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EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN LVOV. BETWEEN CLANDESTINE LABORATORY AND PSYCHOLOGY WITHOUT TOOLS

1. Introduction

In 1946, while proofreading a manuscript on Polish logicians for Bocheński, Łukasiewicz suggested the deletion of the sentence where Bocheński said that Twardowski “fought psychologism.”

Łukasiewicz is not the only one to believe Twardowski never truly abandoned psychologism. The truth is that a kind of “embarrassed” and “prudish” silence accompanies the successive generations of disciples, something like an original sin, unatoned and unforgiven, tarnishing the great master of Lvov: the suspicion of psychologism.

The cataclysm of the Second World War, the lengthy disgrace into which Leopoldian philosophy fell, and the sparsity of Twardowski’s own publications, are all certainly responsible for the general ignorance of his original philosophical theories which is the case at the dawn of the 21st century. Twardowski himself says in his Selbstdarstellung, that it is principally in his classes that he spread his ideas. However, it is only since very recently that these classes have been widely accessible thanks to the e-LV Digital Archives (http://www.elv-akt.net/).

I am certain that a revival of Twardowskian studies is on the way. For one thing, the theory of actions and products (1911 – APT) is already

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piquing the interest of the most zealous linguists\(^3\) and even internationally recognized philosophers such as John Searle.\(^4\) For another thing, Twardowski’s theoretical psychology\(^5\) is gaining great visibility from the success of the cognitive sciences and an important historical work done by A. Brożek.\(^6\) Finally, the digital revolution in the sciences leans on ontological questions related to the objectivities of science, the digital representation of its sources, and there again, Twardowski’s APT theory is surprisingly rich in resources.

In the scholarly world still marked by the rejection of psychologism in logic, some by Frege, some by Husserl, the misunderstanding of the idea of Twardowski’s “theoretical psychology” nevertheless remains, for the moment, at the center of the ambiguous reception, if not to say flat out ignorance, surrounding Twardowski’s original philosophical ideas.

We shall not here lay out the doctrinal context of the Leopoldians abandonment of psychologism. We have already dedicated several publications to this subject. Rather, we shall here make use of the historical reconstruction of the Leopoldian laboratory of experimental psychology in order to bring to light some essential aspects of the Twardowskian conception of psychology as philosophical science.

2. The History of the Psychology Lab at Lvov

In an important article subtitled “On Psychology, Its Object, Its Tasks, Its Method, Its Relationship with the Other Sciences, and Its Evolution” (1913b), which appeared in Pedagogical Encyclopedia, Twardowski\(^7\) affirms that he taught experimental psychology in Lvov from the winter semester of 1898/1899 onwards (a class called, “On optical illusions, with illustrations”\(^8\)) and that he had founded the first psychology laboratory in Poland at the Jan Kazimierz University of Lvov, in 1901. This date is

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\(^3\) Cf. Recent work by Friederike Moltmann.


\(^5\) We use the term “theoretical psychology” as an analogue of “theoretical physics” in the sense of Paul Duhem in La théorie physique, son objet et sa structure. The expression “Theoretical psycholohy,” “theoretische Psychologie” was used for the first tile by J. Lindworsky in 1926: Theoretische Psychologie im Umris. Lindworski was a student of O. Kölpe and was close to the school of Würzburg.

\(^6\) Brożek (2011).

\(^7\) Twardowski (1913a).

\(^8\) Twardowski (1898).