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Overcoming Psychologism: Twardowski on Actions and Products

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This paper is about the topic of psychologism in the work of Kazimierz Twardowski and my aim is to revisit this important issue in light of recent publications from Twardowski and on his works.¹ Twardowski's effort to overcome psychologism constitutes one of the driving forces of his thought (see Schaar 2016, 87) and it is the main topic of a talk that he delivered in the Philosophical Society at the University of Vienna in 1914 under the title “Funktionen und Gebilde” and better known by the English version: “Actions and Products. Some Remarks from the Borderline of Psychology, Grammar and Logic” (Twardowski 1999b). This is confirmed by Roman Ingarden in his classical paper on Twardowski in which he points out that the true meaning of this writing lies in the problem of psychologism (Ingarden 1948, 28–29). According to Ingarden, Twardowski's solution to the problem of psychologism rests precisely on the distinction between action and product. I propose to

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follow the path suggested by Ingarden and to carefully examine Twardowski's "Actions and Products" and his way out of psychologism.

1 The Genesis of Psychologism in the Young Twardowski's Work

Twardowski's autobiography provides insights into the genesis of his treatment of the problem of psychologism in his early work and the impact of Husserl's criticism in his *Logical Investigations*. Twardowski points out that his initial position on that issue was that of Brentano, a position which he also attributes to Marty, and that merely consisted in conceiving of psychology as the 'fundamental philosophical science' (*die philosophische Grundwissenschaft*). This is the position he explicitly advocated in "Psychology vs. Physiology and Philosophy" and implicitly in his earlier works, especially in his 1894 book *On the Content and Object of Presentations*. However, unlike Brentano who never took seriously Husserl's objections, Twardowski seems to recognise that it was Husserl's objections against logical psychologism which forced him to abandon what he considered his own psychologism. The most substantial writing in which Twardowski argues against psychologism dates back from his 1908–1909 lectures "Psychology of thinking" in which he examines three arguments against logical psychologism, including the one based on the distinction between functions and products, which he systematically works out in "Actions and Products".

Let's first have a quick look at Twardowski's paper "Psychology vs. Physiology and Philosophy" in which, according to his intellectual autobiography, he advocates a form of psychologism. The kind of psychologism that he opposes to what he calls 'metaphysicism' in § 7 of this paper boils down to the idea that psychology acquires the status of first philosophy, i.e. becomes the cornerstone of philosophy as a whole. He criticises the Neokantian philosophers from Bode, namely Wilhelm Windelband, because of the sharp division they maintain between psychology and philosophy, and because they assimilate psychology to natural sciences. He sees in descriptive psychology a form of reaction to 'metaphysicism', i.e.

metaphysics as first philosophy in the traditional sense of the term (Twardowski 1999e, 57). Accordingly, the revolution that occurred in philosophy in the study of psychology as of ethics and aesthetics, for example, consists in the way of conceiving and approaching the subject matter of these disciplines. One can think of the definition of psychology as a science of the soul which Brentano criticises at the very beginning of his *Psychology* (Brentano 1995, 2 f.) and which he opposes to psychology understood as a science of mental phenomena whose task primarily consists in the analysis and description of thought and conscious experience in general. Twardowski justifies the privileged philosophical status granted to descriptive psychology by emphasising the role of internal experience as a source of our knowledge of psychical life and because it provides its method and subject matter to philosophy (Twardowski 1999a, 59). Worth mentioning is Twardowski's reference to Stumpf's article 'Psychology and Theory of Knowledge' (Stumpf 1891) which represents the first systematic study on the topic of psychologism and which has been instrumental in Husserl's views on psychologism in *Prolegomena to pure logic* (see Fissette 2015a). We shall see that Twardowski's own definition of psychologism is not foreign to that of Stumpf (see Stumpf 1891, 468–469).

2 Twardowski's Picture Theory of Meaning and Husserl's Criticism in the *Logical Investigations*

In his autobiography, Twardowski recognises the major influence he received from Husserl's criticism in *Logical Investigations*, but he was unaware of the existence of Husserl's earlier writings in which he examines critically Twardowski's *On the Content and Object of Presentations*. The first is the well-known manuscript "Intentionale Gegenstände" written in 1894 in response to his reception of Twardowski's work (Husserl 1990–1991); the second piece is Husserl's review of Twardowski's book which has been posthumously published (Husserl 1994a; see Cavallin 1997; Fissette 2003). The two main objections which are of particular

interest for this study relate to Twardowski's theory of intentionality and his psychologizing conception of meaning and intentional content. These two objections are clearly formulated in § 45 of the fifth *Investigation* entitled "The Presentational Content" in which Husserl criticises Twardowski for not distinguishing, within the content of an act, logical meaning (intentional content of a judgement) and sensory content (i.e. sensations and images) (Husserl 1982b, 175; 1994a, 389). Husserl's main target is Twardowski's notion of content understood in his *Hauptwerk* as a picture, and Twardowski uses the case of painting (*Bild*) to illustrate the way in which the content and object of an act are articulated:

As is well known, one says that the painter paints a picture [*Bild*], but also that he paints a landscape. One and the same activity of the painter is directed toward two objects; the result of the activity is only one. After the painter has finished the painting of the picture and of the landscape, respectively, he has before him a painted picture as well as a painted landscape. The picture is painted; it is neither engraved, nor etched, etc.; it is a painted, real picture. The landscape, too, is painted, but it is not a real landscape, only a 'painted one'. The painted picture and the painted landscape are in truth only one; for the picture depicts a landscape, hence it is a painted landscape; the painted landscape is a picture [*Bild*] of the landscape. (Twardowski 1977, 12)

In order to explain the dual meaning of the word 'painted' in this excerpt both as an external object and as an internal content (or object), Twardowski uses the distinction between modifying and attributive determination which he generally applies to the meaning of a term, for example, to the meaning of 'man' in a 'good' man, which is attributive, whereas the determination 'dead' is modifying in the expression 'a dead man' (see Haller 1982, xiii). Thus, the word 'painted' has an attributive meaning when it is applied to the painting (to distinguish it from an engraving, for example), and it has a modifying meaning when applied to a landscape because, of course, the painted landscape is not itself a landscape but precisely a picture or an image (Twardowski 1977, 13). As far as the articulation between the act, its content, and its object is concerned, Twardowski (1977, 16) claims that the painter is conscious of

both the landscape, as a transcendent object, and the painting as an internal object (Twardowski 1977, 14). The painting, like the content or the image, is the means by which the transcendent object, the landscape, is presented. This is apparently its primary function. But the painter could turn his attention toward the painted landscape and thus adopt a ‘modified’ attitude toward the content, and he would then have a secondary object before his mind. To quote Twardowski’s elegant formulation:

We shall say of the content that it is thought, presented, *in* the presentation; we shall say of the object that it is presented *through* the content of the presentation (or through the presentation). What is presented in a presentation is its content; what is presented *through* a presentation is its object. (Twardowski 1977, 16)

In other words, the content has a mediating function between the act of presenting and the object presented, it is the medium through which an object is presented.

Husserl’s main criticism of Twardowski in *Logical Investigations*, in addition to Twardowski’s theory of intentionality, pertains to the dual direction of an act, both toward its own content and toward an object. For Twardowski, when one thinks of a landscape, one has two objects before the mind, the real landscape and the mere picture. By recognising that a thought is primarily in contact with transcendent objects and indirectly with one’s own presentations, Twardowski takes a first step towards the overcoming of an immanentist theory of intentionality à la Brentano. But in arguing that one can think of these transcendent objects only by means of immanent internal objects, he keeps a foot firmly anchored in Brentano’s early theory of intentionality.

3 Twardowski’s Self-Criticism in his Lectures on the Psychology of Thinking

Twardowski’s first public reaction to the objection of psychologism seems to occur in his lectures on the psychology of thinking (Twardowski 2014b, 134–136) in which logic is defined as ‘the science of correct

thinking', and thus as 'a component of psychology' (Twardowski 2014b, 134). Twardowski explains why this position must be rejected and provides three arguments against it. The first, which he only mentions in these lectures, is that logic 'emerged and developed independently from psychology' (Twardowski 2014b, 134). The second argument, which has also been formulated both by Stumpf (1891, 499–500) and Husserl (1982a, 40 f.), is that the laws of psychology are mere 'generalizations of experiential data in empirical sciences' and are therefore only probable; on the other hand, scientific and logical laws are 'apodictic and independent from experience, logic being an *a priori* science' (Twardowski 2014b, 135). Now, since the laws of logic thus understood cannot be based on mere empirical generalisations and probable statements of an empirical science such as psychology, logic cannot therefore be based on psychology. Twardowski's third argument rests on the distinction between mental function (thinking) and its content (thought). This argument is nicely summarised in this excerpt:

This is because the object of logic is thought, not thinking; not a mental function but rather its product. [...] The difference between thinking and its product is very clear when, among other things, one considers the relationship of both of them to speech; for instance, the meaning of the word 'the Sun' is identical with the thought of the Sun; making present or realizing the meaning of the word 'the Sun' is identical with thinking of the Sun to oneself. [...] These are mental facts, whereas a thought, a conviction, or a judgment is a product of these facts. (Twardowski 2014b, 135–136)

To this distinction between function and product corresponds that between the field of psychology, i.e. thinking in general, and that of logic and the remaining philosophical sciences, i.e. products (Twardowski 2014b, 136). This last argument is further worked out in "Actions and products" which I shall now examine.

4 Preliminary Remarks on “Actions und Products”

In “Actions and products”, Twardowski resumes his discussion on the content and object of presentations where he left it in 1894, and his main purpose in this study is to revisit in depth the notion of content in light of the notion of *Gebilde* (product). Unlike his 1894 work in which his analysis focused more specifically on the relationship between content and object of presentations, this study pertains to an act’s relation to its content, i.e. the correlation between functions and their products. However, Twardowski’s analysis in this important paper is not limited to mental phenomena and psychology. The originality of Twardowski’s study consists among other things in extending the function-product correlation to the field of physical and psychophysical phenomena and to language in general. Like most of Brentano’s students, he proposes a new classification of functions and products which, while preserving the hierarchy between the classes of functions and mental products, emphasises what he calls the class of physical and psychophysical functions and products which he examines in the second part of this study. Moreover, according to Twardowski’s indications in § 10 regarding the historical origins of this distinction between functions and products, these concepts are to be understood in the sense that Stumpf uses them in his two 1906 Academy treatises (Stumpf 1906a, b). True, Twardowski associates this distinction with several other philosophers, but careful examination shows that only Stumpf offers a thorough analysis of this distinction, and for the reasons that I mentioned above, it makes no doubt that he is Twardowski’s major source of inspiration in this writing.

In “Phenomena and Psychological Functions”, Stumpf argues that mental functions and sensory phenomena, though intimately linked (they can only be distinguished by abstraction), are irreducible to one another and belong to distinct domains. The notion of mental function corresponds to that of act or mental phenomenon, the study of which belongs to descriptive psychology understood in the narrow sense of the science of the psychological functions, while the other elements involved in the accomplishment of an intentional act, from sense perception to voluntary

actions, namely sensory phenomena, intentional content and relations, all belong to different domains and neutral sciences. This is particularly the case of *Gebilde*, which Stumpf defines as the necessary correlates of psychical functions (1906a, 28 f.) and which he conceives of as the specific contents of each classes and subclasses of mental functions. To designate the specific content or *Gebilde* of the functions belonging to the class of judgements, Stumpf uses the concept of state of affairs which is expressed linguistically in ‘subordinate clauses’ (*daß-Sätzen*) or in the form of ‘substantivised infinitive’. *Gebilde* also occur both in intellectual and emotional functions, and in the latter case, it is conceived as a value. The study of *Gebilde* belongs to this new ‘neutral’ science that he called ‘eidology’ (Stumpf 1906b, 32 f.) and it is closely related to Husserl’s pure logic in the *Prolegomena*.

5 Overview of Twardowski’s “Actions and Products”

Twardowski’s paper is divided into three parts. In the first part (§§ 1–9), he examines the distinction between function and product through the grammatical distinction between verb and noun like, for example: walking-walk, running-run, jumping-jump, speaking-speech, thinking-thought, judging-judgement, etc. In his analysis of the verbal forms of the type presenting-presentation and judging-judgement, he points out that, in most cases, the verb stands for an activity, a process, or more generally for a function. It marks the dynamic moment of the function while the corresponding name has a static moment. In terms of the grammatical form, the substantive is similar to what Twardowski calls the *figura etymologica* according to which the judged or represented names are the internal objects of the judging or presenting (Twardowski 2017b, 189). All substantives that are formed on the same root as the corresponding verb are internal objects. Moreover, there is a close relationship between the grammarians’ *figura etymologica* and the notion of correlation, for example that between the act of perceiving and the perceived, by which the intentionality of psychical experiences is generally

characterised. In this work, Twardowski again uses the distinction between internal and external object by which he meant the immanent content and the transcendent object of an act of presentation. Moreover, this paper confirms that he still maintains the idea of a dual direction of an act which is in no way affected by the modifications brought about to the concept of immanent content through the introduction of that of product (Twardowski 2017b, 176). The notion of '*geurteilt*' (judged) that he uses in this context refers to the content of an act of judgement that belongs to a class of products that he examines in the other two parts of the paper. This internal object is the result of an act or 'that which arises owing to, as the result of some action, i.e. by means of that action' (Twardowski 1999b, 108), and this something is also named a product to indicate that these contents are realised thanks to an act on which they depend and to designate the very process at the origin of the formation of these contents.

The second part of the text bears on the classification of functions and products. Twardowski (2017b, 191) proposes in fact a dual classification: the first is based on Brentano's distinction between physical and psychical phenomena which is applied both to functions and products. In the class of products and physical functions, he further distinguishes those which are purely physical from those which are psychophysical. The second classification only applies to products and it distinguishes the class of enduring from that of non-enduring products. Twardowski maintains that this function-formation correlation can be found in all cases, such as walking, running, or jumping, which involve a physical activity, i.e. in this case, a bodily movement of the agent. Hence the use of the terms 'action' and 'product' to designate, on the one hand, the action of running, walking and jumping, and, on the other hand, the product of these actions, i.e. the run, walk, and jump.

Gebilde or products and physical functions are further distinguished into those which are purely physical and those which are psychophysical. For example, the pair crying-cry belongs to the class of purely physical functions and products when it is a bodily movement, i.e. a mere mechanical reflex, a non-voluntary, or non-intentional movement. But in this case, we are not dealing with an action as such, i.e. an intentional behavior. On the other hand, psychophysical functions and products are

characterised by their relation to psychical functions (Twardowski 1999b, 109). We shall see that all actions, such as crying or writing, speaking or painting, express something, for example an emotion, which are not to be confused with their meaning proper.

The second classification, though simpler, is just as important as the first one for Twardowski's project in this study. It only bears on products and concerns, at first sight, the (temporal) relationship that these maintain with psychical or physical functions. It is based on the distinction between enduring and non-enduring products. A psychophysical product like a cry belongs to the class of non-enduring formations because the duration of its existence coincides with that of the act that produces it. On the other hand, enduring products such as writing and painting, are products that last longer than their functions because a function like writing, unlike the verb crying, has in addition to an internal object, like the writing, an external object that serves as a support or material that exists independently of this function (Twardowski 2017b, 177).

Moreover, Twardowski distinguishes internal objects, to which mental functions relate, from external objects such as the painter's canvas and his instruments, which are prior to the formations and serve as material or support for the products, such as a painting, and which thus enable it to persist through time. This is the case of both a footprint left in the sand and a drawing on a sheet of paper, the latter being a psychophysical product which also presupposes a psychical function and a transcendent object (the presented landscape). Moreover, enduring products as such are distinguished from materials developed through the use of functions in that they constitute the configurations and groupings that result from the processing or the work of the function. In the third section, he evaluates the possible 'crossover' of the elements of these two classifications, in particular that of the class of enduring products with the subclass of psychophysical functions and products.

In addition to the taxonomic issues which occupy much of this last section, one of Twardowski's major concerns is the status of these products, which have a longer duration than the functions that produce them or the temporary products that are fixed by technical means. In § 39, Twardowski first distinguishes what a product expresses from what it means. A cry can express pain just as a work of art necessarily expresses

the artist's sentiments. But the meaning of such psychophysical products is not exhausted in the expression of emotions or feelings, for in addition to expressing, products mean something, and their meaning is comparable to what Stumpf calls 'invariants of *Gebilde*' (Twardowski 2017b, 184; 1999b, 127). Twardowski refers, in this context, to the beginning of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* where he uses the notion of ideal meaning, and argues that the meaning thus understood is not something transcendent with respect to psychical functions, something that belongs to a third world, but an *abstractum* resulting from a concept formation process that operates on the very content of functions (Twardowski 2017b, 185, § 39). As a product, meaning forms a concrete whole with the function that actualises it and thus maintains a unilateral dependency relation with it. It cannot exist anywhere else than in the intellect that produced it.

But we saw that Twardowski does not dispute the objective nature of the *Gebilde*/product in the field of logic and more generally in the field of the moral sciences. But he maintains that the products' emancipation from their original functions and from psychology in general, and their independence with respect to functions, shall not to be understood as one form or another of Platonism. That is why he proposes an explanation of how a psychical product acquires its relative independence with respect to functions. The best example lies in substitutive products, i.e. products which do not emerge straightforwardly from their correlative functions, but by other artificial means. For example, a logical proposition deprived from its assertive force or, as he says, as a product that would simply be presented in the absence of the judgement's function (or a 'represented judgement' in quotation marks), is considered a non-natural product or an 'artifact'. This is how he conceives of Bolzano's *Sätze an sich* as judgements considered independently from the act of judging (Twardowski 2017b, 187; 2014b, 135–136). Propositions are 'hypostasised mental products', conferring on them some sort of peculiar being, as if they were something that exists beyond the mind in which they originate' (Twardowski 1999c, 136).

6 Psychologism and the Delineation of Psychology and the Humanities

Let us now return to psychologism which is the subject matter of the last section of Twardowski's paper and which is further worked out in an article entitled "The Humanities and Psychology". These two writings seem to corroborate Twardowski's remark in his autobiography according to which the form of psychologism that he advocated before the publication of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and which he now tries to overcome pertains to the delineation of the field of psychology and that of the humanities, including logic, rather than to the problem of the ontological status of laws and propositions (Twardowski 1999d, 31). This is also his main argument in his lectures on the psychology of thinking in which the delimitation of these two domains corresponded rigorously to the distinction between mental functions, understood as the proper object of psychology, and logic whose objects of study are propositions understood as products or specific contents of judgement. Let's examine more closely Twardowski's argumentation.

In the last section of "Actions and Products" (§ 45), Twardowski again addresses the issue of psychologism in emphasising this time the more general topic of the relationship between psychology and the humanities. He challenges Stumpf's position in his treatise 'On the classification of sciences' according to which the subject matter of the humanities are complex psychical *functions*. Against Stumpf, Twardowski proposes to repatriate Brentano's three main normative philosophical sciences, i.e. logic, aesthetics and ethics, into the domain of the *Geisteswissenschaften* by entrusting each of these philosophical disciplines with the study of their respective *products* rather than functions. Twardowski claims that the objects of the humanities are not only products of the human mind (i.e. products of psychical functions as such) but also psychophysical products such as 'various organizations of communal life, and even the very expression of human speech' which are psychophysical products just like jumping or singing (Twardowski 1999d, 136). It also provides important details on the subject matter of descriptive psychology and its delineation with respect to the other human sciences. For contrary to

what the 1914 paper might suggest, psychology deals not only with psychical functions but also with products of the human mind, i.e. mental products, whereas the subject matter of all the other philosophical sciences are merely psychophysical products. Twardowski argues that the latter abstract from this factual connection of mental products with mental functions which produce them, and treat these products independently of mental life, 'in which alone they can truly exist' (Twardowski 1999d, 136). Hence the definition of the *Geisteswissenschaften* 'as the sciences whose objects [of study] are either mental products, considered independently of the mental functions that produce them, or psychophysical products, considered as such' (Twardowski 1999c, 139).

However, descriptive psychology remains a fundamental science among the main philosophical sciences and the humanities in general insofar as it is indispensable to explain the genesis of the mental and psychophysical products which depend in turn on psychical acts or functions. But they remain distinct from psychology which studies the primary psychical functions and its founding role for the humanities. This division of labor and this classification make it possible, according to Twardowski, to definitively dismiss the objection of psychologism (Twardowski 2017b, 188).

7 Final Remarks

To conclude, I would like to briefly assess the relevance of this solution to the problem of psychologism based on the function-product distinction and a sharper delineation of psychology with respect to logic and humanities. Several commentators such as Cavallin (1997) in his classical book on Twardowski, seem to be sceptical when they use the distinction between methodological and ontological psychologism to explain the evolution of Twardowski's thought on that issue (see Woleński 1989; Schaar 2016, 61). Methodological psychologism is understood as the use of the methods of psychology in philosophy, perhaps introspection but most certainly the analysis and description of mental phenomena, whereas ontological psychologism consists in the claim that 'objects of a certain type (e.g. values, meanings, judgements) are mental (psychical)

objects, and the sciences which deal with them (axiology and logic respectively) are parts of psychology' (Cavallin 1997, 41). Cavallin, for instance, argues that Twardowski advocated these two forms of psychologism before 1902, but after the publication of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, he would have abandoned ontological psychologism while preserving methodological psychologism.

The question then arises whether the importance granted to descriptive psychology in "Actions and Products" commits Twardowski to something like methodological psychologism. I doubt it, and I am rather of Stumpf's opinion that despite the importance of descriptive psychology in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, for example, he was certainly not targeted by his own criticism. I agree with Stumpf's claim in "On the classification of sciences" that the form of psychologism targeted by Husserl only concerns ultimately the relationship between pure logic, understood as a *Wissenschaftslehre*, and genetic psychology, but not descriptive psychology as such (Stumpf 1906a, 200). Stumpf's interpretation seems to be corroborated by Husserl's remarks in the discussion he had with Brentano in Florence in 1907 and in the correspondence thereupon, which focused on logical psychologism (see Husserl 1994b, I, 26). Husserl explained to Brentano the distinction, in the *Prolegomena*, between two aspects of logic: logic understood as a *Kunstlehre* or practical discipline, and logic understood as a theoretical discipline, i.e. as a theory of science and pure logic. In response to Brentano's apprehensions, Husserl clearly reminds him that to base logic understood as a *Kunstlehre* on psychology is not psychologism. However, as far as this conception of logic is attributable to Brentano and most of his students, including Twardowski, he is not directly targeted by this criticism. For the form of psychologism described by Husserl in his correspondence with Brentano is simply the 'overestimation of psychology as an alleged fundamental discipline for the whole of philosophy, and therefore also for pure logic and the theory of knowledge' (1994b, 27). This is what Husserl reminds Brentano in this correspondence and during their discussions in Florence in 1907, discussions which obviously did not convince Brentano (Brentano 1995, 238).

Many philosophers and psychologists have reacted just like Brentano, who seems to have understood this objection as an all-out criticism of psychology. Husserl was therefore misunderstood when he said, in the

Prolegomena, that he used the term psychologism in a sense entirely devoid of any pejorative colour. Among Brentano's students, only Twardowski and Stumpf (see Fissette 2015b) seem to have correctly understood the very meaning of this objection and especially its bearing on descriptive psychology.

There is therefore no need to worry about the supposed tensions that exist between Husserl's arguments against psychologism and the place assigned to descriptive psychology in the philosophy of Brentano and his successors, provided that psychologism is only attributable to the foundation of logic on genetic or physiological psychology. For no student of Brentano, starting with Twardowski, has subscribed to this form of psychologism. However, the question remains whether Twardowski succeeded in overcoming *logical* psychologism in his paper "Actions and products" given the dependence that he maintains between products and the function of judgement. For this dependence between the propositional content of a judgement and the function of judging seems to be the target of Twardowski's argument against psychologism in his lectures on the psychology of thinking according to which scientific and logical laws are 'apodictic and independent from experience, logic being an *a priori* science' (Twardowski 2014b, 135; see Schaar, 2016, 160 f.). This is another way of formulating Ingarden's question whether Twardowski succeeded in finding his way between the Scylla of psychologism and the Charybdis of Platonism. This question still remains open.

Note

1. Twardowski 2017a; 2016; 2014a; Meinong and Twardowski 2016; Schaar 2016; Brożek et al. 2015.

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