

The Unity of the Brentano School

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What, if anything, makes the unity and cohesion of the Brentano School? Is there a distinctive mark of what may be called the Brentanian philosophical orientation—or Brentanism for short? In this chapter, I argue that those questions are best answered in terms of *metaphilosophical claims*, claims about what philosophy is and how it should be best carried out—descriptive and normative claims. The proposal I wish to make, in sum, is the following: (i) all the members of the Brentano School share a specific conception of philosophy, and (ii) only they share this conception. To begin, I briefly contrast this approach with those seeking the criterion of Brentanism in doctrinal or merely methodological claims. I then identify a cluster of nine metaphilosophical and epistemological claims arguably endorsed by all the members of the school. I do not intend to deny that other, non-Brentanian philosophers have held some of those claims separately. My suggestion, however, is that the *combination* of those nine claims may be considered a plausible mark of what it is to be a Brentanist.

1. In Search of a Distinctive Mark

Unlike the representatives of the Vienna Circle, the members of the Brentano School never wrote down their views in a co-authored manifesto. This fact is not surprising. It is common knowledge that a number of philosophical disagreements divided Brentano and his students, not to mention discrepancies among the students themselves: Brentano disagreed with Stumpf on the nature of emotional states (Stumpf 1907a, 1928; Brentano 1979: 236-40; see Fisette 2014: 480-6), with Marty on the existence of *entia rationis* (Marty 1908; Brentano 1966, 1995a: 321-68; Mayer-Hillebrand 1955), with

Husserl on the bearings of antipsychologism (Brentano 1995a: 306-7; see Kastil 1958; Huemer 2003), and most notably with Meinong and Höfler, who were charged with propagating “deviations from the correct doctrine” in advocating the object theory (Kraus 1919: 15; Höfler 1921: 15).

This situation makes it difficult to find out a single *doctrinal* content which would display a necessary and sufficient criterion of what it is to be a Brentanist. To be sure, intentionality sometimes is regarded as a plausible candidate, and rightly so. The claim that the mental is intentional—or, as Brentano puts it, that every mental phenomenon involves “the reference to something as an object” (Brentano 1995a: 97)—certainly performed a unifying function among Brentano’s heirs. In this sense, it is fair to say that exploring the “complex unity of mind and object” was central to so-called Austrian phenomenology (Rollinger 2008: 12). However, difficulties arise as soon as one gives a closer thought to the alleged ‘intentionalism’ of the Brentanists.

First, Brentano’s students are far from understanding intentionality all in exactly the same way, and not all of them agree that *every* mental phenomenon is intentional: sensations and some feelings, Husserl argues, are nonintentional (Husserl 2001: 106-12). Next, there is no question that the subsequent elaborations of the intentionality theory outside the Brentano School have very little in common with the spirit of Brentano’s analyses.¹ If one makes a distinction between the *Intentionality Thesis* in the strictest sense (‘All and only mental phenomena are intentional’) and the *Intentional Approach* to the mind (‘At least a significant group of mental phenomena are intentional’), one could say that endorsing the Intentionality Thesis is not a necessary condition for being a Brentanist, while supporting the Intentional Approach may hardly be considered a sufficient condition. For these reasons, appealing to intentionality alone doesn’t really settle the question of what it is to be a Brentanist, even though this is certainly part of the story.²

Given the difficulty to single out a doctrinal criterion of Brentanism, one natural move consists in seeking instead a *methodological*, non-doctrinal criterion. Accordingly, being a Brentanist would be a matter of embracing a certain method. It would be a certain way of doing philosophy. It has been suggested, for instance, that the demand of conceptual clarity was central to the Brentano School (see, e.g., Mulligan 1986; Smith 1994). Still, for obvious reasons, such general considerations provide us with too loose a

sense of what makes the unity of the school. Besides, it might be held that the Brentanian way of doing philosophy duplicates, for the most part, the classical Aristotelian method consisting in carefully describing the data of experience, listing the available theoretical options, formulating them as far as possible in exact terms, and refuting those that do not match the described data (Albertazzi *et al.* 1996: 9).

However sketchy these initial observations might be, it seems that, all in all, there are few chances of getting a satisfying answer to our opening questions by examining further the doctrinal content or methodological dimension of Brentano's philosophical investigations. As suggested above, it is my contention that a more promising way to go is to turn our attention, instead, to the Brentanian conception of what philosophy is and how it should be best carried out. To be sure, the methodological aspects I just touched upon *are* part of Brentano's conception of philosophy. Yet, there is more to Brentano's metaphilosophical views than just a demand of description, exactness and conceptual clarity. At stake is a full-blown conception of the nature of philosophical investigations and the connection thereof with other sciences, starting with psychology. In the remainder of this chapter, I identify three sets of metaphilosophical and epistemological claims which delineate something like a specifically Brentanian view of philosophy. Claims 1-3 concern the relationship of philosophy to *experience*, claims 4-6 concern its relationship to *psychology*, and claims 7-9 determine the kind of psychological investigation that is relevant for the philosophical sciences, namely, the *analytic description* of mental phenomena.

2. Experience

Among the 25 habilitation theses Brentano argued for in 1867, the first four clearly are metaphilosophical claims, claims about what philosophy is and how it should be carried out. The first thesis reads: "philosophy must deny that the sciences have to be divided into speculative and exact, and this denial is the right of its very existence" (Brentano 1968: 136). Theses two and three assert the autonomy of philosophy with respect to theology (I won't say more about this), and thesis four famously reads: "the true method of philosophy is none other than that of the natural sciences" (*ibid.*). Importantly, it is precisely those theses that have been responsible for Brentano's philosophical

attractiveness to his first students (see CHAP. 28). It is therefore reasonable to think that an investigation into what it is to be a Brentanist should start with an examination of the metaphilosophical claims encapsulated in them.

The first thesis suggests that philosophy is a science in the plain or literal sense of the term—not a ‘speculative’ one. The expression ‘speculative science’, Brentano writes, is “a gross misuse of the term science” (Brentano 1995b: 5). One way of understanding this claim is in terms of *determining* vs. *modifying* adjectives (see, e.g., Brentano 1995a: 219-20). The term ‘speculative’, it may be argued, does not add any positive determination to the concept of ‘science’ and rather works as a modifying adjective, in the sense that a speculative science is not a science at all (‘speculative’ has a modifying function here, like ‘fake’ in the phrase ‘fake diamond’). If one buys this view, it sounds absurd to maintain that sciences are to be divided into exact and speculative ones (compare the claim that diamonds are to be divided into actual diamonds and fake diamonds).³ Putting such subtleties aside, one of the main claims encapsulated in the first habilitation thesis can probably be paraphrased in a simple and straightforward way as follows:

C1 Philosophy is a science.

The crucial claim encapsulated in thesis four, in turn, may be rendered as:

C2 There is one and only one scientific method, namely, that implemented in the natural sciences.

Let me briefly comment on those claims. C1 states that, despite all the skeptical and speculative tendencies that periodically come to the fore in the history of philosophy (see Brentano 1895a), philosophy *is* scientific and should be considered so. This means that philosophy is not a species, say, of the genus *art*, nor something *sui generis* which cannot be compared to any other human activity (as Heidegger, for example, will argue), but is rather a species of the genus *science*. On a minimal understanding, a human activity is scientific when it aims at achieving a certain form of knowledge. Given the classical notion of knowledge more or less endorsed by Brentano and his students, this amounts to saying that every science purports to produce *justified true judgments* about its specific subject matter. If those remarks are right, then, C1 simply states that

philosophy has the same *goal* as any other science: It purports to be a set of justified true judgments.⁴

Now, C2 suggests there is only *one way* to reach this goal, namely, adopting the method that enabled the natural sciences to achieve such successful results. On Brentano's view, this method is "quite modest" (Brentano 1968: 89). It roughly consists in collecting phenomena, reviewing their similarities and differences, and formulating general laws (*ibid.*) by means of either induction or self-evident intuition.⁵ Note that this reference to the notion of phenomenon has nothing to do with Kant's distinction between phenomenon and thing-in-itself: "To be a phenomenon, something must exist in itself. It is wrong to set phenomena in opposition to what exists in itself" (Brentano 1995b: 137). 'Phenomenon' rather is to be understood in Auguste Comte's sense, as synonymous with positive or empirical fact. Something is a phenomenon in this sense when it manifests itself in experience, when it is *experienced*.⁶ Accordingly, a more explicit version of C2 would be:

C2* All sciences must reach their goal by conducting investigations into phenomena (empirical facts), reviewing them and dividing them into groups or classes according to their similarities.⁷

Taken separately, C1 and C2* certainly are not distinctive of Brentanism only. For instance, it is probably fair to say that a series of neo-Kantian philosophers endorsed C1 (but not C2*), while the members of the Vienna Circle endorsed C2 (but not C1). That said, combining C1 and C2 leads to a further, *normative* claim, which considerably narrows the options relative to how philosophy is supposed to be carried out:

C3 Philosophy, like all other sciences, must reach its goal by conducting investigations into phenomena (empirical facts).

I take this claim to be central to Brentanism. On a Brentanian view, thus, philosophy should be performed 'from an empirical standpoint': "In the philosophical things, too, there can be no other teacher than experience" (Brentano 1968: 85). Yet, to be sure, this is only a part of the story. The picture that emerges has now to be supplemented by means of a second set of claims regarding the philosophy-psychology relationship.

3. Psychology

As Brentano noticed in his Würzburg lectures, C1 is likely to be—and has actually been—challenged for several reasons. Especially, it may be objected that philosophy is not a science for (i) it has been defined in many, sometimes contradictory ways all along its history, (ii) it has been completely discredited with the rise and fall of speculative systems, (iii) philosophical judgments do not form a single unitary group of judgments. In Brentano's view, objections (i) and (ii) are unessential, since they rest upon historical accidents and lack any actual argumentative force. Objection (iii), however, is a “serious” one (Brentano 1987: 9). One of the main challenges for the supporters of C1, then, is to settle the following questions: Is it possible to exhibit a commonality between the judgments which belong to the field of philosophy? And if so, what do they have in common? At stake is to demonstrate that the judgements that are taken to be ‘philosophical’ form a *unitary* group of judgments, and that philosophy therefore rightly is regarded as a single science.

Brentano's way of tackling this issue may be described as a two-step strategy. First, he concedes, philosophy cannot be said unitary “in the narrow sense”, for a quick glance at philosophical judgments suffices to show that they are not all about one and the same subject matter: philosophers traditionally are concerned with things as different as the layout of reality, the nature of truth and knowledge, the ascription of ethical properties to human behaviors (e.g., ‘this action is right/wrong’), that of aesthetic properties to artifacts or parts of nature (‘this statue/landscape is beautiful/ugly’), etc. With respect to its subject matter, thus, it is reasonable to say that philosophy is not the name of *a* science, but rather of a *group* of sciences. Indeed, on the basis of the traditional subject matters I just have touched upon, it is customary to distinguish at least between metaphysics, logic, theory of knowledge, ethics, aesthetics, etc. Accordingly, C1 should be modified as follows:

C1* ‘Philosophy’ is the name of a group of sciences, the so-called philosophical sciences.⁸

That said, the question remains: Is there nevertheless, *at a more general level*, any commonality between the judgments that are to be found in the philosophical sciences? To be sure, on the face of it, philosophical sciences have very little in common (Marty

1916a: 75). For example, one may doubt there is any commonality between logical and ethical issues (Eisenmeier 1914: 23). Is there any reason, then, why we should regard philosophical sciences as forming a distinctive *group* of disciplines? Is there anything, beside deeply rooted habits, which justifies gathering those disciplines under the head of ‘philosophy’? Brentano and his students think this question must be answered affirmatively: *yes*, appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, there *is* a commonality between all the philosophical sciences. This is the second step of Brentano’s strategy: Whereas philosophy is not a single science “in the narrow sense”, it is nevertheless unified “in the general sense of the term” (Brentano 1987: 10). That which philosophical judgments have in common is best captured in saying that philosophical sciences are concerned with a specific class of phenomena or empirical facts, namely, *mental phenomena* or facts given in *inner perception*. More pointedly:

C4 The philosophical sciences cannot achieve their goals without relying upon investigations into mental phenomena.

Since the study of mental phenomena is the task of psychology, C4 suggests that there is a special and unbreakable connection between philosophy and psychology: the philosophical sciences just cannot achieve their goals without relying upon psychological investigations. Far from being independent disciplines, as the neo-Kantian philosophers maintain, philosophy and psychology are, on the contrary, *inseparable*.⁹

To my mind, C4 is a crucial ingredient in an adequate understanding of Brentanism. Its endorsement by Brentano and the Brentanists is, by the way, confirmed by plenty of textual evidences. In the *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, for example, Brentano justifies the significance of psychology in maintaining that it contains the “roots” of aesthetics, logic, ethics, and politics (Brentano 1995a: 21). The unifying function of psychological investigations is clearly put forward in Brentano’s inaugural lecture in Vienna, where he says that the connection with psychology is the only reason why the philosophical sciences form a single unitary group of sciences (Brentano 1968: 94). On this view, then, there undoubtedly is a dependence of philosophy upon psychology: “Dissociated from psychology, every philosophical science would shrivel like a branch separated from its stump” (Brentano 1895b: 39). Interestingly, Brentano’s pupils also advocate C4. In his rectoral address, Marty defines philosophy as “the field of knowledge which encompasses psychology and all the disciplines that are connected in

the most intimate way to psychological investigation according to the principle of division of labor” (Marty 1916a: 82-3). Even Meinong once endorsed C4, insisting that psychology is not the whole of philosophy but rather the binding element that unifies all the philosophical sciences:

Philosophy is not psychology, for the name ‘philosophy’, on a closer look, doesn’t refer to a single science, but rather to a whole group of sciences. Yet, what gathers them together is their common belonging to the field of mental phenomena. (Meinong 1973: 5)¹⁰

There is no question, thus, that C4 is among the best candidates when it comes to identifying metaphilosophical claims shared by all the members of the Brentano School. The name ‘philosophy’ refers to a cluster of psychology-based sciences including metaphysics, logic, theory of knowledge, etc. (see also Eisenmeier 1914: 33-4; Hillebrand 1913: 8; Husserl 1983: 302; Kastil 1951: 28; Marty 1916c: 162; Stumpf 1892, 1907b/1910: 185; Twardowski 1999: 59-60).

The idea that metaphysics and logic are psychology-based disciplines may strike the reader as odd, to say the least. Yet, before having a look at the main motivation behind C4, it might be good to address a claim tacitly assumed in it, namely, the assumption that there *are* mental phenomena at all. To make this assumption clear, consider the furniture of your phenomenal world: Which kind of things manifests itself to you in your daily experience? To be sure, your phenomenal world involves sensory phenomena like colors, sounds, smells, flavors, and textures. All those things are phenomenally given to you through your senses. But is that all? Obviously not. Right now, while you read those lines, there undoubtedly is more to your phenomenal world than just sensory phenomena. Suppose you feel joyful, or you suddenly remember that you’ve got an appointment tonight, or you think of another philosophical text you have read on the notion of phenomenon. There is a sense in which feeling joyful, remembering an appointment or thinking of a philosophical concept are mental episodes which are no less phenomenally manifest to you than the black-and-white letters on this page (even though, of course, they certainly are not manifest in exactly the same sense, being not perceptible through the senses). This suggests that your phenomenal world is not exhausted by phenomena given in sense perception: It involves mental, ‘inner-perceptible’ phenomena as well. One fundamental assumption of the Brentanian approach to the experience, thus, is that our feelings, cognitive states,

emotions, etc., are phenomenally manifest and form a specific series of phenomena, thereby justifying the use of the label *phenomenal dualism* (Höfler 1897/1930: 2/9; Dewalque & Seron 2015).

Now, taking for granted that our phenomenal world involves mental phenomena, why should those phenomena be relevant for philosophical investigations, as asserted in C4? The answer is given by a definition of philosophy Brentano was already using in his Würzburg lectures:

Among the inductive sciences [...], philosophy is that which deals with what is *insofar as it falls under concepts which are given through inner experience*, be it through inner experience alone or through inner and outer experience at the same time. (Brentano 1987: 10-1, my emphasis; see also Rollinger 2012: 262; Schmidkunz 1918: 495)

This definition suggests that the concepts philosophers use to describe the world are utterly empirical and have their source in inner perception, that is, in the consciousness of one's own mental states.¹¹ This is probably Brentano's most substantial—and most striking—metaphilosophical claim:

C5 Philosophy uses empirical concepts, which have their source in inner perception.

Suppose you endorse a common metaphysical view according to which reality is best described as a set of material and mental things that causally interact. If you are asked to make your conceptual scheme explicit, you will probably refer to the metaphysical concept of causation. Now, causation, Brentano claims, is experienced in inner perception, for instance when you are conscious of believing a proposition *q* because you believe that if *p* then *q*, and you believe that *p*. To be sure, the connection between the *premises* (if *p* then *q*; *p*) and the *conclusion* (*q*), when the argument is valid, is a relation of logical consequence. This is a relation that obtains between the relevant propositions. Still, the relation between the believing of the premises and the believing of the conclusion is causal: this is a relation that obtains between mental states. The concept of causation, Brentano concludes, arguably comes from inner experience and is likely to be *transposed* from there to the outer world (Brentano 1925/1970: 33-5). This suggests that, far from being *a priori*, metaphysical concepts are rooted in inner experience. Of course, showing that this holds true for each and every metaphysical concept cannot be settled *a priori* and is a matter of case-by-case investigations.

Nevertheless, Brentano and some Brentanists maintain that inner perception is a fundamental source for the metaphysical concepts of causation, substance, reality, necessity, existence, number, and the like (see Brentano 1995a: 368, 1925/1970: 40; Marty 1916a: 80-1; Stumpf 1924/2012: 31-33/259-61, 1939: 9-123).¹²

On Brentano's view, C5 also holds true for logical, ethical and aesthetic concepts. For instance, logic needs a clarification of the concepts of presentation and judgment (Husserl 1919: 157; Hillebrand 1891), aesthetics needs a clarification of the concept of imagination (Brentano 1959: 36), and ethics needs a clarification of the "ethical, respectively non-ethical behaviours" (Eisenmeier 1914: 55). In short, it may be argued that every philosophical science needs to engage in a process of conceptual clarification by relating concepts to corresponding experiences, which turn out to be instances of inner experiences in Brentano's sense. The metaphilosophical picture we arrive at is summarized by Stumpf as follows:

Philosophy is in the first instance the most general form of science or metaphysics, to which epistemology forms the entry point. That philosophers since ancient times mostly regarded psychology as belonging to their field of study is objectively explained by the fact that *the mental realm has been significantly more important than the physical in forming basic metaphysical concepts*. It is therefore expedient to define philosophy principally as a science according to the most general laws of the mind and of the actual (or vice versa). Only in this way can we justify classifying logic, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of law, pedagogy, and other branches under the umbrella of the philosophical sciences. *The connecting link is always essentially psychology*. (Stumpf 1924/2012: 28/254-5; my emphasis)

This passage confirms that C5 is one of the main motivations behind C4. Now, C4 and C5 lead to a further, normative claim:

C6 Philosophy must rely upon psychology.

On C6, thus, psychology takes the place of metaphysics as *prima philosophia*. It is the "fundamental philosophical science" (Twardowski 1999: 31), the foundation of philosophy, while metaphysics is its completion (*ibid.*: 58, 64). The most detailed elaboration of C6 is to be found in Eisenmeier 1914, which maybe comes closest to something like a Brentanian manifesto.¹³ Eisenmeier speaks of a "strict dependence" of philosophy on psychology, to the effect that "every philosophical progress is conditioned by the development of psychological knowledge" (Eisenmeier 1914: 35, 16). Logic,

aesthetics and ethics are nothing but “applications” of psychological investigations (Arleth 1896: 242). Twardowski concludes:

If we did not have inner experience, and consequently had no knowledge of the manifestations of mental life, then not only could psychology not exist, but there would also be no logic, no ethics, no aesthetics, no theory of knowledge, not even metaphysics! (Twardowski 1999: 59)

Again, the main motivation for C6 comes from the endorsement of C5. Yet, there is more to it than just conceptual clarification. Indeed, it is the conviction of Brentano and most of the Brentanists that psychological analysis, by providing philosophers with the required conceptual clarification, may help them to get rid of a number of pseudo-problems.

For the sake of illustration, consider the traditional liar’s paradox. From a psychological point of view, the sentence ‘I’m lying’ seems to be tantamount to ‘I affirm that the opposite of my affirmation is true’. This sentence, in turn, is likely to be analyzed in two ways depending on the relationship between the two judgmental acts denoted by “I affirm” (J_1) and “my affirmation” (J_2). Either the phrase “my affirmation” refers to the very same judgment as the one denoted by “I affirm” ($J_2 = J_1$), or it refers to another, unspecified judgment ($J_2 \neq J_1$). If it refers to another judgment, no matter which one, no paradox arises. On this reading, J_1 just is the expression of my taking stance toward the correctness of another judgment, which is just left undetermined. In case J_1 is correct, then J_2 is not—and conversely. There is no paradox, but only *indeterminacy* surrounding J_2 . If, however, J_2 is identical to J_1 , then the situation is quite different, for the sentence means something like ‘I judge that this very act of judging denoted by “I judge” is false’. The apparent paradox comes from the fact that, if J_1 is correct, then it is incorrect—and conversely. Now, this is precisely the point at which psychological analysis offers a way out of the dilemma, for psychological analysis teaches that the primary object of a mental act cannot possibly be the act itself: The only way a mental act can be (and, on Brentano’s view, actually *is*) directed at itself is as a *secondary* object (Urbach 1927: 168).¹⁴ According to this view, the sentence ‘I judge that this very act of judging denoted by “I judge” is false’ cannot be the expression of an actually realized intentional state (nor, a fortiori, of an actually accomplished judgmental act), for it violates the above-mentioned criterion. And since it is not the expression of a judgment, it makes no sense to inquire about its correctness, for, Brentano maintains, only judgmental acts have

correctness conditions in the relevant sense of the term. In sum, the sentence “I’m lying” is neither a correct judgment nor an incorrect judgment, for it simply is not a judgment at all. It is “a linguistic formulation which is absolutely not realizable from a psychological point of view” (Urbach 1927: 170). Thus, providing us with a clarified concept of judgment, psychological analysis enables us to get rid of the pseudo-problem created by the liar’s paradox (without appealing to Tarski’s hierarchy of languages or other logical solutions).¹⁵

4. Description and Analysis

There is no doubt that C6 marks a crucial departure from logical empiricism, whose supporters “neglect the help of psychology and believe that purely *mathematical* methods will do the trick” (Kraus 1934: 67). By contrast, C6 confers on Brentanian metaphilosophy the character of *psycho-empiricism*. Still, endorsing C6 is necessary but not sufficient to make you a Brentanian philosopher. As a matter of fact, again, non-Brentanian philosophers supported C6 and conceived of psychology as the irreplaceable basis of philosophical investigations (see, e.g., Beneke 1832: 88; Lipps 1912: 3-4; Wundt 1913). To single out the specificity of Brentanism, thus, it is necessary to specify further the character of relevant psychological investigations. This is, basically, the business of Brentano’s distinction between descriptive and genetic psychology (see Brentano 1995b).

Since this distinction has already been made explicit elsewhere (CHAP. 3), I will confine myself to highlighting three additional claims, which I take to be of particular significance for an adequate understanding of Brentanism. The first is:

C7 Psychological description is prior to psychological explanation.

In a slogan: “Description first, and then explanation” (Schmidkunz 1892: 3). As far as I know, C7 may be motivated by three arguments. The first is the *argument from simplicity*. Like Aristotle and Descartes, Brentano holds that simpler issues are to be solved before addressing the more complex ones (Brentano 1995b: 8). This is why, Marty wrote, Brentano thinks it better to “start with the first issue [i.e., the description of mental states], which is the first one according the nature of things and is *easier to*

solve" (Marty 1916b: 98; my emphasis). The second argument for C7 is that description is a prerequisite for explanation, in the sense that it is necessary to identify the target of the explanation before explaining it (*argument from identification*).¹⁶ Finally, a third argument to be found in the *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* is the *argument from extension*. The idea is that many psychological laws don't hold for all mental phenomena, but only for a definite sub-class thereof. For instance, not all mental phenomena may be said to be correct or incorrect: this pair of properties (being correct/incorrect), Brentano claims, doesn't hold true for presentations. It is therefore hopeless to try to formulate laws for a specific group of mental phenomena without having first distinguished between the main groups of phenomena under investigation.¹⁷

These arguments certainly speak for the priority of description over explanation. Yet, this priority claim is not the only striking feature of descriptive psychology. Another feature is its relative autonomy from (neuro-)physiology.¹⁸ It is, therefore, 'purely psychological':

C8 Psychological description is relatively autonomous from (neuro-)physiology.

To be sure, there are no mental phenomena without (neuro-)physiological support. Mental phenomena are *ontologically dependent* upon (neuro-)physiological states. Still, acknowledging this ontological dependence is one thing, asserting that the *description* of the mental phenomena depends upon their physiological support is another. C8 doesn't mean that mental phenomena may exist without physiological support, which would be absurd. It means, rather, that the nature of the physiological support simply is not relevant for the description of mental phenomena. As Twardowski puts it, any attempt to deal with the mental phenomena as a species of (neuro-)physiological phenomena is "flawed", for it neglects the fact that "we apprehend the two kinds of phenomena in entirely different ways" (Twardowski 1999: 43-4). The distinction, again, is a phenomenal one, which means that, to assert it, "there is no need to appeal to metaphysical mind/body theories" (*ibid.*). For instance, on C8, considerations about the nature of our sensory organs shouldn't play any role when it comes to describing and classifying sensations as visual, auditory, tactile, etc. If a visual sensation cannot be set in the same class than an auditory sensation, this is because they are dissimilar "in themselves", not because they are produced by different organs. In other words, when it

comes to phenomenological description, the nature of the targeted phenomena as they are given in inner perception is the only thing that matters.

Now, my contention is that the Brentanists do not only share C7 and C8 (see, e.g., Brentano 1895b: 34; Marty 1908: 52-3; Höfler 1897: 4-7, 1930: 50-72; Stumpf 1906: 35, 1928: 55, among others). I believe they also have in common a strong view of what describing is. As Brentano writes (1895b: 1), the main goal of descriptive psychology is to provide us with knowledge of the main “elements” that manifest themselves in our inner experience and the various connections thereof. Describing first and foremost consists in identifying the aspects of one’s mental phenomena and distinguishing them from one another. In a word, it consists in *analyzing* the mental phenomena. To be sure, the notion of analysis can be understood in various senses (see Beaney 2007). For present purposes, suffice it to say that Brentano’s conception of mental analysis roughly is to turn inner perception, which is often obscure and confused, to a clear and distinct perception. Mental analysis therefore aims at making one *noticing* what previously had gone unnoticed although perceived. This is what Brentano calls “clearly and distinctly perceiving” the aspects of a phenomenon, and Stumpf calls the “noticing of a plurality” (Stumpf 1883: 96). The corresponding claim, thus, may be formulated as follows:

C9 For every mental phenomenon *P*, describing *P* is tantamount to analyzing *P*, where ‘analyzing *P*’ means ‘clearly and distinctly perceiving (noticing) all the aspects of *P*’.

This analytic character of phenomenological description has been explicitly acknowledged by a number of Brentanists. Stout, for instance, developed a Brentano-like psychology he called “analytic psychology”, claiming that “it is impossible merely to describe without in some measure defining and distinguishing” (Stout 1896: 54). Höfler advocated a similar view:

Regarding the *compound* mental phenomena, psychological *description* turns into psychological *analysis*. To the extent that there are simple mental phenomena, it is not possible to offer an analysis thereof or to *describe* (or even *define*) them. (Höfler 1897: 4-5)

Again, a good indicator that C9 is a plausible candidate when it comes to identifying the main commonalities among the members of the Brentano School is that C9 is endorsed by Brentanists as different as Marty, Meinong, and Stumpf (see Marty 1892: 309; Meinong 1969: 318; Stumpf 1906: 17). This certainly is an important difference with the

later conceptions of description in the phenomenological movement, which arguably tended to dissociate description and analysis.

5. Conclusion

Let's take stock. In this chapter, I have identified three sets of metaphilosophical and epistemological claims I take to be distinctive of Brentanism.

Set one. Philosophy and experience

- C1* 'Philosophy' is the name of a group of sciences, the so-called philosophical sciences.
- C2* All sciences must reach their goal by conducting investigations into phenomena (empirical facts), reviewing them and dividing them into 'natural classes'.
- C3 [Therefore] the philosophical sciences, like all other sciences, must reach their goal by conducting investigations into phenomena (empirical facts).

Set two. Philosophy and psychology

- C4 Philosophical sciences cannot achieve their goal without relying upon investigations into mental phenomena.
- C5 [The reason it is so is that] philosophy uses empirical concepts, which have their source in inner perception.
- C6 [Therefore] philosophy must rely upon psychology.

Set three. Description and analysis

- C7 Psychological description is prior to psychological explanation.
- C8 Psychological description is relatively autonomous from (neuro-)physiology.
- C9 For every mental phenomenon *P*, describing *P* is tantamount to analyzing *P*, where 'analyzing *P*' means 'clearly and distinctly perceiving (noticing) all the aspects of *P*'.

This last set of claims does not concern philosophy as such, but psychological description. It has, however, significant bearings on the Brentanian view of philosophy, since it specifies what is meant by 'psychology' in C6.

It is probably fair to say that those claims converge into a specific conception of philosophical inquiry. On this conception, 'philosophy' is the name of a cluster of scientific disciplines, which are based upon one's consciousness of mental phenomena and the descriptive, non-physiological analysis thereof. In the course of this chapter, I have gathered some evidence suggesting that all the members of the Brentano School have actually endorsed, in a way that is more or less explicit, most of those claims. Showing that it is so for each of them would require considerably more space than available in this chapter. Still, I think the metaphilosophical view just outlined gives us a plausible and serviceable sense of what it is to be a Brentanist.

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¹ In Heidegger and Sartre, for instance, intentionality is no longer regarded as a property of *mental* states, but rather as something distinctive of *Dasein* or human being.

² According to the above-quoted phrase by Rollinger, the subject matter of Brentano's phenomenological investigations is "the complex unity of mind and object". In my opinion, what is informative and relevant in this way of putting things is something else than just the intentional character of the mental: It is the *analytic* character of phenomenological description, that is, the fact that describing is analyzing complex unities or wholes (see §4 below).

³ This doesn't mean that there is no distinction to be made between exact and inexact sciences. Brentano simply holds that this distinction doesn't coincide with that between exact and speculative sciences. See, e.g., Brentano 1995b: 5.

⁴ This view calls for a number of additional remarks. One obvious source of justification is self-evidence: a judgment is justified, in this rather demanding sense, when it is self-evident, as opposed to 'blind' (see, e.g., Eisenmeier 1914: 23). Yet, since self-evidence is restricted to *a priori* judgments or to inner perception, it is obvious that a less demanding notion of justification is required if one has to account for the justifying procedures in empirical sciences. Brentano himself certainly didn't regard self-evidence as the most common—let alone the only—kind of justification available. On his view, probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*) also works as an acceptable source of warrant for scientific judgments (see Brentano 1925/1970). Accordingly, the probability theory, along with the self-evidence theory, should certainly be considered a central piece of the theory of knowledge which developed in the Brentano School (see, e.g., Meinong 1913/1972; Stumpf 1938). For a Brentanian account of what science is, see the illuminating critique of Wilhelm Dilthey's definition of 'science' in Hillebrand 1884. As Mulligan reports, echoing investigations made by Chisholm, this text published by Hillebrand might actually be from Brentano's hand (Mulligan 1991: 119-20).

⁵ In the manuscript H 45, Brentano contrasts the method of the natural sciences with (1) the merely *intuitive* method, (2) the *mathematical-deductive* method, (3) the method of *rhetorical argumentation*, (4) the method of *poetical acquisition*, and (5) *faith testimony*. When it comes to philosophy, he adds, methods 3-5 must be rejected for they do not give rise to knowledge (self-evidence), method 1 is not possible for every philosophical judgment, and method 2 doesn't preclude errors depending upon the lack of self-evidence of the axioms. He concludes: "We are left with the method of the natural sciences. This doesn't mean that every philosophy relies upon the basis of the natural sciences. [There] only [is] a *proportional* investigation in the philosophical field, just as the various branches of the natural sciences lead their investigations in a proportional way. [The method is that of] observation and experimentation" (Brentano 1987: 306-5).

⁶ This use of the term 'phenomenon' focuses on its "positive component" (Höfler 1930: 3).

⁷ This claim might seem excessively restrictive, for it seems that it hardly holds for an abstract science like, say, mathematics. However, C2* may be saved if we consider extending the notion of 'experience' and 'phenomena' to 'inner experience' and 'mental phenomena' (see §3). Even concepts and concept-based intuitions may be taken as something which manifests itself in experience, in the sense that I experience or 'feel', so to speak, the self-evidence of true mathematical judgements ("There is no triangle which hasn't three corners"). As a mental act, an 'intuition' is no less manifest than any other mental phenomenon.

⁸ There is evidence that C1* actually is in line with Brentano's metaphilosophy and has been explicitly endorsed by some Brentanists (see, e.g., Marty 1916a; Meinong 1973: 5; Twardowski 1999: 60).

⁹ The point at issue is the inseparability of philosophy from psychology. There is no need here to address the question as to whether this inseparability is bilateral or merely unilateral. Suffice it to say that some people (e.g., Wundt, Külpe, etc.) think psychology eventually took his departure from philosophy and should be considered an autonomous science (for a critical discussion, see Twardowski 1999: 55 sq.).

¹⁰ For a critical discussion of this definition of 'philosophy' as 'the cluster of psychological sciences', see Höfler 1920: 21-23, 1897/1922: 4-14. It may be argued that, later on, C4 became a main point of contention in the Brentano-Meinong dispute. On Meinong's view, the object theory should be considered a

completely autonomous discipline, interested in the 'object as such' (not in the object as distinctional part of a mental phenomenon). In the same time, it is probably fair to say that the unifying function performed by psychology has been transferred to the object theory (I owe this suggestion to Riccardo Martinelli).

¹¹ The fact that philosophical concepts may be given "through inner and outer experience at the same time" somehow illuminates if one remembers that, on Brentano's view, the experience of the outer world always is encapsulated in the experience of my own mental states: The portion of the world I am presently seeing, for example, is a 'distinctional part' ('content') of my act of seeing. On this view, the examination of the so-called (outer-)perceptual content also falls within the jurisdiction of descriptive psychology.

¹² Marty (1916a: 81) notices that the dependence of metaphysics upon psychological investigations already was emphasized in Brentano's Würzburg lectures.

¹³ Eisenmeier's book takes place within the context of a huge dispute about the relationship between philosophy and psychology (see also Hillebrand 1913; Wundt 1913). The dispute exploded with the petition against the occupation of philosophical chairs by experimental psychologists. Husserl and Uitz supported the petition, while Meinong refused to sign (Dölling 2001: 157).

¹⁴ Suppose, for instance, that you are perceiving a tree. It seems you cannot be aware of (the act of) perceiving without being aware of the perceived tree: this is why, in Brentano's terminology, the tree is best referred to as *primary* object, while the act of perceiving only is conscious 'on the side', as a secondary object.

¹⁵ As Urbach (1927: 265 sq.) suggests, one could adopt a similar approach to Russell's paradox. Before introducing the notion of a "class" or speaking about "concepts", Brentano argues, psychological analysis is required: "All this should be first and foremost analyzed from a psychological point of view" (Bergmann & Brentano 1946: 122).

¹⁶ The issue at stake is summarized by Kastil in these terms: "To explain the facts of consciousness in a causal way, one has first and foremost to know what they are, one has to know and to conceive *that* which is to be explained, and this is precisely the task of psychognosy, of the descriptive, fundamental part of the theory of the mind" (Kastil 1951: 30).

¹⁷ Here again, the analogy with the natural sciences must make the point clear: "Until this [determination of the fundamental classes of mental phenomena] is accomplished, it will be impossible to make further progress in the investigation of psychological laws, inasmuch as these laws apply for the most part only to one or another kind of phenomena. What would be the outcome of the researches of the physicist experimenting upon heat, light and sound if these phenomena were not divided into natural groups for him by a patently obvious classification?" (Brentano 1995a: 44).

¹⁸ The autonomy of descriptive psychology is said to be 'relative', for the description of mental phenomena requires experimental variation, which is made easier by the application of genetic or explanatory laws (see Brentano 1995b: 8-9).