

Cohen and Natorp on Transcendental and Concrete Subjectivity

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER IS TO ANALYZE AND COMPARE THE WAY IN which Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp deal with the problem of the cognitive subject and, in particular, with the relationship between transcendental and concrete subjectivity. Even though Cohen and Natorp share a certain philosophical method for approaching this problem, their results are quite different. While for Cohen concrete subjectivity remains an open issue, without a proper philosophical account, Natorp manages to put forward a theory of concrete subjectivity within the very limits imposed by the transcendental method. However, Natorp soon encounters difficulties in this doctrine and modifies his initial position. In his late theory of subjectivity, Natorp inverts Cohen's viewpoint and even departs from the framework established by the transcendental method.

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I. HERMANN COHEN

1.1. Kant and Cohen on the Method of Transcendental Investigation

According to the philosophical method adopted by Cohen, philosophy should take a certain fact as a point of departure for investigation and proceed by searching for the conditions of possibility of that fact. This is the so-called “transcendental method.” In the case of theoretical philosophy, the fact to be investigated is experience.¹ Cohen argues:

die Erfahrung ist gegeben; es sind die Bedingungen zu entdecken, auf denen ihre Möglichkeit beruht. Sind die Bedingungen gefunden, welche die gegebene Erfahrung *ermöglichen*, in der Art ermöglichen, dass dieselbe als *a priori* gültig angesprochen, dass strenge Nothwendigkeit und unbeschränkte Allgemeinheit ihr zuerkannt werden kann, dann sind diese Bedingungen als die constituirenden Merkmale des Begriffs der Erfahrung zu bezeichnen, und aus diesem Begriff ist sodann zu deducieren, was immer den Erkenntniswerth objectiver Realität beansprucht. Das ist das ganze Geschäft der Transscendental-Philosophie. (Cohen 1877, 24)

But Cohen identifies experience with mathematical physics. Accordingly, mathematical physics turns out to be the point of departure for the transcendental method. In this sense, Cohen claims that experience is given in mathematics and in pure natural science and,² more precisely, in Newtonian science (Cohen 1910, 32). Thus, the task of transcendental philosophy, now understood as a theory of experience, will be to determine the conditions of possibility of Newtonian science. Cohen summarizes his interpretation of Kantian philosophy in the following way: “Kants Aufgabe ist also zunächst die Prüfung und Kennzeichnung des Erkenntniswertes und des Gewissheitsgrundes der Newtonschen Naturwissenschaft, welche er bei dem Drohwort der Erfahrung fasste” (Cohen 1918, 93).³

In view of this emphasis on the method of philosophy in Cohen’s interpretation of Kant, it may come as something of a surprise that the expression “transcendental

method” does *not* appear in Kant’s work (Baum 1980). The transcendental method, as conceived by Cohen, corresponds rather to the method that Kant calls “analytic” or “regressive.” This method consists in taking what is looked for as already given and proceeding to the conditions under which only the assumed fact is possible (Kant 1968, 276). Kant contrasts the analytic method to the synthetic one. Let us briefly consider this Kantian distinction.

Kant’s critical project aims at establishing the possibility of metaphysics as a science. In contradistinction to other theoretical disciplines of reason (such as mathematics or pure natural science) that already have the status of a science, metaphysics is in an unfavorable situation because, before the investigation of the *Critique*, there is no synthetic a priori judgment that can be put forward as genuine metaphysical *knowledge*. In other words, while there is a mathematical science and a pure science of nature, there is no metaphysical science. In this situation, if we wanted to adopt the analytic method, we could not take the science of metaphysics as a fact to study *how* this fact is possible, for we do not even know *whether* such science is possible. Rather, this is the question to be answered.

At this point, one may abandon the regressive method and adopt a progressive or synthetic one. This is the choice made in the *Critique*. In this work, Kant claims, pure reason is investigated to determine both its elements and the laws governing its pure use, according to principles. In this investigation, nothing beyond reason itself is assumed, and cognition is developed “out of its original seeds without relying on any fact whatever” (Kant 1968, 274).

The synthetic method may be characterized as a method of isolation and integration (Caimi 2009, xxi). It distinguishes philosophical from mathematical cognition. Mathematics begins by establishing definitions, axioms, and postulates and proceeds by constructing concepts in intuition. Conversely, philosophy takes some obscure and confused concepts as its point of departure to decompose them into their elements. Once this moment of isolation is accomplished, philosophical investigation integrates the elements just obtained so that the whole is clearly and distinctly represented. In the case of the critique of reason, the concept to be analyzed is the concept of reason itself, as a faculty of cognition. The investigation of this concept establishes that there are two sources of cognition, each of which cannot be reduced to the other. On

the one hand, there is a *receptive* capacity by means of which objects are *given* to us. Such capacity is *sensibility*. On the other hand, there is a spontaneous faculty by means of which objects are thought of. This faculty is *understanding*. Moreover, investigation establishes that cognition is possible only because of the cooperation of sensibility and understanding. Sensibility provides the subject with an intuitive multiplicity that understanding synthesizes into a unity according to a concept. The given object is thus thought of and, insofar as it is both given and thought of, it is cognized. In view of this result, the possibility of metaphysics as an a priori cognition of objects will be determined. At this point, one should ask what kind of metaphysical cognition can then be proved as possible after this critical investigation. But I will not address this issue here, as I would like to remain focused on the problem of method.

In *Prolegomena*, Kant does not adopt the synthetic method but the analytic one.⁴ We have already seen that there is no justified metaphysical cognition that can be taken as a point of departure for analysis. However, according to Kant, we are in possession of other synthetic a priori cognitions, such as those of mathematics and pure natural science. The investigation of *Prolegomena* will assume these sciences as *facta* and will establish their conditions of possibility. Then, it will be shown how, from the principles of the possibility of those particular sciences, the possibility of *any* synthetic a priori cognition can be derived (Kant 1968, 275). In this way, the analytic method, that is, a method that searches for the conditions of possibility of a certain actual cognition,⁵ may be used to solve the problem of the possibility of metaphysics as a science, although there is no actual uncontested metaphysical cognition to be taken as the point of departure for investigation.

I.II. Critique of Reason and Critique of Cognition

Cohen interprets the analytic and synthetic methods, originally used by Kant to ground the possibility of metaphysics as a science, in the light of a central distinction he makes in his Neo-Kantian theory of knowledge (Edel 1988, 266ff.). The word “knowledge” may designate the cognitive process or activity, or it may refer to the result or product of such a process. Knowledge understood as an activity or task refers to a knowing subject in the first place. On the other hand,

knowledge understood as a result refers to the known object. Thus, a transcendental theory of knowledge may take one of two different routes. It may study knowledge as the activity of a subject or as an objective result.⁶ The synthetic method, adopted by Kant in the first *Critique*, guides an investigation of the first type, because in this case the cognitive faculty of the knowing subject is analyzed. According to Cohen, this amounts to a transcendental *psychology*. In contrast, the analytic method of *Prolegomena* sets forth an investigation of the second type, by assuming mathematics and pure natural science as cognitive products. In this case, the method does not ground a transcendental psychology but rather a transcendental *logic*. On this issue, Cohen states: “Die *Erkenntniskritik* ist somit gleichbedeutend mit der *transcendentalen Logik*; denn ihre Aufgabe ist die Entdeckung der *synthetischen Grundsätze* oder derjenigen *Grundlagen* des Erkennens, auf welche die *Wissenschaft* sich aufbaut, und von deren Geltung sie abhängt” (Cohen 1883, 7).

At first sight it may seem that transcendental psychology is more radical than transcendental logic, for the latter presupposes science as a fact, while the former does not assume anything beyond reason itself. However, Cohen believes that a closer look at the problem shows that psychology cannot guarantee certainty for the results of philosophical investigation. According to Cohen, cognitive consciousness and its operations remain inevitably hidden to this investigation, and any psychological analysis, even a nonempirical and transcendental one, may only determine the elements of consciousness *hypothetically*. Consciousness and its activity are not a possible subject of study for the theory of knowledge. Rather, Cohen maintains that cognitive consciousness only acquires in the *fact of scientific knowledge* that reality to which philosophical investigation may refer (Cohen 1883, 127). Therefore, the theory of knowledge can only be developed as an analysis of the *result* of the process of knowledge. Cohen calls the theory of knowledge thus understood “*critique of knowledge*” (*Erkenntniskritik*), to avoid confusion with any kind of psychology, either empirical or transcendental. In this critique of knowledge we find the limit that connects and, at the same time, differentiates Cohen’s and Kant’s positions:

Während Kant selbst aber noch mit psychologischen Vorstellungen und Zuthungen kämpft, so *objectivieren* wir in seinem Sinne, in dem Geist und

Buchstaben des kritischen Systems die *Vernunft in der Wissenschaft. Kritik der Vernunft* ist *Kritik der Erkenntniss* oder der Wissenschaft. Die Kritik entdeckt das *Reine* in der Vernunft, insofern sie die *Bedingungen der Gewissheit* entdeckt, auf denen die *Erkenntniss als Wissenschaft* beruht. (Cohen 1883, 6)

I.III. Subjectivity and Critique of Knowledge

In this way, according to Cohen, the critique of reason does not investigate our cognitive faculty. Such an investigation would be psychological at most but never logical. The critique should rather be understood as a critique of knowledge itself (Cohen 1918, 733). The subject of study of philosophy is science and not consciousness. In this sense, Cohen distinguishes between a transcendental and a metaphysical a priori. The first one designates a ground of knowledge, while the second one refers to an element of consciousness. With this distinction, Cohen contrasts with both the psychological (Fries, Herbart, Schopenhauer, Beneke) and the physiological (Helmholtz, Lange) interpretations of Kant's doctrine.

In Cohen's view, the pure intuitions of space and time and the categories are not forms of the spirit but methods of cognition (Cohen 1918, 743). In turn, the unity of consciousness is understood as the mere composition of these methods and not as the unity of the I. In this sense, Cohen argues:

So lange aber die Einheit des Bewusstseins nur persönlich gedacht wird, bleibt die ihr zugesprochene Objektivität unzulänglich, den Inhalt der Erfahrung zu entfalten, und der Schein und der Grund der Willkür und des spielenden Subjektivismus ist unvermeidlich. Es hilft nichts, dass das Ich als reines proklamiert und vom empirischen unterschieden wird; es bleibt wie *Hegel* von Kant und Fichte sagt: "psychologischer Idealismus." (Cohen 1918, 750)

The objective validity of science requires the unity of consciousness. But, according to Cohen, the unity of consciousness is just the unity of the principles that constitute the most general laws of nature. In this unity there is therefore nothing that can correspond to an individual subject. The unity of consciousness, now conceived as a unity of principles, finds its ultimate

expression in the supreme judgment according to which the conditions of possibility of experience are at the same time the conditions of possibility of the objects of experience (Cohen 1918, 753).

Based upon the transcendental method, Cohen puts forward a theory of consciousness according to which subjectivity is *nothing but* the system of conditions of scientific knowledge. Pure intuitions and categories are just logical conditions, and they do not have any independent or additional psychological meaning. Transcendental investigation does not reveal any peculiar structure of our cognitive apparatus but exclusively the system of conditions of empirical science. Thus, Cohen asserts:

Diesen Ausweis bringt erst eine transszendentale Methode, deren Prinzip und Norm der schlichte Gedanke ist: solche Elemente des Bewusstseins seien Elemente des erkennenden Bewusstseins, welche hinreichend und notwendig sind, das Faktum der Wissenschaft zu begründen und zu festigen. Die Bestimmtheit der apriorischen Elemente richtet sich also nach dieser ihrer Beziehung und Kompetenz für die durch sie zu begründenden Tatsachen der wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis. . . . Die Elemente des Bewusstseins müssen als Grundlagen der Wissenschaft wirksam sein, und die Voraussetzungen der Wissenschaft sind als Grundzüge des erkennenden Bewusstseins geltend zu machen. Das metaphysische *a priori* muss zum transzendental-*a priori* werden. (Cohen 1918, 108)

In this way, Cohen opposes any position arguing that cognitive consciousness conditions knowledge because such consciousness has a certain organization or structure. Rather, the argument is turned around: we will determine certain elements as elements of cognitive consciousness because they are conditions of knowledge, or, more precisely, of science: “Findet man z. B., dass der Begriff des Systems für die Wissenschaft notwendig, für dieselbe konstitutiv sei, so wird es notwendig sein, ein Element des Bewusstseins ausfindig zu machen, welches in seiner Allgemeinheit diesem Merkmal der Wissenschaft entspricht” (Cohen 1918, 108).

Because scientific knowledge is never complete but always under development and revision, the elements of consciousness will change accordingly. Cohen claims that the necessary thought of the progress of science has as its necessary presupposition the thought of the progress of pure cognitions (Cohen 1914, 396).

Therefore, cognitive consciousness does not have a fixed, rigid, and immutable structure, which a certain study of the metaphysical a priori (like the Kantian metaphysical expositions or deductions) may discover. On the contrary, the results of any investigation aimed at determining those elements in consciousness whose origin is independent of experience have just a relative and provisional value (Cohen 1918, 107). Nevertheless, it remains as a necessary hypothesis that there is consciousness, that is, that there are conditions of science. Otherwise, science would be the product of mere chance (Cohen 1918, 106).

Cognitive consciousness acquires in this way a completely functional sense, and any reference to a cognitive apparatus disappears. The subjectivity reached by the transcendental method is merely the system of the logical foundations of the product of thought: science. Subjectivity is nothing but the conditioning correlate of objectivity. In this way, this theory of subjectivity rejects, on the one hand, any doctrine that may argue for a cognitive subjectivity in itself, that is, a subjectivity that may be characterized independently of its being the logical foundation of science. On the other hand, it is clear that this subjectivity that grounds science cannot be taken for the concrete subjectivity of an *ego* that is not only the subject of knowledge but also the subject of error.⁷ Transcendental subjectivity is neither a metaphysical substance nor a psychological subject but rather only a logical function.

However, because this transcendental subjectivity has the paradoxical character of being a subjectivity without subject,⁸ once such a strict distinction between the logical conditions of knowledge and the concrete knowing subject has been established, it remains to be determined how any connection whatsoever between them can be built.⁹ Natorp aims at overcoming precisely this difficulty in Cohen's position.¹⁰

II. PAUL NATORP

III. "*Erlebnis*" and "*Erfahrung*"

Natorp emphasizes that knowledge involves not only the universal expressed by general and abstract theories but also the particular of immediate experience

(*Erleben*). In knowledge, the unity provided by the theory correlates with the multiplicity of the experienced (*Erlebte*) and the experienceable (*Erlebbar*) (Natorp 1913, 181–82). Philosophy should account for this correlation. However, a law or theory does not contain appearances in their fullness but rather only a mere “reduction” (Natorp 1913, 181) thereof. This separation between unity and multiplicity grows in the case of transcendental philosophy, for the latter deals with a very peculiar kind of law: the law of lawfulness in general. Transcendental philosophy exercises a second-order reduction (a “reduction of the reduction”) (Natorp 1913, 181), which takes us even further away from the immediately experienced (*Erlebte*). For this reason, the cognitive correlation between unity and multiplicity cannot be fully explained from this viewpoint. Natorp states: “indem man, mit vollem Grund und Recht, in methodisch verständlicher Einseitigkeit zunächst nur auf die Gesetzeseinheit losging, ließ man ihre Gegenseite, die unendliche Fülle des Mannigfaltigen, d. i. des Erlebten, zu sehr außer acht und verlor sie schließlich ganz aus den Augen” (Natorp 1913, 182).¹¹

But this should not lead us to reject the transcendental perspective altogether. The law of lawfulness in general is the rule according to which objectivity is *constructed*. Transcendental philosophy determines the conditions under which the subjectively experienced (*Erlebte*) becomes objective experience (*Erfahrung*). Thus, even though transcendental philosophy does not wholly explain the correlation between subject and object, it may be complemented by a doctrine that considers the immediate experience (*Erlebnis*) corresponding to objective experience (*Erfahrung*). Such doctrine would be a philosophical *psychology*, which Natorp calls *general* psychology. This nonempirical psychology should *reconstruct* the subjective elements correlating with objective experience, precisely by stepping back from our knowledge of objects, along the very path of that objectifying process that first enabled us to reach those objects. The investigation of general psychology would then describe the same path analyzed by transcendental philosophy, but in the opposite direction: not from the subjective to the objective, but from the objective to the subjective. It is only by means of this psychological complement to the logical investigation previously carried out that philosophy may finally achieve its goal of accounting for the correlation between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*:

Der eigentlichen Philosophie aber würde, in Erinnerung besonders an ihren Begründer, *Plato*, wohl die Doppelaufgabe des “Aufstiegs” und “Abstiegs,” nämlich 1. die transzendente Konstruktion, 2. die Rekonstruktion des Vollgehalts des Erlebbaren zuzuweisen sein, welche beiden Aufgaben sich nicht nur nicht widerstreiten, sondern schlechterdings zusammengehören, eine ohne die andere nicht nur unfruchtbar, sondern fürsich halb und in ihrer Halbheit haltlos, in sich selbst nicht konsistent wäre. (Natorp 1913, 184)

General psychology would therefore not only undoubtedly belong to philosophy, but it would moreover be the culmination of the proper task of philosophy.¹² However, psychology could not provide the ultimate foundations for philosophy. Rather, transcendental investigation would still bear a logical preeminence over general psychology, for the reconstruction to be carried out by the latter presupposes the construction whose lawfulness is established by the former.¹³ Neither general psychology nor transcendental philosophy could by itself constitute the whole of philosophy, but taken together they would nevertheless fully account for the problem of knowledge.¹⁴

Natorp’s idea of general psychology not only departs from Cohen’s views on subjectivity, but it also implies a different interpretation of Kant’s doctrine. In this sense, Natorp states: “Kants Verfahren der subjectiven Deduction [entspricht] sehr genau dem, was wir als die reconstructive Methode der Psychologie definirten, ja die letztere ist wirklich nichts Anderes als die Verallgemeinerung des thatsächlichen Vorgehens Kants in dem betreffenden Theile seiner Untersuchung” (Natorp 1888, 129).

While according to Cohen the Kantian transcendental conditions of experience (the pure intuitions of space and time and the categories) are *merely* methods of cognition, Natorp suggests that Kant does not neglect “die subjective *Bestätigung* der durch die objective Kritik herausgestellten Grundgestalt des wissenschaftlichen Bewusstseins” (Natorp 1888, 129). The reconstruction of objective knowledge should lead us to a double result. On the one hand, the reconstruction of the *empirical* object should account for the way in which such object is subjectively experienced. This will not be so much the task of an “empirical psychology” but of a “psychology of the empirical” (Natorp 1913, 200). On the other hand, the reconstruction of an object *in general* should

account for the way in which the pure logical conditions of empirical objectivity are present in the subject. In this case, this “philosophical psychology” should rather be called a “psychology of the philosophical” (Natorp 1913, 200). In contradistinction to Cohen’s reading of Kant, the doctrine of the subjective cognitive faculties on which the possibility of objective knowledge relies may now be retained as a useful preliminary step toward a proper interpretation of “sensation, representation and concept” (Natorp 1888, 129), which general psychology is to provide.

III. Correlative Monism

The explicit consideration of the problem of the concrete subject might arouse the suspicion that we are finally relapsing into a certain kind of subjectivism, which was precisely the type of unsatisfactory position to be avoided by adopting a transcendental viewpoint in the first place. Against this possible objection, Natorp points out that not only is there no object beyond, before, or outside cognition: there is no subject either (Natorp 1912a, 207–8). No subject is presupposed by transcendental investigation. Rather, the subjective (psychic) aspect of cognition is nothing but the appearance of the very object of natural science (Natorp 1913, 192). In other words, the “internal” *Erlebnis* and the “external” *Erfahrung* are not two different and independent elements that must somehow become connected in cognition. The internal, immediate experience and the external, mediate experience are just two moments (distinguishable only in reflection) of the single process of knowledge. Natorp calls this position *correlative monism*, thereby stressing the logical dependence of the *relata* (subject and object) upon their relation (cognition).

The opposition between the subjective and the objective in cognition is not absolute but only relative. There is no absolute objective cognition and, accordingly, no absolute subjective content of cognition. There are no ultimate immediate elements of cognition but just elements immediate only in relation to a certain object, that is, at a certain stage of knowledge.¹⁵ On this issue, Natorp asserts:

Daher ist es sehr verständlich, daß das, was man das “Unmittelbare” nennt, in der Regel höchstens vergleichsweise ein solches, in Wahrheit stets schon eine deutliche Objektivierung nur niederer Stufe ist. Farbe z. B. und Ton nennt man unmittelbar, Licht- und Luftschwingung mittelbar erfahren. Und doch ist “Farbe” oder “Rot” oder “Stufe n der Farbenreihe,” “Ton A” oder “Stufe n der Tonreihe” so gut Begriff, also Allgemeines, also dem letzt Empfundenen gegenüber Mittelbares, vergleichungsweise Objektives wie die Schwingungszahl; nur die Stufe der Verallgemeinerung und also Objektivierung ist eine andere. (Natorp 1913, 192)¹⁶

The dynamics of cognition are the clue to Natorp’s understanding of the relationship between *concrete* subjectivity and its object and between the concrete subject and the *transcendental* realm. As a critique of knowledge, philosophy establishes the system of all logical conditions governing experience. But Natorp does not consider experience merely as a fact. The fact of experience is rather a *feri* (Natorp 1912b, 200).¹⁷ The conditions of experience are thus expressions of the progressive development of the ultimate structure of thought, which Natorp calls “synthetic unity.” Transcendental logic investigates this dynamic *logos*, whose internal structure is deployed in a system of categories.¹⁸ Against Kant, Natorp claims that there is only one kind of condition of experience, namely, conditions of *thought*, and no sensible condition irreducible to the former. For this reason, Natorp’s doctrine is a monism and, more precisely, a monism of thought. To think is to establish relations, but the absolute character of thought implies that the *relata* cannot logically precede their relation, for in such case thought would be conditioned by them and would, therefore, not be absolute. Rather, to establish relations means to determine the *relata* from the very concept of their relation, so that their being *in general* is reduced to their being *in such relation*. The *relata* are not independent of the relation but only correlative moments of it. However, precisely for this reason, such monism does not exclude a certain internal dualism. Because to think is to establish relations, the duality of *relata* is thereby required. The dynamics of the *logos* is nothing but the progressive generation of *relata* from the concept of their relation:

Der allein haltbare Monismus, der der Erkenntnis selbst, hebt den allein haltbaren Dualismus, den der beiden zueinander korrelativen Wegerichtungen der Erkenntnis, der Richtung der Objektivierungen und der Subjektivierungen, nicht nur nicht auf, sondern schließt ihn unmittelbar ein; die Einheit der Erkenntnis besteht nur in dieser Korrelation und kraft ihrer. (Natorp 1912a, 105)

This justified dualism contained in Natorp's correlative monism is his answer to the problem of concrete subjectivity. While transcendental logic establishes the system of conditions of the *relation* of knowledge, concrete subjectivity is shown to be a moment of that relation, which correlates with its opposite: concrete objectivity. For every objective moment of knowledge, there is a correlative subjective one, and vice versa:

Somit ist überhaupt alles, was nur als Phänomen im Bewusstsein auftritt, auch Phänomen für die objektivierende Wissenschaft, in diesem Fall Naturwissenschaft. Eine Erscheinung, welche nicht als zu erklärendes, mithin auch beweisendes Moment zum objektiven Zusammenhange des Geschehens (zum Naturzusammenhange) gehörte und auf ihn zu beziehen wäre, gibt es so wenig, wie es eine Erscheinung gibt, die nicht Erscheinung für ein Bewusstsein wäre. (Natorp 1912a, 110)¹⁹

II.III. The Late Natorp

Even though correlative monism provides an account of concrete subjectivity from a transcendental viewpoint, Natorp considered that this theory was still in need of deeper foundations.²⁰ In accordance with the transcendental method, objectivity was given methodological priority over subjectivity, insofar as the latter could only be reached by means of a reconstruction from the former. But this means that the correlation between subjectivity and objectivity was not fully accounted for, because this would rather require explaining how both emerge simultaneously. In his 1922–23 lectures on philosophical systematics, Natorp criticizes his previous theses and argues as follows:

Aber die ganze äußere Scheidung von Objektivität und Subjektivität ist unhaltbar; haltbar darum auch nicht meine frühere Aufstellung, daß die Subjektivität aus einer vorgängig festehenden Objektivität erst zu rekonstruieren wäre. Sondern die Korrelativität beider muß in der ganzen Strenge verstanden werden, daß eine Objektivität ebenso nur zugleich in und mit der Subjektivität, wie diese in und mit jener logisch hervorgeht. (Natorp 1958, 383)

Natorp holds that because subjectivity and objectivity are just the two opposite directions in which the process of knowledge should be considered, a certain zero point may be indicated, regarding which the subjective and the objective are established, like the plus and minus directions of a line.²¹ This “Urpunkt” (Natorp 1958, 386) of the correlation between subjectivity and objectivity is precisely “das Erscheinen”:

Dieses [das Erscheinen] ist nun etwas sehr Wundersames, ja, das Wunder aller Wunder. Als Erscheinung, das heißt Aus-sich-heraustreten, ist es nicht mehr das, was darin erscheint, da es ja aus *sich* austritt; und doch ist Es selbst, *was* darin erscheint, und das heißt doch nicht sich verbirgt, sondern sich darstellt, sich offenbart. Dieser seltsame Doppelsinn liegt wesentlich im “Erscheinen.” Es *ist*, sage ich, es selbst, welches erscheint, und dieses wiederum nicht, denn es erscheint insoweit nur, ist es also *insofern* nicht. Damit ist aber ohne weiteres jene Zweiseitigkeit gegeben, welche die ganze Eigenheit der Subjekts- und Objektsbeziehung ausmacht, und es begründet, daß so wenig von einer Objektivität nicht für eine Subjektivität wie von einer Subjektivität nicht für eine Objektivität die Rede sein kann. (Natorp 1958, 387)

At first sight, this could be understood as a mere restatement of previous theses concerning the double character of appearance, like the one quoted above.²² But Natorp now underlines that it is the subject that, exerting her freedom, *expresses* herself and thereby *determines* the object as such. Objectification is nothing but self-expression of the subject (Natorp 1958, 394).²³ Thus, the priority given to objectivity by the transcendental method is abandoned, and subjectivity is no longer to be reached by reconstruction. From this new viewpoint, subject and object still stand in correlation, so that none

of these two *relata* can be isolated from their mutual relationship. However, the two opposite directions are not balanced, for subjectivity holds now a dominant position with regard to objectivity:

Subjektivität und Objektivität [verhalten] sich zueinander ganz anders, als (wie ich es früher dargestellt habe) die stets miteinander gehenden, zueinander korrelativen Beziehungen von A auf B und von B auf A. Wahr bleibt daran nur, daß beide stets nur miteinander bestehen und sich zueinander korrelativ verhalten. Aber dabei treten die beiden Seiten der Korrelation keineswegs auf gleiche Linie, so daß sie sich gleichschwebend und gleichgewichtig gegeneinander verhielten, oder das eine die Funktion des anderen, und ganz in Beziehung auf das andere, übernehmen könnte (etwa so wie ein A Fußpunkt der Bewegung oder sonstigen Beziehung auf ein B hin, aber ebensowohl umgekehrt dies B Fußpunkt einer Bewegung oder Beziehung gleicher Art auf das A hin sein kann); sondern die Stellung des einen bleibt unbedingt beherrschend, die des anderen beherrscht und nur dienend. (Natorp 1958, 393)

CONCLUSIONS

Neither Cohen nor Natorp conceived their debt to Kant as a debt regarding the content of their philosophy. Rather, they saw it as a debt concerning the form of their philosophizing. The Neo-Kantians emphasized that they did not accept any doctrine of critical philosophy dogmatically. Instead, they only adopted what they understood as the true Kantian legacy: the proper method of philosophy, that is, the *transcendental* method (Natorp 1912b, 194). But the application of this method led each of them to a different result concerning the problem of subjectivity. Cohen's emphasis on the object over the subject as the proper starting point of the regressive method was justified to avoid relapsing into any psychologistic position. The price to be paid was, however, that the problem of concrete subjectivity was left without a satisfactory explanation. Natorp also adopted the transcendental method, but the fact he set at the beginning of the transcendental investigation was itself *a fieri*. Accordingly, he understood cognition dynamically, as a movement *toward* objectivity, so that the conditions discovered by the transcendental method were not so much to be described as the conditions of *objectivity* but rather as the conditions of

objectification (*Objektivierung*). From this viewpoint, the consideration of the inverse process (i.e., the process of *subjectification* [*Subjektivierung*]) was a proper way of establishing a specific relationship between transcendental and concrete subjectivity. The transcendental lawfulness of the *logos* contains concrete subjectivity as one of the *relata* of the cognitive relation, which may be determined by means of the *reconstruction* of the fact of objective knowledge. In this way, Natorp was able to put forward a possible solution to a problem that remained unanswered by Cohen's doctrine. But this attempt was modified later. The methodological priority of the object, according to which the subject may only be reached by reconstruction, was called into question, because it did not enable a proper account of the correlation between the two moments of knowledge. As a result, for such correlation to be maintained, objectivity is finally made dependent on "the grace of the freedom of the subject" (Natorp 1958, 392, 394). Thus, the development of the problem of subjectivity draws a peculiar curve. Cohen stressed the objective character of the conditions of knowledge, thereby leaving the subject without a proper philosophical account. Natorp faced this problem and tried to show how such objective conditions may nevertheless be expressed subjectively. But, in his attempt to explain the correlation between subject and object, he ended up giving priority to the subjective over the objective moment of knowledge, thereby inverting Cohen's original position. With this last philosophical move, Natorp gave up the critical perspective based on the transcendental method and embraced the project of a speculative metaphysics that does not start from the fact of experience but rather tries to answer precisely this enigma, "das Wunder aller Wunder, dass überhaupt etwas 'ist'" (Natorp 1958, 22).²⁴



NOTES

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1. Not only will theoretical philosophy be carried out according to the transcendental method but practical philosophy as well.
2. Cohen (1877), 24–25.

3. To this Newtonian science belong not only mathematical physics but also other sciences, such as biology, which Cohen characterizes as descriptive sciences of nature.
4. “Das methodische Verfahren der Prolegomenen, vornehmlich derer die zu einer künftigen Metaphysik vorbereiten sollen, wird also analytisch sein” (Kant 1968, 275). As a matter of fact, the analytic method is applied only up to § 23.
5. A method that assumes a certain science as a fact to find the conditions of possibility of that fact.
6. In this connection, see also Natorp (1887) and Rickert (1909).
7. See Brelage (1965, 94ff.). See also Poma (1997, 61–64).
8. See Hartmann (1965, 160ff.) and Edel (1988, 271). Cohen argues that the thought that conditions science is valid “not as human thought” (Cohen 1914, 43).
9. For a discussion of the way in which Rickert deals with the problem of concrete subjectivity, see Krijnen (2001, 409–30).
10. On this aspect of the relationship between Natorp and Cohen, see Marx (1964) and Schmidt (1976, 109ff.).
11. “Wer in der Einseitigkeit des Aufstiegs zum Gesetz einmal befangen ist, dem verengt sich leicht der Begriff des ‘Bewußtseins’ zu dem des bloßen Einheitsbewußtseins, welches doch gar nicht im Vollsinn des Wortes Bewußtsein ist, vielmehr es von Stufe zu Stufe mehr zu entleeren und schließlich ganz zu verflüchtigen droht” (Natorp 1913, 183).
12. Even though Natorp’s project of a general psychology is deeply related to his discussion with Husserl’s phenomenology, we will not consider this issue here. See Natorp (1901; 1910; 1917). On the relationship between Natorp and Husserl, see Kern (1964), Luft (2006; 2010, 59–91), Ferrari (2011, 5–68), and, recently, Dahlstrom (2015, 240–60).
13. “Abhängig aber dem Erkenntnisgrunde nach ist (wie ich besonders in meinem letzten Buche zu begründen versucht habe) [*Allgemeine Psychologie nach der kritischen Methode*, HP] die Aufgabe der Rekonstruktion von der der Konstruktion, nicht umgekehrt” (Natorp 1913, 184).
14. “Psychologie nach diesem Begriff würde zur Philosophie unzweifelhaft gehören, ja ihren Gipfel, die letzte Erfüllung ihrer Aufgabe bedeuten, aber allerdings den Begriff der Philosophie nicht erschöpfen, auch nicht ihre Grundlage bilden; denn vielmehr bedarf sie als Grundlage der transzendentalen Konstruktion. Diese also wäre die grundlegende, jene die abschließende, die krönende Philosophie, während keine von beiden für sich, sondern nur beide zusammen *die* Philosophie darstellen würden” (Natorp 1913, 184–85). At this point, it should be underlined that for Natorp psychology has to investigate not only the subjective aspect of cognition but any other kind of objectification as well (i.e., ethical, aesthetic, and religious) (Natorp 1912a, 198). Natorp incorporates thereby a certain aspect of the Cohenian conception of psychology as the science of the unity of cultural consciousness, according to which psychology should deal with the articulation between scientific, ethical, and aesthetic consciousness, reflecting in this way the systematic interest of philosophy. See Cohen (1914, 17ff. and 609ff.). But while for Cohen psychology aims at a higher unity of the objects of nature, morality, and art, and *progresses* from them toward this unity, for Natorp psychology aims at the lower and immediate experience (*Erleben*) of those objects and

- regresses* to it from them. Kinkel criticizes Natorp's idea of psychology (especially the notion of *reconstruction*) from a Cohenian viewpoint (Kinkel 1923, 414).
15. Marck objects that "Natorps rekonstruktive Psychologie kann nur zum Mannigfaltigen der Einheit, nie zum absolut Mannigfaltigen, nur zu der Form Inhalt zurückführen, nie den Inhalt des Inhalts erreichen." But Natorp's point is precisely that absolute subjectivity is as unattainable as absolute objectivity. See Marck (1913, 384).
 16. Because of the procedural character of knowledge, what at a certain stage is an object of cognition turns later into subjective content, while what is content now was previously object. See Natorp (1912a, 208): "was auf einer Stufe 'Inhalt' geworden, war auf einer niederen 'Gegenstand,' was auf einer Stufe erst zu erkennender Gegenstand, wird auf einer höheren, als nunmehr erkannter, zum 'Inhalt,' der wieder auf einen ferneren, höher bin auf erst zu erkennenden 'Gegenstand' = X weist."
 17. On the importance of this difference, see Holzhey (1987, 137ff.).
 18. See Natorp (1910, 44–97).
 19. It is precisely because of this indissoluble correlation between the two moments of the *logos* that Natorp underlines that his transcendental idealism is not to be contrasted with empiricism, for it is rather its legitimate expression. The theory, far from erasing or annihilating appearances, saves them: "Würde nicht aus der Konstruktion des Kopernikus folgen, dass die Sonne für den auf der Erde befindlichen, die Bewegung seines Standorts nicht kennenden oder nicht berücksichtigenden Beobachter in 24 Stunden sich um die Sonne [Erde, HP] bewegend erscheinen muss, so könnte die Theorie nicht Geltung beanspruchen" (Natorp 1912a, 109).
 20. Oberer sees in Natorp's general psychology a preliminary attempt at dealing with the problem of concrete subjectivity, which gets a proper answer only in the *Nachlass* (Oberer 1969, 585). But Natorp's psychology does not seem to be correctly described as a mere "*vorsichtige Frühfassung*" of later developments, for at least two reasons. First, a positive conception of concrete subjectivity is already to be found here. Second, as we will see, Natorp's late theory of subjectivity contains a deep modification rather than a continuation of earlier theses. In this connection, Natorp states: "Nach dieser Seite bedarf meine frühere Darstellung des Verhältnisses von Objektivität und Subjektivität nicht bloß wesentlicher Ergänzung, sondern bis auf den Grund zurückgehender Berichtigung" (Natorp 1958, 395). See also Natorp (1923, 167).
 21. Accordingly, the correlation between subject and object is not properly represented by the single expression S-O, but we should rather use two expressions, each of them indicating the different directions regarding the point of indifference A (appearance): S-A (subjectivity) and A-O (objectivity). For a critical account of Natorp's position, see Cramer (1988, 310ff.)
 22. "Eine Erscheinung, welche nicht als zu erklärendes, mithin auch beweisendes Moment zum objektiven Zusammenhange des Geschehens (zum Naturzusammenhange) gehörte und auf ihn zu beziehen wäre, gibt es so wenig, wie es eine Erscheinung gibt, die nicht Erscheinung für ein Bewusstsein wäre" (Natorp 1912a, 110).

23. Natorp (1958, 394). A detailed discussion of this late theory goes beyond the scope of this paper. For this issue, see Stolzenberg (1995, 207ff.).
24. On this issue, see Wetz (1993).

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