the problem of method, Natorp clarifies that this does not mean that the reconstruction performs an objectivation of its own. According to Natorp, that would be a similar mistake to that Husserl made when discussing a kind of second-order objectivation (Natorp 1912a, 281). The reconstruction is based on objectivation, rather, in the sense that it aims to isolate and explain a necessary subjective moment in the production of the *fieri*, namely, the moment in which the epistemic consciousness constructs the potency, that which makes it possible to subjectively identify the unknown as something determinable. In what follows, I will show that this is precisely what the disposition does, therefore, it should be read as the general methodological result of the reconstruction.

Natorp presents the disposition of psychology as an ‘exhaustive’ analysis of the entire content of lived experience in consciousness. By ‘exhaustive’, Natorp understands the elaboration of the systematic unity of subjectivation, as it takes place in the form of potency. This unity, however, must reveal the general “differentiations” in the potency

to reconstruct a possible, not explicit, division of the chapter. Thus: Introduction to the disposition (§1); the epistemological components of potency (§2-5); provinces of disposition and its limit-concepts (§6-8); justification of disposition in comparison with folk-psychology and genetic psychology (§9), and the critique of the idea of ‘time-consciousness’ (§10-§15) (Natorp 1912a, 229–62).

(Natorp 1912a, 234). In this sense, Natorp insists, the reconstruction does not return to “the lowest most concrete level of objectivation” but the understanding of the general meaning, that is, the reconstruction of subjectivation as “presentation of the highest fundamental concepts”, the “highest disposition of the psychological”, that is, the fundamental psychological moments implied in the enactment of any potency (Natorp 1912a, 232). In order to construct his analysis, Natorp frames the disposition in the following epistemological models of his transcendental logic. First, he distinguishes the *directions* of consciousness. For any objective field of thinking, there is a direction of consciousness. In regard to the analysis of potency, he emphasizes the two most general directions of the *theoretical* and the *practical*: the former is the direction towards the definition of what is (*Sein*), and the second is the direction towards what ought to be (*Sollen*) Second, Natorp also distinguishes levels of consciousness. Ththese two logical elements serve as the construction of the two ‘provinces’ of the disposition of psychology. Natorp defines these provinces as the two most general tasks of the reconstruction. The first task consists in the “ontic reconstruction of the potency”. In Natorp’s words, it consists in a sort of phenomenology because it shows how levels of consciousness occur in the subjective moment of potency: the question of the *species* of consciousness. It concerns the content of potentiality. The second task, on the other hand, is set out in Genetic Reconstruction: Levels of the Unities of lived Experience.

On these methodological grounds, Natorp continues his analysis by discussing the possibility of constructing an ontological definition of potency, that presents it as such. However, as we already know, potency is not an ontological entity that could be defined independently of the infinite task of knowledge. Within the epistemological horizon of subjectivation, potency takes place in the whole movement of thinking. Natorp characterizes this movement as a three-layered process (Natorp 1912a, 236–39). First, the position of a hypothetical particular that functions as the point of departure for the task of determination. Second, the position of the goal-oriented direction of the determination. Third, the infinite progression of this direction, in whose development the initial particular is constantly re-defined in view of the multiple connections produced by the task of determination. Thus if we aspired to localize the potency somewhere in this epistemological scheme, we would discover that it takes place in all of the three instances, for it defines the general moment in which merely possible connections between contents gain form and meaning. Any definition of the potency as such, therefore, would turn it

into something static, something which is not. For this reason, Natorp suggests two metaphorical definitions of potency. Potency cannot be something given in time for it is not a determination whatsoever but the condition for every determinability. It is, therefore, the 'obscure fundament' upon which every lived experience depends (Natorp 1912a, 240). Thus the potency can only be defined in analogy to a ground on which no difference or similarity has yet been established. As such, Natorp claims, potency resembles Anaximander's concept of the *apeiron*, namely, that which has no boundaries (Natorp 1912a, 233–34). But since potency is the a priori form of every lived experience, Natorp also compares it with Cohen's definition of *feeling* (*das Fühlen*) (Cohen 1889, 154–56). Cohen's idea coincides with Natorp's of potency because it defines an "original consciousness", the "general disposition of our awareness (*Bewusstwerdens*)", which is necessary to become aware of any special determination that may or may not take place in the objectifying stream of consciousness (Natorp 1912a, 234). Finally, this ontological consideration of potency is what enables Natorp to conclude that the idea of a potency as such, a potency seen in its simplest and purest possibility, only constitutes an ideal pole for the delimitation of the psychological analysis of knowledge.

But potency can be further defined as that which takes place in the entire movement of consciousness. For potency is that which gives the general structure to the subjectively assessed movement of consciousness. For this reason, Natorp prefers to define it on the ground of the directions of consciousness. Whether theoretical or practical, the original position of potency in perception has the form of a movement towards the determination of what *is* or what *ought to be*. This movement is not the unconscious march towards an unknown goal. Rather, it is an intentional tendency, the subjective definition of which is the *aspiration* to the realization of the legality of thinking. As the subjective aspiration to objective validity, potency mobilizes or motivates the epistemic transformation of the individual into an appropriate 'epistemic subject', for it has the function of installing the possibility of epistemic engagement with the legality of thinking. Unfortunately, Natorp does not further elaborate on the idea of aspiration. Nevertheless, in his *Lessons on General Psychology* of 1910, he offers some hints to enable us to understand the epistemic functioning of the aspiration. There he talks of a "feeling of aspiration" (*Strebungsgefühl*) (Natorp 1910a, 28–30).

Since we can only gain clarity about the epistemic function of potency in its making, that is, by paying attention to its epistemic performance, Natorp designates the disposition as the systematic presentation of the psychological structure of potency. Natorp conceives of this structure as an epistemic path composed of a limited number of ‘last’ or most fundamental epistemic elements. As mentioned earlier, the disposition presents these elements in a double perspective. On the one hand, it defines the structural elements or levels of determination that are in play in the production of objective knowledge. On the other, it also defines the potential elements that are in play in the production of the epistemic engagement of the knowing subject. Thus the first perspective is the phenomenological task and the second is the ecological or genetic task of reconstruction (Natorp 1912a, 240–48).

§4.1. The First Province: Epistemic Levels of Potency

Natorp’s phenomenology of potency takes Kant’s model of the so-called ‘subjective deduction’.⁸⁰ Already in his *Introduction* of 1888, at the end of the treatise, Natorp suggests that the general psychology should be understood as a “subjective deduction” of the a priori elements of knowledge (Natorp 1888b, 128–29). In the 1912 version, however, the model of subjective deduction serves only to define the ‘first province’ of psychology, for it deals with the structural elements or levels of potency. Natorp also defines the first province using the concept of phenomenology, which he declares to have borrowed from Husserl. Nevertheless, it is clear that Natorp has in mind a transcendental-psychological reconstruction of the conceptual formation of thinking. In fact, in a very brief and fleeting passage he characterizes the first province as a psychology of conceptualization, in contraposition to the idea of a phenomenological return to the pure immediacy of lived experience (Natorp 1912a, 242). In this respect, the first province consists in the psychological distinction of the epistemic levels in potency that are necessary to the formation of concepts or objectively valid determinations. Natorp distinguishes three general levels - sensation, representation, and concept (Natorp 1910a, 37). Since each level defines an epistemic contribution to the formation of concepts, so to speak, it is important to bear in mind that the psychological analysis performs a sort of

⁸⁰ As we will see, Natorp’s original contribution consists in the epistemological interpretation of the three levels defined by Kant in the subjective deduction of the first critique: sensation, representation, and recognition in the conceptual formation. To my knowledge, there are no systematic studies of Natorp’s critical-epistemological interpretation of the subjective deduction to date.

chirurgical abstraction. In its own making, each level presupposes the operation of the others. Thus the aim of the first province is to present in isolation what is actually bound in the general form of potency.

From the viewpoint of the critical psychology, the first level is sensation (*Empfindung*). In accordance with his logic, Natorp also presents sensation as the “last element for every connection in consciousness” (Natorp 1910a, 15), therefore the: “subjective fundament for the determination of the object” (Natorp 1910a, 17). As the “matter of knowledge”, sensation is the moment of the undetermined to be determined, that is, that which has to be transformed by the knowing subject into something determinable. Natorp explains that sensation as such is simply the quantitative fixation of something as ‘singular’ (*Einzelne*) and the qualitative fixation of something as ‘identical’ (*Identische*) or ‘real’ (*Reales*). Sensation corresponds to the identification of different particularities, contingent unities that together constitute an undetermined whole, a plurality of separate items. The position of the particular in accordance with quantitative and qualitative descriptions of sensible features serves to produce statements (*Aussagen*) with no clear context of determination, except for their immediate relation to the knowing subject. Thus sensation would correspond to statements about what we see or hear in a contingent here and now, making use of indexical expressions of the “that looks red”, “that seems big”, “I am cold” sort. From the viewpoint of critical psychology, therefore, these statements do not define sensory stimulus, as is commonly assumed by Fechner and other experimental psychologists (Natorp 1910a, 18), but positions of thinking that are the simplest we can express for they rely upon quantitative and qualitative reports.

The second level of potency is representation (*Vorstellung*). Representation is what makes it possible to transform the undetermined contents of sensation into something determinable. It does so by constructing the ‘serial setting’ (*Aufreihung*) of the elemental contents (*Elementalinhalte*) of sensation. The epistemic function of representation is to construct the “determined path of determination” (Natorp 1910a, 38), by presenting (*darstellen*) sensations in view of a common sensible context. Representation, therefore, is the necessary subjective condition or preparation for the realization or concretization of the concept and it should be judged as the most characteristic function of potency (Natorp 1910a, 33). To present sensations in a common context consists in the application of the methods of intuition. Natorp holds that the methods of time and space are obtained

from the very lived experience of the serial setting of sensations. In the serial position of sensations, the knowing subject becomes aware of time and space as the most general order parameters (*Ordnungsweisen*). Once the knowing subject becomes aware of the function of time and space, she can begin to assemble sensations in accordance with temporal and spatial parameters (Natorp 1910a, 34). This allows her to transcend her personal and contingent perspective and to begin to judge her contents of thought in view of temporal and spatial relations. Likewise, Natorp explains, the relations of succession and simultaneity allow her to judge her undetermined contents in view of the laws of relation. Statements of representation turn the contents of sensation into contents defined by sensible-logical relations. For example, “this is redder than that”, “that is bigger than this”, “it is cold in here” etc. But Natorp holds that the subjective outcome of statements of representation is not simply the possibility of being able to define contents in spatio-temporal contexts. Rather, it is the possibility of turning something undetermined into something determinable in view of possible logical relations. In this respect, Natorp calls the determinable of representation ‘schemes’ or ‘images’ (Natorp 1910a, 56). The scheme or image is an epistemic representation that shows or reveals the determinability of any possible determinable. It is epistemic inasmuch as it presents general and iterable relations of determination. For Natorp, to represent things as “two close points” in space, or “these three points form a triangular figure”, or even words as “signals” for possible meanings, “Socrates is mortal”, all these cases are statements that define things from sensible or logical “relations” (Natorp 1910a, 53, 57). Thus the contents presented are representations precisely in the sense that they bring to consciousness general and iterable determinations (for example, not *these* three points but any three points may be judged as a triangle, if they satisfy certain logical relations). Thus with representation the potency abandons the particularity of the undetermined and embraces the generality of what is determinable regarding certain contexts of possible experience. Now the general iterability of schemes makes possible a second necessary function of thinking for the production of objective knowledge: remembrance (*Erinnerung*) (Natorp, 1910, 35). Against Hume and their heirs, Natorp claims that remembrance is not the mere association of sensations. Remembrance is the capacity of representations to produce a *panoramic view* (*Überschau*) (Natorp 1910a, 40), in which past events can be actualized in view of the sensible-logical relations they satisfy. In this manner, Natorp claims, remembrance is the capacity to generate identity between past, present, and even future contents, in virtue of their general meanings as parts of law-like series. In other words, remembrance, the

“wonder” of human thinking as Natorp calls it, is the psychological realization – the lived experience – of the logical principle of synthetic unity (Natorp 1910a, 39–40; 1912a, 54, 123, 169, 259, 260). Thus image and remembrance are the two epistemic sides of the level of representation.

Finally, the third level of potency is the concept. From logic, we know that the concept is: “the consciousness of the general method of setting an object” (Natorp 1910a, 38). “On this function”, Natorp argues: “is grounded every recognizable identity in sensory and representational content” (Natorp 1910a, 54). With Kant, Natorp also calls the concept the: “original synthetic unity of consciousness” (Natorp 1910a, 54). Once we identify a ‘unity’, whether sensitive or representational, the concept is already at work. Psychological analysis of the concept makes explicit how the conceptualization operates in potency. Just as representation unifies sensations, so the concept unifies representations. Unlike the two previous levels, the concept does not rely upon perceptual reports whatsoever (Natorp 1910a, 53). The concept is a completely mediate (*mittelbare*) unification, for it produces an abstraction over the scheme: an abstraction over another abstraction. To unify the scheme in pure conceptual terms, the concept determines the contents of representation in accordance with the logical functions of objective knowledge. The concept turns the quantitative-qualitative determination of something into a variable, whose content or meaning now depends strictly upon the logical rules of the expressed relation. Thus conceptualization makes possible statements of the sort “the dominant wavelength of a certain variable is 628 nanometers”, “the height of such and such is 5 metres”, “There are -2 degrees Celcius” etc. In these statements, the content does not depend upon subjective reports, as in previous cases. Rather, the content is determined in view of objective rules or laws. Thus the concept introduces an interpretation (*Auffassung*) that sets the general and necessarily “unified view of consciousness”, the “concentration of the view”, the “one view of the spirit”, that transforms the determinable into a possible determination (Natorp 1910a, 53, 54). In other words, the determinable becomes a determination of possible experience. Now, the conceptual determination is not definitive, for it can also be subjected to further determinations. In fact, by turning the particular into a variable, a symbol that represents an objective value in a given law-like context, the concept also affords the possibility to further determine the general rules that are in play in the definition. In this sense, the concept not only looks at the particular for further determination. It also looks at the

particular to further determine the general itself, in the case that a particular outcome would require doubting, reflecting, and finally revising the general rules or laws in play. This becomes clearer in the case of the mathematical sciences, in which statements about rules, laws, and theorems can be formalized. In our common agency as knowers, we may see this in cases in which particular situations force us to re-interpret ideas. For example, when a person steals to maintain his family, we tend to judge this particular situation by reflecting on the very meaning of the idea of good, evil, justice etc. According to Natorp, this is possible because the epistemic function of the concept consists in its pure universality and *abstractionality* (*Abstraktheit*) (Natorp 1910a, 53–54). Universality means the possibility of infinitely *unifying* an undetermined plurality of represented contents under one or a common consideration or perspective of objective determination. Abstractionality means the possibility of infinitely delimiting the perspective through employment of the selected perspective or consideration. While universality defines the *extension* of the concept, objective unity itself, abstractionality defines the *specificity* of the contents, the objective relation to the manifold.

§ 4.2. *Second Province: Potency and the Levels of Lived Unities*

With the second province, Natorp aims to explain how the principle of transcendental apperception is fulfilled by every concrete subject. The main argument is that, for every epistemic level of potency, there is a corresponding level of apperception or unity of lived experience. Thus, following the three levels of sensation, representation, and concept-formation, the second province of critical psychology distinguishes three levels of unities of lived experience (*Erlebniseinheiten*).

As I explain in the previous chapter, Natorp deduces the a priori logical functions of thinking from the so-called highest principle of synthetic unity (*Synthetische Einheit*). Natorp argues that this act is the most fundamental condition for objective determination, because it is the last logical act we are forced to presuppose in order to recognize the objective validity of any statement we may ponder, hypothesize, or make. In order to emphasize the logical function of identity or unity that this principle fulfills, Kant chooses to characterize it with the expression “I think”. And for this reason, Kant also characterizes the principle of synthetic unity with the psychological concept of self-consciousness. Thus, as Kant famously put it, the “I think” must be able to accompany

all of our representations, for it is that which gives objective unity to our representations. Notwithstanding these psychological characterizations, it is possible to observe that the principle of synthetic unity does not express any content about ourselves as thinking substances. Rather, synthetic unity only expresses the a priori or general form that underlies all of our thoughts (Kant 1900, Bd. III:B 132-139). In this respect, Natorp claims that the Kantian definition “I think” correctly shows that the I is understood as an “ideal pole”, a “conceptual limit” (*Begriffsgrenze*), or a boundary (*Begrenzung*) (Natorp 1912a, 240). The Kantian I, therefore, does not define the personal identity of the knowing subject, and Kant stresses the methodological impossibility of making the “I think” the object of a rational psychology (Kant 1900, Bd. III:B 157-159, A 343/ B 401).

Whilst Natorp agrees with Kant in denying the possibility of making the “I” the object of scientific inquiry, he still thinks that it is necessary to explain the way in which the transcendental apperception takes place in the epistemic life of a knowing subject. The Kantian deduction that Natorp endorses in his genetic logic only presents the ideal or objective form of the epistemic capacity of apperception, without explaining how such a function concretely “accompanies” the epistemic performance of concrete subjects (Natorp 1912a, 244). The second province of the general psychology carries out this task, inasmuch as it aims to explain the general: “empirical unities of apperception” (Natorp 1912a, 244). In principle, the aim of the second province is to describe in a stratified way how the logical principle of “I think”, or synthetic unity, operates in every epistemic level of potency (Natorp 1912a, 243). For this reason, the second province follows the structural levels described by the first: sensation, representation, and concept-formation. But in order to analyse the epistemic constitution of “I think” in every level of potency, Natorp must define the very concept of potency in an ecological way. The concept he chooses for this task is the Cohenian concept of feeling (*Fühlen*) (Natorp 1912a, 234).] Natorp considers the concept of feeling to be suitable because it defines the subjective but “general disposition of our becoming aware (*Bewusstwerdens*)” of the representations we have of our surroundings. This subjective disposition towards our representations consists in the epistemic capacity of a knowing subject to evaluate whether the statements she may or may not make satisfies or not her own demands of objective determination (Natorp 1910a, 26). In this respect, the concept of feeling aims to express the general form of every concrete or vivid relation of her own act of objectivation. According to Natorp, this relation takes two fundamental forms: either it is a relation of satisfaction –

then the determination is lived experienced by the knowing subject as admissible— or it is a relation of dissatisfaction – then the determination is lived experienced by the knowing subject as inadmissible. In either case, we see that the concept of feeling defines the a priori subjective form of the concrete self-relation of the knowing subject with the demand of legality. In other words, the concept of feeling defines the subjective concretization or realization of the demand of legality. Thus the feeling Natorp speaks of is not a merely individual or arbitrary emotion, for it defines the feeling of the epistemic aspiration (*Streben*) to legality (Natorp 1912a, 237). For this reason, Natorp also characterizes the concept of feeling using the concept of “feeling of aspiration” (*Strebungsgesühl*) (Natorp 1910a, 28). To feel the aspiration to legality means, first and foremost, to constantly determine the objective validity of our contents through a reflective process that enables us to question or challenge the effective reality of our contents in view of increasingly new possibilities of objective determination (Natorp 1910a, 26). To feel the aspiration, therefore, means to make possible the transition from one determination to another, by assessing how the former determination values in a particular context of experience. In Natorp’s words, the feeling of aspiration is the epistemic subjective capacity that makes it possible to transform something that initially seemed determined into something that is undetermined in a wider context, and then again into something determinable in view of the law-like parameters of a context that is more accurate than the previous context. For example, consider the transition from the Ptolemaic model of the planetary system, to the Tychonic model, to finally the Copernican model.⁸¹ This epistemic capacity of feeling the aspiration, therefore, proceeds

⁸¹ In this respect, I invite the reader to consider the following passage written by Michael Polanyi in which he develops an idea that resembles the neo-Kantian perspective of Natorp: “What is the true lesson of the Copernican revolution? Why did Copernicus exchange his actual terrestrial station for an imaginary solar standpoint? The only justification for this lay in the greater intellectual satisfaction he derived from the celestial panorama as seen from the sun instead of the earth. Copernicus gave preference to man’s delight in abstract theory, at the price of rejecting the evidence of our senses, which present us with the irresistible fact of the sun, the moon, and the stars rising daily in the east to travel across the sky towards their setting in the west. In a literal sense, therefore, the new Copernican system was as anthropocentric as the Ptolemaic view, the difference being merely that it preferred to satisfy a different human affection. It becomes legitimate to regard the Copernican system as more objective than the Ptolemaic only if we accept this very shift in the nature of intellectual satisfaction as the criterion of greater objectivity. This would imply that, of two forms of knowledge, we should consider as more objective that which relies to a greater measure on theory rather than on more immediate sensory experience. So that, the theory being placed like a screen between our senses and the things of which our senses otherwise would have gained a more immediate impression, we would rely increasingly on theoretical guidance for the interpretation of our experience, and would correspondingly reduce the status of our raw impressions to that of dubious and possibly misleading appearances.” (Polanyi, 1962, 2).

by means of an inner or subjective questioning of the objective validity of an immediate determination in regard to a more accurate or law-like context of experience. Hence, based on the concept of feeling of aspiration, the second province of the general psychology aims to show or open up a practical dimension in the epistemic process of potency-formation. In fact, the fundamental character of the feeling of aspiration is to constantly affirm or deny our sensible, schematic, or conceptual statements (*Aussage*), in accordance with the concrete self-relation via the demand of legality (Natorp 1910a, 27, 28). This means that the feeling of aspiration is the subjective realization of an epistemic decision (*Entscheidung*) about the validity of our own claims in regard to a particular context of possible experience. The feeling of aspiration, therefore, is a practical epistemic moment, in which the knowing subject, through her own subjective movement of self-reflection, can assess whether the objectifying demand is or is not realized or satisfied by such-and-such a statement. For this reason, the feeling of aspiration, which must accompany the three levels of potency, enables us to be aware of our representations as “acts of our own” (Natorp 1910a, 29–30). In this sense, the feeling of aspiration can also be defined as the subjective correlate of logical satisfaction of the demand of legality. In Natorp’s words, “the moment of the aspiration, therefore, is what transforms the elemental contents and their connections into ‘our’ lived experiences” (Natorp 1910a, 30), that is, into an epistemic decision that has been made in accordance with our own act of objectivation.

As I have indicated, the task of the second province is to reconstruct the particular form of the “I think” in every level of potency. However, Natorp did not develop the genetic analysis of the unities of lived experience in detail. On the contrary, he only gives general guidelines about the three levels of the unities of lived experience. However, in his lessons on general psychology from 1910 there is a clearer picture of the structure of the “I think” that allows us to better conceive of the kind of analysis Natorp had in mind (Natorp 1974; 1901b; 1910a).

The first level of apperception is that of the individual or personal I (Natorp 1974, 66). The personal I belongs to sensation, for it defines the tendency of a knowing subject to satisfy her aspiration of determination only in view of sensible statements. The “I think” of the personal I, therefore, is an empirical form of apperception that has two epistemological limitations. On the one hand, the I of sensation, the I that accompanies

our merely sensible representations, does not extend beyond the immediate perspective posed by perceptual reports. On the other, since the subject's judgment is limited to quantitative and qualitative statements about sensible things, the empirical apperception of the personal I may generate the false idea that the objectivity of our thoughts depends upon sensible determinations, as a solipsist or subjectivist approach would hold.

The second level of apperception corresponds to that of representation (Natorp 1974, 77). As we know, representation consists in the connection of different sensory and non-sensory contents in view of an encompassing and unitary context of experience. According to Natorp, the connection of different contents, whether sensible or intelligible, enables the knowing subject to begin to discover that her sensible immediate statements must be judged in view of the law-like context in which they take place. If the question of the legality of our contents is not considered and recognized by the knowing subject, then she cannot claim that her statements are true or false, valid or invalid, appropriate or inappropriate, possible or not possible, and so on. In order to recognize the validity of her claims, the knowing subject is responsible for making a decision in regard to the demand of legality. In other words, the decision she makes must follow the subjective path of her own feeling of aspiration. In this respect, Natorp emphasizes that the epistemic discovery the knowing subject makes is that her connection of contents no longer depends upon mere sensations, but in the very way or perspective in which the connection is established. In Natorp's words:

“this moment of the aspiration, then, is what makes of the elementary contents and their connections ‘our’ lived experiences. That they all belong to me (my lived experience) actually means that they are connected in a concrete unity (of my own I) through this moment, which pervades and transcends them. All the more so must this moment be presupposed in all that is psychological with no exception, and must already be included in the concept of the psychic element.” (Natorp 1910a, 30).⁸²

⁸² “Dies Moment des Strebens also ist es, was die Elementarinhalte wie deren Verbindungen erst zu „unseren“ Erlebnissen macht. Daß sie alle mir (meinem Erleben) angehören, besagt eigentlich, daß sie durch dieses sie alle durchziehende und über alle gleichsam übergreifende Moment zur konkreten Einheit (meines Ich) verbunden sind. Um so mehr muß dieses Moment in allem Psychischen ausnahmslos vorausgesetzt und schon in den Begriff des psychischen Elements aufgenommen werden.”

Thus in the structural moment or level of representation, the empirical apperception of the “I think” takes place as a self-reflective process or movement to the production of new connections, which is crucially determined by the normative force of the demand of legality. Concretely, the epistemic contribution of the second moment of the empirical apperception consists in the unfolding of a new epistemic possibility, namely, the possibility that the knowing subject may disagree with her own connections, for the sake of more refined or sustained statements about the objects under scrutiny. In this respect, it is possible to claim that the empirical apperception of the second level triggers a sort of splitting of the knowing I: what first seemed correct to the knowing subject at the level of sensation, may now seem imprecise, doubtful, too naïve, or even incorrect, as tends to be the case whenever we start judging things from a more encompassing context than that of our immediate sensations. Hence the second level of empirical awareness brings about the epistemic germ to transform any connection of contents in practical decisions, that is, a decision made on our own in accordance with the demand of legality.

The third and final level of apperception is the “transcendental apperception” (Natorp 1974, 82). Once the knowing subject discovers the possibility of making increasingly better or more accurate decisions, her relation to the demand of legality becomes stronger, to the extent that she now recognizes not only the possibility but, more radically, the responsibility to find more refined objective determinations for her thoughts. At this level, the apperception of the knowing subject overcomes its immediate relation to the sensible, insofar as she begins to focus upon objective validity itself. In this respect, Natorp characterizes this form of the “I think” with the concept of a ‘common-I’ (*Gemein-ich*) (Natorp 1912a, 246). Unlike the empirical apperception of sensation and representation, the apperception of the third level is ‘common’, inasmuch as it is a kind of awareness that transcends any contingent motivation to judge, as in the case of individual opinions, beliefs, preferences etc. In this sense, apperception of the third level is not the apperception of the concrete subject as an individual, but the apperception of the knowing subject as part of a rational community.⁸³ In other words, the ‘common-I’ is an

⁸³ In Natorp words, “In dieser dualen Gegenüberstellung zweier Ich ist stets Vereinigung sowohl als Scheidung. Das Du ist mein Du, und Ich bin auch ihm wiederum ein Du. Und dieser Beziehungswechsel, dies Sichsondern und wieder Sichvereinen wiederholt sich, wie gesagt, in an sich unbeschränkter Stufenfolge. Dieser Begriff der Gemeinschaft ist nicht etwa bloß ethisch und von daher abgeleiteterweise für die Psychologie des Willens von besonderer Bedeutung, sondern er erstreckt sich genauegleichsinnig auch auf das Gebiet des Seinbewusstseins, da ja Zeit und Raum, die Grundformen des Seinsbewusstseins, überall von Bewusstsein zu Bewusstsein die Brücke schlagen, und zwar nach Koexistenz und Sukzession

apperception that transcends our empirical individuality, because our epistemic decisions of objective determination are now made in view of an encompassing form of consciousness. Thus at the level of concept-formation, which is the epistemic context in which Natorp's genetic logic moves, apperception of the common-I makes it possible for the concrete subject to judge in accordance with the objectifying perception by the idea of the infinite task of legality, and not merely in accordance with the subjective pretension of finding a definitive or absolute statement.

§5. Conclusion: Philosophical Psychology and the *Recognition* of the Legality of Thinking

To conclude this chapter, I will sum up the previous paragraphs in which I present my systematic reconstruction of Natorp's philosophical psychology and I will emphasize what I believe is the original epistemological contribution of philosophical psychology to the community of work (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) of Marburgian neo-Kantianism. In §1 I return to the relation between perception and the a priori 'ought' of legality, in order to show that the fact of perception is not only the objectively valid conclusion of the objectivation of thinking. Moreover, the fact of perception is an epistemically justified determination, which is lived experienced by the knowing subject as a normative decision (*Entscheidung*). The concrete subject perceives the object because she recognizes and understands the objective validity of its objectifying act. In this respect, I claim that the a priori condition for the lived experience of this recognition is one that exceeds the scope of genetic logic, for the a priori subjective structure of the knowledge of the object concerns practical capacities, such as the capacity to make a decision (*Entscheidung*) with possible connections between contents in view of the logical demand of legality. It is the task of philosophical psychology to analyse the a priori epistemic structure that makes it possible to fulfill or realize the normative decision of objective perception. In §2 I analyse Natorp's definition of the object of philosophical psychology. I demonstrate that such object is not the immediacy of the given. Rather, it is the a priori form of every epistemic lived experience of consciousness, namely, the form of connection (*Verbindung*). I claim

zugleich; ebenso auch nach der Prozeßion: treten wir doch durch eine "Erziehung", die ebensowohl Erziehung, d. h. Hinaufentwicklung der Vorstellung wie des Willens ist, in eine Gemeinschaft ein, die ebenso, ja deutlicher fast, rückwärts zu den fernsten Geschlechtern wie vorwärts in die erst zu gründende Zukunft der kommenden Geschlechter hinüberreicht." (Natorp 1912a, 246).

that the form of connection defines the a priori possibility of the construction of the *determinable*, the critical-psychological concept of which is potency. In §3 I analyze the epistemic function of potency. I show that Natorp conceives of the connection of lived experiences as the general form of the epistemic process of subjectivation (*Subjektivierung*). Subjectivation is the epistemic act by means of which the incorporation of possible contents becomes possible. Once incorporation satisfies the law-like conditions of the context of determination, the knowing subject recognizes potency (*Potenz*) for the actualization of objectifying concepts. I argue that the epistemic process of subjectivation makes possible the epistemic engagement of the knowing subject with the demand of validity, which is a necessary epistemic capacity to effectively recognize and actualize the objective conceptualization of thinking. Finally, in §4 I analyse the reconstructive method of philosophical psychology. Against the common interpretation that defines the reconstruction as a kind of de-objectivation (*Ent-Objektivierung*) of the object of knowledge, I claim that Natorp conceives of the method of reconstruction as the critical-epistemological reconstruction of the form of connection or potency. The disposition of philosophical psychology is the preliminary result of this reconstruction (§4.1, §4.2). In §4.1 I show that the so-called ‘phenomenology of consciousness’ actually describes the a priori subjective levels for the construction of potency. In §4.2 I show that potency is also grounded on an a priori ecological structure – from the unity of personal consciousness to the unity of transcendental consciousness– the epistemic function of which is to make possible the necessary epistemic engagement of the knowing subject with the demand of legality.

The systematic reconstruction I offer above reveals two significant epistemological contributions of philosophical psychology. The first has to do with the *complementary* character of philosophical psychology. At the limit of genetic logic, philosophical psychology performs the necessary amplification of the critical-epistemological concept of experience (Natorp 1913, 199) . This amplification, as Natorp argues in an essay written a year after the publication of the second edition of his psychological treatise, aims to show that the lived experience of the epistemic agent is a necessary epistemic capacity for the a priori process of knowledge-production, insofar as it makes possible recognition of the objective validity , consequently, it secures the necessary epistemic engagement of the knowing subject, through the development of her subjective aspiration, with the demand of legality. In this sense, Natorp’s analysis of the form of the connection

or potency and its epistemic unfolding in the process of subjectivation, demonstrates that the direction of subjectivation is the necessary complement of the direction of objectivation. To live experience the object means to effectively re-cognize, assess, and decide whether our thought connections possess the kind of potentiality to produce new and increasingly accurate objective determinations. Only in this way it is possible for concrete subjects to become aware (*Bewusst-sein*) of content of thought as an objectively valid content.

Carrying this systematic contribution a step further, it is necessary to introduce the second contribution of Natorp's critical psychology. Natorp thinks the direction of subjectivation is the a priori structure and fundament for understanding the validity and justification of our acts of objectivation. As we know, 'to understand' became the main problem of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.⁸⁴ My analysis has shown that it is plausible that this epistemological problem may have found a first dwelling in philosophical psychology.⁸⁵ The concept of understanding seems valid to characterize this novel and as yet unexplored epistemological contribution of critical psychology for three reasons. First, to understand refers to the epistemic capacity to know how to connect different contents in accordance with a law-like context of possible experience. Second, to understand also refers to the capacity to foresee, that is, to know how to connect different contents in accordance with unexpected possibilities of determination, whether in the same context of possible experience or in new determinable contexts. Natorp outlines a systematic explanation of this epistemic capacity with the reconstruction of potency, both in regard to its structural levels and its structural unities of lived experience. In this respect, it is significant that philosophical psychology is the systematic complement for

⁸⁴ An interesting fact that I unfortunately cannot analyse here in detail: the first section of Gadamer's hermeneutics deals with the aesthetic exposure (*Freilegung*) of the question about truth (*Wahrheitsfrage*). In this section, Gadamer does not refer to Natorp explicitly. However, he does employ the concept of *subjectivation* to define the idea of the lived experience of truth. See (Gadamer 2010, 84), suggesting that Natorp's work may have an as yet undetermined influence on Gadamer's thought. In this respect, s. the following footnote 19.

⁸⁵ In a brief but suggestive paper, Jean Grondin analyses the history of the philosophical relation between Natorp and Gadamer by agreeing with Heidegger that Gadamer was highly influenced by Natorp, Richard Höningwald, and Ernst Cassirer. In this respect, I would like to emphasize that Gadamer's question of the conditions of understanding is, first and foremost, one about the validity and justification of our philosophical-hermeneutical relation to the world. This question, Grondin suggests, seems to come from Natorp's philosophy. Grondin also describes other philosophical relations, such as Gadamer's understanding of philosophy as a history of concepts, his interest in the validity of the human sciences, the central role he attributes to language, and the problem of the formation (*Bildung*) of rational beings. Without addressing these issues explicitly, they will become clearer, however, in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. For Grondin's interpretation, see (Grondin 2009).

logic because it reveals that perception, at least the perception of rational animals, is based on this double perspective: it looks at the present, at that which has been objectified as such-and-such, and it looks at the future, at that which is not yet determined but can be construed as something determinable in possible series of new determinations. Thanks to philosophical psychology, it is possible to further determine why the fact of perception always remains an objective but always relative conclusion. Perception *saves the fact*, in the ancient meaning of the expression Natorp paraphrases (Natorp 1912a, 73, 117), but it also saves the endless possibility of producing new horizons of determination by constructing potencies that open up new questions, reveal new doubts, and motivate the infinite task of thinking. Third, to understand, in the sense I employ it here, refers to the epistemic capacity of ensuring the personal subjective aspiration to fulfill the demand that is realized in perception. To ensure the aspiration, as I explain above, means to become engaged with a path of abstraction because we have acknowledged that our perception correctly enacts the epistemic normativity of thinking. To ensure the aspiration, therefore, means to be entitled or justified to claim that such-and-such contents are effectively valuable as *facts* of perception. In other words, in perception, the knowing subject does not perceive the object without learning, by her own epistemic means, to recognize the validity of her determinations.

To approach the results of philosophical psychology from the viewpoint of the question of understanding and learning as epistemic capacities may seem to go beyond the scope of Natorp's critical psychology. However, these questions were not unfamiliar to Natorp himself and neither are they to the contemporary epistemology of perception. In Chapter 4, I aim to demonstrate the contribution of philosophical psychology to the epistemological question of these issues. Concretely, I address the relation between Natorp's philosophical psychology and his social pedagogy, in which he analyses the a priori conditions for the epistemic formation (*Bildung*) of rationality. My aim there is to argue that both projects may be interpreted as transcendental versions of an action-oriented epistemology of objective knowledge.

Chapter 4. The Social Pedagogy and the Complementation of the Critical Psychology

Introduction

In this chapter I analyse the epistemological contribution of Paul Natorp's *Social Pedagogy* (SP) to the understanding of the unfinished project of the critical psychology. It is well-known that Natorp's *Social Pedagogy* was received, first and foremost, as a concrete alternative to the pedagogical models of his time, which he severely criticized for being based on a technical, too individualistic view of human cognitive abilities. Against this view, Natorp suggests defining pedagogy as the *science of formation* (*Bildung*), or more specifically, the science of the formation of humanity in ourselves. In this respect, many scholars have analysed Natorp's contribution to the history and philosophy of education. Less known, however, is the epistemological contribution of the social pedagogy to Natorp's transcendental philosophy of objective knowledge. My principal aim is to demonstrate that the social pedagogy, particularly its so-called 'critical-epistemological' foundation, may be read as an action-oriented epistemology that describes objective knowledge in terms of the epistemic agency of rational beings. I argue that there is a mutual influence between critical psychology and social pedagogy], which reveals a systematic development of the main argument of critical epistemology. Thus, in §1 I describe the systematic place and function of the project of social pedagogic. In particular, I focus upon Natorp's deduction of the concept of education from the a priori principle of self-consciousness. In this respect, I claim that Natorp understands education as the subjective realization of the idea of humanity. In §2, I demonstrate the systematic relation between the critical psychology and the social pedagogy. First, I explain the function of psychology in the context of the social pedagogy, especially in regard to the concept of tendency as the a priori form of the movement of consciousness. Second, in §2.1, I show that the epistemic levels of the formative experience coincide with the epistemic levels of potency. Third, in §2.2, I demonstrate that social pedagogy not only follows the critical psychology, but it also complements it with the analysis of the formation of the will. Finally, in §3 I conclude that this reading of social pedagogy may provide a better understanding of Natorp's epistemology of objective knowledge by proposing relevant concepts to analyse knowledge in terms of rational agency. I conclude

by claiming that Natorp's critical epistemology can be understood, from its very beginning in the genetic logic to its final development in the critical psychology, as an action-oriented epistemology of objective knowledge.

§1. The Systematic place of the Social Pedagogy: the science of *formation*

To understand the epistemic role of the social pedagogy, it is convenient to remember the main critique of the critical epistemology. In the first section, I explain that Marburgian neo-Kantianism not only gained fertile soil for academic philosophy with the critical epistemology. With the transcendental-logical analysis of the conditions of validity of knowledge, the neo-Kantian community of work (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) also confronted the critique of being an "idealism without a subject" (Brelage 1965, 97). Since the system of a priori principles corresponds to the transcendental subject, then the question becomes how a concrete subject *recognizes* the normativity in herself? Moreover, how does she *learn* to recognize and endorse the normativity of thinking by her own rational means? In sum, how does an individual become a rational agent? In Chapter 3 I show that Natorp announced this problem at the end of his genetic logic, in particular, in the concept of perception.

Natorp shows that the objective validity of a "fact of perception" depends utterly upon the rationality of thinking, which he explains in terms of the systematic network of logical functions that grounds the creative and objectively oriented process of thinking. Natorp deduces these logical functions from a single and unitary principle, namely, the highest principle of synthetic unity, the main content of which coincides with the pure demand of legality. Based on this logical model, Natorp concludes that the epistemic role of perception consists in the *actualization of conceptualization* (Cohen 1877, 19; 1885, 12; Natorp 1910b, 83, 92). Whenever we perceive something as such-and-such –and not a mere impression of our senses or an illusion that deceives our sight– we perceive it as something that must be as we perceive it because the given (*Das Gegebene*) in perception is the realization (*Durchführung*) or instantiation of something that, first and foremost, is given-as-a-task (*Das Aufgegebene*) (Natorp 1912a, 79). From this viewpoint, Natorp draws at least three significant conclusions regarding perception. First, perception, he argues, cannot be defined as a passive act. Perception is not the way in which we get in touch with ready-made objects. Rather, our perceptual reports are epistemic achievements regulated and determined by the a priori conceptualization of thinking. Second, the fact

of perception is not a static content. Rather, it is a dynamic achievement of thinking, for it always follows the demand of legality. Third, whatever the fact of perception is in each case, it must correspond to the normative *ought* of legality. Otherwise, the fact of perception cannot be counted as objective. Regarding these conclusions, especially the third, Natorp concludes that the question of how a concrete subject recognizes and adheres to the ought exceeds the scope of logic. In this respect, I explain in Chapter 3 that critical psychology is the systematic explanation of epistemic capacities in play in the *becoming aware* of the ought or demand of legality. Natorp defines the a priori structure of epistemic consciousness as the form of connection, the content of which is potency. At the end of his critical psychology, Natorp outlines the structural levels of potency as an epistemic progression that begins with the sensible consciousness or personal I, passes through the imaginative consciousness or the I as second person, and finishes in the form of the common consciousness or common I (Natorp 1912a). As in the case of logic, Natorp finishes the critical psychology with a new open question, which takes us one step closer to the problem of the *concrete subject*. How does a knowing subject learn to follow and adhere to this epistemic process of knowledge-formation? I believe that Natorp's answer to this question is contained in his texts on social pedagogy.

Natorp's first text on the topic of a social pedagogy is his 1894 book *Religion within the Bounds of Humanity. A chapter for the Foundation of the Social Pedagogy*.⁸⁶ He also presents the social pedagogy in connection with his texts on the pedagogical work of Pestalozzi, a "genius man" whose work was "also forgotten" by the end of 19th century (Natorp 1922, 69). In 1899, however, Natorp presented the social pedagogy for the first time as an independent research programme. The title of this book, whose seventh and last edition was published in 1974, reveals an original appropriation of the pedagogical

⁸⁶ Social pedagogy is defined in the following terms: "The fulfillment of this demand, that is, the introduction of the idea into the effective reality of human existence, is the theme of a higher pedagogic. I name it social pedagogy in order to differentiate it from the other one which simply sees the education of the individual, be it in abstraction or under a given social order which is thought to be unalterable. As a theory, it [the social pedagogy] must research the social conditions of education and the educational conditions of social life, namely under the corrected presupposition that the social form is alterable, that it is subject to development." (Natorp 1894, 86). "Die Erfüllung dieser Forderung, d. i. die Einführung der Idee in die Wirklichkeit des Menschendaseins, ist das Thema einer höheren Pädagogik; ich nenne sie *Sozialpädagogik*, um sie von derjenigen zu unterscheiden, die allein die Bildung des Individuums, sei es ganz *in abstracto* oder unter einer gegebenen, wie unabänderlich gedachten Gesellschaftsordnung, ins Auge faßt. Sie hat, als Theorie, die sozialen Bedingungen der Bildung und die Bildungsbedingungen des sozialen Lebens, und zwar unter der berichtigten Voraussetzung, daß die Gesellschaftsform veränderlich, daß sie der Entwicklung unterworfen sei, zu erforschen."

tradition: *Social Pedagogy. Theory of the Formation of the Will on the Ground of the Community*.⁸⁷ Natorp also outlined the general plan of this project in some academic lessons (Natorp 1905), and complemented the systematic development of the social pedagogy with an anthology of his essays on the history of the problem of education (Natorp 1922).

Not surprisingly, Natorp's works on pedagogy, unlike his treatises on logic and psychology, enjoyed outstanding attention, both in politics and in education (Natorp 1905; 1901b; 1974; 1922). Furthermore, his pedagogical model still figures in contemporary educational studies as a relevant topic.⁸⁸ In regard to politics, what makes Natorp's texts on pedagogy so attractive is its call for an educational system that reaches every level of society. In principle, his 'social' model aims at emphasizing the urgent need for an education for the working class, whose mechanical labour in industries and enterprises threatened to damage the immanent rational capacities that are necessary to understand the *human* value of their practice and life. Also, his social model aims at emphasizing a national system that can protect the political value of a human community (Natorp 1974, 22–24).⁸⁹ In this sense, as an early commentator remarks, Natorp's pedagogical model seems to fit with the ideals of a democratic republic (Meyerhardt 1916). In regard to education, Natorp's model is attractive because it offers a historical and systematic analysis of the rationally driven process of education. In this respect, Natorp aroused early interest in intellectuals in the United States and Mexico. In the first case, the social pedagogy was seen as an alternative to local models, such as that of John Dewey (Saltzman, n.d.; Oelkers 2000). In the second, Natorp's educational model became more influential in Latin America, because the social pedagogy was employed in the design of Mexican public policy on education at the beginning of the 20th century (Granja Castro 1999).

Natorp was not the only philosopher to tackle the question of education. Before him, Herbart constructed a well-known pedagogy that had a major influence during the 19th century and focused upon the technical conditions and ethical meaning of education. But

⁸⁷ In the seventh edition of the *Social Pedagogy*, the editor, Richard Pippert, develops a critical system to see the differences between the many editions of this work. Pippert defines each edition with a capital letter (A = 1899 edition, B = 1904 edition, C = 1909 edition, D = 1920 edition, E = 1923 edition, F = 1925 edition, G = 1974 edition) See (Natorp 1974, 333).

⁸⁸ S. "Paul Natorps Sozialpädagogik. Ein Kommentar", in: (Natorp 1974, 353–74), (Sieg 2006; Belentsov et al. 2017; Saltzman, n.d.).

⁸⁹ On Natorp's political role in Germany, s. (Jegelka 1992).

unlike Herbart and other thinkers, Natorp developed a novel approach to the problem of education because he grounds the pedagogy on an encompassing and systematically developed philosophy of human rationality.⁹⁰ This philosophy, as we already know, is the critical epistemology (*Erkenntniskritik*). One might think that, by aligning the pedagogy with the critical question of the validity of objective knowledge, Natorp aims to transcendentalize the problem of education, meaning that the latter should be analysed as a mere direction of objectifying thinking. Natorp's plan, however, is quite the contrary. It is possible to explain the epistemological contribution of the social pedagogy in view of two distinguishable but interconnected aims. The first aim of the philosophical foundation of education Natorp proposes is to show that the problem of education is not a merely empirical problem about the techniques and goals adequate to teaching and learning. Rather, as I will show, his philosophical foundation aims to show the intrinsic relation between education and the formation of individuals as constituents of a rational community (*Gemeinschaft*). In Natorp's words, the aim is to demonstrate that education is the very realization of the idea of humanity in ourselves (Natorp 1974, 1974, §10). The second aim is to explain that the social pedagogy leads us to understand a relevant aspect of the effective realization of the validity of objective knowledge. As Natorp writes in his initial definition of the social pedagogy, it is not sufficient to claim that education is the realization of the humanity in ourselves. It is also necessary to show how this realization becomes possible in the effective reality of human existence: “[a]s a theory, it [the social pedagogy] must research the social conditions of education and the educational conditions of social life, namely under the corrected presupposition that the social form is alterable, that it is subject to development.” (Natorp 1894, 86). In this sense, the social pedagogy is meant as a “concrete philosophy” and it is in close relation to his critical psychology (Natorp 1909, 48).

In regard to the first aim, Natorp begins by grounding the social pedagogy on an idealist interpretation of education. Natorp develops this foundation in the first section of his treatise and it consists in the deduction of the concept of education from the a priori principle of self-consciousness (Natorp 1974, 95). According to the genetic logic, self-consciousness is the principle of legality as such, whose epistemic function is to pose the regulative task of constructing series of determinations in accordance with a law-like

⁹⁰ On Natorp's critique of Herbart's pedagogy, s. (Natorp 1922, 208–344, 345–86).

context of possible experience. According to the general psychology, the principle of legality is the lived experience of any concrete subject as a *demand*, particularly as the perpetual ‘ought’ necessary to recognize the objective validity of our determinations, through a reflective process of forming law-like connections or potencies of determination. In this sense, the principle of self-consciousness coincides with the idea, whose sole content is the infinite task of thinking. Now, since self-consciousness is the idea of an end that exceeds our empirical and contingent individuality, the fulfillment of this idea in the milieu of human existence communicates its non-empirical character as an infinite demand. The realization of the idea of self-consciousness, therefore, is also lived experienced and recognized by concrete subjects as a sort of inner but general measure that exceeds our empirical existence or, better said, a measure that permits us to contemplate our existence beyond any empirical constraint, whether psychological, physiological, or social. In virtue of this idea, Natorp says, we understand ourselves as something more than mere “objects of nature” (Natorp 1974, §4). Of course, this does not mean that we simply abandon the realm of nature, as if we were something radically different from other animals. Rather, it means that, in the use of our rational capacities, we discover in ourselves a sort of participation in a new context, namely, one in which nature is not just the surroundings we confront, or the place in which we wander around looking for shelter and means of survival, but a context we actually inhabit, one we possess as a common ground with others like us. In other words, when using our rational capacities, we discover that we inhabit nature as parts of a community. Nature, so to speak, becomes a human world.⁹¹ According to Natorp, the a priori principle of this world is the idea of humanity or, which is the same, the humanity as an idea. As an idea, humanity is not deprived of objective realization. On the contrary, Natorp emphasizes, the idea of humanity is fulfilled in a very concrete and well-known world, namely, that of culture (Natorp 1974, 279).⁹²

⁹¹ In this respect, consider the following passage: “Ist aber das menschliche Bewußtsein schon in seiner sinnlichsten Gestalt durch die Gemeinschaft bedingt, so gilt das Gleiche nur in erhöhtem Maße vom menschlichen Selbstbewußtsein. Es gibt kein Selbstbewußtsein und kann keines geben ohne Entgegensetzung und zugleich positive Beziehung zu anderem Bewußtsein; keine Selbstverständigung ohne die Grundlage der Verständigung mit Andern; kein sich selber Gegenüberreten, kein Selbsturteil ohne die vielfältige Erfahrung, wie Bewußtsein und Bewußtsein sich gegenüberreten, wie der Eine den Andern beurteilt; nicht Frage noch Antwort, nicht Rätsel noch Auflösung, als Auftritte im Selbstbewußtsein des Einzelnen, wenn nicht das alles zuerst vorgekommen wäre im Wechselverhältnis der Individuen in der Gemeinschaft. Wie könnte ich mir selbst zum Du werden, wenn nicht erst ein Du mir gegenüberstände, in dem ich ein anderes Ich erkenne?” (Natorp 1974, 95).

⁹² On Natorp’s concept of culture, s. (Renz 2002; Luft 2015b).

Culture is the objective presentation or manifestation of the idea of humanity. More than simply a particular scenario —whether primitive or modern, Western or Oriental, first world or third world, and so on— culture is the never-ending achievement or *work* of thinking (Natorp 1912b, 197). As such, culture is the sum or, as Cohen calls it, the *summit* (*Gipfel*) of the human spirit (*Geist*) and it is composed of all the objective directions of thinking: science, ethics, aesthetics, and even religion. In other words, culture does not belong to any individual. Rather, the individual belongs to culture, inasmuch as we are all part of the community. Just as the community is the first fulfillment of the idea of humanity, so culture is its second fulfillment. As the materialization of a world, culture shares with nature the fact of having a time and a space of its own. The space-time of culture, however, corresponds to the ‘historical becoming’ (*geschichtliches Werden*) or *historicity* of human life.⁹³ Since culture is a never-ending achievement, the progressive manifestation of the infinite task that the idea of humanity poses in ourselves, then the historicity of culture is the constant progress towards the very end of the social or communal life of thinking: the realization of humanity in and for ourselves. And this progress is nothing less than the task of securing the necessary means to perpetuate the achievement of humanity and to respond to the demands that this idea constantly poses. To accomplish this task, human thinking creates its own rules in accordance with culture, rules that are produced by the very making of the objective endeavour of thinking. In this respect, however, and against any form of cultural relativism, Natorp does not claim that culture should be understood as the last condition of human knowledge. On the contrary, since culture is the result of knowledge-production, then culture is what the horizon of our experience makes possible.

In order to realize or fulfill the idea of humanity throughout culture, it is necessary for individuals to become engaged with such a realization. Culture does not pre-exist the participation of the community, just as the community does not pre-exist the idea of

⁹³ Consider, for example, the following passage: “Die Aufgabe der Gemeinschaft wird, obwohl durch ihre Idee, doch in der vollen Realität der Geschichte erfäßlich. Das Verständnis für Geschichte, als Einheit der Erlebnisse der Menschheit, gehört recht eigentUch dieser Stufe an. Und wenn man längst der Geschichte eine vorzüglich wichtige sittlich bildende Kraft zugeschrieben hat, so müßte sie diese Kraft vor allem in dem Sinne beweisen, daß sie die empirischen Gemeinschaftsformen und alle überlieferte Kultur der Menschheit als wandelbares Produkt der Entwicklung, als Objekt beständiger, ernstester und zwar schließlich für die ganze Menschheit gemeinschaftlicher Arbeit, d. i. als ewige Aufgabe, nie abschließendes Ergebnis begreifen lehrt.” (Natorp 1974, 255–56).

humanity, that is, as the infinite task of producing the world through the objectifying acts that pose directions of thinking. But such engagement on the part of members of a community is not possible without individuals learning to recognize, first and foremost, that they are only singular by virtue] of the community they lived in. Without such recognition, no individual would be able to discover the sense of her communal life, hence she would not realize in herself the idea of humanity. Thus Natorp claims, from the viewpoint of critical-idealist philosophy, that the individual is only the product of an abstraction, just as the atom is the abstract idea of the most singular matter (Natorp 1974, 44, 90). According to Natorp's deductive argument, the only possible way to concretely fulfill the idea of humanity in ourselves is by means of education (*Erziehung*) (Natorp 1974, §10). The kind of education Natorp discusses, however, is no longer the technical or ethical education of the Herbartian model of pedagogy. Education, in the transcendental sense Natorp emphasizes, is understood as an inner process of formation (*Bildung*) (Natorp 1974, 25–26).⁹⁴ Such formation, which is described in comparison with the idea of cultivation, is the necessary subjective path or entrance to culture, that is, the way in which an individual can learn to recognize in herself the demand of the idea of humanity.

As I have indicated, the main goal of Natorp's social pedagogy is to explain the necessary conditions for human education. As such, philosophical pedagogy must proffer towards the concrete conditions under which education takes place. On the ground of the deductive path of the concrete philosophy of pedagogy, Natorp claims that education depends upon two different but complementary concrete conditions, the: "social conditions of formation (*Bildung*) and the formative conditions (*Bildungsbedingungen*) of social life".⁹⁵ Despite I seek to analyse the latter, especially in their relation to the philosophical psychology of potency, a brief explanation of the former conditions is necessary in order to understand the epistemological structure of the social pedagogy.

⁹⁴ See the following: "Es [the word "formation"] weist darauf hin, daß die menschliche Bildung, wie sehr auch Sache natürlicher Entwicklung, doch zugleich einer auf Förderung oder wenigstens Schutz dieser Entwicklung planvoll gerichteten Bemühung bedarf. Es liegt darin die Analogie des Aufziehens, des absichtlichen Züchtens, der „Kultur“ von Pflanzen und Tieren, im Unterschied vom bloß natürlichen, spontanen Aufwachsen. Das Wort besagt: durch geeignete Behandlung oder Pflege zum gedeihlichen Wachstum bringen. Darin liegen diese zwei Voraussetzungen: erstens, es gibt ein Wachstum, eine stetig wie nach innerem Plan fortschreitende Entwicklung mitgebrachter Anlagen zu einer gewissen Höhe, die unter bestimmten, normalen Bedingungen sicher erreicht wird; zweitens aber, es ist möglich und notwendig, dies Wachstum zu unterstützen, mindestens Störungen desselben hintanzuhalten durch eigens darauf gerichtete planmäßige Vorsorge, ohne welche die gleiche Höhe der Ausbildung nicht, oder nicht ebenso rasch, oder nur mit sonstigen Nachteilen erreicht wird." (Natorp 1974, 25–26)

⁹⁵ See note 1.

On the ground of this deduction, Natorp claims that it is possible to show the ‘most profound root’ between pedagogy, as the science of education or formation, and the doctrine of society (*Gesellschaftslehre*). The systematic development of this relation is the subject matter of the second and third parts of Natorp’s treatise. Whilst my aim is not to analyse these sections in detail, a brief explanation of the contents of both sections may help to further clarify the deductive structure of entire project of the social pedagogy and, particularly, the central place that the epistemological contribution I deal with in §2 occupies in this context. On the one hand, the second part develops a social philosophy of rational thinking. This social philosophy is grounded on conceptual analysis of the ethical virtues of concrete subjects or individuals. The main thesis is that individual morality (*Sittlichkeit*) depends upon the communal morality. In Natorp’s words:

“[n]un ist zwar die konkretere Gestalt der sittlichen Aufgabe die gemeinschaftliche. Denn, wemgleich Gemeinschaft ein Abstraktum und nur die Individuen konkret sind, so ist dagegen das isoliert gedachte Individuum wiederum eine Abstraktion. *In Wahrheit gibt es kein isoliertes, menschliches Individuum, denn der Mensch ist Mensch nur in menschlicher Gemeinschaft und durch Teilnahme an ihr.* Und das gilt doppelt vom wollenden und handelnden; im bloßen Erkennen mag man eher noch sich vereinzeln, im ästhetischen Genießen und Schaffen für sich bleiben und allein sich genügen wollen; dagegen *das Handeln des Einzelnen* und, sofern es aufs Handeln zielt, schon sein Wollen greift unvermeidlich in die Sphäre der Gemeinschaft ein, muss also, falls es mit Bewusstsein geschieht, auch seiner Wirkung in diese Sphäre hinein mitbewußt sein. Also ist der Einzelne, zugleich in seiner Gemeinschaftsbeziehung gedacht, konkreter als der bloß für sich gedachte Einzelne.“ (Natorp 1974, 103).

As the passage shows, Natorp argues that the individual, not only in her social life, but also in her ontological dimension as an individual among other individuals, that is, in the social construction of her own practical identity, is constituted by the social relation to the community. Natorp develops this argument through description of the necessary ‘system of virtues’ that makes it possible for individuals to unfold practical rationality from its potentiality to its actuality. In this respect, Natorp emphasizes that the main fundament for the development of social virtues in individuals is the idea of justice

(*Gerechtigkeit*) (Natorp 1974, 130). Based on this conclusion, Natorp finally aims to describe general classes of the main social activities (Natorp 1974, 165) as practical manifestations of the a priori virtues of the community (Natorp 1974, 183).

On the other hand, the third and final section of the *Social Pedagogy* presents the organization and method of the education or formation (*Bildung*) of human will. Natorp's main thesis in this section is that the method of education, that is, the harmonic development of the rational capacities of individuals, both to learn to know and to live in society, must be secured through the political organization of three main social institutions, namely, the institution of the family or home (*Haus*), the institution of the school (*Schule*), and the multiple institutions for the free organization of adults, in which the university and technical institutes play a significant role. For Natorp, these three kinds of organization are not arbitrary because each is strictly related to the main epistemic capacities of individuals – the instincts, the will, and the will of reason– the analysis of which is presented by the epistemological foundation of the social pedagogy of the first section. Thus in the third section Natorp finally offers an empirical description –at the level of the political institutions to which humans conform– to the deduction of the concept of education from the a priori idea of the community. Along with this empirical description, it is also important to bear in mind that, behind these analyses, there is also at stake a relevant political commitment for Natorp. In fact, by explaining the intrinsic relation of these main institutions with the epistemic capacities for the human or rational education of individuals, Natorp aims to develop a robust argument in favour of the necessary formation of the working class. And for precisely this reason Natorp's philosophy is relevant in the debate about education and politics at the beginning of 20th the century.⁹⁶

It is now possible to continue with analysis of the main topic of this chapter, namely, the epistemological contribution of the Social Pedagogy, I am going to focus upon what

⁹⁶ Natorp's political commitment to the precarious education of the worker class is expressed in the following passage of his *Lesson on General Pedagogy*: "Für die gegenwärtige Periode, wo es gilt, eine tiefe Kluft zwischen den oberen und unteren Volksschichten erst zu überbrücken, wird es die wichtigste Aufgabe sein, die freie Bildung der Erwachsenen besonders in den arbeitenden Klassen in einer Weise zu organisieren, welche eben hierzu geeignet ist; was besonders einschließt, daß die Arbeiterbildungsbestrebungen in enge Beziehung treten müssen zu der wirtschaftlichen Hilfe und der politischen Erziehung der arbeitenden Klassen." (Natorp 1905, 33).

Natorp calls the “formative conditions of social life” and the a priori idea on which these rely, namely, the idea of the community or, as Natorp calls it, ‘the idea of humanity’. Natorp explains the formative conditions in the first part of his treatise, specifically from §7 to §10. Here, he presents an *Entwicklungsgeschichte* of thinking, the main purpose of which is to explain the general epistemic capacities for human education. I will argue that these passages bear a twofold relation to Natorp’s critical psychology and, specifically, to the disposition of the general psychology. On the one hand, it is possible to see that this *Entwicklungsgeschichte* presents the first task of the general psychology in practical terms (Natorp 1901b, 4). On the other, these paragraphs also complement the second task of the critical psychology, namely, the analysis of the levels of the lived unities of experience. Natorp holds that the development, or formation, of the will (*Willensentwicklung*), or (*Willensbildung*) as he also calls it, is the most fundamental epistemic capacity for the development of rational individual consciousness. By focusing upon this topic, we will see that Natorp aims to explain the necessary subjective capacities that make it possible for an individual to become a rational agent, thus bringing the unfinished project of philosophical psychology to an original completion. This is what I will call ‘action-oriented’ critical epistemology.

§2. Formation and Potency. The Psychological Analysis of the Social Pedagogy

As I have indicated, Natorp defines education as a process of formation (*Bildung*), the main epistemic function of which is to realize the idea of humanity in ourselves. In this respect, Natorp also writes that education may be understood as the subjective realization of the idea of humanity, the objective realization of which is culture (Natorp 1974, 54). Since education is a subjective process, it is necessary to define the epistemic capacities that are in play in its subjective process of formation. Natorp claims in several texts that philosophical psychology plays a fundamental epistemological role in his social pedagogy (Natorp 1901b, §5; 1905, §7). Furthermore, he also referred to the social pedagogy when discussing the subjective direction or subjectivation of the objectifying directions of thinking (Natorp 1912a). In his *Lessons on Pedagogical Psychology*, a short text which has tended to be overlooked by scholars, Natorp defines the epistemological contribution of philosophical psychology in the following terms:

“It [philosophical psychology] consists in the most possible *individualization* of the task of education. It should teach, not how to conduct in the general course of education (this can only be determined in the objective path), but how to conduct in the given individual case, *in the praxis*.”⁹⁷ (Natorp 1901b, 4; 1905, 7, My emphasis).

In order to explain the individualization of education, that is, the way in which the epistemic formation (*Bildung*) takes place in the praxis of a concrete subject’s everyday life, Natorp begins with a warning, which recalls his critique of psychologism (Natorp 1901b, §2; 1905, 1905, §7). At first sight, he says, it might seem that here psychology is understood as the scientific study of the energy-relations (*Energiebezüge*) in cognitive performances. If this were the case, Natorp argues, we would focus upon the physiological conditions of the mental development of individuals, and also on the empirical relations between individuals partaking in the process of formation, namely, the student (*Zögling*) and the educator (*Lehrer*). In this sense, psychology would be a *physiological* psychology, the main focus of which has been the senses and the brain, as studies of perception by Wundt and Helmholtz teach us (Natorp 1901b, 5–8). The problem with such an approach, Natorp forewarns, is that it can only offer “general theories”, which say nothing of the: “fruitful application of knowledge in the lived-praxis” (Natorp 1901b, 4). The phenomenon at stake here, consequently, is the epistemic practice of the good educator, namely, the “art” (*Kunst*) of awakening the student’s learning process from her own epistemic abilities. This art is a *tactfulness* (*Takt*) acquired through disposition (*Anlage*) and exercise, which is accomplished through the emphatic contact (*Fühlung*) with others’ souls (*Seele*) (Natorp 1901b, 5). The educator, Natorp observes, develops this pedagogical art through attentive conversation with the student, which enables her to progressively put herself in the position of the learning student in order to awaken the student’s consciousness. Unlike the educator, the philosopher must unfold or reveal the epistemic capacities at play here in order to describe them in their very structural function. For this, Natorp claims, we need philosophical psychology. In this respect, philosophical psychology is the analytic observation of the process of knowledge and learning “in the concrete praxis” (Natorp 1901b, 4). In fact, as I explain

⁹⁷ “Sie [die Psychologie] besteht in der möglichsten Individualisierung der Erziehungsaufgabe. Sie soll erkennen lehren, nicht wie im allgemeinen Gang der Erziehung (dieser läßt sich, und zwar nur, auf objektivem Wege festlegen), sondern wie im gegebenen einzelnen Fall in der Praxis zu Verfahren sei.”

in the previous chapter, for Natorp, critical psychology is the systematic description of the structural “components of the human animate life”, inasmuch as it describes the necessary epistemic capacities for the construction of objectively valid contents. In order to do so, we have seen that philosophical psychology describes potency in terms of the general structure of the: “fundamental laws of its [objective contents] combinations” (Natorp 1901b, 5). Now, while the psychological description focuses upon the structure of potency, pedagogical psychology explains this structure from a more practical or agential viewpoint. But how does Natorp construct the agential viewpoint of pedagogical psychology?

§2.1. *Philosophical Psychology and the ‘Entwicklungsgeschichte’*

As I have indicated, the answer to this question appears in the first part of the *Social Pedagogy*. In principle, Natorp distinguishes two aspects of the process of formation (*Bildung*). On the one hand, since the formation of individuals is a process of experience (*Erfahrung*), the content of this process is given by the directions of thinking: science, ethics, and aesthetics. From the viewpoint of content, the process of formation is endless, since it changes as the work of culture progresses (Natorp 1912b, 197; 1974, 282–83). On the other, since the formation of individuals is also a process of lived experience, the form of this process is described as the a priori form of the epistemic activity of consciousness, namely, the form of the tendency (*Tendenz*). From the viewpoint of form, the process of formation is characterized as a layer-cake development, for which Natorp employs the model of the *Entwicklungsgeschichte*.

The epistemic activity of consciousness, whether in its theoretical or practical directions,⁹⁸ has an original and encompassing form, the psychological meaning of which can be characterized with the concepts of: “direction, aspiration, or tendency”.⁹⁹ Natorp

⁹⁸ In this respect, Natorp says: “Der Zusammenhang zwischen Wollen und Verstehen, Idee und Erfahrung ist hiernach ein vollständiger, bis zu einer letzten gemeinsamen Wurzel zurückreichender. Der Mensch will nur, indem er versteht, versteht nur, indem er will. Im ganzen Aufbau der Erfahrungswelt, also im ganzen reiche des Intellekts, waltet zugleich das Streben; daher überträgt sich das Gesetz der Entwicklung, also auch der Bildung des Verstandes in aller Genauigkeit zugleich auf die Entwicklung, also Bildung des Willens.” (Natorp 1905, 18). Also, see (Natorp 1974, 103ff).

⁹⁹ The passage I bear in mind in this paragraph is the following: “Wir glaubten aber zwischen theoretischem und praktischem Bewußtsein einen bis zur letzten Wurzel zurückreichenden, nicht erst hinterher sich gleichsam künstlich herstellenden Zusammenhang zu erkennen. Wir lernten Erfahrung als (Prozeß) verstehen. Sie zeigt sich auf keiner Stufe fertig, immer im Werden begriffen. Daher muß ein Verhältnis dessen, was schon in den sicheren Besitz des Bewußtseins, das heißt in Erfahrung, gebracht ist, und dessen,

calls it ‘tendency’ because its main function is to direct its objectifying activity towards that which has yet to be conscious. Thus this activity consists in the “movement of the mind” (*Gemüt*) towards the objective content of a manifold (Natorp 1974, 71), that is, towards the objective determination of something that is not yet determined (*Unbestimmtes*). In virtue of this original activity of consciousness, Natorp claims that it is possible for concrete subjects to make present what it is not yet effectively present, for instance, in a certain manifold (Natorp 1974, 67, 71). In this sense, Natorp emphasizes, the tendency is the fundamental cause (*Ursache*) of our ability to become aware of our acts of representation as a goal-oriented activity of our own (Natorp 1974, 67). In this sense, the movement of consciousness is fundamentally a *practical* movement, for it always aspires towards that which is posed –by ourselves– as a final goal, namely, the determination of that which *must be* (*Seinsollenden*) (Natorp 1974, 68–69).

As we see in the critical psychology, the lived-movement of consciousness is characterized by three structural levels that make possible the formation of connections or potencies of determination.¹⁰⁰ In the context of the social pedagogy, Natorp defines these levels according to the model of an *Entwicklungsgeschichte*.¹⁰¹ In principle, Natorp chooses this model because his aim is to describe the process of formation in view of its agency. Thus Natorp means to explain the a priori levels or moments of conscienciality (*Bewusstheit*) that partake in the activity (*Tätigkeit*) of formation. Natorp distinguishes three main levels or epistemic capacities. The first and lowest level is instinct (*Trieb*). Instinct represents the immediate and haphazard tendency towards that which is given in our immediate environment. As such, instinct describes a sensible and unfree direction towards a single and concrete thing, which captures our attention in a non-reflexive way. Despite being an unreflective movement of consciousness, instinct describes the necessary soil for the development of formative experience. In fact, in virtue of this

was erst in sie einbezogen zu werden im Begriff steht, noch aber außer ihr, mithin außer jedem bestimmten gegenständlichen Bewußtsein schwebt, auf jeder Stufe der Erfahrung stattfinden. So wunderbar es ist, es gibt, und zwar in jedem Momente des Erfahrens, eine Art Bewußtsein des noch nicht, beziehungsweise auch des nicht mehr im empirischen Sinne Bewußten. Es läßt sich faßlich mit Richtung, Strebung, Tendenz oder einem analogen Ausdruck bezeichnen.” (Natorp 1974, 67).

¹⁰⁰ In the Social Pedagogy, Natorp characterizes this in the following terms: “Es durchdringt auch das ganze Getriebe der Vorstellungen, das ja in mannigfach wechselnden, sich von Moment zu Moment gleichsam verschiebenden Verbindungen durchaus besteht, also ein Verhältnis gegebener und erst anzueignender, bezw. auch abzustoßender, sich aus dem jeweilig zusammenhang des Bewußtseins lösender Momente aUzeit in sich schließt.”

¹⁰¹ In regard to the 19th century model of the *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, see (Henrich 1979; Sachs-Hombach 1993).

sensible tendency, individuals learn to orient their praxis towards specific goals. In this sense, Natorp argues that instincts are the sensible root of human 'work' (Natorp 1901b, §9).

The second level is the will in the narrow sense. Natorp characterizes it as narrow because it defines the moment when concrete subjects make decisions among many possibilities. In this sense, the second moment consists in the position of a determined intention. This intention represents an overcoming of the first level, inasmuch as it flows from the 'concentration' of our cognitive activity. This concentration is possible, Natorp explains, because the concrete subject learns to classify her particular aspiration or tendency in view of a more encompassing system of possible desires (*Gewollten*). Certainly, the concrete subject is not fully aware of this system. Nevertheless, by making decisions the individual can arrange her aspiration in view of a unitary goal which exceeds the immediacy of the object of instinct.

The third level is will in the wide sense or the 'will of reason' (*Vernunftswille*). It is wide because it defines the elevation of the personal will to the general and unconditional demand of thinking, namely, legality as such. This level, or moment of conscienciality, Natorp explains, coincides with Kant's statement of the rationality (*Vernunftigkeit*) of the will (Natorp 1901b, §9), because it recognizes the a priori demand of finding, for every possible determination, a last unity that fulfills the pure demand of the will. The fulfillment of this demand is a regulative principle for the formative experience of the concrete subject. Therefore, the will of reason is the moment in which the concrete subject aligns her own decisions with the recognition of the idea as the only true law, namely, the law of an infinite task.

To conclude this sub-paragraph, let me explain the epistemological contribution of the *Entwicklungsgeschichte* to critical psychology. It is important to bear in mind that Natorp published this model 13 years before the publication of the *Disposition of Psychology*. We recall that the disposition, as well as the theory of subjectivation, were not part of the first edition of the critical psychology. Nevertheless, there are systematic similarities between the developmental model of pedagogical psychology and the disposition of critical psychology.

First, from these definitions, we see that the three levels bear a close connection with the so-called ‘phenomenology of consciousness’ of critical psychology. Instinct corresponds to sensation, the will to representation, and the will of reason to conceptualization. Second, the three levels describe the general form of the process of incorporation of contents, as Natorp describes it in his *General Psychology*. While the critical psychology describes the process of *subjectivation* in view of epistemic capacities, the social pedagogy goes a step further in the direction of the *practice of knowledge*, by accentuating the agential character of these capacities.

§ 2.2 *The Epistemic Commitment of the Concrete Subject: The Formation of the Will*

Thus far, we can claim that Natorp’s critical epistemology of objective knowledge reveals a practical orientation, which becomes more explicit with the psychological analysis of the formative process. Nevertheless, as I already claimed, with the psychological analysis of the social pedagogy it is also possible to further complement the analyses of the critical psychology. In particular, this is achieved through psychological analysis of the formation of the will.

As I have explained, from the 1887 essay Natorp understood objective knowledge, in all of its manifestations, to be the general epistemic capacity to abstract from ourselves as individuals (Natorp 1887; 1912a, 77). In this respect, to objectively judge means to determine something as such-and-such in accordance with the legality of thinking. From the viewpoint of the critical psychology, we can say that knowledge-production demands that we learn to evaluate or ponder our mental subjective contents in view of general criteria of objective validity. In the context of the *Social Pedagogy*, Natorp explains that this demand can only be fulfilled by the development of the will. The will, as the pure capacity of making decisions by our ourselves, is a necessary level of conscienciality. Its main function, Natorp argues, is to be the first step towards awareness of the normative demand of the a priori principle of legality. In fact, the will defines an epistemic relation between a personal I and her own mental contents. In this relation, the concrete subject learns that her own mental contents can be directed and modelled beyond the immediate contents at disposal. In this sense, Natorp writes that the immediate given-ness of a sensory stimulus becomes something different, namely, something that is now given as the task of a decision to make, a given that is simultaneously given as a task (*Aufgegeben*).

The will, already in its narrow sense, prepares the personal and private consciousness to trespass the sensible and unreflective boundary of the instincts, towards the infinite horizon of the will of reason. Without learning how to develop her own will, it would not be possible for the concrete subject to learn to ‘hear’ the categorical imperative of the transcendental consciousness, so to speak. How does the concrete subject learn to make decisions on her own? How does the individual open herself to the rational vocation of the will?

On the other hand, Natorp argues that the concrete subject learns to hear the call of the will of reason because the pure will, already at the second level of aspiration, begins a sort of reflection about her sensible and intelligible contents that shows her, along with the contents of her thinking, parallel content. Natorp calls this reflective content the “feeling of aspiration” (*Strebingungsgefühl*) (Natorp 1910a, 29–32). This feeling consists in the first subjective recognition of the demand to judge the series of our lived experiences in accordance with a position (*Setzung*) that has been introduced and fixed by ourselves. In this sense, to feel the aspiration means to become aware of the tendency to represent and create connections from a single perspective, namely, the perspective of *our* lived experience (Natorp 1910a, 22, 30). This reflection awakes in us consciousness of a law-like demand to judge the epistemic credentials with which we claim the validity of our statements. Hence the feeling of aspiration consists in an epistemic active energy to pose a maxim or a rule (*Regelsetzen*) in order to evaluate –that is, disallow or authorize– such-and-such a determination (Natorp 1974, 77). Thus the will becomes the practical position of an object, a unitary rule to freely decide and reflect on our right to judge in a given context. Thus for Natorp, the will is the laborious overcoming of instinctive immediacy, the first dictation of a unitary direction for our thoughts, and the entrance to the rational normativity of thinking, in which the concrete subject is prepared to *commit* herself to conduct her epistemic agency in accordance with a wider will, namely, one that transcends her individuality, the will of rationality. As such a commitment, Natorp finally claims, the formation of the will operates as the necessary capacity of concrete subjects to learn to become rational agents. Without the will, in this case the will to know by herself, a concrete subject would not be able to find the *humanity* in herself. For: “the human, Natorp claims, becomes human only through human community” (Natorp 1974, 90). And as I have indicated, the individual is only a secondary determination that becomes possible once we are engaged in the community (*Gemeinschaft*).

In order to motivate the lived and formative process of the formation of the will, Natorp explains several pedagogical methods and techniques which are systematically described in view of the social and institutional life of concrete subjects. The common ground of these methods, however, is the epistemic lived context of the community, or in contemporary terms, the lived context of intersubjectivity. In principle, Natorp observes, the formation of the will depends upon intersubjective practices because education is the subjective realization of the idea of humanity. As such, the very sense and function of education is tied up with the epistemic and social life of the community. Education, as I explain, is the effective entrance of the individual into the general epistemic life of culture. For this reason, the development of the formation of the will depends upon the many contexts in which we exercise our epistemic agency. As we have seen, for Natorp the main contexts are the house, the school, and the various organizations or institutions that promote the free association of adults. But the intersubjective context occurs not only at the social level of institutions, for it also takes place at the social level of interpersonal relations between individuals. In this sense, Natorp claims that the formative dialogue between the educator and the student is a necessary activity for the formation of the will. Against the tradition of ‘verbalism’, Natorp claims that the main goal of the educator is not simply to communicate different contents to the student. Rather, the task of the educator is to motivate the student to learn by her own means, that is, to awaken in the student her own epistemic capacities for knowing. In this sense, the role of the educator is closer to guide than instructor. Natorp describes the formative dialogue between the educator and the student in accordance with the epistemic levels of the epistemic tendency of the knowing subject (Natorp 1905, §16).

At the first level, the educator must teach the student to note (*Merken*) the particular in the midst of many different things. The role of the educator, in this sense, is to show the student particular things to which she should direct her attention. At this stage of the formative experience, the community between the educator and the student is perfect, for there is no distinction between them: the: “educator and the student are unified as if they were in *one* immediate sensation” (Natorp 1905, 27).¹⁰² At the second level, the educator must teach the student to conduct (*Hinüberleiten*) her attention from the particular to the

¹⁰² “Erzieher und Zögling wie in einem unmittelbaren Empfinden sich vereinen.”

manifold. This conduction, however, must permit the student to conduct her attention in a progressive and free manner (Natorp 1905, 27). Thus the educator conducts the student in order to teach her how to direct and conduct her attention by her own means. Natorp writes that the dialogue between them allows the student to recognize her own will, by distinguishing her progress and decisions from that of the educator. In Natorp's words: "it is no longer just a holding, but also a letting-go, and re-holding and re-letting-go, with the intention and effect of making the conducted more and more independent of the conduction, of putting her on her own feet." (Natorp 1905, 27).¹⁰³ Finally, at the third level, the educator teaches the student to bring her cognitive progression to a relative conclusion. The task of the educator is no longer to conduct but to indicate (*hinweisen*) to the student the necessity of justifying her own connections between contents. Natorp writes: "[w]hat remains to be done then is the justification and demonstration in new actions, the self-assessment and correction of what has been missed; with which the cycle of learning closes, but at the same time more and more tasks for ever new learning open up" (Natorp 1905, 28).¹⁰⁴ At this final stage, therefore, the educator and the student dialogue as pairs, for the educator has taught the student to focus her attention, to develop her own path of determination, and to justify her results in view of her own cognitive accomplishments. In this manner, Natorp claims, the formative dialogue stimulates the formation of the will.

Along with the epistemic interaction between educator and student, Natorp also emphasizes the epistemic role of two human accomplishments for the formation of the will: perception and language. Unlike the dialogue between the educator and the student, perception and language make possible the inner dialogue or self-conversation of the individual with herself. In this sense, he claims that the epistemic role of both human accomplishments is to support and develop the necessary self-awareness of the formative experience.

¹⁰³ "es ist nicht mehr bloß ein Festhalten, sondern auch ein Loslassen, und Wiederfesthalten und Wiederloslassen, in der Absicht und mit der Wirkung, den Geführten von der Führung mehr und mehr unabhängig zu machen, ihn auf eigene Füße zu stellen."

¹⁰⁴ "Was dann noch zu tun übrig bleibt, ist das Rechenschaftgeben und Erproben in neuem Tun, die Selbstbeurteilung und Berichtigung des Verfehlten; womit der Kreislauf des Lernens sich schließt, aber zugleich immer weitere, größere Aufgaben für immer neues Lernen sich eröffnen."

Regarding perception, Natorp emphasizes that it already contributes to the formative experience during the first phase of the epistemic life of individuals. Natorp even claims that the most important aid (*Hilfe*) for children during infancy is the “book of images” (Natorp 1901b, 37). Natorp reasons as follows. According to him, there is no doubt that every spiritual achievement begins with the development of our sensibility (Natorp 1901b, §3). From a naïve viewpoint, we could say that our sensible capacities make us believe that the content of our perceptual reports is immediate and direct. However, from the viewpoint of [the] critical epistemology, Natorp shows that human perception is rather the result of a long and complex process of conceptualization.¹⁰⁵ Certainly, perception depends to a certain extent upon sensible matter to operate. This sensible matter, which physiologists and psychologists define as ‘sensation’, cannot be something determined unless objectifying acts of thinking determine it. As such, Natorp says, sensation defines a ‘perfect chaos’, the positive meaning of which is the index of something that is present beyond truth or falsity. In this sense, and as I explain regarding the critical psychology, sensation determines something in terms of that which is undetermined (*Unbestimmtes*). Natorp claims that development of perception helps us to learn how to transform this mere indeterminacy into something determinable. In fact, as an epistemic capacity, perception is a sensible determination, that is, the instantiation of the entire: “system of fundamental methods of representation” (Natorp 1901b, §4). By exercising her perceptual capacities, the concrete subject learns how to make use of the logical functions that make possible the objective determination of facts of perception (Natorp 1901b, 8–9). In fact, to know how to quantify or qualify, as well as to know how to construct relations between possible contents, not only helps her to judge whether her judgements are possible, effective, or necessary for a given case, but it also enables the concrete subject to order, refine, imagine, and finally manipulate her logical capacities for the determination of new and unknown possible scenarios. Perception, therefore, is the original and most immediate way or medium for a rational being to make use of her rational capacities of thinking. Long before the child becomes aware of her own reflective consciousness, she has been applying and exercising her conceptual capacities from the very instant that her perception became active.

¹⁰⁵ In the context of the pedagogical psychology, Natorp put it in the following terms: „Die gewöhnliche *Sinneswahrnehmung* ist bei weitem nichts Elementares, sondern sie ist das Ergebnis eines langen und verwickelten Prozesses, in welchem wir die erste, fundamentalste aller geistigen Bildungen zu erkennen haben.“ (Natorp 1901b, 6).

In regard to language, Natorp argues that it contributes to formative experience in a clearer and more structured way than perception. Language is the second most important human accomplishment or “spiritual creation” (Natorp 1901b, §5). As a “social achievement”, language is the medium to transmit the results of the: “spiritual work since thousands of years” (Natorp 1901b, §5). Language, in this sense, is what makes it possible to communicate the work of the community, namely, human culture. At first sight, Natorp says, language helps us to indicate things. In this sense, words seem to operate as mere pointers in our surroundings (Natorp 1901b, §5). Later, by means of exercise and attention, words can almost become properties of objects. But once we start using words in different contexts and with different persons, they become messages or information. At this point, Natorp claims that concrete subjects learn that language is not a mere mechanical imitation of objects. Words are not the mediate copies of ready-made things in the world. Rather, the use and application of linguistic expressions in different situations teaches us that words perform an even greater operation: with words, we can name things and we can also reproduce the operations through which we construct these things as objective determinations.¹⁰⁶ In other words, thanks to language and the possibility of using different words to distinguish between properties and substances, causes and effects, relations and similarities, and so on, it is possible to reproduce, using words: “the constructive structure of the perceptual world” (Natorp 1901b, §5). Thus the most significant service language renders the experience of formation consists in the development of this constructive reproduction. Words do not imitate things in the world, as if they were in a direct and static relation to the sensible properties of objects. By designating common features of things with different words and concepts, language teaches us the constructive structure of objects.

Finally, to conclude this sub-paragraph let me explain the epistemological contribution of the formation of the will to the critical psychology and its epistemological interpretation of the concrete subject. The pedagogical analysis of the formation of the

¹⁰⁶ „Die hauptsächlichste *Hilfe der Sprache für die Ausbildung des Denkens* liegt darin, daß der stets allgemeine Gebrauch des Worts darauf hinlenkt, nicht bloß ein bestimmtes sinnliches Bild in der Vorstellung zu zeichnen, sondern auf das Gemeinsame in dem Gleichbenannten zu achten, besonders sofern es nicht in den sinnlichen Merkmalen, sondern in dem konstruktiven Aufbau des Gegenstandes liegt. (...) Das Wort giebt also nicht den Begriff, es dient nur gleichsam als Signal, um die Bewegung des Denkens in eine bestimmte Richtung zu weisen; es ist nur die Brücke des Gedankens“ (Natorp 1901b, 10).

will emphasizes a significant aspect of the lived experience of objective knowledge, namely, the normativity of human thinking. Natorp defines the formation of the will as the epistemic capacity to know how we, as concrete subjects, construct objective contents of thought. In this sense, Natorp seems to emphasize that *to know how* is a necessary subjective capacity to *know that*. In fact, the formation of the will as such is the reflective process of making decisions in regard to something that is to be known, whether it be a problem, a question, or even an immediate conception we are willing to prove. In this sense, the formation of the will operates as a parallel epistemic capacity to the epistemic formation of potency, the purpose of which is to accompany the constructive process of knowledge with a self-critical reflection about the steps and assumptions of our very process of knowledge-production. As we have seen in the critical psychology, this reflective process takes place in perception, more specifically in the epistemic manufacture of potencies of determination. In regard to this epistemic process of producing possible connections between contents, Natorp now shows that the formation of the will clarifies its agential or practical dimension. The necessity of fixing a point of departure for the process of determination is, at the same time, the necessity to make a decision. In this respect, Natorp suggests that the lived experience of the risk of proposing one determination over another, the uncertainty of following a path of determination whose results must be proven, the recursive experience of revising our steps in the construction of connections, the testing of connections that may or may not answer our questions, all these lived experiences take place in the epistemic agency of the concrete subject in a way that is not random or strictly individual, for the concrete subject also trains her own epistemic will in order to fulfill this process in view of its immanent normativity. In this sense, Natorp seems to suggest that each choice we make implies a series of other choices, the logic of which depends upon the very logic of the contents we are pondering and assessing by means of our lived experience or agency. In this respect, the formation of the will teaches us not only to venture a hypothesis, so to speak, but also to assume the responsibility to justify such a proposition. As I have indicated, the epistemic usefulness of perception and language goes exactly in this direction. If perception and language play a significant epistemic role in the formative experience, this is so because both activities grant an objective ground to the individual to awake, motivate, and order her learning process through responsible reflection, that is, a reflection that respects the normativity of the very process. Furthermore, since perception and language are intimately linked to the process of thinking, they constantly help us to

improve and better manipulate the very exercise of our general epistemic capacities. In this manner, the formation of the will appears in Natorp's critical epistemology as a necessary subjective capacity to recognize and justify the normativity of our own process of knowledge-production. Finally, as Natorp claims, the formation of the will enables us to recognize the normativity that underlies our determinations, and by doing so it helps us to reach a relative conclusion, a point of closure that may serve for a new series of determinations. At this stage, however, the concrete subject is no longer responding to her own will, or the will of other concrete subjects. She begins to respond to the will of reason. Thus the concrete subject learns to commit herself to the principle of legality or, as Natorp defines it in this context, to the infinite task of humanity.

Based on this argument, Natorp can finally claim that study of the objective contents of the directions of thinking cannot be understood as the learning of technical contents or skills. Rather, we study the work of culture because it teaches us how to think for ourselves in a dynamic, constantly changing, and ethically engaged community of rational beings. Since the will is both the free position of legislations and the response to the normativity of rational thinking, then education and, in general, our rational epistemic agency is an epistemically engaged exercise of knowledge-production, whose human sense is to be a dynamic, self-critical, and ethically engaged praxis or *ethos*. For this reason, Natorp's social pedagogy holds that knowledge-production must ground the social conditions that allow us to *learn* to recognize the normativity of thinking. In the social and political space of rational deliberation, the practical commitment to knowledge is the most concrete and direct form of the: "free self-instruction (*Erziehung*) in the common-life of adults" (Natorp 1901, §4).

§3. Conclusion: The concrete Subject of the Critical Epistemology

To conclude, first I will sum up the results of the present chapter. In this chapter, I analyse Natorp's *Social Pedagogy*. My principal aim has been to demonstrate that the social pedagogy, particularly its critical-epistemological foundation, not only follows but also complements the critical psychology, especially the two tasks or provinces that Natorp outline in the Disposition of Psychology. In order to demonstrate this, I examine a small section of the *Social Pedagogy*, namely, the first section on the deduction and

epistemological foundation of the concept of education (Natorp 1974, 25–101). I claim that Natorp analyses education or, more specifically, the formative experience or formation (*Bildung*), as a *fieri* of knowledge-production. In fact, Natorp conceives of education as the subjective realization of the a priori principle of self-consciousness and, in this sense, he ponders it as an exemplary case of the epistemic agency of concrete subjects. Thus in §1 I describe the systematic place and function of the *Social Pedagogy*. In particular, I show that Natorp analyses the *fieri* of education as an exemplary case of the rational agency of concrete subjects. In particular, I explain that Natorp deduces the concept of education from the a priori principle of self-consciousness. In this respect, I claim that Natorp understands education as the subjective realization of the idea of humanity, the name of which is ‘formation’ (*Bildung*). I claim that Natorp’s epistemological aim is to describe the epistemic capacities at play in the process of formation (*Bildung*). In §2 I demonstrate that the description of these capacities reveals the systematic influence of critical psychology on social pedagogy. I proceed by explaining the function of psychology in the context of the social pedagogy. I show that Natorp sustains his analysis of the epistemic capacities of the formative experience in a critical-psychological definition of the activity of consciousness, namely, the form of the ‘tendency’. Second, I proceed by analysing the epistemic capacities in the process of formation in two steps. On the one hand, in §2.1 I show that the epistemic levels of the formative experience coincide with the epistemic levels of potency. On the other, in §2.2 I demonstrate that the *Social Pedagogy* not only follows the critical psychology, but also complements it with analysis of the formation of the will.

Based on the results of this fourth and last chapter, it is possible to draw at least two significant conclusions regarding Natorp’s critical epistemology. The first has to do with the main problem of this dissertation, namely, that of the philosophical meaning of the ‘concrete subject’ in Marburgian neo-Kantianism. The second problem is more general than the former, but it is connected with Natorp’s epistemological interpretation of the concrete subject that I have emphasized here. Thus I can formulate the conclusion of this dissertation in the following terms. There is not only a systematic definition of the concrete subject. There is also a systematic interpretation of the critical epistemology in terms of an action-oriented epistemology of objective knowledge. In other words, the critical-epistemological analysis of the concrete subject unfolds a relevant aspect of Natorp’s model of critical epistemology, namely, its action-oriented perspective.

In regard to the first problem, this dissertation shows that Natorp develops a systematic interpretation of the concrete subject from his 1887 essay to the unfinished project of the critical psychology of 1912. In his critical psychology, Natorp develops a critical-epistemological interpretation of the concrete subject. As I explain in Chapter 3, Natorp defines the concrete subject using the concept of the lived experience of consciousness. Furthermore, he identifies the lived experience of consciousness with an epistemic direction of thinking, namely, the direction of subjectivation. In principle, subjectivation defines the lived experience of objective knowledge. The main epistemic role of the lived experience of knowledge is defined as the epistemic capacity to *recognize* and *adhere* to the objective validity of or conceptual determinations. In order for a concrete subject to recognize the validity, Natorp explains that it is necessary for the concrete subject to produce *potencies of determination*. The potencies, whose a priori form is the form of connection, enable the concrete subject to recognize and appropriate for herself the process by means of which an objectively valid content can be produced. As I explain in Chapter 4, the social pedagogy complements the critical psychology in a significant sense. With the psychological analysis of the social pedagogy, especially with the clarification of the epistemic capacities for the formation of the will, Natorp constructs a strictly critical-epistemological definition of the concrete subject. As epistemological analysis of the social pedagogy confirms, by producing potencies of determination, the concrete subject not only recognizes objective validity but it also generates, by her own epistemic means, the subjective conditions for the theoretical-practical commitment to the a priori demand of legality, whose pure form is the principle of the synthetic unity or self-consciousness. Finally, analysis of the concrete subject reveals an interesting aspect of Natorp's model of critical epistemology, namely, its practical or agential orientation to define the transcendental question of the conditions of validity of objective knowledge.

But the results of the last chapter of this dissertation not only demonstrates the systematic coherence of Natorp's epistemological interpretation of the concrete subject. Furthermore, these results also shed light on the idea of a critical epistemology with an action-oriented perspective on objective knowledge. I believe that it is possible to further clarify this general thesis by returning to the previous chapter and explaining how the idea of an action-oriented epistemology can be observed in each case. This is the main purpose of the Conclusion of the dissertation.

Conclusion. Towards an Action-Oriented Epistemology of Objective Knowledge

In the present dissertation I reconstruct the critical-epistemological function of Paul Natorp's *General Psychology* regarding the neo-Kantian project of transcendental philosophy. My reconstruction holds that the main object of the general psychology, namely, the lived experience of the knowing subject, plays a significant epistemic role in the a priori process of knowledge-production. Against the common interpretation, I explain that Natorp understands the lived experience of knowledge as a particular kind or class of thought content. Lived experience is not something we feel or enact before or after we define the contents that will be part of an objective concept. Rather, the lived experience of the knowing subject occurs with or in her own contents of thought. As such, Natorp's philosophical psychology describes lived experience as a general type of content, the epistemic function of which is to form the subjective direction of thinking or *subjectivation*. In Natorp's view, just as logic explains the a priori process necessary for the construction of the object, psychology explains the a priori process necessary for the construction of the subject. Thus subjectivation is that which we, as concrete knowing subjects, *do or realize* whenever we undertake the task of forming the objective concepts that determine the object of experience. Since this is the inverse process of objectivation, psychological analysis of the general psychology is defined as a reconstruction. In this respect, Natorp holds that subjectivation, as the systematic development of lived experiences, expresses the epistemic process by means of which we recognize, adhere to, and finally justify for ourselves and other rational subjects the objective validity of our contents of thought. For this reason, I explain, Natorp identifies the concept of lived experience with that of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*). Lived experience of objective knowledge is the subjective-epistemic way in which consciousness is fulfilled by any concrete subject. I further explain that the epistemic fulfillment of consciousness takes place in perception (*Wahrnehmung*). The a priori form of the perceptual fulfillment of lived experience is what Natorp calls the 'a priori form of connection' (*Verbindung*) or 'potency' (*Potenz*). According to the method of reconstruction, the epistemic formation of potencies contributes to two fundamental moments of the process of objectivation: the concrete epistemic realization (*Erfüllung*) of objective content and the epistemic formation of the necessary condition of objective apperception (*Apperzeption*).

§1. Summary

I organize the reconstruction of this interpretation into four chapters. The first clarifies the philosophical context of the Marburg School and the relevance of the question of a philosophical psychology. I do this by comparing Hermann Cohen's early and late formulation of the validity question with Hermann von Helmholtz's scientific epistemology of perception. The second chapter explains the transcendental logical foundation of the last version of the philosophical psychology. I begin the chapter by analysing the Natorp-Husserl correspondence as an exemplary case of the misunderstanding of the critical-epistemological enterprise of analysing the a priori principles of the objective validity of knowledge. Then I explain the genetic-logical frame that makes it possible to define the a priori functions of knowledge and to introduce the question of the necessity of a psychological analysis of the fact of perception. The third chapter analyses the main argument of the general psychology in regard to the concept of lived experience. Here I explain the main concepts with which Natorp characterizes the epistemic role of lived experience. In particular, I focus upon the concept of potency and the reconstruction of its two provinces, namely, the epistemic levels or moments of the process of determination (sensation, representation, conceptualization) and the epistemic levels of the apperceptive function of potency (the personal I, the second-person I, and the common-I). The final chapter proposes that Natorp's *Social Pedagogy* significantly complements the philosophical psychology, namely, the analysis of the second province of potency, the purpose of which is to explain the a priori levels of the epistemic commitment of the knowing subject. I present this argument by reading in detail the first section of the *Social Pedagogy* and showing that the epistemic condition for education that Natorp calls the 'formation of the will' is a necessary subjective capacity for the development of the epistemic commitment of rational agents to the a priori principle of legality. In view of this reconstruction, I believe that this dissertation may lay the foundation for future research on neo-Kantianism and its epistemological contribution to contemporary debates. In this regard, I would like to suggest the direction of Natorp's transcendental philosophy for contemporary epistemology of perception and objective knowledge.

§2. Action-Oriented Epistemology and Transcendental Philosophy

In his essay from the collection *Self-presentation* of 1922, Natorp holds that his *General Psychology* was a work significant for his late philosophical path. Whilst this treatise still relies upon the epistemological distinction of object and subject, Natorp writes in his critical-psychological analysis of the epistemic function of lived experience “the ice was broken”, for it shows that: “the logical, and in and with it the psychological, have more dimensions.” (Natorp 1923, 167).¹⁰⁷ As Natorp immediately states, one of the contributions of this book was to open the path to his late philosophy, particularly to his unfinished *General Logic* from 1918/24. Based on the results of the present investigation, this book also ‘breaks the ice’ in regard to another direction. The critical dissolution of the metaphysical dualism of object and subject enabled Natorp to understand the lived experience of knowledge as the immanent and correlative formation of object and subject in the infinite task of leading the a priori act of thinking to concretion. In this respect, I think that this critical-epistemological viewpoint insinuates what I call an ‘action-oriented epistemology’ in Natorp’s transcendental philosophy. By ‘action-oriented’ I mean the normative-agential fundament of the critical concept of objective knowledge. I think it is possible to see this fundament or orientation in the epistemic process of the lived experience of the concrete knowing subject, on the one hand, and of the entire critical-epistemological model of the act of thinking (*Denken*), on the other.

The first case concerns the analyses of chapters 3 and 4. As I explain, the concept of lived experience defines *how* we recognize and justify the objective-validity of the rational act of objective determination. As a subjective capacity, the lived experience of knowledge reveals the particular kind of agency of rational agents, namely, the agency of a living being that inhabits a normative space of reasons (Brinkmann 2006; Bäckström 2017). As is well-known, recent epistemology of perception, particularly the late works of John

¹⁰⁷ The full passage is the following: “Von all solchen Erwägungen ließen freilich meine älteren Arbeiten noch kaum etwas erraten. Einen gewissen Begriff dessen, wohin ich eigentlich steuerte, konnte erst die „Allgemeine Psychologie“ von 1912 geben, wenn auch, wer ihn da einmal gewonnen hat die Ansätze dazu auch in allem Früheren nicht verkennen wird. Aber auch in dem genannten Buche stellte sich das Gegenverhältnis von Objekts- und Subjektsbeziehung noch viel zu äußerlich und bequem als das einer einfachen logischen Umkehrung dar. Jetzt glaube ich klarer zu sehen (was zwar auch schon und wieder zutage kam), daß in dem Ausgleich des einzigen Gegensatzes des Objektiven und Subjektiven die Aufgabe so wenig erschöpft ist wie in dem des Gegensatzes etwa des Rationalen und Irrationalen des Individualen und Überindividualen oder was man sonst nennen mag. Das Logische, und in und mit ihm das Psychische, hat mehr Dimensionen. Immerhin war mit diesem Buche das Eis gebrochen; von da ab ging es rascher vorwärts.”

McDowell, stress that human rationality pervades the facticity of our lives.¹⁰⁸ As I suggest throughout the dissertation, this idea closely resembles Natorp's transcendental philosophy. Let us take the following case as an example. In order to form connections for the production of an objective concept, it is necessary that the knowing subject learn to commit herself to the very task of determining the manifold in view of law-like conceptual procedures. My analysis of the *General Psychology* and the *Social Pedagogy* shows that the epistemic commitment of the knowing subject consists in the progressive and intersubjective formation of the will. In fact, only by learning to orient her will can the knowing subject understand and assess the epistemic value of the decisions she makes in regard to a case to be determined. In this manner, Natorp shows that the epistemic process of potency-production is at the same time an *ethos*, that is, a form of life that is conducted in view of the epistemic demands and questions of the community we inhabit. The critical destiny of human life, therefore, is to be an 'epistemic life': a life that is always confronted with and responsible to the never-ending task of becoming rational, enlightened, cultured, in sum, alive as self-aware creatures, whose whole life depends upon free commitment to a rational community, that is, a community the culture of which aims to realize the idea of humanity in itself.

The second case concerns the analyses of Chapter 2. As we have seen, the action-oriented perspective also has significant repercussions for genetic logic. As I indicate, the action-oriented perspective reveals itself in Natorp's interpretation of the *factum* as a *fieri*. The concept of the *fieri* suggests that every scientific result is the result of an epistemic practice, the a priori condition of which is the transcendental network of logical functions or categories. Furthermore, the fact that knowledge is not simply the innate biological ability to represent ready-made objects scattered in our surroundings, but rather the infinite task we live and inform in the course of our being-in-common—precisely to learn to experience the world as a common-world—suggests that both the *fieri* and the transcendental network of logical functions are always engaged in epistemic commitments, the meaning of which cannot be reduced to the truth or falsity of our claims, the efficiency of technical methods, or the profitability of the products we may obtain. For this epistemic engagement not only compels us to justify our epistemic credentials, but also to constantly ask for the sense of our cognitive actions and the way

¹⁰⁸ In this respect, see in particular (McDowell 2007; McDowell 2013a; Schear 2013).

in which we may or may not make use of logical functions to model, project, and manipulate the question of a case to be determined.

This last point brings us to the case presented in Chapter 1, namely, the neo-Kantian understanding of the academic task of philosophy. In this respect, I think that it is also possible to see the action-oriented perspective of Natorp's transcendental philosophy.

Natorp witnessed the scientific transformations that took place in German universities, in new scientific societies and institutions, and mainly in industry. For him, the institutional reconstruction of knowledge-production was the symbol of a new human community, namely, one based on the technological achievements of knowledge. Against the extreme technification of life, which Natorp hardly criticized in defence of the humanistic formation of low- and middle-class workers, he aimed to vindicate the humanistic and epistemic value of knowledge in the formation of free rational agents. In this milieu, Natorp became interested in the academic and public role that philosophy should play in the new community of knowledge.

In this respect, Natorp agrees with Cohen's original insight, when he poses the question of the *certainty* of cognition (*Gewissheit des Erkennens*) in 1877. But Natorp tackles the problem from a more encompassing perspective. The society of knowledge, or knowledge as the life of a new modern society, depends upon the *ethos* of rationality. Moreover, it not only depends upon it but is also responsible for its care. According to Natorp, central to the task of taking care of the rational ethos of humanity is interpretation of philosophy as a praxis. In particular, he distinguishes between two complementary concepts of philosophy as praxis.

On the one hand, it is quite clear that Natorp, inspired by Cohen's *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, understood philosophy as an academic discipline, no different from others in regard to its form, since its vast tradition also demands the use of scientific practices, such as philological methodologies, thought experiments, and the design of philosophical models to deal with classical problems.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the interpretation of transcendental

¹⁰⁹ Consider, for example, the double *dictum* of Cohen's masterpiece: to restore both Kant's own words and his philosophical authority, that is, to perform both an *exegetic* reconstruction of documents on the ground of scientific practices (systematic reading, reconstruction of historical contexts, the construction of

philosophy as a replicable and coherent method, the Marburg school's idea of a 'community of work', the enterprise of doing of philosophy as an autonomous but collaborative discipline with other sciences, and even reinterpretation of the idea of *systematic* philosophy, made of critical epistemology (*Erkenntniskritik*) a research programme, for without hesitation it adapted itself to academic demands in order to assure the objectivity and replicability of its procedures. In this sense, Natorp believed that philosophy must redefine itself as a *scientific praxis*, since new sciences made it look as an old-fashioned discipline, ready to retire and to be replaced by modern technologies and methodologies that promised to solve its unsolved queries. In this sense, Cohen and Natorp made of the traditionally alleged *foundational role* of philosophy an institutional warhorse in the debate with scientists and philosophers, especially those who hailed from experimental psychology and pedagogy. While the former aimed to bring knowledge into an experimental environment of technological procedures to dissect cognition into psycho-physical laws and mechanisms, the latter aimed to manipulate knowledge through strict technical instructions to secure cognitive processes such as learning, memorizing, and thinking. In Natorp's view, despite their utility, both approaches run the risk of reducing knowledge to a natural event that exceeds or goes beyond the rational jurisdiction of concrete knowing subjects.

On the other hand, and pertaining to the point about the autonomous rational jurisdiction of individuals, Natorp defines philosophy in the *Social Pedagogy* as the ground and the goal, the seed and cultivation of a rationally engaged and informed humanity (Natorp 1922; 1974; 1905). In this respect, philosophy certainly differs from the academic contour described above. What makes philosophy such a relevant praxis is its potential to awaken and develop the epistemic condition of the *formation of the will*. As I explain throughout the dissertation, objective knowledge, in all its manifestations, is the capacity to abstract from ourselves as individuals (Natorp 1887; 1912a, 77). Since objective judgment seeks to determine something as such-and-such in accordance with the a priori legality of reason, then concrete subjects must learn to evaluate their mental subjective contents in

specialized vocabulary etc.), and a *creative* interpretation in view of the recent developments of knowledge. See (Cohen 1885). Also, consider Natorp's extensive philological reviews of texts on ancient philosophy, the systematic and historically informed reconstruction of modern systems of philosophy, and the multiple *reports* of contemporary theory of knowledge. By Natorp's time, philosophers had already become party to the cultural change that led from the 'natural philosopher' to the 'scientist'. I take this expression from (Snyder 2012, 17).

view of general criteria of objective validity. As we have seen, the will (*Wille*) is the necessary level of conscienciality (*Bewusstheit*) that first opens us up to the awareness of the normative demand. Briefly, the will consists in the epistemic reflection about many possible sensible and intelligible contents, in order to connect the series of lived experiences we may have in accordance with an objective position (*Setzung*), which at first is introduced by us but later progressively adapted to fulfill the a priori idea of legality. In this way, this practical reflection awakens in us consciousness of a law that allows us to judge our epistemic credentials in order to disallow or authorize such-and-such determinations (Natorp 1974, 77). As a concrete and practical position of an object, the will, therefore, teaches us to freely decide and reflect upon our right to judge in a given context. In other words, the epistemic development of the will makes possible both the laborious overcoming of instinctive immediacy and the rational commitment to the will of rationality (*Vernunftwille*). As a commitment, the formation of the will is the process necessary to learn to become a rational agent. But the epistemic cultivation of the will requires a rationally driven praxis, whose exercise can teach us how to improve our criteria and rational credentials to judge the truth or falsity of our thoughts. Natorp believes that philosophy is the most exemplary practice to cultivate our epistemic capabilities. Due to the critical orientation of philosophy, that is, the systematic task of analysing the transcendental fundamentals of what we recognize as *facts* of knowledge, the exercise and cultivation of philosophy teaches us to understand and assess how the transcendental normativity of thinking is fulfilled in every ‘spiritual work’ or, in other words, scientific discipline (Natorp 1912b). The exercise of philosophy, in this sense, is the exercise of a dynamic (self-critical) communal praxis. Thus, based on this argument, and unlike Heidegger’s well-known thesis, Natorp emphasizes that philosophical praxis teaches us how to think for ourselves in a dynamic, constantly changing, and ethically engaged community of rational beings. For this reason, Natorp believes that philosophy must be the ground of the social conditions that enable us to *learn* to recognize the normativity of thinking. In the social and political space of rational deliberation, philosophical praxis reveals itself as a concrete form of the: “free self-instruction (*Erziehung*) in the common-life of adults” (Natorp 1974, 211).

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Samenvatting

Op zoek naar het concrete onderwerp. Over de epistemische rol van beleefde ervaring in de kritische epistemologie van Paul Natorp

Dit proefschrift behandelt de 'Algemene psychologie volgens de kritische methode' van Paul Natorp uit 1912. Ik betoog dat de algemene psychologie een belangrijke kritisch-epistemologische (*erkenntniskritisch*) bijdrage levert aan het centrale probleem van het neokantianisme van de Marburgse School, te weten de vraag over de *a priori* validiteitsvoorwaarden (*Geltungsbedingungen*) van objectieve kennis. Ofschoon Natorp het volledige project van een filosofische psychologie nooit heeft voltooid, toon ik aan dat de laatste schets van dit werk een nieuwe en systematische uitbreiding van de neokantiaanse transcendentale basis van objectieve kennis bevat. Wat houdt deze bijdrage van de algemene psychologie in? In welke zin breidt de algemene psychologie het onderzoeksprogramma van de Marburgse school uit? In dit proefschrift betoog ik dat het kritisch-psychologische werk van Natorp de immanente en noodzakelijke relatie tussen validiteit en beleefde ervaring op systematische wijze trachtte te verklaren (*Erlebnis*). Hierdoor vorderde Natorp in de richting van een voorlopige kennistheorie van het epistemologisch agentschap van concrete onderwerpen, dat wil zeggen, een kennistheorie die de epistemologische rol van de beleefde ervaring bij de productie van objectieve bepalingen verklaart en beschrijft. Door het epistemologische karakter van de beleefde ervaring te benadrukken, beoogt dit proefschrift derhalve aan te tonen dat de algemene psychologie van Natorp een nieuwe transcendentale beschrijving biedt van de *a priori* bepalingen van het proces waardoor individuen rationele actoren kunnen worden, ofwel, promotors van een rationeel betrokken epistemologisch leven.

Binnen de gangbare benadering van de algemene psychologie ligt de aandacht op wat ik haar negatieve bijdrage noem, te weten, de kritiek van Natorp op het dispuut omtrent psychologisme. Tegelijkertijd verdedig ik echter het idee dat de filosofische psychologie van Natorp ook een positieve bijdrage levert. Het werk van een algemene psychologie bestaat uit de systematische constructie van een niet-empirische of idealistische filosofische psychologie (*philosophische Psychologie*). Als zodanig, stel ik dat Natorps filosofische psychologie uit 1912 de laatste systematische poging is om de

epistemologische rol van een specifieke psychologische component in het kennisproces te definiëren, namelijk; de perceptueel *beleefde ervaring* (*Erlebnis*) van de productie van objectief-valide kennis. Concreet stel ik dat perceptueel beleefde ervaring kan worden geïnterpreteerd als de *a priori* subjectieve voorwaarde voor de concrete en effectieve erkenning (*Anerkennung*) en toe-eigening (*Aneignung*) van de objectieve validiteit van inhoud.

Naast het feit dat de algemene psychologie een onvolledig project is, is het feitelijk zo dat de meeste wetenschappers die geïnteresseerd zijn in de neokantiaanse psychologie, een fenomenologische benadering hanteren om Natorps transcendentale analyse van de beleefde ervaring van objectieve kennis te beoordelen. In dit proefschrift betoog ik dat deze benadering geen ruimte laat voor herkenning van de juiste inhoud en het doel van een kritische psychologie, zoals Natorp dat beschreef in 1912. Om de naar mijn mening juiste "neokantiaanse" betekenis van de psychologie van Natorp te onthullen, gaat mijn voorkeur uit naar een conceptualistische benadering. Volgens deze benadering mag het vraagstuk van de beleefde ervaring van objectieve kennis - in tegenstelling tot hetgeen een aantal door fenomenologie geïnspireerde wetenschappers veronderstellen - niet worden opgevat als het vraagstuk van de onmiddellijkheid van kennis. Het dient eerder te worden geïnterpreteerd vanuit de epistemologische rol die de beleefde ervaring speelt in het proces van conceptvorming.

Om de hoofdthesis van dit proefschrift uit te werken, wordt in de 4 hoofdstukken een argumentatie uiteengezet die vanuit de meest algemene aspecten van de algemene psychologie toewerkt naar haar meest gedetailleerde differenties. Zo licht ik in hoofdstuk 1 en 2 enerzijds de wetenschappelijke en filosofische context toe waarin Natorp zijn psychologische analyses ontwikkelde. Anderzijds, analyseer ik in de hoofdstukken 3 en 4 de door Natorp ontwikkelde definitie van het object en de psychologische methode om de systematische definitie van de beleefde ervaring te reconstrueren als een subjectieve voorwaarde voor de herkenning en naleving van objectief valide inhoud. Hieronder volgt een synoptische toelichting van deze hoofdstukken.

In hoofdstuk 1 introduceer ik het epistemologische vraagstuk van een filosofische psychologie volgens kritische epistemologie. Het is welbekend dat Marburgse neokantianen keer op keer betoogden dat het gebruik van experimentele psychologie in

de filosofie tot vele vormen van psychologisme leidt. Om de epistemologische relevantie van een neokantiaanse psychologie te kunnen begrijpen, is het noodzakelijk besef te hebben van het algemene epistemologische doel van kritische epistemologie. Daarom geef ik in dit hoofdstuk een vanuit historisch perspectief onderbouwde en systematische verklaring van de neokantiaanse versie van de transcendentale filosofie. Dat wil zeggen, het filosofische raamwerk en het doel ervan. Ik ben van mening dat, om de neokantiaanse werkgemeenschap (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) op juiste wijze te interpreteren, een verklaring die de academische en institutionele relevantie van een kritische epistemologie in ogenschouw neemt, zinvol is. Het ontstond immers als antwoord op de epistemologische debatten over de grondslag van objectieve kennis, die plaatsvonden in de context van de opkomst en ontwikkeling van het wetenschappelijk discours over kennis vanaf de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw. Gezien het bovenstaande is dit hoofdstuk verdeeld in drie hoofdparagrafen. In de eerste paragraaf positioneer ik twee vormen van neokantianisme tegenover elkaar, namelijk Hermann von Helmholtz's perceptietheorie (paragraaf 1.1) en Hermann Cohens vroege en latere kritische epistemologie (paragrafen 1.2 en 1.3). Hiermee beoog ik aan te tonen dat Cohens idealistische epistemologie gericht was op de oplossing van een epistemologisch raadsel voor de opkomende fysiologie en experimentele psychologie, te weten de transcendentale basis van de objectieve zekerheid (*Gewissheit*) of validiteit (*Geltung*) van kennis. In de tweede paragraaf leg ik de fundamentele concepten van Cohens kritische epistemologie uit. Mijn doel hier is om een duidelijk beeld te geven van de zogenaamde transcendentale methode en haar onderzoeksobject. In paragraaf 3 sluit ik het hoofdstuk af met het introduceren van het vraagstuk over een filosofische psychologie volgens kritische epistemologie. Mijn doel hier is om aan te tonen dat de neokantiaanse kennistheorie een epistemologische behoefte heeft aan de ontwikkeling van een complementaire filosofische psychologie. De centrale vraag hierbij is hoe en in welke zin een concreet subject de validiteit van objectieve kennis kan herkennen of zich daaraan vast kan houden. Zo draagt het eerste hoofdstuk bij aan een vanuit historisch perspectief onderbouwde en correcte beoordeling van kritische epistemologie alsmede, en in het bijzonder, aan het voorlopige begrip van één van de minst bekende projecten tot nu toe: het epistemologische werk van een filosofische psychologie.

In hoofdstuk 2 licht ik de mogelijkheid en het belang van een filosofische psychologie volgens kritische epistemologie toe. Ondanks het feit dat Natorp verschillende teksten

heeft geschreven over filosofie en psychologie, verhindert het zeer technische karakter en de onvoldedige uitwerking van zijn algemene psychologie een correcte interpretatie van de verhandeling. Mijn belangrijkste doel in dit hoofdstuk is betogen dat de psychologie van Natorp kan worden beschouwd als de subjectieve basis van het normatieve karakter van objectieve kennis. Om te begrijpen hoe Natorp tot deze subjectief-transcendentale basis is gekomen, is het noodzakelijk om de systematische ontwikkeling van zijn werk te analyseren. Daarom presenteer ik in de eerste paragraaf van dit hoofdstuk Natorps vroege definitie van filosofische psychologie. Hiermee beoog ik aan te tonen dat het oorspronkelijke plan van Natorp bestaat uit twee gecorreleerde, maar te onderscheiden projecten: de kritiek op psychologisme (paragraaf 1.1) en de systematische ontwikkeling van een transcendente psychologie (paragraaf 1.2). In paragraaf 2 behandel en verduidelijk ik de twee belangrijkste filosofische problemen met betrekking tot de ontvangst en het begrip van de laatste versie van de filosofische psychologie uit 1912. Mijn doel hier is betogen dat een goed begrip van de kritische psychologie, een gedegen inzicht in Paul Natorps genetische interpretatie van de transcendente methode vereist. In paragraaf 3 leg ik de fundamentele, genetisch-logische concepten van de filosofische psychologie uit. Hiermee beoog ik een duidelijk beeld te schetsen van Paul Natorps interpretatie van de epistemologische objectivering. In paragraaf 4 sluit ik het hoofdstuk af met een gedetailleerde toelichting op de systematische plaats en de noodzaak van de filosofische psychologie. Mijn doel hier is om aan te tonen dat de filosofische psychologie, de subjectieve voorwaarden voor de realisatie en erkenning van het 'feit van perceptie' moet analyseren. Op deze wijze draagt hoofdstuk 2 bij aan een systematische en op historische kennis gestoelde verklaring van de kritische psychologie en, in het bijzonder, aan de hedendaagse beoordeling van haar voornaamste taak en methode.

In hoofdstuk 3 laat ik zien hoe Natorp de kritisch-psychologische grondslag van de handeling van het objectiveren opvat. Mijn voornaamste doel is om aan te tonen dat de filosofische psychologie een originele en systematische verklaring biedt voor de epistemologische rol van de beleefde ervaring (*Erlebniss*) van bewustzijn, omdat het een beschrijving geeft van de subjectieve epistemologische capaciteiten om de objectieve validiteit van kennisproductie te herkennen. Hiertoe, verschaf ik een systematische reconstructie van de opzet van de filosofische psychologie vanuit het oogpunt van de inhoud – te weten, het object en de methode. De systematische reconstructie die ik voorstel, is opgedeeld in vijf paragrafen. In de eerste paragraaf analyseer ik de

epistemologische relatie tussen perceptie en het 'zou moeten' (*Sollen*) aspect van rechtmatigheid, hetgeen ons in het vorige hoofdstuk bij het 'limiet' van de genetische logica bracht. Hier betoog ik dat de realisatie of concretisering die plaatsvindt in perceptie, veronderstelt dat elk concreet onderwerp epistemologische capaciteiten heeft om de effectieve validiteit van de objectiverende conceptualisering van het denken te herkennen. In dit opzicht beweer ik dat het perspectief van de filosofische psychologie noodzakelijkerwijs verschuift van het 'object van kennis' naar de 'kennis van het object' om deze capaciteiten systematisch te ontplooiën. In paragraaf 2 presenteer ik een nieuwe, kritische interpretatie van het 'object' van de kritische psychologie. Met betrekking tot de fenomenologische interpretatie die het object van psychologie opvat als de 'onmiddellijkheid' van het gegeven, stel ik dat Natorp het object van psychologie definieert als zijnde een kritisch-epistemologisch bewustzijnsmodel, met het doel de epistemologische vorm en functie van bewustzijn te verduidelijken. Mijn doel hier is om te laten zien dat Natorp de epistemologische vorm van bewustzijn definieert als de op een wet lijkende subjectieve 'verbinding' (*Verbindung*) van mogelijke bepalende inhoud. In de derde paragraaf ga ik in op de epistemologische functie van bewustzijn. Mijn doel hier is om uit te leggen dat elke verbinding van beleefde ervaringen deel uitmaakt van een epistemologisch proces van subjectivering (*Subjektivierung*). De voornaamste taak van dit proces is om de bovengenoemde verbindingen te transformeren in de epistemologische "potentie" (*Potenz*) voor de actualisatie van objectiverende concepten. Met het Aristotelische concept van 'potentie' herinterpreteert Natorp het probleem van het 'concrete onderwerp' als de noodzakelijke 'epistemologische verbintenis' met het *a priori* legaliteitsbeginsel. In paragraaf vier analyseer ik de 'reconstructieve methode' van psychologie. In tegenstelling tot de algemene interpretatie die de reconstructie definieert als een soort de-objectivering (*Ent-Objektivierung*) van het kennisobject, stel ik dat de reconstructie eerder de noodzakelijke subjectieve constructie van het kennisobject beschrijft. De voorlopige en algemene resultaten van deze constructie zijn wat Natorp de dispositie van de filosofische psychologie noemt. Ik beoog hiermee aan te tonen dat deze sectie licht werpt op de *a priori* structuur van de twee voornaamste gebieden van het epistemologisch bewustzijn. Ten eerste worden de epistemologische niveaus voor de constructie van de 'potentie' van inhoud beschreven (paragraaf 4.1). Wat volgt is een uiteenzetting van de ego-logische niveaus van belevingseenheden (*Erlebnisseinheiten*) ten behoeve van de constructie van het noodzakelijke epistemologische engagement; van het deel van persoonlijk bewustzijn tot het deel van transcendentaal bewustzijn (paragraaf

4.2). Tenslotte concludeer ik in paragraaf 5 dat de filosofische psychologie wel degelijk een systematische analyse biedt van de *a priori* subjectieve voorwaarden voor de erkenning van het normatieve karakter van het denken. Zodoende draagt hoofdstuk 3 bij aan een nieuwe en correcte interpretatie van de systematische rol van de filosofische psychologie als een epistemologie van perceptie. Op deze manier leidt dit hoofdstuk ons ook naar hoofdstuk 4, waarin ik de relatie tussen de filosofische psychologie en de kritisch-epistemologische bijdrage van Natorps Sociale Pedagogiek nader toelicht.

In hoofdstuk 4 analyseer ik de epistemologische bijdrage die '*Social Pedagogy*' van Paul Natorp heeft geleverd aan het inzicht in het onvoltooide werk van de kritische psychologie. Het is bekend dat de Sociale Pedagogiek van Natorp in de eerste plaats werd ontvangen als een concreet alternatief voor de pedagogische modellen van zijn tijd, die hij sterk bekritiseerde, omdat zij waren gebaseerd op een technische en - naar zijn mening - te individualistische kijk op de cognitieve vermogens van mensen. Anders dan deze visie, stelt Natorp voor om pedagogiek te definiëren als de *wetenschap van vorming en opvoeding (Bildung)*, of meer specifiek, de wetenschap van de vorming van de menselijkheid in onszelf. Natorps bijdrage aan de geschiedenis en filosofie van het onderwijs is door een groot aantal academici geanalyseerd. Minder bekend, echter, is de epistemologische bijdrage die de Sociale Pedagogiek van Natorp heeft geleverd aan zijn transcendentale filosofie van objectieve kennis. Mijn doelstelling is om aan te tonen dat de Sociale Pedagogiek, en in het bijzonder haar zogenaamde kritisch-epistemologische basis, gelezen kan worden als een actiegerichte epistemologie die objectieve kennis beschrijft als zijnde de epistemologische keuzevrijheid van rationale wezens. Hiertoe pleit ik voor de wederzijdse invloed van kritische epistemologie en Sociale Pedagogiek, hetgeen een systematische ontwikkeling van het belangrijkste argument van de kritische psychologie aan het licht brengt. Derhalve ga ik in paragraaf 1 in op de systematische plaats en functie van de Sociale Pedagogiek. Ik richt me in het bijzonder op Natorps deductie van het concept van onderwijs van het *a priori* principe van zelfbewustzijn. Hieromtrent betoog ik dat Natorp onderwijs interpreteert als de subjectieve realisatie van het idee van mensheid. In paragraaf 2 zet ik de systematische relatie tussen kritische psychologie en sociale pedagogiek uiteen. Allereerst licht ik de rol toe die psychologie speelt in de context van de sociale pedagogiek - in het bijzonder ten aanzien van het concept van "neiging" als de *a priori* vorm van de beweging van het bewustzijn. Ten tweede toon ik in paragraaf 2.1 aan dat de epistemologische niveaus van de vormende

ervaring samenvallen met de epistemologische niveaus van de potentie. In paragraaf 2.2 laat ik vervolgens zien dat sociale pedagogiek de kritische psychologie van Natorp niet alleen volgt, maar deze ook vervolledigt met de analyse van de 'vorming van de wil'. Ten slotte concludeer ik in paragraaf 3 dat deze lezing van de Sociale Pedagogiek een beter begrip van Natorps epistemologie van objectieve kennis kan verschaffen, door relevante concepten naar voren te brengen die de analyse van kennis vanuit het perspectief van "rationeel agentschap" faciliteren. Derhalve besluit ik met de stelling dat de kritische epistemologie van Natorp, vanaf haar eerste begin in de genetische logica tot haar uiteindelijke ontwikkeling in de kritische psychologie, kan worden geïnterpreteerd als een actiegerichte epistemologie van objectieve kennis.

In de conclusie beweer ik, tot slot, dat de transcendentale filosofie van Natorp kan worden begrepen als een actiegerichte epistemologie van objectieve kennis. Op basis van de resultaten van dit onderzoek, concludeer ik dat de Algemene Psychologie het filosofische werk is dat de strikt op logica gebaseerde richting van de Marburgse School heeft doorbroken. De kritische ontbinding van het metafysische dualisme van object en subject stelt ons in staat om de 'beleefde ervaring' van kennis te begrijpen als de immanente en correlatieve vorming van object en subject in de oneindige taak van het teweegbrengen van concretisering van de *a priori* handeling van het denken. In dit opzicht ontdekt Natorp de normatieve agentschapsbasis van het kritische concept van objectieve kennis. De analyses van dit proefschrift in ogenschouw nemend, concludeer ik, meer specifiek, dat het mogelijk is om deze basis of richting in het epistemologische proces van de beleefde ervaring van het concrete wetende subject te identificeren. In het verlengde daarvan, is het tevens mogelijk om de systematische plaats van het 'beleefde' beginsel van objectieve kennis te herkennen in het gehele kritisch-epistemologische model van het denken. Zodoende mag het vraagstuk van de beleefde ervaring wellicht niet relevant zijn voor louter een logica van objectieve kennis, voor de wijze waarop elk willekeurig concreet subject objectief valide inhoud *herkent* en de wereld objectief *leert* overdenken, is ze echter absoluut noodzakelijk.

Summary

Searching for the Concrete Subject. On the Epistemic Role of Lived-Experience in Paul Natorp's Critical Epistemology

The dissertation deals with Paul Natorp's *General Psychology according to the critical Method* from 1912. I argue that the general psychology makes a significant critical-epistemological (*erkenntniskritisch*) contribution to the main problem of the Marburg School of neo-Kantianism, namely, the question about the a priori conditions of validity (*Geltungsbedingungen*) of objective knowledge. Despite Natorp never completing the entire project of a philosophical psychology, I show that the last outline of this project does contain a novel and systematic enlargement of the neo-Kantian transcendental foundation of objective knowledge. What is this particular contribution of the general psychology? In which sense does the general psychology enlarge the research programme of the Marburg School? Throughout this dissertation, I will hold that Natorp's critical-psychological project attempted to systematically explain the immanent and necessary relation between validity and *lived experience* (*Erlebnis*). By doing so, Natorp advanced towards a preliminary epistemology of the epistemic agency of concrete subjects, that is, an epistemology that explains and describes the epistemic role of lived experience in the production of objective determinations. Thus, by emphasizing the epistemic character of lived experience, my dissertation aims at demonstrating that Natorp's general psychology offers a novel transcendental description of the a priori conditions of the process through which individuals may become rational agents, that is, promoters of a rationally-engaged epistemic life.

The common approach to the general psychology has focused the attention on what I call its negative contribution, namely, Natorp's critique of the dispute concerning psychologism. Along with this, however, I defend the idea that Natorp's philosophical psychology also develops a positive contribution. The project of a general psychology consists in the systematic construction of a non-empirical or idealist philosophical psychology (*philosophische Psychologie*). As such, I claim, Natorp's philosophical psychology from 1912 is the last systematic effort to define the epistemic role of a specific psychological component in the process of knowledge, namely, the perceptual *lived-*

experience (Erlebniss) of the production of objectively-valid knowledge. In concrete, my thesis is that perceptual lived-experience can be understood as the a priori subjective condition for the concrete and effective recognition (*Anerkennung*) and appropriation (*Aneignung*) of the objective validity of contents.

Besides the fact that the general psychology is an uncomplete project, there is the fact that most scholars interested in neo-Kantian psychology have assumed a phenomenological approach to assess Natorp's transcendental analysis of the lived-experience of objective knowledge. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that this approach does not allow for recognition of the proper content and goal of a critical psychology, such as Natorp depicted it in 1912. In order to unveil what I claim to be the proper "neo-Kantian" meaning of Natorp's psychology, I rather follow a conceptualist approach. According to this approach, the problem of the lived-experience of objective knowledge should not be understood as the problem of the *immediacy* of knowledge –as some phenomenologically-inspired scholars are used to assume. Rather, it should be understood in terms of the *epistemic role* that lived-experience plays in the process of concept formation.

To develop the main thesis of this dissertation, its four chapters unfold a story that goes from the most general aspects of the general psychology to its most detailed distinctions. Thus, on the one hand, in the first two chapters I explain the scientific and philosophical context in which Natorp developed his psychological analyses. In chapters 3 and 4, on the other hand, I analyze the Natorp's definition of the object and method of psychology, in order to reconstruct the systematic definition of the lived-experience as a subjective condition for the recognition and adherence to objectively-valid contents. In what follows, I give a synoptic explanation of these chapters.

In chapter 1, I introduce the epistemological problem of a philosophical psychology in accordance with critical epistemology. It is well known that Marburgian neo-Kantians argued time and again that the employment of experimental psychology in philosophy leads to many forms of psychologism. In order to understand the epistemological relevance of a neo-Kantian psychology, it is mandatory to be aware of the general epistemological goal of critical epistemology in its own terms. Therefore, in this chapter I offer a historically informed and systematic explanation of the neo-Kantian version of

transcendental philosophy, i.e. its philosophical framework and goal. I think that the correct understanding of the neo-Kantian community of work (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) may benefit from an explanation that takes into account the academic and institutional relevance a critical epistemology, for it emerged in response to the epistemological debates about the foundation of objective knowledge that took place in the milieu of the emergence and development of scientific discourse concerning knowledge from the second half of the 19th century. Thus, this chapter is divided in three main paragraphs. In §1 I contrast two forms of neo-Kantianism: Hermann von Helmholtz's theory of perception (§1.1) and Hermann Cohen's early and later critical epistemology (§1.2, §1.3). My aim here is to show that Cohen's idealist epistemology was oriented toward the solution of an epistemological riddle for the emerging physiology and experimental psychology: the transcendental foundation of the objective certainty (*Gewissheit*) or validity (*Geltung*) of knowledge. In §2 I explain the fundamental concepts of Cohen's critical epistemology. My aim here is to offer a clear picture of the so-called transcendental method and its object of analysis. In §3 I conclude by introducing the question of a philosophical psychology in accordance with critical epistemology. My aim here is to demonstrate that neo-Kantian epistemology has an epistemological need to develop a complementary philosophical psychology, the main question of which is how and in which sense a concrete subject may recognize or adhere to the validity of objective knowledge. Thus, chapter 1 contributes to a historically-informed and correct assessment of critical epistemology and, particularly, to the preliminary understanding of one of its least known projects to date: the epistemological project of a philosophical psychology.

In chapter 2, I explain the possibility and necessity of a philosophical psychology in accordance with critical epistemology. Despite the fact that Natorp wrote several texts on philosophy and psychology, the highly technical and incomplete development of his General Psychology has impeded a correct understanding. My principal aim in this chapter is to argue that Natorp's psychology can be understood as the subjective foundation of the *normativity* of objective knowledge. In order to understand how Natorp conceived this subjective-transcendental foundation, it is necessary to analyze the systematic development of his project. Thus, in §1 I present Natorp's early definition of philosophical psychology. My aim here is to show that Natorp's original plan is composed of two correlated but distinguishable projects: the critique of psychologism (§1.1) and the systematic development of a transcendental psychology (§1.2). In §2 I review and clarify

the two major philosophical problems for the reception and understanding of the latest version of the philosophical psychology from 1912. My aim here is to argue that a proper understanding of the critical psychology requires a clear understanding of Paul Natorp's genetic interpretation of the transcendental method. In §3, I explain the fundamental, genetic-logical concepts of philosophical psychology. My aim here is to offer a clear picture of Paul Natorp's interpretation of the epistemic act of objectivation. In §4, I conclude by explaining the systematic place and necessity of philosophical psychology in detail. My aim here is to show that philosophical psychology must analyze the subjective-conditions for the realization and recognition of the "fact of perception". Thus, chapter 2 contributes to a historically-informed and systematic explanation of critical psychology and, particularly, to the contemporary assessment of its main task and method.

In chapter 3, I show how Natorp conceives the critical-psychological foundation of the act of objectivation. My principal aim is to demonstrate that philosophical psychology provides an original and systematic explanation of the epistemic role of lived-experience (*Erlebniss*) of consciousness, because it describes the subjective epistemic capacities to recognize the objective validity of knowledge production. To do so, I offer a systematic reconstruction of the plan of the philosophical psychology from the viewpoint of its contents – namely, the object and method. The systematic reconstruction I propose is divided into five paragraphs. In §1 I analyze the epistemic relation between perception and the "ought" (*Sollen*) of legality, which brought us in the previous chapter to the "limit" of the genetic logic. Here I argue that the realization or concretization performed in perception presupposes that any concrete subject is in possession of epistemic capacities to recognize the effective validity of the objectifying conceptualization of thinking. In this respect, I claim that philosophical psychology effects the necessary change of perspective, from the "object of knowledge" to the "knowledge of the object", in order to unfold these capacities systematically. In §2 I offer a novel, critical interpretation of the "object" of the critical psychology. Against the phenomenological interpretation that understands the object of psychology as the "immediacy" of the given, I claim that Natorp defines the object of psychology in terms of a critical-epistemological model of consciousness, the purpose of which is to clarify the epistemic form and function of consciousness. My aim here is to show that Natorp defines the epistemic form of consciousness as the law-like subjective "connection" (*Verbindung*) of possible contents

of determination. In §3 I focus on the epistemic function of consciousness. My aim here is to explain that every connection of lived-experiences is part of an epistemic process of subjectivation (*Subjektivierung*), the main task of which is to turn such connections into the epistemic “potency” (*Potenz*) for the actualization of objectifying concepts. Thus, with the Aristotelean concept of “potency”, Natorp reinterprets the problem of the “concrete subject” in terms of the necessary “epistemic engagement” with the a priori principle of legality. In §4 I analyze the “reconstructive method” of psychology. Against the common interpretation that defines the reconstruction as a kind of de-objectivation (*Ent-Objektivierung*) of the object of knowledge, I claim that the reconstruction rather describes the necessary subjective construction of the object of knowledge. The preliminary and general results of this construction are what Natorp calls the *disposition* of the philosophical psychology. My aim here is to show that this section sheds light on the a priori structure of the two main provinces of the epistemic consciousness. First, it describes the epistemic levels for the construction of the “potency” of contents (§4.1). Second, it describes the egological levels of lived-unities (*Erlebnisseinheiten*) for the construction of the necessary epistemic engagement, from the unity of personal consciousness to the unity of transcendental consciousness (§4.2). Finally, in §5 I conclude that philosophical psychology does offer a systematic analysis of the a priori subjective conditions for the recognition of the normativity of thinking. Thus, chapter 3 contributes to a novel and correct interpretation of the systematic role of the philosophical psychology as an epistemology of perception. In this way, this chapter also leads us to chapter 4, in which I further explain the relation of philosophical psychology with the critical-epistemological contribution of Natorp’s Social Pedagogy.

In chapter 4, I analyze the epistemological contribution of Paul Natorp’s *Social Pedagogy* to the understanding of the unfinished project of the critical psychology. It is well-known that Natorp’s *Social Pedagogy* was received, first and foremost, as a concrete alternative to the pedagogical models of his time, which he intensely criticized for being based on a technical, too individualistic view of the cognitive abilities of human beings. Against this view, Natorp suggests defining pedagogy as the *science of formation* (*Bildung*), or more specifically, the science of the formation of humanity in ourselves. In this respect, many scholars have analyzed Natorp’s contribution to the history and philosophy of education. Less known, however, is the epistemological contribution of Natorp’s social pedagogy to his transcendental philosophy of objective knowledge. My principal aim is to demonstrate

that the social pedagogy, and particularly its so-called critical-epistemological foundation, may be read as an action-oriented epistemology that describes objective knowledge in terms of the epistemic agency of rational beings. In this respect, I argue for the mutual influence of critical epistemology and social pedagogy, which reveals a systematic development of the main argument of the critical psychology. Thus, in §1 I describe the systematic place and function of the SP. In particular, I focus on Natorp's deduction of the concept of education from the a priori principle of self-consciousness. In this respect, I claim that Natorp understands education as the subjective realization of the idea of humanity. In §2, I demonstrate the systematic relation between critical psychology and social pedagogy. First, I explain the function of psychology in the context of the social pedagogy, especially in regard to the concept of "tendency" as the a priori form of the movement of consciousness. Second, in §2.1, I show that the epistemic levels of the formative experience coincide with the epistemic levels of the potency. Third, in §2.2, I demonstrate that social pedagogy not only follows Natorp's critical psychology, but also complements it with the analysis of the "formation of the will". Finally, in §3 I conclude that this reading of the SP may provide a better understanding of Natorp's epistemology of objective knowledge, by putting forward relevant concepts to analyze knowledge in terms of "rational agency". In this respect, I conclude by claiming that Natorp's critical epistemology can be understood, from its very beginning in the genetic logic to its final development in the critical psychology, as an action-oriented epistemology of objective knowledge.

Finally, in the conclusion, I claim that Natorp's transcendental philosophy may be understood as an action-oriented epistemology of objective knowledge. Based on the results of the present investigation, I think that the *General Psychology* is the philosophical project that breaks with the strictly logical direction of the Marburg School. The critical dissolution of the metaphysical dualism of object and subject allows us to understand the "lived-experience" of knowledge as the immanent and correlative formation of object and subject in the infinite task of leading to concretion the a priori act of thinking. In this respect, Natorp discovers the normative-agential foundation of the critical concept of objective knowledge. More specifically, by considering the analyses of this dissertation, I think that it is possible to identify this foundation or orientation in the epistemic process of the lived-experience of the concrete knowing subject. And, by extension, it is also possible to recognize the systematic place of the lived-fundament of

objective knowledge in the entire critical-epistemological model of the act of thinking (*Denken*). Thus, the question of lived-experience might not be relevant for a sheer logic of objective knowledge, but it is absolutely necessary to describe how any concrete subject *recognizes* objectively-valid contents and how she *learns* to think objectively about the world.

Curriculum Vitae

Nicolas Alejandro Trujillo Osorio was born in Punta Arenas (Chile), December 10th, 1987. After completing his secondary education at Colegio Pierre Faure in 2005, he enrolled in the BA program of Theory and History of Art at Universidad de Chile. He concluded his BA studies in 2011 with highest distinction. In 2011, he enrolled at Universidad Diego Portales for a MA in Contemporary Thought: Philosophy and Political Thinking. During this period, he worked as an assistant lecturer in Art Theory at Universidad Alberto Hurtado. He obtained his MA degree in 2013 with highest distinction with the thesis “The Life of an infinite Task. The Problem of Consciousness in Paul Natorp's General Psychology”. In 2015, he enrolled in the joint PhD program at Leiden University Institute for Philosophy and Universidad Diego Portales. During his PhD., he developed his research in Chile, Germany, and The Netherlands. Since 2019, he works as assistant lecturer and assistant researcher at Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Universidad Andrés Bello, and Universidad Diego Portales.

