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Monism and Particularism: Methodology in Brentano's Psychology

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Abstract. The paper argues that Brentano was the exponent of a methodological monism, which is based on the requirement that science should be grounded on *experience*, and not on a speculative-idealistic principle, as in the case of German idealism. In Brentano's psychological writings, this methodological requirement concretized in two different theses: (T1) The method of psychology is *identical with* the method of natural science; (T2) The method of psychology is *inspired by* the method of natural science. The thesis of this study is that an important part of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* is elaborated in accordance with T1. By contrast, Brentano's *Descriptive Psychology* illustrates the subsequent decision to give up this idea. In its place, the aforementioned requirement is elaborated in the spirit of a methodological particularism that recommends the scientist elaborate his methods according to the specificity of the phenomena under investigation and to the difficulties that need to be overcome when approaching them.

Keywords: empirical psychology, descriptive psychology, empirical method, methodological monism, methodological particularism.

1. Introduction

It is common knowledge that, with respect to methodology, Brentano advocated an approach that held that both natural and mental science should share the same method, the method of the natural sciences. In that respect, in his fourth habilitation thesis at the University of Würzburg in 1867, he clearly maintained: "The true method of philosophy is none other than that of the natural sciences."[2] In the present [398] stage of research, one cannot know whether or not Brentano was influenced or not in elaborating this thesis by Auguste Comte. But as Brentano's study of Auguste Comte

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[2] Brentano 1866, 137. For the sake of convenience, the following abbreviations will be used: AC for the paper "Auguste Comte" (1869), PES for *Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint* (1874), GE for the lecture "Über die Gründe der Entmutigung auf philosophischem Gebiete" (1874), and DP for *Descriptive Psychology* (1982).

(1869) and his inaugural lecture at the University of Vienna (1874) show, this thesis is entirely compatible with Comte's thinking. In addition, the mentioned works also show that the core of the method of natural science consists of observation and explanation understood as the subsumption of phenomena under general laws and reduction of these laws to more general laws (AC, 105). In the following I claim that *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* constitutes in an important part of it the result of transposing the model of explanation specific to the natural sciences in Auguste Comte's scale of positive sciences (physics, chemistry, etc.) into the psychological domain.[3] In other words, in 1874 Brentano justifies psychology's claim to be a science by the fact that its program aims to explain psychological phenomena through empirical laws that should in turn be reduced to ultimate laws.

Another important thesis of my paper is that Brentano's descriptive psychology is the result of emancipation of psychological research from the ideal of natural science. More precisely, in his Viennese period Brentano assigns to genetic psychology the task of establishing the laws of succession of mental phenomena, and he seriously doubts that genetic research will ever be able to discover ultimate psychological laws. For this reason, he focuses on descriptive analysis aiming at establishing the elements of consciousness and their connections. In this way, descriptive psychology represents a type of research that is independent to a great extent from physiological research. At the same time, it gives expression to a methodological particularism that preserves the idea of the unity of method with that of natural science, but emphasizes that the descriptive psychologist has to elaborate his method according to the specificity of the phenomena under investigation and to the difficulties that need to be overcome when approaching them.

As regards the way this matter has been dealt with in the literature, it should be said that until now the relationship between empirical and descriptive psychology as to method has not been addressed. Although Brentano's empirical method and the idea that philosophy can acquire scientific status exclusively based on this method are of special interest for scholars,[4] there is no focused study meant to show how his fourth habilitation thesis develops in the two aforementioned psychological writings.

In order to point out the significance of this thesis, we need to specify that, according to an early taxonomy of sciences that Brentano designed in one of the

[3] Comte 1830, 94; PES, 23 f.
[4] See, for instance, Haller 1988.

introductions of his lectures on the history of philosophy, philosophy is a natural, abstract science that divides in two main disciplines: natural science and mental science.[5] [399]

In the literature, the account that holds that mental science should use the method of natural science is known as methodological monism.[6] The first main distinction here is between the programmatic statement and the actual articulation of a thesis. From this standpoint, the fourth habilitation thesis may be considered as the expression of a *general, inspired by natural science, and programmatically assumed* monism. The thesis of this monism valid for natural science as well as for psychology and metaphysics is as follows:

T0 Any science, including philosophy and psychology, has to follow the method of natural science, and should not be grounded on a speculative-idealistic principle, as is the case with the last stage of the decay of modern philosophy, the German idealism.[7]

Based on Brentano's works, we may highlight two ways whereby T0 was developed throughout his academic career:

T1 The method of mental science is *identical with* the method of natural science.

T2 The method of mental science is *inspired by* the method of natural science.[8]

In order to prove those theses, I shall start with two hypotheses: one concerns the relation between empirical psychology and descriptive psychology; the other focuses on the different approaches to inner perception and the outcomes they provide. In setting forth these hypotheses, and in my whole paper, I shall repeatedly use the descriptive-genetic distinction outlined during Brentano's Viennese period, namely, that descriptive psychology investigates the elements of consciousness and their way of connecting, while genetic psychology attempts to specify the conditions accounting for the occurrence and development of mental phenomena (DP, 3).

The two hypotheses mentioned above are the following:

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[5] Ms. H 45: 'Gesch. d. Phil. Einteilung der Wissenschaften' (n. 25253) (apud Hedwig 1987, XIII).

[6] See, in this respect, von Wright's compelling analysis in *Explanation and Understanding*. Here Comte's and Mill's contributions to methodological monism are well emphasized, without any mention of Brentano's contribution to the issue. However, Brentano holds the same thesis, while also explicitly aknowledging his being indebted to Comte and Mill.

[7] Brentano 1998, 86 f., 100 f.

[8] In the specialist literature, Haller (1988, 22 f.) has advocated for T0, Mezei and Smith for T1 (1999, 2) , and Volpi (1989, 19) and Hedwig (1988, 40) for T2. As I shall show below, each standpoint has its legitimacy. For an overview of Brentano's philosophy relevant for the context of the present discussion, see Poli (1998), Albertazzi (2006).

H1: PES constitutes an autonomous and independent project with its own goals and specific methods to meet them, distinct from the goals and methods of the descriptive psychology set forth during Brentano's Viennese period.

The goals of PES are the following:

G1 Determining the characteristics according to which mental phenomena could be distinguished from physical phenomena.

G2 Determining the main classes and subclasses of mental phenomena and their features. [400]

G3 Determining the ultimate mental elements that underlie more complex mental phenomena.

G4 Determining the laws of succession and coexistence of mental phenomena.

G5 Reducing these laws to ultimate laws.

As I shall show further on, the methodical steps necessary for achieving those goals are taken mainly from the natural sciences in Comte's scale of positive sciences, which constitutes a strong argument for T1. As I have already claimed, both the goals and the methodical steps are mostly distinct from the goals and the methodical steps of descriptive psychology.

H2: Inner perception and the results obtained through the study of it could be used both in the genetic account and in the descriptive account. This is the reason why they may be considered neutral with respect to the genetic-descriptive distinction: although experiencing through inner perception constitutes the first step of the method of descriptive psychology, we should keep in mind that inner perception also constitutes the main method of the 1874 empirical psychology (PES, 29; DP, 32). On its grounds are achieved all goals mentioned above. Moreover, Brentano's claims clearly show that G1 and G2 are meant to serve that genetic goal of discovering the laws of succession of mental phenomena.

With respect to the theses whereby T0 is developed, we should specify that T1 is an interpretation of T0 in a narrower sense. It constitutes Brentano's heavy artillery and it is applicable to the study of Auguste Comte, to PES, to his inaugural lecture at the University of Vienna, and to genetic psychology. Brentano had resorted to T1 at different stages of his early academic career, for example in his inaugural lecture at the University of Vienna as he clearly defines the method of positive science that psychology also should follow. Conversely, in his late Viennese lectures he had increasingly resorted to T0. It is important to emphasize that on such occasions

Brentano expressly wanted his audience to acknowledge him as a pioneer and a promoter of an anti-speculative, empirical philosophy able to provide for philosophical method the same accuracy and prestige that natural science was enjoying at the time.

According to von Wright's remarks, T1 is related to two other theses, both relevant for defining the specific character of Brentano's early thought on the proper method of philosophy.

T1' The goal of science is to explain phenomena; scientific explanation "consists in the subsumption of individual cases under hypothetically assumed general laws of nature."[9]

T1" Physics embodies the methodological ideal of all the other sciences.

Inspired by the ideas of Comte, in his inaugural lecture mentioned above, Brentano had thoroughly formulated a methodological canon of natural science that embodies this ideal. According to him, the following steps are required for a discipline to become a positive science: [401]

NS1 Observing the phenomena and their succession.

NS2 Determining similarities between different phenomena.

NS3 Determining the laws, i.e., "the general and unchanging relations" governing the relations between phenomena.

NS4 Explaining the phenomena, i.e., their subsumption under general laws.

NS5 Reducing general laws to yet more general, ultimate laws (GE, 89, 95; AC, 105, 111).

With respect to the second thesis, its complete expression is the following:

T2 Although inspired by the method of natural science, the method of mental science is determined independently by the psychologist according to the specificity of the phenomena under investigation and to the difficulties that must be overcome in approaching them.

Due to the fact that this thesis conceives the method to depend on the particularities of the object to be studied, I will call it the thesis of *methodological particularism*. In comparison with T1 that is an interpretation of T0 in a narrower sense, T2 constitutes a free interpretation of it and is applicable to descriptive psychology. While T1 assumes that the very young science of psychology follows in

[9] Wright 1971, 4; I added the first part of the thesis.

the footsteps of the advanced mathematized science of physics, T2 addresses psychology in relation to sciences departing from the paradigm of physics such as anatomy and geognosy. In this context T2 simultaneously aims at maintaining the idea of grounding psychological investigations on experience and also results in forgoing the attempt of PES to translate the paradigm of natural science as such in the area of psychology.

Since von Wright presented T1 in correlation with T1' and T1", I will show that two further correlated theses can also be identified regarding T2. To this end, we should bear in mind the distinction between the two methodological accounts that Brentano had endorsed in the two stages of his academic activity in Würzburg and Vienna. Although in Würzburg he designed his empirical psychology based on inner perception, he was still inclined to accept T1' and T1". In contrast to this fact, which is a sign of a lack of a net alternative to T1' and T1", the descriptive psychology he designed at the end of his Viennese period plainly allows for constructing an alternative. Although Brentano does not present it as such, this alternative may be rephrased as the two following theses:

T2' The goal of science is not to explain, but to describe; the first stage of description is to distinguish the components of the mental act.

T2" Mental science need not follow the methodological ideal of the natural sciences in Comte's scale of positive sciences. Instead it has to forge its own method.

With respect to the relation between those three theses and the period of time Brentano advocated them, we need to specify the following: Brentano had endorsed T0 from the beginning of his scientific career until his death; as for his academic career, in Würzburg he ultimately and programmatically emphasized T1 and built [402] his PES on it; conversely, his Viennese works bear witness to T2, while T1 continues to be tacitly valid for genetic psychology.

In the following, I shall argue for the theses mentioned above, with reference especially to PES and DP. Brentano's other writings are referred to only insofar they deal with issues approached in PES and DP.

2. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* and the Method of Natural Science

PES is structured within the theoretical framework resulting from the early separation of philosophical disciplines into natural science and mental science. This is the reason why in his 1874 work, psychology is defined in thorough analogy with natural science: the object of both sciences is the characteristic features and the laws of succession and coexistence of physical and mental phenomena respectively.

With respect to methodology, PES is the sole work where Brentano tried to design a psychology based on inner perception, while also *working within the paradigm of natural science*. Therefore, my claim here is that PES is designed based on T1 that is on the identity of method with natural science. However, we should notice that it is a weak kind of identity that does not require implementing all the specific elements of the method of natural science displayed above, but only those appropriate for psychology. Translated into the field of psychology, the methodological model of natural science is revised as follows:

PES1 Experience one's own mental phenomena on the basis of inner perception (PES, book one, ch. 2, § 2; book two, ch. 2-3).

PES2 Determine the characteristic features of mental phenomena in comparison with physical phenomena (PES, book one, ch. 3, § 1; book two, ch. 1).

PES3 Determine the fundamental classes of mental phenomena based on their natural affinities (PES, book one, ch. 3, § 2; book two, ch. 5-9).

PES4 Investigate the most basic mental elements (sensations) out of which more complex phenomena arise(PES, book one, ch. 3, § 3).

PES5 Inductively determine the general laws that rule the succession of mental phenomena (PES, book one, ch. 3, § 4-7;).

PES6 Derive from them more specific laws that refer to complex mental phenomena (PES, book one, ch. 4, § 3).

PES7 Inductively test those specific laws after having deduced them (PES, book one, ch. 4, § 3).

PES8 Determine the ultimate psychological laws from which the general mental laws will be derived (PES, book one, ch. 3, § 4-7).

In what follows, I make some remarks on PES1, 5, and 8—these three being

of the greatest importance for my thesis

In contrast to natural science that can convert the outer perception of phenomena under its investigation into observation, psychology works with inner [403] perception that can never turn into observation. The reason is that any attempt to observe mental phenomena while experiencing them leads to their alteration – the attempt to observe my anger while experiencing it leads to its „settling" (PES, 30). However, this does not entail the impossibility of enforcing the method of natural science on the investigation of mental phenomena, but only that any enforcement should account for their specificity, that is, for the fact that mental phenomena can be immediately perceived only by the person experiencing them, and this specific perception cannot turn into observation.

Certainly nowadays, it is common to address the second book of PES independently of the methodological program displayed in its first book. It is also common to consider the second book of PES as a prefiguration of descriptive psychology, for it focuses particularly on those elements that will be taken up and developed afterwards by descriptive psychology, namely, the characteristic features of mental phenomena and their main classes. But in doing so, we would overlook that the methodological parts of PES clearly indicate the path Brentano had in mind to pursue in their further development as well as the goals to be accomplished throughout it. As the methodological chapters of PES show, that path consists of various attempts to implement the methodological model of natural science within the area of psychology. Thus, on this account, that path does not lead to descriptive psychology. On the contrary, the project of PES seems to be an attempt to take up within the field of psychology the methodical steps of natural science. These steps were to be further developed on the basis of inner perception: PES2 and PES3 are based on investigating mental phenomena in inner perception, while PES5 is based on inductive generalisations of data provided by inner perception.

Consider the following. (i) The fact that the study of mental phenomena based on inner perception constitutes the way the thesis on the empirical, i.e., non-speculative grounding of natural science develops within the area of mental science (T0). (ii) Most of the steps mentioned above are either borrowed from the methodology of natural science or adjusted to meet the specificity of mental phenomena. (iii) The works of two advocates of the methodological monism, Comte an J. St. Mill, were an unfailing inspiration for Brentano's analyses (PES, 12 ff., 23 f.,

32 f., 64, 70 ff.). In view of all this it becomes clear that the project of PES is an *autonomous project, independent of the project of descriptive psychology*. It is a *project wherein psychology is grounded on inner perception, and focuses among other things on defining the laws of succession of mental phenomena through implementing the method of the natural sciences* of Comte's scale of positive sciences (PES, 99).

With respect to the descriptive-genetic distinction, this project integrates both investigations leading to descriptive psychology and genetic research. This is no surprise, for the entire third chapter of the first book is intended to analyse the difficulties that the research focused on discovering the laws of succession of mental phenomena faces. The fact that, in this chapter, determining the characteristics and the main classes of mental phenomena explicitly serves the discovery of the laws of succession of mental phenomena clearly shows the significance of genetic investigations for PES. In this respect, Brentano argues the following: [404]

"The principle of the subdivision of mental phenomena will emerge from an account of their general characteristics; and will lead immediately to defining the fundamental classes of mental phenomena based on their natural affinities. Until this is accomplished, it will be impossible to make further progress in the investigation of psychological laws (…) By the same token, without having distinguished the main classes of mental phenomena, psychologists would endeavour in vain to establish the laws of their succession." (PES, 44 f.)

H2 above, in claiming that the outcomes of inner perception are neutral as to the genetic-descriptive distinction, relies precisely on this passage, whereas G1 and G2 of PES help to accomplish G4. In other words, someone aiming at investigating the correlations between mental phenomena and their physiological basis cannot accomplish their goal if they are unable to identify the mental phenomena under investigation and if they do not know their characteristics. We also should emphasise here that not all data grasped through inner perception can be developed in the descriptive account. For instance, empirical generalisations that founded the laws of succession of mental phenomena—e.g., the law of temporal contiguity of mental phenomena—are grasped through inner perception. They do not pertain to the area of descriptive psychology; rather, they pertain to that of genetic psychology (PES, 12).

As for the fifth moment above, inductively determining the general psychological laws, we should notice that they are laws inductively obtained through

generalising the relations between mental phenomena grasped through inner perception. Although exhibiting a high level of generality, they are not the highest and ultimate laws as is the case with the laws of mechanics. Instead, they are empirical, vague, ordinarily and approximately valid laws that require further explanation. There are two reasons for the precarious status of those laws: the difficulty of their mathematisation and the early stage of development of physiology that makes it impossible to know those physiological conditions of the course of mental life on which the latter is fundamentally dependent. Thus, the empirical generalisations the psychologist uses are valid under the assumption of a regular, constant course of the physiological processes of the brain. Any deviation from the regular course, due for instance to substance use (e.g., alcohol) or to pathological anomalies, will lead to adjustments in the law correlations ascertained through inner perception and to a decreased generality due to defining the limits of their validity (PES, 47, 62 f.).

The account of psychological laws that Brentano repeatedly focuses on aims precisely at addressing the physiological conditions of mental life. Although he does not state it explicitly, he aims at two types of succession of mental phenomena: their immediate succession (for instance, Mill's Law of Contiguity of mental phenomena) and their succession after a certain period of time (the phenomenon of habitual dispositions) (PES, 47 f., 59 ff.). In the first case, the account of the succession of mental phenomena would consist of a more thorough designation of the immediate physiological preconditions or concomitant conditions of their succession excluding any physiological element that is not immediately connected to them in that process. In the second case, the account would consist of indicating the purely physiological processes that have occurred in the brain in the time frame up to the emergence of [405] the mental phenomenon that produces the habitual disposition. The focus here is, as Brentano emphasises, on those phenomena that convey the metabolic processes of the brain significant for the phenomenon of habitual disposition. If we would have this information, then:

"we would be in possession of fundamental psychological laws that, while they would certainly be less transparently clear, would nonetheless possess the same rigorousness and accuracy as the axioms of mathematics—the highest psychological laws that could be treated as ultimate laws in the narrower sense of the word. The laws that constitute our highest laws at the moment would, however, reappear to some

extent in an altered form as derivative laws, and a great deal, if not the whole of psychology would acquire a half-physiological, half-psychological character." (PES, 48)

Unlike the paper on Comte and the inaugural lecture at the University of Vienna, where Brentano had focused on explanation as a subsumption of phenomena under general laws, both the text mentioned above and the analyses from the last two chapters of the first book of PES focus on explanation as reduction of general laws to yet more general laws. This fact shows that, for Brentano, the issue that psychology had to deal with at that time was not the lack of general laws designed to explain the succession of mental phenomena. Instead, the issue concerned the lack of ultimate psychological laws capable of resolving fundamental disputes in psychological research.

As the Subjunctive Mood used by Brentano in the passage quoted above clearly shows, finding such ultimate laws constitutes a mere theoretical possibility that, although achievable in principle, is still far from being successfully accomplished. On the other hand, this fact should not prevent us from noticing that, though brief, the passage shows PES operates on the assumption that at some point physiology will be so advanced that it could provide the necessary knowledge for determining the type of ultimate psychological laws mentioned. From those laws one could derive the general laws of the succession of mental phenomena, laws hitherto inductively determined by generalising the data provided through inner perception. From this viewpoint, we could surmise that in PES Brentano had drawn broadly the outlines of a future empirical-genetic psychology that shares the method of the natural sciences in Comte's scale.[10] Unlike the 1874 psychology that had managed to absorb only the first four levels of the methodological model of natural science, this future psychology would succeed in absorbing also its last stage that is reducing the laws determined through empirical generalisation to ultimate psychological laws.

In this context, it is worth commenting with respect to genetic investigations in PES that although Brentano explicitly acknowledged the significance of conditioning mental activity upon physiological activity, there are plenty of claims in

[10] In his lecture on psychology held at the University of Prague since 1880−1, Anton Marty also dealt with this topic, because the second part of his lectures is exactly about the genetic psychology (see Marty 2011, and Rollinger 2014).

PES that show that, for him, the investigation of mental phenomena on the basis of inner [406] perception is more significant than the attempt to discover through a psychophysical approach the ultimate laws of consciousness. The fact that it is possible to highlight two different accounts of mental phenomena within PES constitutes a strong argument for this idea. The first account—designated, for reasons that will be subsequently clarified, as the *continuity account* of different classes of phenomena—puts mental phenomena in the framework of Auguste Comte's theory of the hierarchy of phenomena. This hierarchy emphasises the continuity of various classes of phenomena in keeping with the genetic approach. The second account, never mentioned before in the exegetics, confines continuity to those phenomena preceding mental phenomena, precisely in order to emphasise their radical discontinuity and heterogeneity with respect to all previous phenomena as they are distinguished by Comte.

With respect to the first account, the continuity account, Brentano's starting point is Auguste Comte's claim that there is a hierarchy of phenomena that constantly grows in complexity (mathematical, astronomical, physical, chemical, biological, and social phenomena) and a corresponding scale of sciences. The constitutive principle for this hierarchy is that every new class of phenomena represents a development of previous phenomena with new elements and new conditions for their correlations. Although it is obvious that every new class of phenomena is irreducible to previous classes, for each has its own laws, the focus of this account is squarely on the idea of continuous growth in the complexity of the phenomena. In accordance with the hierarchy of phenomena, each superior science would be able to fulfil its task only after the establishment of the science that investigates previous phenomena (physics after mathematics, chemistry after physics, etc.).[11] This means, with respect to the relations between the last sciences in the scale, that younger sciences would reach their positive level, i.e., the level of enforcing the method of natural science, only after previous sciences in the scale had already reached their mature level. We should notice here that Brentano makes significant changes in Comte's scale. Those particular changes are sociology substituted for psychology and psychology considered as fundamental to it (PES, 23 f.). Such changes are made precisely to

[11] Comte 1830, 86 ff., 96 f., 111 ff.; see also PES, XXVIII, 23 f.

justify the investigations in PES. Brentano's following claim is highly relevant for this account that emphasises the continuity of mental phenomena:

"Just as physical phenomena are under the influence of mathematical laws, and chemical phenomena are under the influence of physical laws (…) so psychological phenomena are influenced by the laws governing the forces which shape and renew the bodily organs involved." (PES, 17 f.)

Let us now compare this quotation to the following quote from the third chapter of the same book:

„But the result of a more careful comparison and an analysis of all pertinent facts certainly seems to us to prove that much more information about physiological phenomena is to be expected from chemical phenomena than from physiological phenomena about mental phenomena. The difference between [407] physiological processes and chemical and physical processes really seems to be only that physiological processes are more complex. [...] We can hardly say the same thing of the concept of life when we apply it to the physiological and psychical realms. On the contrary, if we turn our attention from the external world to the inner, we find ourselves, as it were, in a new realm. The phenomena are absolutely heterogeneous, and even analogies either forsake us completely or take on a very vague and artificial character. It was for this very reason that we separated mental and physical sciences as the main branches of empirical science in our earlier discussion of the fundamental divisions of that realm." (PES, 50 f.)

The quotation clearly shows that the word 'life' means fundamentally different things with respect to psychology and physiology, and that Brentano firmly holds the irreducibility of mental phenomena with respect to all the other phenomena by Comte. Both this account, and the *continuity account* belong to a work that is closely linked to the thesis that there is no other way for psychology to become a science than to use the methodical steps of the natural sciences of Comte's scale of sciences. As I shall show below, in his Viennese period Brentano came to the idea that there is another way for psychology, and that this way is quite diffrent from the way of positive sciences in Comte.

3. Brentano's Descriptive Psychology and the Ideal of Natural Science

By the end of his Viennese period, Brentano had given three lectures on descriptive psychology: *Deskriptive Psychologie* (1887–8), *Deskriptive Psychologie oder beschreibende Phänomenologie* (1888–9), and *Psychognosie* (1890–1). The last one underlies DP.[12]

Broadly speaking, the main change in Brentano's account on psychology as science during this time consists of his reaching the view that causal-explanatory science is not the only way for psychology to become a science. Furthermore, Brentano highlights a descriptive paradigm of science, i.e. descriptive psychology. This approach no longer aims at explaining the laws of succession of the phenomena, but at highlighting the elements of consciousness and their relations. Thus, we may say that in his Viennese period Brentano had discovered an alternative way for psychology to become a science than the one he endorsed in PES. PES gathered investigations dedicated to the distinction between mental and physical phenomena, investigations devoted to determining the main classes of mental phenomena, and genetic investigations that, due to the development of contemporary physiology, could not provide conclusive results in the foreseeable future. By contrast, in DP Brentano manages to define the task of descriptive psychology so that it is plainly [408] distinguished from genetic investigations, and therefore it is no longer dependent on the development of physiology, as was the case in his 1874 empirical psychology.

I shall turn now to the genetic-descriptive distinction in regard to its relevance for the issue of methodological monism. In this respect, I shall refer first to genetic psychology since, on the one hand, genetic investigations played a major role within PES in transplanting the method of natural science to psychology. On the other hand, they continue to be the area of application of this method during Brentano's Viennese period.

Unlike PES, which was founded on the idea of a single, identical method for both natural and mental sciences, DP holds this idea only with respect to genetic psychology. As for descriptive psychology, it is set in the spirit of T2. In this respect,

[12] Baumgartner, Chisholm, Müller 1995, p. XVI; DP also contains fragments from his other lectures and some of his papers on descriptive psychology from around 1900.

in a piece from 1901, Brentano clearly argues in favour of methodological particularism:

"3. The method.

In general it is the method of natural science based on experience. But this is not saying much. Think of how different the methods of the different branches of natural science are! Each one must take into account the particularity and the particular difficulties of the subject." (DP, 163)

In the work of 1874, due to the transplanting of the program of natural science, Brentano focused on highlighting the correlations between the laws of succession of mental phenomena and the changes happening at the level of their physiological basis. But in his accounts of genetic psychology during his Viennese period, he focuses not on a psychophysical explanation of the laws of succession but on investigating the circumstances that cause the occurrence of mental phenomena. This task of genetic psychology is justified by his explicit acknowledgment of the importance of genetic investigations for descriptive psychology (DP, 3 f., 8 f.). In addition to this, Brentano changes his view on genetic psychology during his Viennese period: one of the main reasons why he could substitute sociology for psychology in Comte's scale of sciences in 1874 was that psychology and natural science had a common goal: to determine the laws of succession of the phenomena and explain them through the reduction to yet more general laws. This goal played a key role in accounting for psychology within Comte's scale, for thereby psychology naturally pursued the positive program of other sciences. In this respect, during his Viennese period, Brentano's view changes radically for the following reasons.

First, unlike PES wherein Brentano trusted that sometime in the future physiological investigation along with genetic investigation would be so developed that they could provide the necessary information to reduce the empirical laws of the mental to ultimate psychological laws, during his Viennese period he loses confidence in the possibility of accomplishing this goal. According to him, genetic psychology will presumably have to permanently give up any claim to exactness (DP, 6 f.). More explicitly, despite its affinity to the other sciences within Comte's scale, genetic psychology is not a science that is called to achieve the ideal of exactness already accomplished in sciences such as mathematics and physics. Therefore, it is not

through the development of physiology and psychological investigations that psychology will acquire the same status as the two sciences mentioned above. Rather, the application of methodological particularism, i.e., through the drawing of [409] its own method, will enable psychology, more precisely descriptive psychology, to determine laws as exact as the laws of mathematics (DP, 5 f.). In other words, there is another way for a discipline to become a science than the way of natural science in Comte's scale (physics, biology etc.). This is the way of descriptive psychology.

Second, as for the two accounts of mental phenomena displayed in PES that we have highlighted above—i.e., approaching mental phenomena from the standpoint of their continuity with respect to previous phenomena in Comte's hierarchy and approaching them independently, as a radically different class from them—in DP the first is overlooked and implicitly set aside along with its genetic investigations.

These observations show that in his Viennese period Brentano takes a critical look at his previous idea that psychology can accomplish the methodological ideal of natural science. Unlike PES where he accepts the possibility that the psychological-genetic researches could reach the ultimate stage of the ideal of natural science (i.e., discovering the ultimate psychological laws), in his Viennese period he does not discuss this idea anymore, but emphasizes constantly the difficulties of genetic psychology: the approximate character of its laws, the fact that they have numerous exceptions, etc. (DP, 5). These statements are fully consistent with those made in a lecture on the future of philosophy in 1893. There Brentano takes a position against the unilateralism of Adolf Exner, who considered that science has to operate according to the model of natural science. For Brentano the scientist should not be guided by normative claims that are hard or impossible to satisfy. On the contrary, in the spirit of the above-mentioned methodological particularism, he recommends the approach by direct induction and the use of those steps in the methodical model of natural science suitable to the level of development of each science. From this viewpoint it is important to notice that Brentano illustrates his thesis with references to sciences such as meteorology, physiology, zoology, i.e., sciences in the incipient stages of their development.[13] For this reason, his statements on genetic psychology in DP can be interpreted as evidence that Brentano abandoned the idea of constituting a psychology according to the model used in 1874.

[13] Brentano 1893, 32 ff.

As regards descriptive psychology, I shall not delve further into an analysis of Brentano's mereology specific to this work, for this topic has been thoroughly addressed in the literature.[14] Instead, I shall focus on the particular methodological aspects that are relevant to the issue I examine here.

Unlike PES, wherein the task of an investigation grounded in inner experience consisted of determining the characteristics and the laws of mental phenomena, DP focuses on determining the elements of mental life and their connections. Brentano's notion of element enables a consistent description of mental life, for it reduces mental *acts* and their *features* to a common denominator: while the former are actually separable elements (the mental acts), the latter are merely distinct, separable elements (distinctional parts in the proper sense and in the improper sense) (DP, 15-31). This conceptual toolkit made through systematising various types of [410] distinctions, is meant to exhaustively separate different kinds of parts of consciousness and their connections as necessary when investigating any mental phenomenon. There are no elements of consciousness, nor connections other than those Brentano included in his mereological inventory. There is also no mental state, no matter how complex, that would not be fully described by this inventory. Unlike T1' in PES that held that science aims at explaining the phenomena, its descriptive alternative that Brentano frames in DP holds that science aims to describe, as distinct from explaining, the phenomena. That is to say, according to Brentano psychology could become a science in his day only if it confined itself to describing mental states.

The method whereby Brentano attempts to accomplish his descriptive goals and that constitutes his methodological particularism consists of the following stages: experiencing, noticing, fixing, inductive generalisation and making deductive use. Compared to the methodological model of natural science employed in 1874, the originality of his new model is identifiable in its intermediate steps. I shall now focus on the second and the fourth steps because they especially highlight how a science like descriptive psychology works.

With respect to the second step, is worth noting that it plays the most significant part within the methodological particularism of DP. Brentano's special focus on it is due to the difficulties specific to inner perception: in inner perception complex mental states and their parts are diffusely registered (DP, 34). The role of

[14] See, for example, Chisholm 1967, Mulligan and Smith 1984/84, Marek 1989, Albertazzi 2006, 131-143.

noticing is to distinguish those parts. The objective of Brentano's mereological toolkit is to warrant the fact that a description is complete—i.e., there are no other types of parts of mental acts than those listed in it. In other words, there are no other parts of mental acts that cannot be detected by whoever is using this toolkit. If used for the investigation of mental life, both separable parts and distinctional parts show, each of them, the outcomes achieved by clarifying the implicit parts of a mental phenomenon inwardly perceived. Unlike PES, which solely highlighted the general characteristics of mental phenomena and their main classes, the psychognost is able to describe and analyse mental life far more accurately due to this methodological stage and its corresponding toolkit (DP, 36). If we take into account that the subsequent methodological stages of descriptive psychology also use the data provided by *noticing*, then we may consider it as the main step in building up descriptive psychology as science.

With respect to the moment of inductive generalisation, Brentano shows in DP that there is yet another way to arrive at general laws than the inductive generalisation of the relations registered through inner perception. There are laws manifested through concepts and that express certain ideal correlations. These correlations are intuitively grasped, and they show the connections specific to certain concepts—e.g., "every point in a phenomenal space is of a specific spatial species" (DP, 76). Or, they show the fact that there are no other characteristics than those intrinsic to the concept—e.g., "that there is no third quality apart from affirmation and negation" with respect to judgment (DP, 71 f.). These laws admit no exceptions, and they may be stated as sharply and precisely as the laws of mathematics (DP, 5). Thanks to them, psychology is considered an exact science with the same status as mathematics. However, in DP, Brentano no longer reconciles descriptive psychology to Comte's scale of positive sciences. Instead, he associates it with sciences such as [411] anatomy and geognosy (DP, 8). Like descriptive psychology, they also deal with elements and their connections that are specific to their respective areas.

Similar to PES, DP is also grounded on experience. However, unlike the 1874 work, this foundation no longer pursues the path of the natural sciences of Comte's scale. Instead it follows the way of methodological particularism and freely develops its own method depending on the difficulties to be overcome and on the tools required to address them provided by the philosophical tradition. In this respect, we may say that the method of descriptive psychology is no longer the method of natural science

but a method solely *inspired by* it. On the other hand, if we consider the confident approach in DP, we may say that descriptive psychology did not have to go through childhood, as was the case for genetic psychology due to its dependence on physiology: in other words, it was born already mature. Accidentally or not, once the fact that psychology may acquire the status of a mature science solely as descriptive psychology was clarified, in his conferences on the method of philosophy from his last years at the University of Vienna, Brentano conceived his statements on the method of philosophy more loosely. He no longer referred to transplanting the method of mature natural sciences like physics to psychology. His focus, instead, was on various formulations of the general methodological monism displayed in T0, maintaining that both philosophy and psychology should be grounded on induction and experience.[15]

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[15] Brentano 1886 and 1889; 1893. For linguistic corrections, I am particularly indebted to Susan Gabriel. I would also like to thank to Susan Gabriel and Alexandru Bejinariu for their critical comments that helped me reach a clearer expression of the theses defended in this paper.

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