

The origin of Hayek's spontaneous order

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This paper attempts to show that Hayek's idea of spontaneous order can be traced back to his earliest 1920 work on psychology. It was, unpublished, entitled "*Beiträge zur Theorie der Entwicklung des Bewußtseins*" (housed in the Hayek papers at the Hoover Institution, Stanford). Of course, there is no direct term equivalent to spontaneous order, but he three times underlined the idea with the term 'emergence (*Entstehung*)' of patters of connections (*Verbindungen*) of neurons or physiological elements (7, 8, 9). As Paul Lewis already pointed out, the term "emergence" appeared only once in Hayek's published work, viz. in his 1964 paper on 'The Theory of Complex Phenomena' (Hayek [1964] 1967: 26: "The emergence of new patterns as a result of the increase in the number of elements between which simple relations exist, means that this larger structure as a whole will possess certain general or abstract features which will recur independently of the particular values of the individual data"). Following Lewis's remarkable emphasis on the importance of Hayek's idea 'emergence' (Paul Lewis 2011), my paper would add a historiographical information that Hayek's emergence had already emerged long before his 1952 book, *The Sensory Order*, especially in the earliest essay by Hayek.

Some interpretations will be given: (1) it is not Othmar Spann's Universalism from which Hayek could get the inspiration for the idea of spontaneous order, although Hayek supported Universalism in his dissertation "*Zur Problemstellung der Zurechnungslehre*", supervised by Spann in 1923 at the law and state-science Faculty of Vienna University.

(2) In critically reading and evaluating the idea of the origin of money in Carl Menger's *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre*, Hayek had already had his own spontaneous-order oriented view from his psychological and physiological consideration. For Hayek, the idea of spontaneous order was an application of his own study in other sciences (psychology and physiology) than economics in the early 1920s.

(3) Hayek can be seen as a late-blooming returner to the philosophy of Cambridge moral sciences before 1903, when Alfred Marshall freed the subject "Economics" from moral-science tripos including "Mental Philosophy" or later "Psychology". It must be remarkable that one can notice Hayek siding with Keynes's suggestion to Roy Harrod on 4 July 1938 that economics is essentially a moral sciences. (CWJMK vol. 14 p.297)