



Carl Stumpf (1848 - 1936)



Carl Friedrich Stumpf was born on April 21, 1848 in *Wiesentheid* in Franconia, Germany. Stumpf's intellectual biography is rich and complex owing to his lengthy university career that lasted more than 50 years, his academic achievements, and his philosophical work, including his supervision of Husserl's habilitation thesis in Halle in 1887. Stumpf is also known as the founder of the Berlin Institute of Psychology, which gave birth to Gestalt psychology whose main adherents were, among others, his students W. Köhler, K. Koffka, W. Wertheimer and K. Lewin. Founder of the Phonogram Archive in Berlin, now under the protection of UNESCO, Stumpf is also considered to be one of the initiators of comparative musicology as well as a pioneer in ethnomusicology. He held positions in the philosophy departments at the Universities of Göttingen, Würzburg, Prague, Munich and Halle, before obtaining a professorship at the University of Berlin, where he was also rector in 1907-1908. His two main sources of inspiration in philosophy were Franz Brentano, of whom he was the first student in Würzburg, and Hermann Lotze, who in Göttingen supervised his doctoral thesis on Plato (1868) and his habilitation thesis on mathematical axioms (1870).

From his two mentors, Brentano and Lotze, Stumpf inherited a marked interest in the history of philosophy. This interest was not strictly historiographical; Stumpf's point of departure was Brentano's theory of the four phases in the history of philosophy, and he worked out his own philosophy of history. Brentano's thinking on the history of philosophy partly explains Stumpf's repeated criticisms of Kantianism throughout his work. Stumpf's first address as Rector of the University of Berlin in 1907 was entitled "Renaissance of Philosophy," in which he applied his philosophy of history to the nineteenth century. Other than his *Raumbuch*, the book that gave Stumpf a certain renown in psychology was *Psychology of Sound*. This book dealt with phenomena related to the perception of sounds, specifically with judgments caused by sounds. In the essay "On the Classification of Sciences" Stumpf also addressed the issue of the status of philosophy and its specific tasks in comparison with other sciences. What Stumpf calls phenomenology in his two Academy treatises of 1906 is a field of study to which he dedicated many works, from his early investigation of the origin of spatial perception up to his 1926 book on vowels and phonetics. Stumpf first introduced the notion of formation [*Gebilde*] in 1902 in order to characterize the specific contents of functions or what he also called the objective correlates of a psychical function.

The structural relationship between psychical functions and the hierarchy within the domain of simple and complex functions obeys what Stumpf refers to as "laws of structure" between parts or aspects of a whole. To these *Grundverhältnisse* or fundamental relations belong, among others, the concepts of analogy, equality, and fusion that Stumpf examines succinctly in the second volume of *Tonpsychologie*.

One of the questions to which Stumpf paid particular attention was that of psychophysical relations. In his studies on Spinoza and in his compilation entitled "Body and Soul," Stumpf criticized the theories of



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parallelism (despite its dominance at the time) and interactionism, which recognizes the causal action of bodily processes on the psychical and vice versa.

Mention should also be made of Stumpf's publications on the relation between logic and the theory of probabilities, and his research pertaining to the elaboration of a theory of induction. He claimed that the application of probability concepts does not involve any presuppositions on the external world and on the law of causality, for the calculus of probability is purely *a priori* and is derived solely from the concept of probability itself. In an article published in 1891, under the title "Psychology und Erkenntnistheorie", Stumpf criticized the Kantians, who tried to liberate the theory of knowledge from psychology, as well as psychologists who claimed to reduce the theory of knowledge and philosophy to psychology. According to Stumpf's critique, the neo-Kantian argument against psychologism was that psychology could never lead to the knowledge of "general and necessary truths" and that we can even ignore it altogether since, as Kant argued in the first *Critique*, the sources of knowledge lie in *a priori* forms of intuition and thought. This form of anti-psychologism could therefore be described as metaphysical in the same sense as the postulate of an empty space. Stumpf recognized the value of the Kantian's objections directed against psychologism, including the normative nature of laws, but he argued that it was wrong to deny any contribution made by psychology to the theory of knowledge.

Although psychology is essential to a theory of knowledge, its field of study differs significantly from the latter. By psychology, Stumpf understood the science of psychical functions; for example acts of judgment whose contents are states of affairs, which is the main topic of logic. In his posthumous work *Erkenntnislehre*, Stumpf claimed that the task of descriptive psychology differed from that of the theory of knowledge in that it studies the origin of concepts while the theory of knowledge's main task is questioning the origin and justification of knowledge, not the physiological causes, but the contents of acts (of judgment) and their relations to thought. Stumpf's position on justification is akin to that of Brentano, and it is based on the evidence of inner perception, a position that was severely criticized by M. Schlick in his *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre*.

In 1897, Stumpf published two historical treatises on musicology: one on the concept of consonance in the Middle Ages and the second on the pseudo-Aristotelian problem of music. Although Stumpf published only one study on aesthetics ("Die Lust am Trauerspiel," 1887), it is this that figures among Stumpf's main theoretical interests. The three studies collected in his book *Gefühl und Gefühlsempfindung* (1928) partly fulfil the abandoned project. In a paper on musical *anbedonia* (1916), Stumpf studies the psychopathological case of a musician suffering from the inability to feel pleasure while listening to music despite his auditory sense not being significantly affected, in order to show that *anbedonia* to musical notes would result in apathy or loss of emotion or pleasure regarding music in general.

In his second address as Rector of the University of Berlin in 1908, Stumpf was opposed to formalism and moral scepticism, and argued for an ethics based on an objective theory of values. Stumpf argued that emotions are passive feelings as opposed to active feelings, which are directed toward a duty, a project, or an intention to be achieved through voluntary actions. At the end of his autobiography, Stumpf confesses that he



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never sought to found a school and that he is grateful to those of his students who pursued their research based on their own plans in the same scientific spirit.

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