

Cover Page



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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁹⁵ See note 1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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