**France – Berkeley Fund Project 2014/15**

**The Distinction between Actions and Products and its Importance for Social Ontology and Speech Act Theory**

**Project leaders:**

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**Description of the Research Topic**

Social reality consists of objects constituted, at least in part, by the intentionality of agents. It is the intentionality of agents that conveys objects with functions, representational properties, truth or satisfaction conditions, and normativity. This is a central theme in the work of John Searle on social reality. The central question we will pursue in this project is how it is that an intentional act or state can be constitutive of an object, a carrier of representational or normative properties, and more in particular, what does the distinction between an act and the cultural object it produces consist in if, as it may be, the product is not physically realized (as possibly a poem, a personal rule, a musical composition or an electronic file).

We will pursue this question by taking into account both some important historical work from early analytic philosophy and a more linguistic methodology which explores how relevant distinctions are reflected in natural language. The central piece of work for the project is a highly important, but in contemporary analytic philosophy largely neglected paper ‘On Actions and Products’ that the Polish philosopher Twardowski (1866-1938) published in 1912.

In ‘On Actions and Products’, Twardowski distinguishes between an action such as an act of claiming, an act of thinking or an act of judging and its product, namely a claim, a thought, or a judgment. Crucially, products need not be physically realized, in which case, they last only as long as the action that ‘sustains’ it. The distinction between actions and products for Twardowski was both a distinction reflected in natural languages (in particular in two types of nominalizations in German, Polish, and French) and a distinction playing a fundamental role in many areas of philosophy. Most importantly products but not actions may carry truth conditions or satisfaction conditions and relevant normative properties and enter similarity relations based on being the same in content. Products also play the role of propositions, though as ‘products’ of attitudes, not their contents of objects. Laws, rules, and norms are products exhibiting the same characteristic properties as ‘claims’ or ‘judgments’. The distinction between actions and products also includes the distinction between acts of artistic creation and their products, the works of art, and, as one may add, the distinction between creating an electronic file and the file itself (Miskiewics 2014).

Twardowski’s article and the distinction between actions and products had great importance in in early analytic Polish philosophy. It is central also for example in Ingarden’s (1931) work on aesthetics. However, it is hardly known in contemporary analytic philosophy as is the case for related work within the Lvov-Warsaw school.

Twardowski’s article is also an inspiration for more linguistic work regarding action and product nominalizations. While the distinction between actions and products is very intuitive in the case of laws and works of art, it appears more elusive in the case of the distinction between a state of believing and a belief and an act of claiming and a claim (both speech acts, one would think). However, a more careful analysis of the semantic behavior of the two sorts of nominalizations shows that the distinction is on a par with the distinction between an act of artistic creation and the work of art and an act of establishing a rule and the rule itself.

One contribution of the project will be to make the most important work of the Lvov-Warsaw school accessible to contemporary analytic philosophers and to show its importance for the contemporary debates about artifacts and propositions. Another contribution will be to show the importance of applying more linguistic methods for addressing questions of the ontology of cognitive products and cultural objects. The overall impact of the project should be new directions in research on the ontology on cultural objects in view of neglected historical work and the interest in a more linguistic methodology as well further developments of original perspectives that the historical work has already inspired (such as Moltmann’s (2003; 2013, Chap 4) work on attitude reports).

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