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Title: Searching for the concrete subject: On the epistemic role of lived-experience in Paul Natorp's critical epistemology

Issue Date: 2020-12-09

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” (*Strebungsgefühl*) (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 Prozedur: 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.