

Psychology first!

Denis Seron (FNRS, University of Liège, Belgium)

In: Th. Binder & M. Antonelli (Eds.). *The Philosophy of Franz Brentano: Proceedings of the Second International Conference Graz 1977/2107*. Leiden Boston: Brill (Studien zur österreichischen Philosophie / Studies on Austrian Philosophy).

Abstract: Brentano as well as many of his followers assigned to psychology a foundational role in the edifice of science. The present paper claims that this view is a consequence of Brentano's theory of intentionality. The thesis of the intentionality of the mental expresses a strong epistemological position about what knowledge in general is: All knowledge, whether inner or outer, has its source in "inner perception" and hence has somehow to do with psychology. Given this, I discuss Brentano's account of the distinction between psychology and physics — which is certainly among the most original and fruitful aspects of his epistemology and his philosophy as a whole.

Franz Brentano's aim in his masterpiece, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, as is clearly indicated in the title, was to develop an epistemology of psychology (Seron 2017a). It is the contention of this chapter, however, that this book is much more than this. In my view, it is not merely about psychology, but about scientific knowledge in general. In his *Psychology*, Brentano seeks to create not merely an epistemology of psychology, but a general epistemology which assigns the first role to psychology.

Psychology is accorded a preeminent place in the epistemology of Brentano and his pupils — with some notable exceptions like the transcendental Husserl. My purpose in this chapter is to show that Brentano's privileging of psychology over the natural sciences is a consequence of his empiricism. Brentano's version of empiricism involves a certain view of what experience is, and this view of experience entails that psychological knowledge enjoys some sort of

priority.

1. All perceptions are inner perceptions

Brentano as well as most of his followers (here again the transcendental Husserl is an exception) were strong empiricists. Historians of philosophy commonly distinguish two kinds of empiricism, “concept empiricism” and “knowledge empiricism” (Ayers 1991). Roughly, concept empiricism is the view that all concepts derive from experience, while knowledge empiricism is the view that all knowledge derives from experience. Brentano endorsed both of these two kinds of empiricism.

First, Brentano adhered to concept empiricism. He strongly rejects Kant’s account of a priori knowledge and claims that all concepts are empirical. All concepts, he affirms, are either directly abstracted from experience, or obtained by combining concepts that are directly abstracted from experience (Brentano 1976: 3, Engl. trans.: 1; Brentano 1952: 281, Engl. trans. 174). Secondly, Brentano defended a very strong form of knowledge empiricism, according to which all you can know are ultimately phenomena given in present perception. For example, your knowledge that your left shoe is undone is in no way an indirect knowledge of a real shoe that exists behind its appearance. Its actual object is not a substance, but a mere phenomenon given in your present perception. This applies to mental objects as well. Just as physical knowledge deals with physical phenomena rather than bodies, so psychological knowledge deals with mental phenomena rather than souls. Psychology is the “science of mental phenomena”; physics is the “science of physical phenomena”. I will limit myself here to knowledge empiricism and will not discuss Brentano’s concept empiricism.

Knowledge empiricism claims that all knowledge derives from perceptual experience. Brentano’s variant of knowledge empiricism holds that all objects of knowledge are objects of perception, that is, phenomena. All knowledge is knowledge of phenomena and only phenomena, as opposed to their putative substantial causes or bearers. This latter thesis is one form of what philosophers technically call “epistemological phenomenalism”.¹ On the other hand, however, such an epistemological phenomenalism is already in Berkeley and Hume in

¹ See (Seron 2014; Seron 2017b). Georges Dicker (1980: 167) defines epistemological phenomenalism as the view “that knowledge of physical things is exhaustively knowledge of their ways of appearing, *i.e.* of the ways they do and would appear to us under various conditions”. Likewise, for Mario Bunge (1983: 151), “epistemological phenomenalists hold that, although there may be an autonomous world, *i.e.* a reality independent of the knowing subject, it cannot be known: at most we may construct fictitious worlds”.

some ways. What is novel in Brentano's knowledge empiricism? In my view, Brentano defends three distinct claims of his own that are not found in more traditional forms of empiricism and constitute the basis of a new epistemology. Since I think the conjunction of these three claims is the core of Brentano's theory of intentionality, I consequently view Brentano's theory of intentionality as an epistemological theory (cf. McAlister 2004).

The first of the three theses is that

(Th1) necessarily all perceptions are inner perceptions.

In other words: a so-called "outer perception" is actually either an inner perception that is improperly called "outer perception", or something that is not a perception at all. Brentano's view is that it is either, depending on how you look at it.

This first thesis is clearly stated in these two quotes:

Moreover, inner perception (...) is really the only perception in the strict sense of the word. (...) Therefore, strictly speaking, so-called external perception is not perception. Mental phenomena, therefore, may be described as the only phenomena of which perception in the strict sense of the word is possible. (Brentano 1973: 128-129, Engl. trans. 91)

One is telling the truth if one says that phenomena are objects of inner perception, even though the term 'inner' is actually superfluous. All phenomena are to be called inner because they all belong to one reality, be it as constituents or as correlates. (Brentano 1982: 129; Engl. trans. 137)

The terms "perception" and "inner perception" are necessarily or conceptually equivalent. Actually we need not specify that a given perception is an *inner* perception, because its being an inner perception conceptually follows from its being a perception. This thesis is opposed to

all forms of neutral monism or psychophysical identity thesis. A direct consequence of it is that psychological knowledge must be much broader in scope than a mere “science of mental phenomena”. The physical phenomena of so-called “outer” perception, if they are really given, must actually be given only in inner perception, for inner perception is simply the only available way to experience something. Your experiencing something simply means that something appears to you *in your mind*. Therefore, in some sense that needs further clarification, even physical phenomena are “mental”. This, I think, is the only reason why Brentano assigns a dominant role to psychology: all phenomena and hence all objects of science fall into the scope of psychology. All are, in some sense, objects of psychology. Thus, the concept of mental phenomenon should, as Brentano says, “be broadened rather than narrowed”. Here is the text:

With respect to the definition of psychology, it might first seem as if the concept of mental phenomena would have to be broadened rather than narrowed, both because the physical phenomena of imagination fall within its scope at least as much as mental phenomena as previously defined, and because the phenomena which occur in sensation cannot be disregarded in the theory of sensation. (Brentano 1982: 140; Engl. trans. 100)

Two brief remarks may help to clarify the meaning of (Th1). First, it seems that (Th1) presupposes some form of psychophysical dualism, in contrast with monisms like Ernst Mach’s.² Of course, if you reject as meaningless the distinction between “internal” and “external”, as Mach did, then you must also reject as meaningless the view that all perceptions are inner perceptions. Secondly, thesis (Th1) — necessarily all perceptions are inner perceptions — entails that, as Brentano notoriously claims in the *Psychology*, only mental phenomena really exist. Indeed, being perceived is necessarily equivalent to being a phenomenon that really exists in the present. Thus, if you cannot perceive anything but mental phenomena, then it is impossible that a non-mental phenomenon really exists in the present. The reasoning is as follows: Every phenomenon that really exists is perceived; every phenomenon that is perceived is mental; therefore, every phenomenon that really exists is

² For an extensive discussion of Brentano’s dualism, see (Tassone 2012: 196 ff.).

mental. Quite interestingly, the converse does not hold: it is not true that every mental phenomenon really exists. This last remark leads us to Brentano's second thesis.

2. Some phenomena are not perceived

I said that Brentano defended some form of psychophysical dualism, and that for him non-mental phenomena do not really exist. This view is puzzling and not easy to make consistent. At first glance at least, the form of psychophysical dualism Brentano embraces means that there are mental as well as physical phenomena. It seems impossible to defend both such a dualism and the view that non-mental phenomena do not exist. The way-out closest at hand is to say this:

(Th2) Not all phenomena are objects of perception.

In other words: there are other modes of experience than perception, for example remembering, imagining, judging, thinking, and the like. The objects of these non-perceptual experiences do not really exist, for a phenomenon's really existing necessarily implies its being perceived. Yet such objects do certainly appear. Although they are not perceived, Pinocchio and the concept of a puppet are really given to you inasmuch as you imagine or think them.

Thesis (Th2) is the cornerstone of both Brentano's psychophysical dualism and his theory of intentionality. It is one of the main objections he raises against Mach's psychophysical identity thesis in his manuscript on *Knowledge and Error* (Brentano 1988, Chap. 10). Brentano takes Mach's identity thesis to mean that all phenomena are sensations, that is, objects of perception. Since Brentano considers being perceived to be equivalent to being a phenomenon that really exists, this implies that, for Mach, all phenomena must really exist. This is the view Brentano challenges. And what he proposes instead is to hold that some phenomena are not perceived and do not really exist. This is the basic tenet of Brentano's theory of intentionality: some phenomena are present in the mind only "intentionally", as *mere appearances*.

3. Physical phenomena are contents of mental

phenomena

Pinocchio and the concept of a puppet can appear only inasmuch as you imagine or think them. In order for such nonexistent phenomena to be present as phenomena, there must exist a mental act “in” which they appear — a mental act which *is* perceived and does really exist in the present. Put more simply:

(Th3) Every non-existent phenomenon (i.e., “intentional” object) is contained within a mental phenomenon.

The conjunction of (Th2) and (Th3), I think, is precisely what commentators call Brentano’s theory of intentionality. Brentano’s intentionality view is that every mental act contains in itself an “intentional” object, that is, a phenomenon that doesn’t really exist. To put it otherwise: something appears in your mind without really existing. Besides the phenomena that are perceived and really exist, namely *secondary objects*, there must be phenomena that are not perceived and don’t really exist, namely *primary objects*.

A direct consequence of (Th1) and (Th2) is that all physical phenomena studied in natural science fall into the second category. Since every perception is internal, as expressed in thesis (Th1), physical phenomena don’t really exist, they are primary objects, that is, mere appearances in the mind. This clearly suggests that psychology is not a science like others and should be given a fundamental role. Psychology is that science which, so to speak, studies phenomena of which the objects of all other sciences are just inseparable “correlates”. And what is more, it is the only science whose objects are with absolute evidence known to really exist.

On the other hand, however, it would be a mistake to say that the objects of psychology are given in inner perception while those of physics are not. When a psychologist innerly observes a mental act, say, a feeling of anger, her observation is certainly based on inner perception. However, the anger is past, it no longer really exists at the moment when she observes it. Consequently, what she actually perceives is not her anger, but a new act which has it as its correlate, namely her memory of her anger. Psychology and physics are on an equal footing in this respect. Just as the psychologist’s observations are not perceptions of her present mental phenomena, the physicist’s observations are perceptions not of physical

phenomena, but of present mental phenomena of which they are correlates. The actual difference between both sciences is rather that the objects of psychology can be innerly perceived, while physical phenomena cannot.

This is exactly how Carl Stumpf puts the point in his 1907 essay on the classification of the sciences. The psychologist, like the physicist, he argues, must proceed by inference (*Erschliessen*). In other words: neither mental functions nor physical objects are “immediately given” in the present. The psychologist’s objects are the past mental acts of herself or others; the physicist’s objects cannot be perceived, properly speaking. Nonetheless, psychology enjoys an “overwhelming epistemological preeminence over natural sciences” (*ein gewaltiger erkenntnistheoretischer Vorzug gegenüber den Naturwissenschaften*), because mental life, unlike physical reality, is the kind of thing that can be “immediately given” (Stumpf 1907: 21).

4. Why other sciences?

So it seems that, if you accept Brentano’s theory of intentionality, then you are committed to defending the psychology-first view. However, this line of thought immediately gives rise to a host of difficulties. The question now to be discussed is no longer what the place of psychology is with respect to the other sciences — whether it should come first or not —, but rather: Why should there be other sciences at all? As I said at the outset, Brentano was an empiricist. According to empiricists, science should be grounded in perceptual experience. But on the other hand, as indicated above, all perceptions are inner perceptions. The only thing you can really perceive is your present mental life. Thus, it seems that the only science that is really grounded in perceptual experience is psychology, and, accordingly, that psychology is the only legitimate science at all. Hence, the question is not merely why not psychology first, but *why not psychology alone*.

As a matter of fact, Brentano maintains that there is a “science of physical phenomena” which is distinct from psychology. How is such a science possible and what makes it different from psychology? Of course, Brentano proposes criteria for distinguishing between mental and physical phenomena. Infallible evidence and intentional inexistence are such criteria. Both are sufficient conditions for a phenomenon’s qualifying as “mental”; the absence of the intentional inexistence property is a sufficient condition for a phenomenon’s qualifying as “physical”. This, however, is not sufficient to distinguish physics from psychology. For we cannot simply say that psychology is the science that studies mental phenomena and physics

the science that studies physical phenomena. As we have seen, the psychologist, too, studies physical phenomena thus characterized.

In order to understand this point, let us return to the text quoted earlier in which Brentano argues that “the concept of mental phenomena should be broadened rather than narrowed”. In the following lines, Brentano says this:

It is obvious, however, that <the physical phenomena which occur in sensation> are taken into account only as the content of mental phenomena when we describe the specific characteristics of the latter. The same is true of all mental phenomena which have a purely phenomenal existence. We must consider only mental phenomena in the sense of real states as the proper object of psychology. And it is in reference only to these phenomena that we say that psychology is the science of mental phenomena. (Brentano 1973: 140; Engl. trans. 100)

Clearly enough, Brentano means here that the psychologist studies physical phenomena as well, but only from a certain perspective, namely as *contents* of mental acts. For example, it is psychologically relevant whether you imagine Pinocchio or Geppetto or the Blue Fairy. This is a *psychological* property of your act of imagining — a psychological property which as such can be innerly perceived.

Brentano believes that an empirical physics distinct from psychology is possible. Physical phenomena can also be grasped and known from a non-psychological perspective. But what does it mean to grasp or know physical phenomena not as a psychologist, but as a physicist? This plausibly means that physical phenomena are regarded not as contents, psychological features of mental acts, but as *objects in the external world*. A good illustration of the difference in question can be found in the lecture on phenomenal green delivered before the Vienna Philosophical Society in 1893. Brentano’s starting point in this text is the claim that color words are equivocal terms, which denote either phenomenal or physical properties (Brentano 1979: 5 ff.). For example, the word “green” denotes either a quality of a sensation content or, say, the wave length of a light ray. Clearly, this distinction coincides with the distinction between studying green as a psychologist and studying green as a physicist. The

psychologist studies green as a feature of sensory contents; the physicist studies green as a property of objects in the outside world.

Thus, the question before us is, What does it mean to study green as a property of objects in the external world? A passage of the *Psychology* provides us with helpful indications on this last point. Here is the text in question:

This is especially true of the definition of the natural sciences. These sciences do not deal with all physical phenomena, but only with those which appear in sensation, and as such do not take into account the phenomena of imagination. And even in regard to the former they only determine their laws insofar as they depend on the physical stimulation of the sense organs. We could express the scientific task of the natural sciences by saying something to the effect that they are those sciences which seek to explain the succession of physical phenomena connected with normal and pure sensations (that is, sensations which are not influenced by special mental conditions and processes) on the basis of the assumption of a world which resembles one which has three dimensional extension in space and flows in one direction in time, and which influences our sense organs. Without explaining the absolute nature of this world, these sciences would limit themselves to ascribing to its forces capable of producing sensations and of exerting a reciprocal influence upon one another, and determining for these forces the laws of co-existence and succession. Through these laws they would then establish indirectly the laws of succession of the physical phenomena of sensations, if, through scientific abstraction from the concomitant mental conditions, we admit that they manifest themselves in a pure state and as occurring in relation to a constant sensory capacity. We must interpret the expression “science of physical phenomena” in this somewhat complicated way if we want to identify it with natural science. (Brentano 1973: 138; Engl. trans. 98-9)

In this text, Brentano tells us what a physical phenomenon must be in order to be an object of the natural sciences and thus to be part of the physical world as studied in the natural sciences. He identifies three distinct conditions:

(A) First, the objects of the natural sciences are not all physical phenomena indiscriminately, but only physical phenomena that “occur in sensation”, that is, in sensory experience. The imagined Pinocchio is certainly a physical phenomenon, but it is not an object of the natural sciences.

However, for a physical phenomenon to be an object of the natural sciences, it is obviously not sufficient to be given in sensation. For sensations can in some cases be hallucinatory. Whatever this means, the physicist ought to set aside hallucinated physical phenomena, and to do this, she needs a second criterion.

(B) This second criterion has to do with some form of scientific realism. It is that the physical phenomena dealt with in physics must, as Brentano says, “depend on the physical stimulation of the sense organs”. In short, they must be causal effects of external reality on the mind. The physicist is required to discriminate the physical phenomena that are assumed to be caused by external reality from those which are not.

Importantly, Brentano views this criterion as metaphysically loaded. More precisely, it commits the physicist to a twofold metaphysical assumption (*Annahme*). The first assumption is that there is a causal relation that holds between some physical phenomena and external reality, or between some sensations and physical substances or bodies. The second metaphysical assumption is that there is between them a relation of similarity. The physicist must assume that the physical reality behind the phenomena she studies displays a one-dimensional structure that is similar to phenomenal time (*zeitähnlich*), and a three-dimensional structure that is similar to phenomenal space (*raumähnlich*).

The natural scientist’s commitment to certain metaphysical presuppositions may be another argument in favor of the psychology-first view. A central feature of Brentano’s epistemology in 1874 is to define psychology without reference to any mental substance or soul. Brentano contends that his empirical definition of psychology is better than the traditional one as a theory of the soul, because “the old definition contains metaphysical presuppositions from which the modern one is free” (Brentano 1973: 27, Engl. trans. 18). The empirical psychologist does not need to presuppose a substrate for the mental acts she studies, and this is an obvious epistemological advantage. For Brentano conceives of such metaphysical assumptions as *fictions*. The presupposition of mental or physical substances, souls or bodies,

is “a fiction to which no reality of any sort corresponds” (*eine Fiktion, der keinerlei Wirklichkeit entspricht*) (Brentano 1973: 15, Engl. trans. 11).

Physical theories are really about external reality: their *intentional objects* are physical things in a mind-independent world. But in Brentano’s view, an intentional object is something that appears in the mind without really existing (Seron, forthcoming a). As Brentano puts it in a famous letter to Marty, the external thing’s being an object is merely the “linguistic correlate” of its being presented in a sensory presentation (Brentano 1930: 88). This does not imply metaphysical phenomenalism, for this does not rule out the possibility that there exists an external world that is different from the world physical theories are about. However, this clearly entails epistemological phenomenalism.

This view is closely related to Brentano’s claim of the relativity of physical knowledge in the first chapter of the *Psychology*. “The truth of physical phenomena, he declares, is only a relative truth” (Brentano 1973: 28, Engl. trans. 19). In other words: the physicist’s true judgments about physical reality are true only under certain presuppositions that cannot be supported by evidence — the presupposition of a mind-independent world that causes sensations and is similar to them. By contrast, the truth of mental phenomena is an absolute truth: “They are true in themselves. As they appear to be, so they are in reality, a fact which is attested to by the evidence with which they are perceived.” And from this Brentano concludes: “This constitutes a great advantage of psychology over the natural sciences”(Brentano 1973: 28-9, Engl. trans. 19).

An interesting question arises here. As I said, the natural scientist’s metaphysical presupposition is twofold: there must exist a mind-independent reality that causes sensations, and sensations must be similar to their mind-independent causes. Brentano’s claim that “the truth of physical phenomena is only a relative truth” seems to imply that, if the conjunction of these two presupposition is false, that is, if one or both are false, then all the judgments of physics must be false. Now, it seems that Brentano rejects both as false. First, he agrees with Hume that physical causation is an illusion (Brentano 1952: 281 ff., Engl. trans. 174 ff.). Accordingly, it is also an illusion to identify the cause of the sensation with the primary object of the act (Brentano 1968: 276, Engl. trans. 196). Secondly, Brentano holds that the copy theory of knowledge is proved to be false. In the 1893 lecture on phenomenal green, Brentano says this:

There was a time when everyone believed that our visual sensations

gave us a substantially faithful picture of the outside world. The progress of science has destroyed this illusion (*Diesen Wahn hat der Fortschritt der Wissenschaft zerstört*); we know now that the light rays that produce our visual sensations and the bodies that emit or reflect these light rays are not qualitatively similar to what appears to us in sensation. (Brentano 1979: 5)

This remark is about colors. In the *Psychology*, Brentano seems to hold that, although it is false in most cases, the copy theory of knowledge remains plausible as regards spatial relations (Brentano 1973: 28, Engl. trans. 19). He suggests, however, that the natural scientist must also investigate a number of phenomena that are not spatial relations, for example “the phenomena of light, sound, heat, spatial location and locomotion” (ibid.). It is not easy to make sense of how the physicist’s judgments about such phenomena could still be regarded as true or even acceptable. Supposing that Brentano was not willing to discard physics as a whole, an interesting question is what scope remains for physics.³

(C) The natural scientist deals with physical phenomena, that is, with phenomena that don’t have an intentional content; she deals not with all physical phenomena indiscriminately, but only with those that are sensed and assumed to be caused by external reality. This is still not enough, however. Suppose at a dinner a botanist of your friends tells you this: “Dear colleague, what you are seeing in your plate is a very fine specimen of what we botanists call a tomato. As I have repeatedly observed in my greenhouse at the University, tomatoes, like radishes and cucumbers, are identifiable by their beautiful gray color.” So spoke the botanist. The gray color of the tomato is a physical phenomenon; it is the content of a sensation; your color-blind friend assumes that it is caused by a real tomato in the outside world. And yet we will say that your friend’s observation has no scientific value. Within a community of color-seeing botanists, it is preferable not to be a color-blind person. Likewise, it is more difficult to be a good natural scientist for a person prone to frequent hallucinations, even though hallucinated persons sometimes assume that their hallucinations are caused by the outside world. If we wish to rule out such cases, we have to add a further requirement. The third and final requirement is about the conditions of experience. To be objects of physics, so Brentano

³ To get around this difficulty, I have recently proposed to interpret Brentano’s claim that “the truth of physical phenomena is relative” as being closely related to William Hamilton’s theory of the relativity of knowledge (Seron, forthcoming b).

claims, physical phenomena must be “phenomena of normal and pure sensations” (*Phänomene normaler und reiner Sensationen*).

A “pure” sensation is a sensation that “is not influenced by special mental conditions and processes”. In other words: it is a sensation that is influenced only by external reality. I presume Brentano has here in mind optical illusions or sensory perturbations, as when a dazzled person sees a color clearer than it really is. In a sense, this is just another way to say that physical knowledge is required to be *objective*. Like Natorp, Stumpf in his critique of Mach, and many other empiricists, Brentano conceives of objectivity as requiring an abstraction process: the physicist must proceed “through scientific abstraction from the concomitant mental conditions” (Brentano 1973: 138; Engl. trans. 99). Of course, this requirement does not apply to psychology. It would make no sense to require of the psychologist that she ignore the individual mental conditions.

The condition requiring sensations to be “normal” marks another significant difference with psychology. The physicist should limit herself to “normal” sensations, while the psychologist, as Brentano claims in the second chapter of the *Psychology*, investigates abnormal minds as well (Brentano 1973: 57 ff.; Engl. trans. 41 ff.). In the natural sciences, by contrast with psychology, experiences are acceptable or not acceptable, and an acceptable experience is an experience under optimal conditions. An experience’s being acceptable or unacceptable is dependent, at least in part, on norms, and thus on social conventions. Of course, a world where color-blind botanists are looked at as “normal” is entirely conceivable.

To recapitulate: The natural scientist causally explains the succession of physical phenomena that are given in pure and normal sensations, and assumes that these physical phenomena are caused by external reality. As Brentano puts it, the natural scientist

seeks to explain the succession of physical phenomena connected with normal and pure sensations (...) on the basis of the assumption of a world which resembles one which has three dimensional extension in space and flows in one direction in time, and which influences our sense organs (Brentano 1973: 140; Engl. trans. 98).

Of course, Brentano defines physics as the “science of physical phenomena” just as he defines psychology as the “science of mental phenomena”. But what he says here is that the former

definition is actually more complex. “We must, he argues, interpret the expression ‘science of physical phenomena’ in this somewhat complicated way if we want to identify it with natural science” (Brentano 1973: 138; Engl. trans. 99). Physics is not *merely* a “science of physical phenomena”, it is a science that studies the phenomena of sensation that are assumed to be caused by external reality, and so on.

Conclusive remarks

I conclude with two remarks.

An interesting question is why Brentano was not content with condition (C) and thought it necessary to add the further condition (B): that the physicist should assume sensations to be caused by external reality. Like Husserl later, Brentano regards metaphysical realism as an essential feature of the natural sciences, but his reasons for thinking so are quite unclear. The question remains: Why not, like Mach and others, only retain conditions (A) and (C) and claim that the physicist’s task is *no more* than to explain the succession of physical phenomena in order to make it, say, predictable? This question is beyond the scope of this chapter. But it is to be noticed that the abandonment of condition (B) would significantly weaken the psychology-first view.

My second remark is more specifically about the difference between psychology and the natural sciences. One may be tempted to think that Brentano’s view of this distinction is directly opposed to positivism and neo-Kantianism, the idea being that Brentano views it as a distinction between two natural kinds of objects while positivists as well as neo-Kantians construe it in merely epistemological terms — as a distinction between “standpoints” (*Auffassungsweisen*) on sensory materials that are intrinsically neutral. However, the above discussion clearly suggests that this interpretation is true only to a certain extent. Brentano’s actual claim is that all the objects of physics are objects of psychology as well. In some broadened sense, they are “mental”. Likewise, not all physical phenomena are objects of physics: for example, Pinocchio and the Blue Fairy are not. Therefore, the distinction between psychology and the natural sciences does not coincide with the distinction between mental and physical phenomena.

It follows from this that actually Brentano did not conceive of the distinction between psychology and the natural sciences as a distinction between two natural kinds of objects. It is

true that Brentano defended a psychophysical dualism against the positivists and the neo-Kantians. On his view, mental and physical phenomena appear to us differently, with different phenomenal properties, and belong to different natural kinds. However, this does not entail that the distinction between psychology and the natural sciences should be construed as a difference between two natural kinds of objects. In fact, this distinction is better seen as a distinction between two standpoints on some physical phenomena.⁴ If you accept a sensation as “normal” and assumes that it is caused by external reality, then you study the corresponding physical phenomenon as a physicist; if you don’t, then you study it as a psychologist.

To sum up: Psychology deals with all phenomena, whether mental or physical, while physics only investigates those few physical phenomena that are supposed to be caused by external reality and given in pure and normal sensations. This, of course, implies an enormous epistemological superiority of psychology over physics.

References

Ayers, M. (1991), *Locke: Epistemology and Ontology*. New York: Routledge.

Brentano, F. (1925). *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*. Vol. 2: *Von der Klassifikation der psychischen Phänomene*. Leipzig: Meiner. Engl. transl. (1995): *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell, & L.L. McAlister, Trans.). London and New York: Routledge.

Brentano, F. (1952) *Grundlegung und Aufbau der Ethik*, Bern: Francke. Engl. trans. (2009): *The Foundation and Construction of Ethics* (E.H. Schneewind, Trans.), New York: Routledge.

⁴ As Uljana Feest (2014: 696) very rightly emphasizes: “While Brentano took an explicit interest in the question of boundaries between psychology and other sciences, he did not think that such boundaries were cast in stone. In this vein, he (...) acknowledged that every division of scientific fields, no matter how good, will be somewhat artificial.”

Brentano, F. (1968). *Kategorienlehre*. Hamburg: Meiner. Engl. trans. (1981): *The Theory of Categories* (R.M. Chisholm & N. Guterman, Trans.), The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Brentano, F. (1973). *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*. Hamburg: Meiner. Engl. transl. (1995): *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell, & L.L. McAlister, Trans.). London and New York: Routledge.

Brentano, F. (1976). *Philosophische Untersuchungen zu Raum, Zeit und Kontinuum*. Hamburg: Meiner. Engl. transl. (1988): *Philosophical Investigations on Space, Time and the Continuum* (B. Smith, Trans.). London, New York, Sydney: Croom Helm.

Brentano, F. (1979). *Untersuchungen zur Sinnespsychologie*. Hamburg: Meiner.

Brentano, F. (1982). *Deskriptive Psychologie* (R. Chisholm & W. Baumgartner, Eds.). Hamburg: Meiner. Engl. transl.: *Descriptive Psychology* (B. Müller, Trans.). London and New York: Routledge.

Brentano, F. (1988). *Über Ernst Machs „Erkenntnis u. Irrtum“ . Mit zwei Anhängen: Kleine Schriften über E. Mach. Der Brentano-Mach-Briefwechsel*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Bunge, M. (1983). *Treatise on Basic Philosophy, Vol. 5: Epistemology & Methodology I: Exploring the World*. Dordrecht Boston Lancaster: Reidel.

Dicker, G. (1980). *Perceptual Knowledge: An Analytical and Historical Study*. Dordrecht Boston London: D. Reidel.

Feest, U. (2014). The continuing relevance of nineteenth-century philosophy of psychology: Brentano and the autonomy of psychological methods. In: *New Directions in the Philosophy of Science* (M.C. Galavotti, D. Dieks, W.J. Gonzalez, S. Hartmann, T. Uebel, M. Weber, Eds.). Cham Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London: Springer, pp. 693-709.

McAlister, L. (2004). Brentano's epistemology. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano* (D. Jacquette, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 149-167.

Seron, D. (2014). Brentano's "descriptive" realism. *Bulletin d'Analyse Phénoménologique*, 10/4, pp. 1-14.

Seron, D. (2017a). Brentano's project of descriptive psychology. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Franz Brentano and the Brentano School* (U. Kriegel, Ed.). New York: Routledge, pp. 35-40.

Seron, D. (2017b). Brentano on appearance and reality. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Franz Brentano and the Brentano School* (U. Kriegel, Ed.). New York: Routledge, pp. 169-177.

Seron, D. (forthcoming a). Consciousness and representation.

Seron, D. (forthcoming b). Intentionality and epistemological relativity.

Stumpf, C. (1907). *Zur Einteilung der Wissenschaften*. Berlin: Verlag der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Abhandlungen der Königlich-Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 5).

Tassone, B.G. (2012). *From Psychology to Phenomenology Franz Brentano's Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*. Palgrave Macmillan.