



GUAIRACÁ REVISTA DE FILOSOFIA

BRENTANO ON PSYCHOLOGISM AND THE BACKGROUND OF PHENOMENOLOGY

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Abstract:

In a text entitled *Vom Psychologismus*, which was only published as an appendix to the 2nd edition of *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* in 1911, Franz Brentano positioned himself about *the controversy about psychologism (Psychologismusstreit)* by expressly refusing the label of psychologist given to him by Edmund Husserl, one of the most influential names in what would become known as the Brentano School. The development of this paper, which aims to analyze the *Psychologismusstreit* exclusively from the Brentanian perspective, is divided into three moments. In the first moment, I present Brentano's textual response to Husserl. In the second moment, I draw on the recent results of Porta's investigations into the status of psychological method in philosophy in the nineteenth century and make explicit how this method presented itself in the context of the formulation of the Brentanian theory of knowledge as it was developed between 1874 and 1891 (PES and PD). In the third and last moment, taking as a basis the assumptions of Brentano's theory of knowledge formulated

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in his *Descriptive psychology*, I present two reasons sustained by Brentano to refuse the label of epistemological psychologism supposedly attributed to his theory of knowledge: a) Husserl was mistaken about his definition of truth; b) Husserl was also mistaken about his psychic description of the act of judging and, therefore, was unable to understand the relation between psychology, logic, and the theory of knowledge. I will leave open the question about the plausibility of the Brentanian thesis, given the recurrent later formulations and reformulations of Husserlian phenomenology, as well as the development of *Psychologismusstreit*.

Keywords: Psychologism, Descriptive Psychology, Phenomenology, Brentano, Husserl.

BRENTANO ACERCA DO PSICOLOGISMO E O BACKGROUND DA FENOMENOLOGIA

RESUMO:

Em um texto intitulado *Vom Psychologismus*, que só foi publicado como um apêndice da 2ª edição do *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* em 1911, Franz Brentano posicionou-se sobre a *controvérsia acerca do psicologismo (Psychologismusstreit)*, recusando expressamente o rótulo de psicologista que lhe fora atribuído por Edmund Husserl, um dos nomes mais influentes no que viria a ser conhecido como a Escola de Brentano. O desenvolvimento deste trabalho, que visa analisar o *Psychologismusstreit* exclusivamente a partir da perspectiva brentaniana, está dividido em três momentos. No primeiro momento, apresento a resposta textual de Brentano a Husserl. No segundo momento, eu recorro aos resultados recentes das investigações de Porta sobre o status do método psicológico em filosofia no século XIX e explico como este método se apresentou no contexto da formulação da teoria do conhecimento brentaniana, tal como foi desenvolvida entre 1874 e 1891 (PES e PD). No terceiro e último momento, tomando como base as suposições da teoria do conhecimento de Brentano formuladas em sua *Psicologia descritiva*, apresento duas razões sustentadas por Brentano para recusar o rótulo de psicologismo epistemológico supostamente atribuído a sua teoria do conhecimento: a) Husserl estava equivocado acerca da sua definição de verdade; b) Husserl também estava equivocado acerca da sua descrição psíquica do ato de julgar e, portanto, era incapaz de compreender a relação entre psicologia, lógica e teoria do conhecimento. Deixo aberta a questão sobre a plausibilidade da tese Brentaniana, dadas as formulações e reformulações posteriores recorrentes da fenomenologia Husserliana, bem como o desenvolvimento do *Psychologismusstreit*.

Palavras-chave: Psicologismo, Psicologia descritiva, Fenomenologia, Brentano, Husserl.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a short text entitled “*On Psychologism*”, which only became public in the Appendix of the 2nd edition of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* in 1911, Franz Brentano positioned himself about “the controversy about *psychologism*” (*Psychologismusstreit*) by vehemently refuting the label of *psychologist* attributed to him by Edmund Husserl, one of the most influential names in what would become known as the Brentano School. The development of this presentation, which aims at analyzing *Psychologismusstreit* exclusively from the Brentanian perspective, is divided into three moments. In the first moment, I present Brentano’s textual response to Husserl to support the following hypothesis: Brentano interpreted the Husserlian critique raised against his theory of knowledge, not as a critique of a type of *ontological psychologism*, but as a critique of a specific type of *epistemological psychologism*, which referred it to relativism. This hypothesis assumes the thesis defended by Porta (2021, p. 456), who argues that, around 1900, the use of the term ‘psychologism’ in Germany differed from those formulated by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*. In this context, *psychologism* would be a tendency, a program or a thesis that, in its *epistemological* version, reduced a given discipline to psychology and, in its *ontological* version, reduced a certain set of entities or phenomena to psychological entities or phenomena. In both versions, the term ‘psychologism’ critically described a mode of “reductionism”, which implied both ignorance of some kind of specificity and relativism and denial of objectivity. In the second moment, I build on the recent results of Porta’s (2018, 2019, and 2021) investigations into the *status of psychological method* in philosophy in the nineteenth century and make explicit how this method presented itself in the context of the formulation of the Brentanian theory of knowledge as it was developed between 1874 (PES) and 1891 (PD). This historical exposition of the relation between *psychological method* and *philosophy* allows us to highlight, not only the reasons why Brentanian *psychology* could not be conceived as a science independent from *philosophy*, but fundamentally the philosophical character of the *psychology* named by Brentano as *Phänomenologie* or *Descriptive Psychology*. In the third and last moment, taking as a basis the assumptions of Brentano’s theory of knowledge formulated in his *Descriptive Psychology*, I present two reasons sustained by Brentano to refuse the label of *epistemological psychologism* attributed to his theory of knowledge: a) Husserl was mistaken about his definition of truth; b) Husserl was also mistaken about his psychic description of the act of judging and, therefore, was unable to understand the relation between psychology, logic, and the theory of knowledge. I will leave open the question about the plausibility of the Brentanian thesis, given the recurrent

later formulations and reformulations of Husserlian phenomenology, as well as the development of *Psychologismusstreit*.

2. BRENTANO ON PSYCHOLOGISM

2.1 The context of the text “*On Psychologism*”

Brentano’s position in the “polemic about *psychologism*” (*Psychologismusstreit*), as he defended it in the Appendix to the 2nd edition of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (PES) in 1911, was part of a set of clarifications presented against the attacks that the 1st edition of PES (1874) had received. The publication of these clarifications in the form of an Appendix was part of a strategy adopted by Brentano, which had two objectives. The first was to present the innovations and improvements that he had developed for his theory during the thirty years that followed the publication of the 1st edition. However, as he himself pointed out, it was necessary to note about such innovations that “the later investigations have not substantially altered the views expressed in it, although they have led to further developments or, (...), to improvements on some rather important points” (2009, p. XXIII). Brentano’s second goal was to maintain the original format of his work in the form in which it had influenced his contemporaries. Taken together, these goals made understandable Brentano’s explanation that he was led to follow this procedure by the realization that “many eminent psychologists who had shown great interest in my doctrine, were more inclined to rally to it in its first form, than to follow me in my new lines of thinking” (2009, p. XXIII). Therefore, although it was of utmost importance to preserve the text of the 1st edition in its original form, out of respect for the psychologists who took it as a starting point, the set of texts that made up the Appendix to the 2nd edition explicitly defended it against the criticism raised against the first version of his theory of knowledge. This dual purpose was explicitly stated by Brentano himself in the following terms:

So I decided to reprint the old text with practically no changes, while at the same time supplementing it with certain observations which are to be found partially in footnotes, but mainly in an Appendix. These observations contain a defense against certain attacks on my doctrine from various sources, and they develop those aspects of my doctrine which, in my own judgement, needed revision (2009, p. XXIII).

This dual purpose of the Appendix in the 1911 edition therefore set the context that defined both the basis of the alleged *psychologism* rejected by Brentano, and the defense put forward by Brentano himself against the misconceptions that would have led Husserl to such an interpretation.

2.2 THE TEXT “*ON PSYCHOLOGISM*”

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In “*On Psychologism*,” Brentano first classified as an “accusation” the fact that his theory of knowledge was labeled *psychologism*. Then, he expressed the strangeness shared among the philosophers of his time, resulting from the vagueness and multiplicity of meanings that the term ‘psychologism’ presented. Using a metaphor, Brentano first clarified that ‘psychologism’ was “a word which has lately come into use and when it is spoken many a pious philosopher - like many an orthodox Catholic when he hears the term Modernism - crosses himself as though the devil himself were in it.” (2009, p. 238).

Interestingly, it was not Erdemann (PORTA, 2021, p. 467), but Husserl, the one whom Brentano considered responsible for introducing the term ‘psychologism’ in the German philosophical debate. Therefore, he said, “during a friendly encounter, I sought an explanation from Husserl, and then, as the opportunity arose, from others who use the newly introduced term by him.” (2009, p. 238; 1971, p 180). The set of responses received by Brentano to his request for clarification was systematized as a definition of *psychologism* in the following terms: “*Psychologism* means a theory which contests the general validity of knowledge, a theory according to which beings other than men could have insights which are precisely the opposite of our own” (2009, p. 238). *Psychologism* being defined in these terms, Brentano defended himself by saying: “understood in this sense, I am not only not now an advocate of psychologism, but I have always very firmly rejected and opposed such absurd subjectivism” (2009, p. 238).

Brentano’s later considerations about the outcome of this friendly conversation showed his disappointment with the fact that he could not dispel the suspicion of *psychologism* that rested on his theory of knowledge. However, the explanations received would have been sufficient to explain the fragile support for the charges that claimed the existence of a *psychologism* in his theory of knowledge presented in 1874.

2.3 ONTOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGISM AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL [ANTI]PSYCHOLOGISM

By 1900 in Germany, as Porta’s thesis states, the use of the term *psychologism* defined critically a mode of “reductionism”, assuming as a rule that *psychologism* implied ignorance of some kind of specificity or relativism and the denial of objectivity. This was exactly the point of Husserl’s “accusation” of the Brentanian theory of knowledge. However, *psychologism* could be understood from two versions: a) as “a tendency, program, or thesis that epistemologically reduced a given discipline to psychology.”; or b) as “a tendency, program, or thesis that ontologically reduced a given set of entities or phenomena to psychological entities or phenomena” (2021, p. 456). Based on these two versions, it is possible to understand that Brentano’s strategy

consisted, first, in identifying elements of *ontological psychologism* in the Husserlian “accusation” and, then, in demanding the recognition of the *epistemological (anti) psychologism of the structure of his theory of knowledge developed as Descriptive Psychology*, which had founded *philosophy on psychology*, but without this implying the reduction of *philosophy to psychology*. Precisely for this reason this distinction is fundamental, since it corroborates Brentano’s own assertion that Husserl had forgotten his descriptive anti-psychological solution, by wrongly accusing him on the basis of *pseudo-ontological* problems.

LET’S LOOK AT THE DETAILS OF THIS “CONTROVERSY”.

According to Brentano, Husserl had claimed that the supposed suppression of the unity of universal truth, which would characterize the *psychologism of his theory of knowledge*, resulted from the absence of the presupposition of a producer of truth. In this way, Brentano understood that the structure of the critique formulated against his theory of knowledge would be as follows:

The following definition of “truth as correspondence” is established and established as universal truth:

a) Truth consists only in the fact that true judgment corresponds to something outside the spirit (*Geistes*), which is one and the same for everyone who judges.

b) It establishes the extent of the concept of true judgment and excludes negative judgments, modal judgments etc.:

i) In the case of negative judgments and in the cases of those that describe something as possible, impossible, past or future, this something could not, however, be a thing.

c) It turns out that the Brentanian theory of knowledge does not respect the established criterion of truth:

i) Brentanian theory holds as something existing, alongside things, also indeterminate non-things, non-beings (*Nichtsein*), possibilities, impossibilities, past-beings, future-beings etc.

d) It is concluded:

i) The Brentanian theory of knowledge misses here, and therefore suppresses, the unity of universal truth.

In analyzing the structure of this critique, Brentano recognized that there was a fundamental error in the charge leveled against his theory, namely, *the denial of the exclusivity of correspondence to something outside the spirit*. But it is interesting to note first two points about this “charge” that Brentano recognized as erroneous:

a) Brentano acknowledged that the 1st edition of PES allowed such misinterpretation by stating that there he “sets up sentences, which in their conclusions would have to lead to *psychologism*” (1971a, p. 180).

However:

b) Brentano also stated that, in the writing of the 1st edition, he did not explicitly point out that the *elimination of the universality of knowledge* was a consequence of the “denial of such exclusivity (of correspondence to something outside the spirit)” (1971a, p. 180).

Taken together, and even if points (a) and (b) were merely circumstantial considerations about the “erroneous accusation”, Brentano felt that these two reasons would already be sufficient to absorb him of the charge of *psychologism*. Therefore, he said, “even if the elimination of the general validity of knowledge were a consequence of such a denial, it still would not do to call me down for being an advocate of *psychologism*, because I myself do not draw this conclusion. One could only say, for example, that I put forward propositions which, in their consequences, would have to lead to *psychologism*” (2009, p. 238; 1971, p 180).

Well observed and considering Frechette’s (2013; 2016) analysis of the concept of intentionality revisited, we can claim that many of the psychologistic interpretations of PES (1874) stemmed from the incompleteness of the work. In fact, the Brentanian theory of truth as evidence had not been developed in 1874. Its presentation, in the form of a lecture, as well as its publication, occurred in 1889, in the context of the elaboration of the papers that made up the book *Descriptive Psychology*.

In most forceful argument of his refutation of the Husserlian “accusation”, Brentano pointed out that his theory of knowledge, founded on *descriptive psychology*, allowed a distinction between the question of law (logical validity) and the question of fact (genetic necessity) and, therefore, allowed a description of the nature of truth as evidence. Still according to Brentano, as evidenced by the following quote, what was inadmissible was to accept that Husserl did not know or had forgotten the foundations of his theory of knowledge,

This by way of defense against defamatory talk which I can scarcely believe has really come from the lips of one of my own students. In order not to put an even worse interpretation on it, I must assume that this is an indication of an extraordinarily poor memory. I, at least, both in my lectures and my writings, have always very firmly distinguished between lawfulness in the sense of natural necessity and in the sense of the correctness of an activity. Indeed, no one before me and not one after me (Husserl included) has been able to express himself with greater clarity and emphasis on this matter than I have (BRENTANO, 2009, p. 239).

The foregoing is sufficient to present the textual basis of my hypothesis, in which I claim that Brentano interpreted the Husserlian critique, raised against his theory of knowledge, as a critique of a specific type of *epistemological psychologism*. It is now up to me to present, from Brentano's own theory of truth, the textual corroboration of this hypothesis, as well as Brentano's way of refuting this criticism. However, this task will remain for the last part of this presentation because its plausibility requires that we first present the function of the *psychological method* in Brentano's *Phänomenologie* or *Descriptive Psychology*. In other words, how Brentano restructured the psychological method to ground philosophy in psychology and, thereby, to structure his proposal for *descriptive psychology*.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL METHOD

Porta's recent investigations (2018, 2019, and 2021) into the historical development of *psychologism*, especially prior to the publication of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, show that much of the "polemic around *psychologism*" (*Psychologismusstriet*) resulted from the divergence between varieties of conceptions of *psychological method*. In any case, specifically for the context of the development of Brentano's *descriptive psychology*, Porta says, "it is conceptually and historic-philosophically more appropriate to understand the notion of *psychological method* in a neutral way, as a thesis that makes *psychology* the fundamental discipline of *philosophy* (and that does not reduce the latter to the former)" (PORTA, 2021, p. 247). In this sense, the notion of *psychological method* is not to be confused with that of *psychologism*, either in its epistemological or ontological version.

According to the historical systematization developed by Porta in *Brentano and the Psychological Method*, "what is characteristic of Brentano's relation to the *psychological method* is that, at the same time that he takes up elements of it, he develops them, deepens them and, in short, produces something essentially new" (2018, p. 337). Therefore, he presents nine fundamental characteristics, which allowed the Brentanian reconstruction of the *psychological method* to structure *philosophy* as *descriptive psychology*. Let us see:

1. Two fundamental theses of Brentanian philosophy were at the basis of the proposals of the "psychological method" since its reception in the Germanic environment.
 - a. Psychology is the basic discipline of philosophy.
 - b. The true method of philosophy is none other than that of natural science.
2. Brentano continues a tradition already underway in the Germanic sphere.
 - a. Two points in common with the psychological method:
 - i. The enemy, which in Brentano certainly extends from speculative idealism to idealism, including the Kantian one.

ii. The positive proposal, that is, the founding of philosophy as a science through experience, taking the method of the *Naturwissenschaft* as a model.

3. But not merely the theses, but even their specific mode is Germanic:

a. That philosophy must follow the method of *Naturwissenschaft* implies at the same time:

i. a reflection on the notion of “empiricism” appropriate to empirical science.

4. In Brentano’s conception the proper and specific method of *Naturwissenschaft*:

a. is not the mathematical construction, b. but to fit the nature of its object.

5. In the case of psychology this adequacy implies that:

a. To be empirical science, this experiment is characteristically descriptive and not inductive.

b. Brentano thus adheres to the majority trend of German psychological empiricism, which since Fries has differed from English empiricism and its eventual culmination in Mill.

6. Germanic empiricism does not understand inductivism as a necessary consequence.

7. Brentano’s empiricism radicalizes the *psychological method* by making it an exclusively descriptive procedure. This implies that:

a. It not only distinguishes between external and internal perception but bases descriptive analysis on the latter.

b. The psychic is now characterized by INTENTIONALITY, its intrinsic property, and no longer by its mode of access.

8. *Descriptive psychology* is now understood as act psychology (*Aktpsychologie*).

9. The presupposition of the “Principle of Immanence” (PI) plays an essential role as the basis of the argument that leads to the grounding of philosophy in psychology.

a. PI is the Cartesian-Lockean thesis that the only direct and immediate objects of consciousness are its own representations (*Vorstellungen*, ideas).

i. I will deal with PI in the last part when I present the concept of presentation as the basis of the act of judging with evidence.

Considering these nine points presented above, Porta (2018, p. 340) concludes that the book *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* is within the tradition of the

psychological method, sharing with it its fundamental objectives and presuppositions, namely the reorientation of philosophy towards natural science, promoting a new type of empiricism, typically Germanic, characterized by its non-inductivist tendency, but Brentanianly intentionalist. However, despite this common starting point, which will ultimately refer to a foundation for philosophy in psychology, the fundamental point is that:

the understanding of psychology itself, no longer defined solely by its introspectionist approach, but by its intentionality and its new correlative understanding of inner perception, presents characteristic differences, with Brentano being the first to link the proposal of the psychological method to a strict and consequently descriptive approach. This approach, which at first bears fruit in the idea of a psychology of the act, will nevertheless continually lead, and through the very division of the analysis of intentionality, to the overcoming of this determination in the sense of a phenomenology of its own, which will integrate into its scope elements that transcend this sphere without, however, falling into the confusions, pointed out by neo-Kantism, in the sense of an overlapping of psychological and epistemological planes. (PORTA, 2018, p. 340)

All the points presented from this historical systematization allow us to understand not only the context of Brentano's 1874 work, but also his fundamental assumptions that became explicit in some of the works that made up his *Descriptive Psychology* (1889 - 1891). Particularly point (9), which deals with the Brentanian reception of the *Principle of Immanence* (PI), and has been described by Porta (2018) as the one that plays the essential role in the basis of the argument that leads to the grounding of philosophy in psychology, through the descriptive specificity of its method, can serve as a touchstone in characterizing the originality of the fundamental theses of the Brentanian theory of knowledge. Let's see.

While it is true that in assuming the *psychological method* Brentano presupposes the *principle of immanence* (PI), that is, the Cartesian-Lockean thesis that the only direct and immediate objects of consciousness are its own representations (*Vorstellungen* or *ideas* in Descartes' sense), it is also true that he does so in a way that is originally different from that of his interlocutors. In other words, Brentano embraces the *psychological method* and, at the same time, reformulates the fundamental concept of the *principle of immanence* (PI) presupposed in it, namely the concept of *Vorstellungen* (*ideas*), which in Brentano is more appropriately expressed as *presentation*.

Presentation, in the Brentanian sense, is the most fundamental class of mental acts perceived immediately as *psychic phenomena* and its originality requires some clarification, as Boccaccini (2021, p. 255-256) rightly points out in his analysis of the translation of the term '*Vorstellung*' by '*presentazione*' into Italian. The demarcation of its proper meaning is based on the following four points:

(i) For Brentano, this class of mental acts is analogous to the simple naming of a thing on the level of language.

a. Brentano therefore uses *Vorstellung* to refer to something that manifests itself to consciousness, in the sense of being before the mind:

i. in the sense of something that is present, placed in front (*stellen vor*) of consciousness,

ii. and not in the sense of being in the mind, i.e., an internal state or mental content of the subject or their thought.

(ii) By *Vorstellung* Brentano means all mental phenomena in which the object is simply present to us, the object appears without any attitude on our part:

a. These are all sensitive *presentations*, whether simple sensations, but also amnesic or fictional *presentations*, and noetic or conceptual *presentations*.

(iii) Therefore, the elementary and foundational status of *Vorstellung* in Brentano's psychology does not necessarily derive from its sensory origin, but rather from the fact that it is the first thing in the world:

a. firstly, of its function of identifying or *presenting* the object of the mental act (the object of which can be of a no-sensible nature, for example a mathematical or theological object).

b. A *Vorstellung* is therefore not just the *sensible impression* of the classical empiricist tradition.

(iv) For this reason, the choice of translating *Vorstellung* as *presentazione* (following the corresponding Italian term *presentazione*) is intended to underline the way in which this concept in Brentano represents an act of the mind in line with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition and not a mental representation, a notion closer to the Cartesian-Lockean line of modern philosophy.

Describing a *presentation*, that is, an *act of presenting*, as well as an act of *judging* or an act of *loving and hating*, were the fundamental results achieved by Brentano, which were characterized as *psychic phenomena* due to the way in which *psychology* was constituted as a *psychological method*, without this implying a reduction of philosophy to psychology. However, the fundamental point here was to recognize that this possibility of describing *psychic phenomena*, guaranteed by this psychology of the act (*Aktpsychologie*), was not based on the mode of access to such *psychic phenomena*, but on their fundamental intrinsic property, namely the *intentionality* that constituted them, since this property radicalized *introspectivism* by allowing the description of the immediate apprehension of *psychic phenomena* by internal perception. From a historical point of view, this thesis was confirmed

by Porta based on the difference between the projects of Freis, Beneke, Meyer and Lipps, and the Brentanian project.

Only in Brentano does the psychological method become purely descriptive, something that, despite the empiricism expressed, was never done before in Fries, Beneke, Bona Meyer or Lipps, although in each case for different reasons. All of them are radical “introspectivists” and claim to be based on a specific internal perception that is different from the external, reacting equally against the reduction of psychology to physiology or the replacement of a subjective perspective with an objectivist perspective of any kind. In all of them, however, internal perception is far from being the basis of a purely descriptive analysis (PORTA, 2018, p. 238).

Although the ambiguities of Brentano’s work from 1874 (PES) were the fulcrum of Husserl’s criticism, as Brentano suspected, the historical analysis of Porta presented above corroborates Brentano’s own defense of the objectivity of his theory of knowledge from 1874 (PES). Furthermore, this historical analysis sheds light on the subsequent reformulations presented by Brentano, which aimed to reformulate the ambiguous concepts of his theory of knowledge. In this sense, it is possible to recognize that the mereological description of the constituent parts of the *intentional relation*, characteristic of each of the three types of *psychic phenomena* (*act of presenting, act of judging, act of loving and hating*) was presented by Brentano (around 1889-1991) with the purpose of eliminating the aforementioned ambiguities and guaranteeing, among other solutions, the epistemological foundation of his theory through the reaffirmation of the following two points:

a) the primacy of internal perception over external perception, due to the *straight and oblique* mode of direction and apprehension characteristic of the *intentional relation*.

b) The philosophically empirical *point of view* of Brentanian psychology, in other words, Brentano’s empiricism in its radical form.

Finally, the fundamental reformulation of the *Principle of Immanence* (PI), as well as its consequent formulation of the Brentanian concept of *presentation*, found fertile ground in another characteristic reformulation of empiricism conceived by Brentano. In other words, although strongly influenced by Mill, the exclusively descriptive characteristic of the Brentanian *psychological method* replaced the inductivist pretension of empirical science, as well as the associationism that underpinned it, by also reformulating the concept of *physical phenomenon* received from the Kantian tradition. However, it was not a question of formulating a new concept, since Brentano had already incorporated the interpretation of the Comtean concept of *phenomenon*, elaborated in the summer of 1869, into the criteria for defining the method of psychology presented in his PES thesis (1874). In Comte’s view, when defending the legitimacy of positive philosophy, *phenomenon* is not what appears,

but the explanation of the facts themselves (*faits*). Therefore, “the explanation of the facts, brought back to their real meaning, is from then on nothing more than the production of the connection (*Verbindung*) between the different particular phenomena and some general facts, whose number the progress of science always strives to reduce further” (BRENTANO, 2022, p. 11). Brentano then assumes the Comtean criterion, which ensures that only in this sense can a simple *phenomenon*, such as the weight of bodies on the surface of the earth, be expanded into a general fact and characterized as an explanation of the general phenomena of the universe, as the law of gravitation established by Newton. In this way, he emphasized:

Above all, as far as the expression phenomenon is concerned, it is not to be

understood in our philosopher as it is in Kant. We would be mistaken if we took Comte’s *phénomène* to mean a Kantian φαίνόμενον [*phainomenon*], an appearance behind which the νοούμενον [*noumenon*], the thing in itself, is hidden and inaccessible. This may even serve as a sign that by phenomenon Comte often means the same as what the expression “fact” indicates, as, e. g., when he says, “the explanation of the facts (*faits*) is, for the positive thinker, nothing but the establishment of the connection between the different specific phenomena (*phénomènes*) and some general facts (*faits*).” (BRENTANO, 2019, p. 16; 2022a, p. 445)

Two points stand out from the above quote. On the one hand, (a) if the Comtean definition of phenomenon assumed by Brentano showed recognition of the results of differential and integral calculus by preserving for *physical phenomena* the description of a fact, describable in algebraic equations, as particular cases of general facts (that is, laws *derived from* the first equations), then the description of such a phenomenon would make explicit the structure that took the individual case no longer as an instance of induction, but as an example of a type. On the other hand, (b) if the description of the *psychic phenomenon of judgment* as a phenomenon that contained within itself a *presentation of a physical phenomenon* (we’ll see later), or rather, the mereological description of the constituent parts of the *intentional relation* between the *act of judging* and the *correlate of the act judged*, were adequate to the nature of the object, then the description of such a phenomenon would make explicit *the intentional mode of the relations* (substitutes for induction) of this same structure between the constituent parts and the whole of the *act of judging* that immediately perceives the evidence of a law. This is effectively the way Brentano conceives the identity between the methods of the natural sciences and psychology, as announced in his famous *4th Habilitation Thesis*: “*Vera philosophiae methodus nulla alia nisi scientiae naturalis est*” (2017, p. 161).

The above about the *psychological method*, as well as its descriptive criteria characteristic of its anti-psychological orientation, is enough for us to present

the description of the concept of self-evident truth, as Brentano considered it to be sufficient to refute the Husserlian criticism leveled against his theory of knowledge.

4. THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF THE PSYCHIC DESCRIPTION (PHÄNOMENOLOGIE) OF TRUTH

At this final point in the work, based on the presuppositions of the Brentanian theory of knowledge presented in the previous subtopic, I analyze the *theoretical-philosophical* context of the *psychic description (Phänomenologie) of the act of judging truth*, in which Brentano explained the origin of the concept of *self-evident truth*. This description was presented, in parts, in his communication to the Vienna philosophical community in March 1889, entitled *On the Concept of Truth (Über den Begriff der Wahrheit)*, and was published as the first chapter of the work *The True and The Evident (Wahrheit und Evidenz: Erkenntnistheoretische Abhandlungen und Briefe)*. Thus, my hypothesis that Brentano refuted the label of *psychologism*, attributed by Husserl to his theory of knowledge, is supported by the fact that such a *psychic description (Phänomenologie)* offers plausibility for the following two theses:

a) Husserl was mistaken about the Brentanian definition of truth because he assumed that it was the concept of truth *as correspondence* and therefore based his criticism on the absence of a *truth-maker* in the fundamental form of true judgment described by Brentano's theory of knowledge. However, the Brentanian definition of truth in question, on which his theory of knowledge was based, dealt with the concept of truth *as evidence* and, *therefore*, the description of the *evident true judgment* consisted of philosophically explaining the judgment itself as a *truth-bearer*.

b) Husserl was also mistaken about Brentano's *psychic description of the act of judging evident truth* and was therefore unable to understand the relation proposed by Brentano between psychology, logic and the theory of knowledge.

So, let's look at each of these two theses, which underpin my hypothesis, starting with (a), since it demands an analysis about the nature of this misunderstanding.

4.1 EQUIVOCITY AND MULTIPLICITIES OF *BEING SAID TO BE TRUE*

The fundamental point of Brentano's refutation of the Husserlian critique was not merely that Husserl had been mistaken about the Brentanian concept of truth, but that Husserl had failed to recognize the fundamental role that the very equivocity of the concept of truth played in the Brentanian theory of knowledge. In other words, Brentano understood that the limitation of the Husserlian critique was in not realizing that the *equivocity* of the concept of truth had been

its starting point and not a supposedly erroneous point of arrival. In addition, as we summarize in the following paragraphs the results of previous investigations (BRITO, 2012; 2018), the Brentanian analysis, developed in his text *On the Concept of Truth* (2009), presented a resumption of the classic Aristotelian definition of truth understood as *adaequatio rei et intellectos*. This analysis, which opposed the traditional interpretation of this Aristotelian concept of truth as correspondence, was guided by the definitions, distinctions and classifications presented by Brentano himself in his doctoral thesis (1862), in which he had developed an interpretative theory about the *multiple meanings of Being enunciated as true according to Aristotle*. In this way, Brentano continued to maintain in 1889, as he had done in 1874 based on Aristotelian presuppositions, that truth and falsity taken in their proper sense were to be found in judgment, whether positive or negative (BRENTANO, 2009c, p. 4). It is interesting to note, more specifically, that Brentano's analysis was punctual and directly indicated what would be the main Aristotelian definition of truth, by mentioning and interpreting one of the main passages of *Metaphysics* as follows:

The preceding investigation has shown that Aristotle uses the words "true" and "false" in several senses; hence it will now be important to determine in which of these meanings it is employed when he deals with being in the sense of being true and non-being in the sense of being false. It does not seem difficult to decide this question since, in Met. VI. 428 Aristotle explains himself with a clarity that leaves nothing to be desired by saying that the *on hos alethes* and the *me on hos pseudos* occur only in judgments, either affirmative or negative. "Being as the true and non-being as the false are found in combination and separation, and both together in the division into contradictories, since the truth has affirmation when there is combination, and negation when there is separation, while the false in each case has the contradictory opposite For the true and the false are not in things ... but in the understanding, and not even in the understanding where simple concepts are concerned". Obviously, it is the judgment which is here called true and false, hence to be or not to be. (BRENTANO, 1975, p. 22-23)

The delimitation of judgment as a place of truth and falsity enunciated in its proper sense, as Brentano showed he had found in Aristotelian theory, served as the touchstone for the Brentanian description of judgment as a psychic act of attributing truth and falsity (or valuing the *presentation* of *something* as true or false). This description was characterized by the fact that judgment, analyzed from the point of view of Brentano's *descriptive psychology* of 1889, had a structure and, furthermore, this structure consisted of the existential predication of a *presentation* (*act of presenting something*), whether it was simple [(A)is] or compound [(A is B)is]. Brentano explained and exemplified the *act of judging in* the following terms:

The judgment itself is the subject to which being belongs as a predicate. Hence the being of which he here speaks is not the copula which connects subject and predicate in the sentence itself, especially since a negative judgment, too, is said to have being,

and an affirmative one non-being. Rather we are concerned with a being which is predicated of the entire, fully articulated judgment. This may be clarified through an example. Let us suppose somebody wanted to demonstrate to someone else that the sum of the angles in a triangle is equal to two right angles, and that he requires as a starting point of the proof the assumption that the exterior angles are equal to the opposing interior angles. The question now is whether this is or is not [the case], i.e., is it true or is it false? It is! i.e., it is true. (BRENTANO, 1975, p. 23)

It's worth pointing out that Brentano developed his analysis of the Aristotelian concept of truth based on the foundations of his description of the psychic phenomenon of judging, defined from 1889 onwards as a primary and secondary psychic relation (*Diploseenergie*) (BRITO, 2012, p. 106; CURVELLO, 2016, p 17; CARVALHO, 2021, p. 271). In these terms, judgment was described as a psychic act intentionally directed towards *presentation* and this, in turn, was described as a psychic act intentionally directed towards an *immanent object*. Because of these theoretical orientations, Brentano considered that the correct definition of truth could be established by analyzing the Aristotelian answer to the following question: "when is a judgement true, and when is a judgement false?" (BRENTANO, 2009c, p. 4). As the following quotation describes, the answer to this question is the starting point for Brentan's analysis:

His answer is this: a judgement is true if the one who makes the judgement is related to things in a way which corresponds to them, and a judgement is false if the one who makes the judgement is related to things in a way which is contrary to them. "He who thinks the separated to be separated and the combined to be combined has the truth, while he whose thought is in a state contrary to that of the objects is in error" (Metaphysics IX, 10, 1051, b 3). And so it was that truth was explicated as being a kind of agreement or correspondence obtaining between things (*wirklichen Dingen*) and judgement (BRENTANO, 2009c, p. 4).

In presenting the Aristotelian definition above, Brentano's analysis recognized the need to clarify the misunderstandings surrounding the notion of *correspondence* due to the confusion caused by the terms 'real things' (*wirklichen Dingen*) and real things (*reales Dinge*). For this reason, Brentano presented at least two very important warnings about the fundamental point:

(i) "The fact that we will no longer look for more than is really given in the definition (*Wirklichkeit*) is itself of considerable value [...] we are protected from conceptual confusions" (2009c, p. 16).

(ii) "Finally, we shall not be tempted, as so many have been, to confuse the concept of a thing (*den Begriff des Realen*) with the concept of an existent (*des Existierenden*)" (2009c, p. 16).

So, let's continue our analysis with these warnings in mind.

It is a shared strategy among scholars of Brentanian theory to make explicit the ontological status of the *immanent object* in order to support the theory of truth. In other words, in order to describe the foundations of evident true judgment, we commonly resort to explaining the *existing* and *non-existing* character of the *immanent object* as *realia* or *irrealia* (PORTA, 2022, p. 6-7), as well as its corresponding *affirmation* and *negation*, as the case may be, which is characteristic of the *act of judging* (BRENTANO, 1974 p. 25 ; 2009c, p. 15). However, in order to elucidate the thesis (a) of my hypothesis, it is opportune to consider the problem from the point of view of the relation between judgement and the real thing (*ein reales Ding*), as Brentano himself extraordinarily proposed in his work *On the Concept of Truth* (2009c), because the fundamental point was to recognize that the *immanent object*, as a correlate of the *act of presenting*, which is the basic act in every act of *judging*, is not always a real thing (*ein reales Ding*). For this reason, Brentano warned:

Nor are we likely to think, as so many foolishly do, that whenever one is aware of the truth one must compare a thing (*ein reales Ding*) with a judgement. People who think in this way do not realize that our judgements are not always concerned with things that are real (*reales Dinge*). And they do not realize that when our judgements are concerned with what is real, we could not compare the judgement and the thing unless the thing were already known to us. The theory would thus lead to an infinite regress (2009, p. 16).

In fact, by taking judgments under the descriptive criteria of his *Phänomenologie*, Brentano made explicit the three classic types of the theory of judgments, namely assertoric judgments, problematic judgments, and apodictic judgments. However, the same descriptive criteria of his *Phänomenologie* made it clear that only assertoric judgments were made up of real things (*reales Dinge*) as one of their parts. For this reason, Brentano said to present his classification, "if we now ask about the relation between truth and reality, we find a very simple answer" (2009c, p. 15):

(1) For one class of true judgements, there is, so to speak, a direct relation between their truth and something (*etwas Realem*) or other; these are the judgements which are such that the idea or thought which is at their basis has a thing as its object (*realen Gehalt*). Clearly the truth of the affirmative judgement - and, in the inverse sense, that of the negative - depends upon the existence, the coming into being, or the passing away, of the thing (*die betreffende Realität*) to which the judgement pertains. The judgement itself may not undergo any change; but it will become true if the thing in question comes into being, and it will cease to be true if the thing (*die betreffende Realität*) is destroyed (2009c, p. 15).

In Brentanian terms, therefore, we have above the definition of assertory judgments, that is, the type of judgment in which *res judicata* is real, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Original	Tradução
<p>ne, ue and lie, ne, ve and hate, ne, ee will and fate.</p>	<p>Há uma linha fina, Entre a <u>verdade</u> e a <u>mentira</u>, Há uma linha fina, Entre o amor e o ódio, Há uma linha fina, Entre o livre <u>arbitrio</u> e o <u>destino</u>.</p>
<p>ve to do is to follow your heart ll be like a work of art ing will fall apart) ne between good and bad ne between wise and mad ne between serious and sad</p>	<p>Tudo o que tens de fazer é <u>seguir o teu</u> E a vida será uma obra de arte (ou tudo se demorará) Há uma linha fina entre o bom e o mal Há uma linha fina entre <u>sábio</u> e <u>louco</u> Há uma linha fina entre <u>estar sério</u> ou</p>

In addition to assertoric judgments, but, above all, because of the fundamental difference with them (namely, “judgments in which the *presentment* has no real content (*realen Gehalt*)”), there are two other types. One of them, described in the following quote, is the problematic judgment, i.e., that type of judgment in which the thing judged is possible and therefore not real.

It may be that the judgement is not directly dependent upon a thing (*von einer Realität*), but is indirectly dependent upon a thing (*von einer Realität*). The object of the presentation or thought underlying the judgement is not itself a thing (*obwohl die Vorstellung keinen realen Gehalt hat*); yet it may be said to exist, or not to exist (*daß ihr Gegenstand zum Existierenden oder Nichtexistierenden gehört*), as a result of the fact that a certain thing (*eine gewisse Realität*) - or things (*gewisse Realitäten*) - happens to exist, or did exist, or will exist. Consider an empty space, any kind of lack, deficiency, or deprivation, a capacity, an object of thought, or the like: these exist, and come into being and pass away, as the result of alterations among objects that are things (*realen Veränderungen*) (2009c, p. 15)

This definition of problematic judgment, expressed in Brentanian terms, establishes that the specificity of this type of judgment lies in its dependence on real transformations and, therefore, even indirectly on reality (*Realität*), as the diagram below illustrates.

Original	Tradução
<p>It's a fine line, Between true and lie, It's a fine line, Between love and hate, It's a fine line, Between free will and fate.</p> <p>All you have to do is to follow your heart And life will be like a work of art (or everything will fall apart) It's a fine line between good and bad It's a fine line between wise and mad It's a fine line between serious and sad</p>	<p>Há uma linha fina, Entre a <u>verdade</u> e a <u>mentira</u>, Há uma linha fina, Entre o amor e o <u>ódio</u>, Há uma linha fina, Entre o livre <u>arbitrio</u> e o <u>destino</u>.</p> <p>Tudo o que tens de fazer é seguir o <u>teu coração</u> E a <u>vida será uma obra de arte</u> (ou tudo se demorará) Há uma linha fina entre o <u>bom</u> e o <u>mau</u> Há uma linha fina entre <u>sábio</u> e <u>louco</u> Há uma linha fina entre <u>estar sério</u> ou <u>triste</u>.</p>

In addition to assertoric and problematic judgments, Brentano described apodictic judgments in particular. This was the type of judgment in which *res judicata* is necessary. Therefore, he said:

It may be that, so far as truth is concerned, the judgement is not at all dependent upon any thing (*von einer Realität*). This may be said of those judgements whose objects (*Gegenstand*) are in themselves necessary or impossible. The law of contradiction, and with it all analytic judgements, belongs to this category (2009c, p. 15).

In fact, the touchstone here is the very necessity (or impossibility) of the *immanent object presented*, which underlies the act of judging as part of the act of *presenting that* constitutes it, as the following diagram also illustrates.

Original	Tradução
<p>It's a fine line, Between true and lie, It's a fine line, Between love and hate, It's a fine line, Between free will and fate.</p> <p>All you have to do is to follow your heart And life will be like a work of art (or everything will fall apart) It's a fine line between good and bad It's a fine line between wise and mad It's a fine line between serious and sad</p>	<p>Há uma linha fina, Entre a <u>verdade</u> e a <u>mentira</u>, Há uma linha fina, Entre o amor e o <u>ódio</u>, Há uma linha fina, Entre o livre <u>arbitrio</u> e o <u>destino</u>.</p> <p>Tudo o que tens de fazer é seguir o <u>teu coração</u> E a <u>vida será uma obra de arte</u> (ou tudo se demorará) Há uma linha fina entre o <u>bom</u> e o <u>mau</u> Há uma linha fina entre <u>sábio</u> e <u>louco</u> Há uma linha fina entre <u>estar sério</u> ou <u>triste</u>.</p>

Here we have the fundamental point to emphasize: it is the psychic description (*Phänomenologie*) of the evident true judgment which, by making explicit *the relation* between the act (of *affirming*) and its correlate (*necessary*), as well as the act (of *denying*) and its correlate (impossible), makes explicit the ontological status of the latter. Precisely for this reason, the description of this type of judgment played a fundamental role in Brentan's theory of knowledge. We'll come back to it in the last topic.

It is now only important to consider that the analyses presented make it plausible to hypothesize that (a) Husserl was mistaken about the Brentanian definition of truth, because he did not understand (or forgot, as Brentano suggested) that the psychic description (*Phänomenologie*) of an *apodictic judgment* makes the judgment itself explicit as a *truth-bearer*.

4.3 THE RELATION BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY, LOGIC AND THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Finally, it remains to justify thesis (b), which argues that Husserl's misunderstanding of the Brentanian psychic description of the *act of judging the obvious true*, as explained in the previous topic, implied a misunderstanding of the relation between psychology, logic and the theory of knowledge.

The argumentative strategy I will adopt here will consist of following the structure of Brentan's own definition of *psychic phenomena*, which made it possible to explain an individual case as an example of a type, without having to resort to a process of induction. In this way, I will try to present the Brentanian description of that *individual act of judging in a true and evident way*, which could be taken as an example of that truth recognized as a type or general law. In other words, I will try to describe, in Brentanian terms, that individual act of judging capable of exemplifying the *principle of non-contradiction*.

Furthermore, it is interesting to remember that for Brentano every *act of judging is based on a presentation (Vorstellung)* and, as explained above from the very Brentanian definition of *presentation*, the elementary and founding status of *presentation* derives from its function of identifying or "presenting" the object of the mental act, which can also be a mathematical object (BOCCACCINI, 2021, p. 255). This is a fundamental presupposition, because only the *presentation of a logical object*, such as a contradiction ($A \wedge \neg A$), can support an *act of judging that is true and evident*.

Now, according to the descriptive foundations formulated in the context of the development of Brentanian *Phänomenologie* (1889 - 1891), each and every individual act of denying a contradiction can be described as an act of judging that denies an impossibility. For this very reason, such an act makes the truth that it

carries within itself explicit, exclusively from the relation between the parts that make it up. Thus, the constituent parts of such individual acts of judging can be described as follows:

- The individual basic act of *presenting* where the contradiction ($A \wedge \neg A$) is the correlate of the immanent act/Object *presented*.

- The *act of denying* (*judging negatively*) the basic act of *presenting* the contradiction *presented*: $\neg (A \wedge \neg A)$.

The following diagram illustrates the individual case of the negation of a contradiction, according to the model for describing apodictic judgments.

Finally, the above schema also makes explicit what Brentano saw as the relation between psychology (psychic description), logic and the theory of knowledge, since the same mereological description of said *psychic phenomenon* applies to (i) the *individual act of denying an impossibility (contradiction)* and (ii) the *principle of non-contradiction*, making explicit (iii) *the supreme rule of syllogism*.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of *Psychologismusstreit*, developed in this work exclusively from the Brentanian perspective, supported the interpretation that Brentano's textual response to Husserl was characterized by an effort to refute the accusation that a specific type of *epistemological psychologism* referred his theory of knowledge to relativism.

The argumentative strategy I adopted, based on the results of the research carried out by Porta (2018, 2019 and 2021) on the development of the *psychological method*, took advantage of the specific use of the term *psychologism* in Germany in the context that preceded the publication of Husserl's work *Logical Investigations* (1900), as well as the reformulations made by Brentano for his theory of knowledge in the works published in the context of the elaboration of *Descriptive Psychology* (1889-1891). As I proposed at the beginning, I left open the question of the validity of this interpretation in the light of the subsequent development of Husserlian criticism of *psychologism* after the publication of *Logical Investigations*, but also the validity of this interpretation in the light of Brentano's *reist* turn.

However, I believe that the above has been enough to make understandable the sense of the Brentanian thesis which, by assuming knowledge as a judgment belonging to the domain of *psychology*, considers that, if beings other than us share knowledge with humans, what they share must be in the human psychic domain and only here is it directly accessible to the scientific investigation proposed in the terms of a *descriptive psychology*.

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