



Getting the Quasi-Picture: Twardowskian Representationalism and Husserl's Argument Against It

RYAN HICKERSON*

I. INTRODUCTION

KAZIMIERZ TWARDOWSKI (1866–1938) IS PRINCIPALLY remembered for work he inspired in others. As many as thirty of Twardowski's pupils went on to become professors in Polish universities, a feat that makes him almost single-handedly the founder of 20th century Polish analytic philosophy. The school Twardowski established, the so-called “Lvov-Warsaw School,” eventually became famous for producing logicians.¹ Twardowski also had a hand in launching one of Poland's first laboratories of experimental psychology. Additionally, he was instrumental in shaping the work of phenomenological thinkers like Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Roman Ingarden (1893–1970).²

Twardowski was first and foremost a teacher, involved in the production of minds rather than books. He left us only two full-length monographs, *Idee und Perception* (1891) and *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen* (1894). And even these are rather short, so far as monographs go. The former was Twardowski's doctoral dissertation, a forty-two page study of clarity and distinctness in Descartes, particularly devoted to the role clarity and distinctness play in the Cartesian treatments of truth and judgment. The second was Twardowski's

¹ Jan Lukasiewicz (1878–1956), Stanislaw Lesniewski (1886–1939), and Alfred Tarski (1902–1983), to name only a few.

² Twardowski was a contemporary of Husserl in the Brentano School. He studied in Vienna, with Brentano and Zimmermann, from 1885–1889; Husserl attended Brentano's lectures at the University of Vienna from 1884–1886. Ingarden was a student of both Twardowski and Husserl. For a rich account of Twardowski's influence see Jan Wolenski, *Logic and Philosophy in the Lvov-Warsaw School* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).

Ryan Hickerson is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Western Oregon University.

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one-hundred-nine page *Habilitationschrift*, the major written work of his career.³ In this latter work Twardowski takes up Brentano's philosophical psychology, which emphasizes the foundational role presentations (*Vorstellungen*) play in consciousness, and adds to Brentano's account a sharp distinction between presented content and presented object. Twardowski's entire *Habilitationschrift* is organized around the elucidation of this single distinction, which takes pride of place in the work's title (and on its first page) and is systematically elaborated upon by subsequent chapters.

While Twardowski's treatment of mental content sprang from the same sources Husserl's did, i.e., Brentano's lectures and *Psychology*; it is sharply at odds with both his teacher's doctrine of intentional inexistence and his classmate's phenomenology. It is therefore tempting to read Twardowski as counterpoint to the more well-known figures in the Brentano School. This contrast can be illustrative, but also runs the risk of playing Twardowski as perpetual second fiddle. I hope to avoid that miscue, while simultaneously performing a pair of important tasks: (a) understanding Twardowski's unique treatment of mental content, and (b) assessing Husserl's principal argument against it. Only after we give Twardowski his due, i.e., hear his particular voice in the lush scoring of the Brentano School, will we be repaid with insight into the diverse treatments of mind and consciousness in that tradition. In this paper I will attempt to showcase the uniqueness of Twardowski's part, if not make him the soloist. We may even gain an ear for subtle differences in representational doctrines still rehearsed today.

Twardowski's *Content and Object* (1894) was among the last philosophically sophisticated works to appeal to the doctrine of a mental picture.⁴ Rightly or wrongly, the onus for this infamous idea is often pinned upon Descartes (1596–1650).⁵ But the doctrine of the mental picture as a positive theory, rather than fodder for straw-men, was almost completely spent by the dawn of the 20th century. In the early part of this past century the “Cartesian” theory of mind, along with the doctrine of “special status pictures,” was under attack from a variety of quarters, from the likes of Heidegger (1927) to the likes of Ryle (1949). And in the later part of the century it was still under attack from those quarters, from the likes of Dreyfus (1991) to the likes of Dennett (1991). Cartesianism has not recently been popular, whether as substance dualism, “mental picture-show,” or any of a variety of

³ Kazimierz Twardowski, *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen: Eine psychologische Untersuchung* (Wien: Alfred Hölder, 1894). Translated into English as Kasimir Twardowski, *On the Content and Object of Presentations*, trans. R. Grossmann (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977). The subsequent quotation of this work is my own translation, but citation is to the pagination of Grossmann's text, hereafter abbreviated *Content and Object*.

⁴ It was among the last of the picture theories in a particular sense. Today there is no dearth of claims that some mental process or another involves the manipulation of some “mental picture” or another. A fairly common contemporary claim, for example, is that the visual field is like a television screen, or that the retina (at least) contains pictures. Such metaphors update (to a certain degree) the “mental pictures” of yesteryore, while preserving their basic philosophical function. Twardowski was among the last of the picture theorists insofar as he held that content is a “mental copy” [*geistige Abbild*] of an extra-mental entity.

⁵ Wrongly, it turns out. Though Descartes may seem to suggest such a doctrine, he did not in fact treat ideas as images. See Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene, “Ideas, In and Before Descartes,” *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 87–106. According to Ariew and Grene the picture theory is more appropriately associated with Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), or Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655).



other more specific charges in between. Given the powerful figures arrayed against it, it is no wonder that Twardowski was among the last of the picture theorists. The way that the picture theory gave way to newer forms of representationalism is part of the story retold in Twardowski's case.

My task below is twofold. First, I provide an account of the Twardowskian treatment of content. I argue that the central role content played in Twardowski's work made him into the kind of representationalist he was. Twardowski's representationalism was not a representationalism that we might legitimately attribute to Descartes, what I will call a proxy-percept representationalism. Twardowski's theory was a descendant of such a view, a kind of intermediary stage between ideal theories and early 20th century sense-datum accounts. Twardowskian representationalism was, like many representationalisms now popular, what I will call a mediator-content representationalism. Second, I will provide an account and interpretation of Husserl's principal argument against the Twardowskian position. Husserl's rejection of Twardowski is increasingly recognized as an important step on the way to his *Logical Investigations* (1900, 01). However, there has yet to emerge a clear interpretive consensus on the kind of criticism Husserl made, or where exactly it was leveled. Husserl's criticism, I will argue here, was aimed squarely at Twardowski's notion of content. Unlike other rejections of traditional philosophies of mind (Heidegger's and Ryle's rejections of "Cartesianism," for example), Husserl's rejection of Twardowski was made on distinctively phenomenological grounds, i.e., on the basis of what changes and stays fixed in our conscious experience. I will argue that the Husserlian criticism of Twardowski is based upon a key distinction for the early Husserlian phenomenology.

Scholars have pointed out (rightly I think) that Husserl's reading of Twardowski was either not particularly charitable, or not particularly astute.⁶ Twardowski explicitly disavowed the claim that contents are literal pictures, instead treating contents as signs or "quasi-pictures" (*Quasi-Bilden*).⁷ Despite Twardowski's careful dissociation of himself from this more naïve variant of his view, Husserl in places seems to pigeonhole Twardowski unsympathetically as someone who believed that mental contents are literal pictures. Husserl's criticisms were motivated by a variety of factors: his desire to describe experience faithfully, his natural rivalry with a former classmate, his disdain for traditional metaphysics, his antipathy for doctrines of psychologism, not to mention his longing to put philosophical claims on firmer epistemic footing. While Husserl's intentions may have been beyond reproach, his arguments are another matter. It is in light of the real possibility that Husserl either mistook or misconstrued Twardowski's position that we must gauge his arguments' successes.

⁶ The claim is made, for example, by Jens Cavallin, *Content and Object: Husserl, Twardowski, and Psychologism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 146. It is also suggested by Robin Rollinger. See Robin Rollinger, *Husserl's Position in the School of Brentano* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 149.

⁷ See Twardowski, *Content and Object*, 2. See also the discussion in section 3, below.





2. TWARDOWSKI'S DISTINCTION: CONTENT FROM OBJECT

Twardowski believed that the term 'presentation' (*Vorstellung*),⁸ a term central for philosophers of the Brentano School, is one that harbors deep ambiguity. On Twardowski's judgment, the Brentanian phrase 'presented object' was sometimes used to pick out non-mental objects, and sometimes used to refer to mental contents. So Twardowski proposed a strict distinction between the contents of Brentanian presentations and the objects of Brentanian presentations. He meant to add this distinction—the *raison d'être* of his *Habilitationschrift*—to his otherwise faithfully Brentanian position. On Twardowski's own account, the disambiguation of the term 'presented' was his work's basic motivation.⁹

The principal difference between the two terms is introduced straightforwardly on his work's very first page. Following Brentano, Twardowski proposed to use 'content' as a synonym for 'immanent object,' a reference to something that is itself mental. But following Höfler, Twardowski proposed to treat *objects* as extra-mental entities, i.e., those things that may "exist independently"¹⁰ of any act of consciousness.

Accordingly, one has to distinguish the object at which our presentation is "directed," from the immanent object [*immanenten Object*] or the content of the presentation. (*Content and Object*, 2)

The *content* of a presentation is the "immanent object," residing inside the mind and nowhere else. But where Brentano had used the language of 'content' and 'object' synonymously,¹¹ Twardowski distinguished content from object by appeal to "immanence," i.e., propinquity with the mental. It is the doctrine of *immanence*,

⁸ I will follow the common practice of the literature on the Brentano School by translating *Vorstellungen* as 'presentations.' This is somewhat misleading, however, as the German term was adopted (not in the tradition of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel but) as a translation of the English word 'ideas,' the technical term of the modern empiricists. In the Brentano School all of consciousness was thought to be built up out of these *Vorstellungen*. In Twardowski's case particularly, the term is perhaps best translated (as it is now in the Kant literature) by 'representation.' Twardowski (unlike others in the Brentano School) explicitly treated the contents of *Vorstellungen* as mental copies of extra-mental objects, "the means by which objects are represented" (*Content and Object*, 16).

⁹ See *Content and Object*, 1.

¹⁰ An interpretive warning: "Exists independently" should be read here with the emphasis on "independently" rather than on "exists." While Twardowski explicitly endorses this characterization (see the quotation of Höfler and Meinong at *Content and Object*, 2), he later deploys the notion of existence in a more technical fashion. Twardowski did not believe that all objects exist. Neither did he think all objects are real. And most interestingly, for Twardowski these were independent considerations. (See *Content and Object*, 33–34.) The important point here is that Twardowski treated *objects* (as opposed to *contents*) as presentation-independent. I warn the reader of this because the terrain is the sort in which even the most expert interpreters can get lost. Dermot Moran, for example, writes that according to Twardowski, "The content is a *real* part of the act and really exists" (Dermot Moran, "Heidegger's Critique of Husserl's and Brentano's Accounts of Intentionality," *Inquiry* 43 (2000): 44). Cf. Twardowski himself, who writes: "It [the content] does form together with the act one single mental reality, but while the act of having a presentation is something real, the content of the presentation always lacks reality" (*Content and Object*, 29). It is perhaps J. N. Findlay's *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 8–17, which best navigates the precarious Twardowskian metaphysics.

¹¹ A good example is the famous passage wherein Brentano was supposed to have reintroduced intentionality to the modern philosophy of mind. See Franz Brentano, *Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint*, ed. Oskar Kraus, Linda L. McAlister, trans. Antos C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and Linda L. McAlister (New York: Routledge, 1973), 88.



i.e., of something existing only within the mind, that Twardowski used to distinguish contents from objects. The division neatly tracks our common sense that the contents of consciousness (whatever they might be) belong in the same metaphysical category as consciousness itself (whatever it might be), whereas the objects that consciousness is directed toward need not. In distinguishing content from object by characterizing the former as an immanent version of the latter, Twardowski taps into a deep realist intuition: that the objects of the world are unlike our mental contents insofar as they lie outside our minds, i.e., insofar as they “exist independently” of our mental processes.

Twardowski did more than merely stipulate this difference. He analyzed the ambiguity he found in ‘presented object’ by appealing to a distinction between two broadly logical functions for adjectives.¹² Twardowski not only believed that the phrases ‘presented object’ and ‘immanent object’ were sometimes used to describe contents and other times used to describe objects, he also believed that this confusion rested on an ignorance of the basic logical functions of language. In most cases adjectives are used to determine an object as being a specific type of whatever would have been picked out by the noun were the adjective not a part of the noun phrase. Compare, for example, the relationship between ‘man’ and ‘good man.’ The adjective ‘good’ is supposed by Twardowski to further determine a type of man, i.e., a good man is a particular type of man. Twardowski called such adjectives *attributive adjectives*, or *determining adjectives*. But in certain cases adjectives are used to classify an object as being of a completely different type than it would have been were the adjective not part of the noun-phrase. Compare, for example, ‘friend’ and ‘false friend.’ ‘False’ in this case makes the noun-phrase refer to something completely different than it would have with merely the noun ‘friend’; a false friend is no kind of friend at all. Twardowski called adjectives with this latter sort of broadly logical function *modifying adjectives*. Twardowski believe that some adjectives are determining adjectives, and others modifying adjectives. He also believed that some (like ‘false’ in the example I’ve reproduced above) may be used as either determining adjectives or modifying adjectives, depending upon the context.

According to Twardowski, the terms ‘presented’ and ‘immanent’ are adjectives of this latter sort. They are sometimes used as *determining adjectives*, sometimes used as *modifying adjectives*; and this is a source of ambiguity in phrases like ‘presented object’ and ‘immanent object.’ Twardowski mustered his technical terms ‘content’ and ‘object’ to correct this problem. On Twardowski’s account, a “presented object” is no kind of object at all, it is a content. And on Twardowski’s account, an “immanent object” is no kind of object at all, it is also a content. In these cases the words ‘presented’ and ‘immanent’ are working as modifying adjectives.

Now consider a particular species of representationalism: *proxy-percept representationalism* is the doctrine that an immanent percept stands in a representational

¹² This discussion reproduces *Content and Object*, 11–17. In reading this as one of Twardowski’s most significant philosophical observations, I follow Jan Wolenski, “Twardowski and the Distinction Between Content and Object,” *Brentano Studien* 8, (1998/89): 15–35. On this point I am also grateful to two anonymous referees for the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.



relation to an extra-mental object or state-of-affairs.¹³ Descartes might be a classic example of a proxy-percept representationalist. The grounds for saying this are that on the Cartesian account, perception is always of an *idea*. The understanding may present that idea clearly and distinctly or otherwise. But perceptual error is making an unwise judgment, i.e., a willing assent to an only dimly perceived idea. Most importantly, on the Cartesian account, it is ideas themselves that are immediately perceived by the mind.¹⁴ That is to say, on Descartes' account, ideas are percepts. When we couple this with the thesis that ideas exist only within the mind we are two-thirds of the way to the definition of proxy-percept representationalism. The final claim necessary is that these immanent percepts represent extra-mental objects or states-of-affairs.¹⁵

Is there reason to believe that Twardowski's treatment of content made him a representationalist in this strong sense? One useful contrast for proxy-percept representationalism is mediator-content representationalism. *Mediator-content representationalism* holds that mental contents represent objects (or states-of-affairs) in the extra-mental world, but that the contents are not themselves percepts. More recent representationalisms often treat representational content as necessary for consciousness, but as neither an extra-mental object (or state-of-affairs), nor an immanent percept. The importance of distinguishing these two broad classes of representationalism is frequently overlooked, but crucial for interpreting Twardowski. I will argue below that Twardowski was not a representationalist in the former sense, but was one in the latter. Despite the additional Twardowskian claim that contents are "signs" or "quasi-pictures," Twardowski was not a proxy-percept representationalist.

3. TWARDOWSKIAN CONTENT AS QUASI-PICTURE

Chapter twelve of *Content and Object* is specifically devoted to characterizing the relation that holds between *content* and *object*. The chapter gets off to a somewhat rocky start, however, opening with the claim that the relation in question is, "an irreducible, primary relationship which can as little be described as the relation-

¹³ In this paper I will couch definitions of various kinds of representationalism as perceptual doctrines. (Hence the introduction of the term 'percept' here.) However, these definitions may be generalized to cover cognition or consciousness more broadly. 'Percept' here means merely 'thing perceived.' Readers may substitute 'thing cognized,' or 'object of consciousness,' if they so desire.

¹⁴ Descartes writes to Hobbes in the *Objections and Replies*: "But I make it quite clear in several places throughout the book [the *Meditations*], and in this passage [from the Third Meditation] in particular, that I am taking the word 'idea' to refer to whatever is immediately perceived by the mind." René Descartes, "Third Set of Objections with the Author's Replies," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 127.

¹⁵ Whether Descartes was committed to this final claim is surprisingly difficult to ascertain. There is an on-going debate over whether Descartes was a representationalist of the sort I have defined in this paragraph, or was instead a direct realist. For a recent argument in support of the former see Paul Hoffmann, "Direct Realism, Intentionality, and the Objective Being of Ideas," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 83 (2002): 163–79. For argument in support of the latter see Steven Nadler, *Arnauld and the Cartesian Philosophy of Ideas* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989). Whether Descartes was a proxy-percept representationalist is ultimately less significant for this paper than establishing that Twardowski was not.



ship of incompatibility between two judgments.”¹⁶ Twardowski ultimately pronounces the relation between them ineffable, as difficult to describe as P’s incompatibility with not P, and ultimately falls back upon the assertion that content and object are related to one another insofar as both “belong” to the same presentation.¹⁷

But in explaining the ambiguity of “the presented,” Twardowski also appealed to a helpful (and telling) analogy. The analogy is especially helpful for understanding Twardowski’s treatment of the relation between content and object, but must also be taken into consideration when interpreting Twardowski’s notion of content itself. It is especially helpful because it is what Twardowski himself, a genuine teacher, appealed to by way of straight-forward explanation of his theory. According to Twardowski, contents are to objects what pictures are to landscapes.¹⁸

Some object is presented, a horse for example. By this act, a mental content is presented. The content is the copy [*Abbild*] of the horse in the same sense in which the picture is the copy [*Abbild*] of the landscape. (*Content and Object*, 16)

If there were any confusion about whether contents were supposed to be mental or extra-mental, the picture analogy clears it up. The simplest thing it does is serve this basic didactic purpose, it explains and makes intuitive Twardowski’s proposed difference between content and object. Contents are not merely “immanent objects,” abstractly construed; they are like little mental pictures, like mental copies of the objects. Twardowski frequently described content as a kind of “mental picture” (*geistige Abbild*) or “copy” (*Abbild*).¹⁹

Given the analogy and this choice of language, and given the choice of the picture as the central metaphor for content, it may seem fair to label Twardowski’s theory a “picture theory” of mental content. But despite Twardowski’s frequent reference to content as a “mental picture,” he did not claim that contents are themselves literal pictures.²⁰ He also asserted that any claim that contents are literal pictures rests upon a “primitive psychology.”²¹ And *in lieu* of that primitive psychology, following Kerry, Zimmermann, and the best psychological science of his day, Twardowski judged content to be a kind of “sign” or “quasi-picture.”

Recognizing that Twardowski was opposed to treating contents as literal pictures, one might instead interpret the discussion of mental pictures as merely metaphor, as a *façon de parler*, i.e., lacking substantive philosophical import. But the picture is not merely a metaphor in Twardowski’s work. It is used to express

¹⁶ *Content and Object*, 64. He makes this point about presentations of objects that are *simple*. Nothing more can be said about their relation to objects (supposedly). The chapter goes on to assess the relation between content and object for presentations of objects that are *complex*, which I will not broach here.

¹⁷ See *Content and Object*, 64–65, 76. Husserl will make this a point of criticism. See section 4, below.

¹⁸ The analogy is introduced in Chapter 4 of *Content and Object*.

¹⁹ He uses this language throughout *Content and Object*; see 7, 14, 16, for a few examples. He uses *psychischen Inhalt* synonymously; e.g., 16.

²⁰ This point may or may not have been lost on Husserl, who never acknowledged a difference in this respect. But it is certainly not lost on scholars. For one example, see David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1982), 111.

²¹ See *Content and Object*, 64–65.



the precise relation that holds between content and object. Just as ‘painted’ may be a determining adjective in ‘painted picture’ and a modifying adjective in ‘painted landscape,’ so the term ‘presented’ may be a determining adjective in ‘presented content’ and a modifying adjective in ‘presented object.’²² These last two phrases, Twardowski insisted, both pick out contents. And just as the painted landscape (i.e., the picture) represents the landscape, the presented object (i.e., the content) represents the object. This is to say that the picture analogy was introduced by Twardowski as an analogy in the strictest sense. The function of analogical argument is not the comparison of objects, i.e., not mere metaphor, but instead the expression of precise relations. Twardowski’s analogy expresses the relation between content and object as the relation between picture and pictured. This does not commit Twardowski to the claim that contents are themselves pictures. Nor was Twardowski merely offering a metaphor.

Mental contents were supposed to be representational tokens for objects, a kind of mental symbol or sign. This is the cornerstone of any representational theory of mind. The treatment of mental content as symbolic, i.e., representational, is what makes Twardowski a representationalist. But Twardowski was a representationalist in a unique sense. Contents were supposed to represent objects in exactly the way that pictures represent landscapes. On Twardowski’s account, contents represent objects by resembling them.²³ *Resemblance representationalism* is the theory that a representational content represents in virtue of a specific sort of representational relation holding between that content and the represented object, viz. resemblance. It is important at this stage to recognize that proxy-percept representationalism, as defined above, does not commit one to resemblance representationalism. Nor does resemblance representationalism commit one to proxy-percept representationalism. While individual philosophers may espouse either or both of these theories, the claims themselves are logically independent of one another. Twardowski was a unique figure in the history of philosophy insofar as he was committed to resemblance representationalism but not proxy-percept representationalism.

To describe content as a “copy” or a “picture” is to make a philosophical claim about the kind of relation that contents have to the things they copy or picture. Resemblance is one representative relation among many Twardowski could have chosen. Consider differences between the following sorts of relations: between a name and a thing named, between a stop sign and a particular convention when arriving at an intersection, between a rude hand gesture and an attitude toward another person. This is not merely a catalogue of different relations; these are different types of symbolic relation. After the powerful artistic movements of the 20th century, we are not quick to associate pictures or copies with resemblance; but

²² See *Content and Object*, 12.

²³ This is a non-trivial interpretive claim. Cf. Findlay, *Meinong’s Theory*, 13. Findlay differs from me on exactly this point. One is tempted to argue, like Findlay, that because Twardowski rejected the thesis that contents are literal pictures, he therefore could not have held that the relationship between content and object was one of resemblance. But that does not follow. Findlay cites *Content and Object*, 64 as evidence that Twardowski rejected a resemblance relation; but Twardowski does not do so, at 64 or anywhere else. Twardowski rejects, specifically and merely, the relation of photographic similarity [*photographischer Aehnlichkeit*.] (See subsequent note.)



when Twardowski discussed picturing and copying he had classical paintings, i.e., pre-20th century landscapes, in mind. Picture and pictured were meant to have isomorphisms of shape, color, and basic compositional structure. Similarly, content and object were meant to be isomorphic in their respective relations of parts to whole.²⁴ Twardowski's choice in this regard was supported by the fact that acts of imagination are often peculiarly visual, that they are traditionally thought to involve a sort of literal "mental picturing." Modern philosophers' treatments of ideas as image-like, especially in relation to the faculty of the imagination, was the backdrop for Twardowski's choice. But Twardowski's treatment of the "mental picture" was not a wholly traditional one. Twardowski treated content as "sign," or "quasi-picture."

It is useful to think of mental content as picture-like, if not wholly pictorial. Content becomes a symbolic stand-in for an object in consciousness, a simulacrum inside the mind where the objects themselves cannot go. We are most familiar with the symbolic uses of pictures as representational tokens for things pictured. Picture and pictured are frequently interchanged by us, a representational displacement that happens despite stark differences in their material media. The little man with his foot slightly raised on the walk sign stands-in for people crossing the intersection at a coordinated moment in time. The people themselves, engaged in the activity of crossing the street, could not possibly be put up onto the sign. The horse Twardowski "pictured" is made of flesh and bone, but its picture could be of paint and paper, or wood and chalk, or clay, or the "stuff" of consciousness. The appeal of Twardowski's position turns on the fact that content not only involves the familiar feature of multiple realizability, i.e., its relative indifference to material media, but also the sort of representational displacement in which we are constantly engaged. So long as the mental and the non-mental are sharply divided, it seems impossible for an actual horse (non-mental) to get inside consciousness (mental). The displacements involved in the picturing relation allowed Twardowski to bridge the mind/world gap. Because pictures commonly stand in for what they picture, Twardowski was able to suggest that a "mental picture" (though not literally a picture) serves as a token for the object inside the mental realm.

In addition to being a token, or sign, content also had the function of playing a mediating role between the act of consciousness and the object toward which it

²⁴ Twardowski did not offer an explicit definition of resemblance. Nevertheless, he was committed to one, and I am happy to offer it on his behalf. Twardowski treated resemblance mereologically. A *resemblance*, on Twardowski's account, is an isomorphism in relations of parts to whole between content and object. This definition applies generally, not only to his discussion of objects presented as simple but also to his discussion of objects presented as complex. (See *Content and Object*, 64–65.) Twardowski explicitly appealed to isomorphism in his discussion of objects presented as complex, but adverted to the claim that the relation between content and object for objects presented as simple is not further characterizable. However, Twardowski ultimately denied that there can be simple objects of presentation. (See *Content and Object*, 70.) Even had Twardowski not appealed to isomorphisms explicitly, (and he did, again see *Content and Object*, 65) the picture analogy would be enough to commit him to it. While it is true that Twardowski was not committed to a relation of "photographic similarity" (see previous note) many resemblances are not relations between literal pictures and pictured things; not all resemblance is photographic similarity. Family resemblances are a classic alternative, the resemblances of icons and ideograms are another. Paintings themselves, especially the more modern varieties, may resemble without "resembling photographically."



is directed. Contents and objects were supposed by Twardowski to be sharply divided by the fact that contents are “in” the presentations while objects “exist independently.” But with this theoretical move content also becomes the principal connection, the medium through which consciousness hooks onto the non-mental objects. “We said that the content is the means [*das Mittel*], through which the object is presented.”²⁵ This returns us to the notion of a mediator-content representationalism. Mediator-content representationalism, we recall, is the claim that representational content is not itself the target of consciousness, but a means by which consciousness picks out extra-mental objects or states-of-affairs. Mediator-content representationalism is the claim that representational content is not a percept, but is nevertheless necessary for perception as a means by which any percept is perceived.

We should not be surprised to discover this philosophical function reflected in the language Twardowski adopted.

Of the content we will say that it is presented *in* the presentation; of the object we will say that it is presented *through* the content of the presentation (or the presentation itself.) What is presented *in* a presentation is its content; what is presented *through* a presentation is its object. (*Content and Object*, 16)

The object is presented *through* the content of a presentation. The content is presented *in* the presentation itself. Twardowski cites another of his teachers, Robert Zimmermann (1824–1898), as the philosopher from whom he picked up this (now familiar) language. The ‘through’-language is philosophically significant insofar as it indicates the nature of the theoretical relationship between content and object, i.e., content plays a mediating function, the means by which consciousness picks out objects. The adoption of the ‘through’-language is the natural expression of the content/object distinction as Twardowski conceived it, as one of the first mediator-content representationalists.

It is important to notice that mediator-content representationalism is compatible with resemblance representationalism but not proxy-percept representationalism. The mediator-content representationalist claims that representational content is a means by which consciousness is directed at extra-mental entities; the proxy-percept representationalist claims that representational content is that toward which consciousness is itself directed. The former makes representational content into a component of the mental act, the latter makes representational content into that which is picked out. When asked the question, “Does an act of perception or cognition target a representational content?”, the proxy-percept representationalist answers, “yes,” but the mediator-content representationalist answers, “no.” While proxy-percept representationalism and mediator-content representationalism are each compatible with resemblance representationalism, they are not compatible with one another.

We are now in a position to summarize the key components of the uniquely Twardowskian representational theory. For Twardowski, mental content is not the object of an act of consciousness. Content is that through which an object is perceived. Because Twardowski claimed that it is through immanent contents that we

²⁵ *Content and Object*, 16.



perceive something else, i.e., objects, his theory descended from earlier representational doctrines. While he was clearly influenced by the Cartesian theory studied in his doctoral dissertation, he was not a proxy-percept representationalist, insofar as he denied that immanent mental contents, e.g., ideas, are objects of perception.²⁶ He was instead a resemblance representationalist and a mediator-content representationalist. Evidence for the former is his appeal to the picture analogy, his frequent description of content as “picture” or “copy” (*Abbild*), and his treatment of the relation of contents to objects as mereological isomorphism. Evidence for the latter are these plus the language adopted from Zimmerman, and his discussion of content as a means (*das Mittel*). Twardowski was among the first of a new breed of mediator-content representationalists, a dramatic development in the history of the philosophy of mind. At the end of the 19th century Twardowski was on the cusp of movement away from older representational theories and toward 20th century ones.²⁷ He was among the last of the picture theorists.

However, Twardowski’s theory must also be sharply contrasted with those on the scene today. Twardowski treated content not merely as mental, but also as in consciousness. “Of the content we will say that it is presented *in* the presentation.” Twardowski’s appeal to the resemblance of content and object, an isomorphism in compositional structure, is another expression of his commitment to contents residing in consciousness. His definition of content as an “immanent object” not merely places them in the mind, but also in consciousness. This is to stake out a treacherous middle ground. If contents are not merely mental, but also in consciousness, then what is their status vis-à-vis our attention or awareness? It would seem that Twardowski must think that we are aware of them. But if that is the case, then in what sense do we perceive them over and above our perception of the objects perceived through them? Are we only “quasi-aware” of contents? The mediator-content representationalist, more generally, need not face this problem. Unlike Twardowski, the mediator-content representationalist (more generally) need not commit herself to the claim that contents are conscious rather than merely mental. Mediating contents can quite plausibly be treated as mental but extra-conscious. Examples are brain states (treated as broadly mental) with representational properties, subconscious states in drive psychology, or one of the extra-conscious states postulated by 20th century cognitive psychologists. It is also quite possible that extra-conscious contents mediating consciousness of objects would not be mental at all. One might plausibly claim that mental representation hinges on extra-mental language, or an extra-mental Fregean-style *Sinn*. The moral of the story is that we must draw important distinctions not only amongst types of representationalism, but even amongst types of mediator-content representationalism, if we are to recognize Twardowski’s unique position. On the one hand are

²⁶ There is also strong evidence to suggest that, unlike Twardowski, Descartes was not a resemblance representationalist. See, for example, passages in the Sixth Meditation (e.g. Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, 53, 57.) While Descartes clearly denies that our ideas must resemble their causes, the issue is vexed by the various ways that resemblance may be understood. Descartes clearly denied there must be “resemblance,” but the sense in which the heat need not resemble the fire is not easily established. (I owe my appreciation of this complexity to a conversation with Don Rutherford.)

²⁷ A collection of recent representational theories is *New Representationalisms*, ed. Edmond Wright (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1993).



more recent mediator-content theories, upon which consciousness transpires through extra-conscious (and non-resembling) contents. On the other hand is Twardowski's theory, which treated objects as presented through contents but also treated those contents as in our conscious experience. Twardowskian representationalism, committed to contents in consciousness that nevertheless mediate consciousness of objects, was a bridge between historical representationalisms and those more popular today.

4. HUSSERL'S CRITICISM OF TWARDOWSKIAN CONTENT

The primary texts for appraising Husserl's reaction to Twardowski are two. The first, "Intentional Objects," is an essay Husserl wrote in two parts, the first part in 1894 and 1895, and the second part in 1898.²⁸ Two years later and earlier respectively, in December of 1896, Husserl wrote a review of Twardowski's *Content and Object*, titled "Critical Discussion of K. Twardowski."²⁹ Each of these writings on Twardowski is relatively minor in the voluminous Husserlian corpus; nevertheless, the unpublished essays are a window onto Husserl's developing treatment of intentionality, precursors to the position he would take in the *Logical Investigations* (1900/01). One could cast the net wider, and also examine references to Twardowski in Husserl's published works. There are several of these in the *Logical Investigations* (1901) and one in *Ideas I* (1913). One could cast the net wider still and examine texts where Husserl does not mention Twardowski by name, but criticizes the "picture theory" or the appeal to an "immanent object." In that case one would also include the draft of a letter written to Anton Marty (dated July 7, 1901), which has the "immanent object" as its principal theme, or the shorter works Husserl wrote prior to Twardowski's *Content and Object*, most notably, "Psychological Studies in the Elements of Logic" (1894).³⁰ But I will cast my net here rather more narrowly, and still attempt to catch the biggest fish.³¹

²⁸ There is a rather complicated story to tell about this text itself. It remained unpublished until 1979, and untranslated until 1994. It was written at least three distinct times, and portions of it are apparently lost, as the essay opens with reference to previous "considerations" that have not been preserved. The two main fragments were published as part of Husserl's *Nachlass*. Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana*, Bd. XXII. *Aufsätze und Rezensionen (1890-1910)*, ed. Bernard Rang (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 303-48. These are translated as Edmund Husserl, *Collected Works V: Early Writings in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics*, trans. Dallas Willard, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 345-87. Subsequent archival work by Karl Schuhmann has augmented and corrected the originally issued version; which has been republished as Edmund Husserl, "Intentional Objects," in *Brentano Studien 3* (1991): 137-76. Schuhmann cites a letter that Husserl wrote to Meinong, dated April 5, 1902, where he described this material as a "reaction against Twardowski" (Ibid, 138).

²⁹ This second piece also remained unpublished until 1979 and untranslated until 1994. Edmund Husserl, "Besprechung von K. Twardowski, Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen. Eine psychologische Untersuchung, Wien 1894," in *Husserliana*, Bd. XXII, 349-56. It is translated as "Critical Discussion of K. Twardowski, *Zur Lehre Vom Inhalt Und Gegenstand Der Vorstellungen. Eine Psychologische Untersuchung*," in Husserl, *Collected Work V*, 388-95. Subsequent quotations from the essay are my own translation, but references are to the pagination of Willard's *Collected Works* volume, unless otherwise indicated.

³⁰ First published in *Philosophische Monatshefte* 30 (1894) but republished in Husserl, *Husserliana* XXII, 92-123; translated in Husserl, *Collected Works V*, 139-70.

³¹ A more comprehensive account of Husserl's reaction to Twardowski is attempted by Jens Cavallin, *Content and Object: Husserl, Twardowski and Psychologism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). See especially "Annex I" 269, 40 and Appendix I, 241 for a helpful presentation of the places Husserl refers to Twardowski.



While it is commonly known that a rejection of the Twardowskian treatment of content is an important component of Husserl's criticism of Twardowski, I mean to show that the rejection of this treatment of content was in fact Husserl's central and most philosophically significant departure from the philosophy of the Brentano School. For this reason, we might turn to any of Husserl's claims about Twardowski and still make our catch.³² The main text of the "Critical Discussion" essay is a short review, a discussion and summary of Twardowski's monograph. It is only in several lengthy footnotes that the "Critical Discussion" provides its critical component. The first of these footnotes (footnote #2 in Willard's 1994 translation) will be the exclusive object of analysis in the remainder of this essay. The footnote's argument is a series of points, numbered (1) through (3), framed as an attack upon a parallel that Twardowski draws between contents and names. However, Husserl's attack is misread if read merely as a rejection of the Twardowskian analogy with language. Husserl meant to deny the cogency of the Twardowskian notion of content itself.³³ It is important to emphasize that this does not mean that Husserl was critical of a distinction between content and object *per se*, or of the general strategy of Twardowski's work. Husserl developed a sophisticated version of a content/object distinction himself. What the footnote attempts to accomplish philosophically is a distinction between two types of content, which will then ground Husserl's claim that Twardowski's construal of content is a "psychological fiction" (*psychologische Fiktion*).³⁴ Husserl described one sort of mental content, as "real" or "psychological," another sort of mental content as "ideal" or "logical." And it was this very distinction that became central for his philosophy of mind in the *Logical Investigations*.³⁵ The single footnote is a microcosm of Husserlian philosophy. It is "the breakthrough to phenomenology," the rejection of psychologism, a criticism of rival philosophers in the Brentano School, and a presentation of the doctrine of the ideal structure governing experience: a kind of infinite Husserlian space in a nutshell.

³² This opinion is not universally shared. Compare Rollinger, *Husserl's Position*, 145–53, where he argues that "Intentional Objects" presents a Husserlian theory of intentionality of "far greater importance" (152) than the criticisms articulated in the "Critical Discussion" footnotes. Rollinger notwithstanding, the theoretical move that drives Husserl's criticism in both places is the distinction of ideal/logical content from real/psychological content. This distinction takes pride of place in the "Critical Discussion" footnote, and in the *Logical Investigations*, and in many places besides.

³³ Cf. Rollinger, *Husserl's Position*, 145–47.

³⁴ "Critical Discussion," 389n.

³⁵ *Ibid.* The content distinction, here and in the footnote, is couched in the language of psychological and ideal contents. It is sometimes also discussed in the language of "immanent" and "representational" contents, but the latter contrast should be read as strictly paralleling the former. In 1896 Husserl discussed representation in the context of the functional role an immanent content plays in picking out objects. The content distinction is preserved throughout the Husserlian corpus, despite dramatic variation in some of Husserl's other doctrines. In the *Logical Investigations* (1900/01) the two types of content are renamed *reellen content* and *intentional content*, respectively. See Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Halle a. S.: Max Niemeyer, 1900/01): *Investigations V*, §16. In *Ideas I* (1913) the content distinction is preserved and elaborated upon as a distinction between sensuous *hylē* and intentive *morphē*. See Edmund Husserl, "Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie," in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung I* (1913): §85. The content distinction is one of Husserl's most significant, if under-appreciated, doctrines.



Husserl begins the argument in the first “Critical Discussion” footnote by pointing out that there is a sort of mental content that varies dramatically despite immutable representation.³⁶ Husserl here adds to the discussion a notion that Twardowski touched on only obliquely, i.e., the notion of an equivalent representation.³⁷ *Equivalent representations*, for purposes of Husserl’s criticism of Twardowski, may be defined as two or more otherwise distinct presentations of the same object. Husserl’s strategy was to begin by pointing to wide variation in our mental representations of the same thing. He pursued this strategy with a concrete example. Imagine three instances of the presentation of a tree. I’ll change Husserl’s example slightly and consider Ryan, Eleanor, and Wayne, each imagining the 2001 White House Christmas Tree.³⁸ Ryan imagines a linden (since childhood that particular mental image has been his paradigmatic “tree”), Eleanor imagines a fir, and Wayne imagines the phrase, ‘the 2001 White House Christmas Tree.’ All three persons have evoked symbols in their imaginations of the 2001 White House Christmas Tree, but each has a quite different “mental picture.”³⁹ Perhaps we would want to deny that Ryan’s representation was satisfactory, as the 2001 White House Christmas Tree was not a linden. Perhaps we judge Wayne’s representation deficient, as it was an unnaturally verbal sort of “mental-picture.” But why should a more colorful picture trump a wordier one? On what grounds is a representation that captures only some structural similarities between the imagined content and object ruled impoverished? It was Twardowski himself who denied “photographical similarity” is a necessary feature of mental representation. What we are encountering here are difficulties involved in assessing the amount of structural isomorphism required for resemblance. What Husserl’s example meant to illustrate colorfully is that, *contra* Twardowski, objects do not match up neatly with symbols used to represent them, even when the representing contents are treated as image-like. There are, in fact, many different sorts of mental contents that represent the same object. According to Husserl, what is immanent may vary, while the object represented does not.

³⁶ See the argument numbered (1) in “Critical Discussion,” 388–89n.

³⁷ See Twardowski’s discussion of “so-called equivalent presentations [*Wechselvorstellungen*]” (*Content and Object*, 29). We might object to Twardowski’s terminology here. It cannot be, on Twardowski’s account, acts of presentation themselves that are equivalent. After all, they may present quite different contents when referring to the same object, and presumably they take place at different times and in different persons. It is their representative function that is supposed by Twardowski to be equivalent. Husserl’s critical footnote respects this distinction, distinguishing a *Vorstellung* from a *Repräsentation*. Willard admirably preserves this key distinction by translating them as ‘representation’ and ‘Representation,’ respectively. Because we have already had *Vorstellungen* under consideration, I will stick with ‘presentation’ as its translation, and now add ‘representation’ to the mix (as translation of Husserl’s Latin term.) The important difference between the two is the following: according to Twardowski, an act of presentation has an immanent content, which represents (by resembling) an object. ‘Representation’ names the relation between the content and the object. ‘Presentation’ names the dated act of consciousness.

³⁸ We need not restrict Husserl’s objection to cases of imagination. This was the mode in which Husserl introduced it, and the case of imagination nicely targets Twardowski’s quasi-pictorial content. Through the course of the footnote, however, Husserl also included perceptual examples.

³⁹ The proposed counter-example works irrespective of the object’s greater or lesser degree of generality. Imagine that instead of being asked to imagine the 2001 White House Christmas Tree we were asked to imagine an oak tree. In that case Ryan might imagine a particular oak tree on The Hill of Three Oaks in the Carleton College Arboretum, Ellie the characteristic roughness of oak bark, Wayne the word ‘oak’ itself, etc.



The opening claim in the Husserlian footnote is thus a challenge to Twardowski's reliance on content as relatively constant. Husserl follows that claim by insisting that representation does not fluctuate with changes to what is immanent, that representation may remain identical through an otherwise shifting conscious experience.⁴⁰ We may think of a certain sort of immanent content as constantly fluctuating, as comprising a stream of consciousness,⁴¹ but nevertheless find it "absurd to speak of constant variation in the case of meanings [*Bedeutungen*]."⁴² Husserl's first argument against Twardowski is thus a pair of coordinated claims, a kind of one-two combination punch. Husserl claimed that one kind of mental content fluctuates to a degree Twardowskian content could not allow, but that the representations supported by those contents remain fixed throughout their fluctuation. A Twardowskian content, insofar as it was supposed to be static and representationally correlated with a single object, not only fails to capture the former of the two sorts of content, it also fails to account for the distinctive feature of the latter, i.e., its unity through an otherwise shifting experience. The most important theoretical difference between Husserl and Twardowski is this rejection of a single-content theory of consciousness. Husserl believed that our account of consciousness must appeal to at least two quite different kinds of mental content.

Husserl's two-pronged observation poses Twardowski a dilemma: either Twardowski must treat content as relatively constant (which would allow him to account for representation but not the sensory stream) or he must treat it as fluctuating (which would allow him to account for the sensory stream, but not the relatively constant representation). Twardowskian content was supposed to be relatively unchanging, something that remained the same until a discrete presentation ended and a new presentation (associated with a whole new object?) began. It was this unchanging nature of content that made the tight resemblance between content and object possible. But according to Husserl, there simply is no immanent content that can be associated univocally with each object. Appealing to the stream of consciousness, i.e., the newer Jamesian psychology, Husserl dismissed the fixed Twardowskian content as a "psychological fiction."

Was Twardowski's psychology as primitive as Husserl cast it? In places, Twardowski does indeed seem to appeal to a one-to-one correlation between content and object.

There must be a relation between the content and the object, which thereby makes an object belong to this particular content, and a content correspond to one particular, and no other, object. (*Content and Object*, 64)

In particular, the phrase, "to *this particular* content" suggests such a reading. But was Twardowski really committed to this one-to-one relation? It is hard to believe

⁴⁰ See the claim marked (2) in "Critical Discussion," 389n.

⁴¹ Husserl was greatly impressed by his reading of William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1890). He read James in the winter of 1891/92, and again closely in 1894, and is reported to have abandoned work which was more strictly psychological, claiming that "James had said what he wanted to say." See Karl Schuhmann, *Husserliana Dokumente, Bd. I: Husserl-Chronik: Denk- Und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 32, 41, 363.

⁴² "Critical Discussion," 389n., Husserl's emphasis.



that he would have made the claim, if only because it seems so extravagantly and demonstrably false. We should be encouraged, if only for that reason, to question whether Twardowski could have avoided the claim. And indeed, despite the sorts of language quoted in the passage above, there are portions of Twardowski's text that reveal him as more than willing to countenance multiple contents per object. One clear example is his discussion of "equivalent presentations,"⁴³ cited above. In that passage Twardowski discusses what has since come to be known as a "Fregean pair," i.e., a pair of different expressions (for Twardowski these are strict analogues for contents) that refer to the same object.⁴⁴ Twardowski's example of a Fregean pair is, 'the city located at the site of the Roman Juvavum' and 'the birthplace of Mozart,' both of which refer to Salzburg. Insofar as Twardowski was not committed to a one-to-one relation between content and object he could quite plausibly have granted that there are multiple contents per object, but insisted that this does not fundamentally undermine his particular treatment of content. Such a defense would cite cases of different contents representing a single object, acknowledge the relation between content and object as many-to-one rather than one-to-one, but hold fast to the notion of content he offered. Far from KO'd by the one-two combination of Husserlian criticism, Twardowski could have simply rolled with the punches.

However, with a throw-away parenthetical, ". . . (*und umgekehrt*)"⁴⁵ Husserl also suggested a more powerful argument, one not so easily sidestepped. It is not the multiplicity of contents that are vulnerable, but the fact that each was supposed to pick out one and only one object. It is quite plausible to suppose, and consonant with Husserl's later work, that a single immanent content represents a variety of different objects. One need not resort to examples of extremely impoverished sensory stimuli in order to hit upon examples. Such examples would not themselves demonstrate the need for a many-to-many relation between mental contents and extra-mental objects. (The particular specification of content and of extra-mental object will remain the key.) But these would be the bane of Twardowskian content insofar as their explanation requires theoretical machinery not at Twardowski's disposal. If the relationship between what we consciously experience and the extra-mental object must additionally, for example, invoke a notion of aspect or "seeing as," then Husserl will have shown that Twardowskian content was not up to its job.⁴⁶

The key point is that Twardowskian content was supposed to serve double duty, as both sensation and representation, as both a psychological element *in* an individual act of consciousness, and as a symbolic token *through* which the extra-mental object is perceived. To distinguish content from something in consciousness that is sensory, or from something underlying (or in) consciousness that is repre-

⁴³ *Content and Object*, 29.

⁴⁴ See Gottlob Frege, "Sense and Reference," trans. Max Black, in *The Philosophical Review* 57 (1948): 207–30. First published "Über Sinn und Bedeutung," in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100 (1892): 25–50.

⁴⁵ ". . . (and the reverse.)" See "Critical Discussion," 388n.

⁴⁶ Husserl had at his disposal, for example, a key distinction between objects presented and objects as they are presented. (See Husserl, *Logical Investigations V*, §17.) Twardowski made no such distinction.



sentational, is to concede Husserl's criticism: that a unitary content assigned both functions is a "psychological fiction."

But before we close the book on the matter, consider another line of Twardowskian defense. Even if it has been shown that Twardowski required a kind of mental content in addition to his treatment of content as sign or quasi-picture, it remains an open question whether Twardowski could not have provided such an account in a pinch. To quote Smith and McIntyre on this matter: "In fairness to Twardowski, it is not clear from his text that he either ignored or could not have accommodated Husserl's notion of 'ideal' content."⁴⁷ Smith and McIntyre judge (rightly, I think) that Twardowskian content was meant to be psychological, something in the individual presentation. They then point to Twardowski's citation of Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), teacher of Twardowski's teacher Zimmermann, and defender of exactly the sort of ideal content that became popular with Husserl.⁴⁸ Bolzanian *presentations-in-themselves* were meant to be a type of ideal content that was neither immanent nor mental.⁴⁹ Therefore, Smith and McIntyre suggest, a line of Twardowskian defense is that he may plausibly have left room in his theory for ideal contents in the more Bolzanian, (or Husserlian, Fregean, etc.) sense. They suggest that Twardowski himself may have considered such an approach.

Catching Twardowski's reference to Bolzano is important. However, Twardowski's quotation does not make content concordant with the Bolzanian presentation-in-itself, nor does it ensure that Twardowski's theory had room for such. Twardowski quotation of Bolzano is of someone, like Kerry and Zimmermann and unlike Sigwart and Drobisch, who "clung steadfastly" to a general distinction between content and object. But there are many ways to make such a distinction. That Twardowskian content was meant to be immanent, *in* our conscious experience (unlike Bolzano's presentation-in-itself) is indisputable, or at least supported by numerous passages in *Content and Object*.⁵⁰ Whether Twardowski also had room for ideal contents is an important interpretive question, but is ultimately beside the point when assessing Husserl's criticism. This is because Husserl's criticism was not that Twardowski's theory had no room for ideal content after the fashion of Bolzano, Husserl, or Frege, but instead that our experience has no room for Twardowskian content, as described by him in *Content and Object*. Husserl appealed to the distinction between immanent psychological content and ideal representational content in order to criticize Twardowski. But that criticism was not that Twardowski had neglected one form of content in favor of the other, it was that Twardowski had conflated them. Husserl's criticism was not that Twardowski had left something out, but that Twardowskian content is a "psychological fiction," a theoretical postulate not to be met with in our experience.

⁴⁷ Smith and McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality*, 112.

⁴⁸ See *Content and Object*, 15.

⁴⁹ These are sometimes discussed as antecedents of the Fregean and Husserlian treatments of ideal content. For their source see Bernard Bolzano, *Theory of Science*, trans. Burnham Terrell (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1973). The *Wissenschaftslehre* was originally published in Sulzbach, by J. E. v. Seidel, 1837.

⁵⁰ On this issue, Cf. "Critical Discussion," 392n.



Husserl's final critical claim in the first "Critical Discussion" footnote is that an immanent content can stand in a variety of relations to objects, and that such relations are not limited, as Twardowski suggested, to resemblance.⁵¹

The representing content can stand in various sorts of relations to the represented object. It can be inherently foreign to it (e.g., the word sign), it can be one part or "side" of the object (as in the case of external perception in the usual sense), or even wholly similar to it or to some aspect of it (external phantasy). ("Critical Discussion," 389n.)

Husserl here argues that resemblance is only one possible relation, and not the only one, in which content and object may stand. The case of imagining the 2001 White House Christmas Tree as 'the 2001 White House Christmas Tree' is the real case in point. It shows that the symbolic relation between an immanent content and an extra-mental object, the relation between the content of a particular subject's consciousness and the object of that consciousness, need not be resemblance. Neither 'the city located at the site of the Roman Juvavum' nor 'the birthplace of Mozart,' resembles Salzburg. But this opens a set of important questions about the nature of representational relations. Whether and to what degree are they experienced? If they are, how are they established amongst the contents of consciousness, and how do they interact and influence one another? Are there laws that govern them, and if so how can those be observed and investigated scientifically? Husserl's simple distinction, between an immanent psychological content and an ideal representational content, opens theoretical space for a new set of questions and problems concerning the interface of representations and consciousness. Indeed, whether 'representation' is the best name for the intentional relations between acts of consciousness and extra-conscious objects must itself be drawn into question. While Husserl used the phrase *Repräsentation* in his writings in the 1890s, whether and to what degree the mature philosophical product of this decade (the *Logical Investigations* (1900/01)) presents a representationalism should not be prejudged. At the conclusion of the footnote we may only infer that Husserl's treatment of consciousness would not be a Twardowskian representationalism, that it would not rely on Twardowski's notion of content.

In his overly-long footnote, Husserl did not provide answers to these questions, for which he conceived the entirely new science of *phenomenology*. In the estimation of many persons (Husserl among them), Husserl was unable to provide satisfactory answers to these questions despite a lifetime of further research. It is sufficient here to recover the opening onto them, i.e., that we recognize Husserlian phenomenology beginning in an apparently simple distinction in an unpublished footnote. Just as the distinction between real psychological content and ideal logical content was the backbone for Husserl's critique of psychologism,⁵²

⁵¹ See the objection marked (3) in "Critical Discussion," 389n.

⁵² For an account of the wide philosophical wrangling over psychologism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see Martin Kusch, *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1995). Curiously, Twardowski does not make Kusch's rather extensive bibliography or "lists of the accused" (see fig. 3, 97). This is an odd omission only because Husserl accused Twardowski of "psychologistic elimination" [*psychologistischen Verflüchtigung*] quite frankly at the closing of *Logical Investigations V*. Others have read "psychologism" as an important component of Husserl's criticism of Twardowski. See Barry Smith, *Austrian Philosophy: The Legacy of Franz Brentano* (Chicago: Open Court, 1994), 175; Cavallin, *Content and Object*, 34–42; Wolenski, *Logic and Philosophy*, 41–43, for examples.



and marked the birth of modern logic, the same distinction was the breakthrough to phenomenology, and the hallmark of Husserlian philosophy. It should not surprise us that Husserl appealed to this distinction in grounding his criticism of Twardowski, or that he was forced to conclude his footnote with a promise for “more detailed remarks in a larger publication.”⁵³

I have not attempted to canvass all of the arguments Husserl employed against the Twardowskian position. The first “Critical Discussion” footnote can be read as the definitive treatment of Husserl’s rejection of Twardowski only in its philosophical substance, not in its historical detail. Husserlian arguments about the “doubling of the object” in the picture theory, or the “inauthentic language” involved in distinguishing genuine from intentional existence are perhaps equally significant.⁵⁴ I have not discussed them, in part because they have received adequate attention elsewhere, but also because it is the content distinction that brings us to the nub of the issue.⁵⁵ Husserl’s three points comprise a decisive rejection (if not an outright refutation) of the Twardowskian theory, but it is not clear that Husserl’s reading of Twardowski was accurate. Husserl nowhere distinguished the Twardowski he was arguing against from a philosopher who claims that mental content is a literal picture, a picture bearing photographic similarity to the objects it pictures. Nor did he recognize Twardowski’s key distinction between determining adjectives and modifying adjectives.⁵⁶ That Husserl’s argument might prove decisive, against an even better interpretation of the Twardowskian theory than the one of which he availed himself, is a deep irony of philosophical dialectic.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The significance of Husserl’s criticism of Twardowski for his treatment of consciousness in the *Logical Investigations*, and thus the breakthrough to phenomenology, is a point lost in the standard history of the phenomenological movement. The examination of Twardowskian content has an important payoff insofar as it helps us understand Husserl’s treatment of consciousness in the *Investigations*. It provides a crisper understanding of Husserl’s Brentanian legacy by showing how a single-content theory, the theory designed to shore up ambiguities in Brentano’s position, was amongst the provocations of Husserl’s separation of intentional and psychological content, the distinction paramount for the first phenomenology. Twardowski provides a sharp theoretical contrast for the Husserlian philosophical position: Husserl’s account of mental content, unlike Twardowski’s, is a two-content theory. The Husserlian criticism of Twardowski was meant to high-

⁵³ This reference is undoubtedly to the *Logical Investigations*, and is the final phrase of the critical footnote. See “Critical Discussion,” 389n.

⁵⁴ See Husserl, “Intentional Objects,” 350, 353, respectively. Cf. “Critical Discussion,” 392n.

⁵⁵ Given the opportunity, I would argue that the content distinction is also the key theoretical move for “Intentional Objects,” despite that essay’s wider scope and additional detail. In “Intentional Objects” Husserl writes: *Zu solcher Auffassung* [that Twardowski’s language of “immanent objects” is inauthentic] *drängt uns von vornherein auch die Unterscheidung des idealen von dem psychologischen Gehalt der Vorstellungsakte*. (See Schuhmann’s reconstruction of the text in *Brentano Studien* 3 (1991): 148.) I read: “From the beginning we are pushed to such an interpretation by the distinction of the ideal from the psychological content of the act of presentation.”

⁵⁶ For this point see Wolenski, “Twardowski and the Distinction Between Content and Object,” 33.



light the uniquely phenomenological deficiencies of the single-content approach, its inadequacy as an equation of sensory experience and representational function. Husserl criticized the unitary Twardowskian content for being unable to bear the theoretical burden that contents of consciousness must bear. Husserl did not point to logical inconsistencies in Twardowski's work, but to its inadequacy as an account of the relations amongst immanent contents and mental representation (broadly construed). Husserl's argument against Twardowski was thus one of his first phenomenological arguments.

But the examination of Twardowskian content also has a payoff in its own right. The difference between various kinds of representationalism, and Twardowski's role in the sea change of representational theorizing, are points also lost in the standard history of the philosophy of mind. Twardowski was not unique in treating content as a sign, or quasi-picture. But he was unique in integrating this account with a newer representational idea, i.e., that representation transpires *through* representational content rather than being targeted at it. Twardowski's contents were in certain crucial respects like the ideas of the 17th century. The legacy of modern philosophy is manifested especially in Twardowski's reliance on notions of presentation and resemblance. But for Twardowski content was a symbol that resembled objects but was not itself the object of consciousness. In claiming that it is through content (rather than content itself) that we perceive, Twardowski distinguished himself as one of the first mediator-content representationalists. Yet he still treated content as a symbol in consciousness in a real sense, something that we see, or feel, or otherwise experience. This made his theory neither fish nor fowl; a thing of its own. An important payoff is learning the ways that representational theories must still be distinguished from one another, even today.

A final question to be answered is about the scope of the Husserlian refutation. The reconstruction offered above suggests that Husserl, despite his failure to differentiate Twardowski's position from a more naive picture theory, may have indeed revealed weaknesses in the Twardowskian representationalism. But if this "refutation" is treated as decisive, can it also be generalized to cover any mediator-content representationalism, or does it merely target Twardowski's particular variety, that mediator-content representationalism that is also a resemblance representationalism and that also treats representational content as in consciousness? Husserl's final objection in the "Critical Discussion" footnote clearly targeted Twardowski's reliance upon resemblance. But Husserl's initial two-pronged objection also points to a deficiency in representationalisms more broadly construed. Husserl showed that any representationalism that does not respect the difference between immanent contents (paradigmatically the sensory stream) and the ideal content that individuates the representations themselves, is doomed to phenomenological inadequacy. Husserl's refutation is not merely of resemblance representationalism, but of any mediator-content representationalism that holds that there is one and only one content of consciousness.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ I owe thanks to friends and critics of earlier versions of this paper, including Dick Arneson, Jonathan Cohen, Eleanor Hickerson, P.D. Magnus, Wayne Martin, Don Rutherford, and two anonymous referees for the *Journal*. I especially owe thanks to Wayne Martin.