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Edited by Christopher Erhard and Tobias Keilling

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# THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF PHENOMENOLOGY OF AGENCY

*Edited by Christopher Erhard and Tobias Keiling*

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# CONTENTS

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	<i>viii</i>
Introduction <i>Christopher Erhard and Tobias Keiling</i>	1
<b>PART I</b>	
<b>Important Figures: From Brentano to Tengelyi</b>	<b>5</b>
1 Franz Brentano's critique of free will <i>Denis Seron</i>	7
2 Phenomenology of willing in Pfänder and Husserl <i>Karl Mertens</i>	15
3 Alexander Pfänder's phenomenology of motivation <i>Genki Uemura</i>	29
4 Scheler's phenomenology of freedom and his theory of action <i>Eugene Kelly</i>	41
5 The intentionality and positionality of spontaneous acts: Adolf Reinach's account of agency <i>Francesca De Vecchi</i>	53
6 Dietrich von Hildebrand on the will and intentional agency <i>Alessandro Salice</i>	67

## Contents

7	The varieties of activity: Hans Reiner's contribution <i>Christopher Erhard</i>	79
8	Martin Heidegger: from fluid action to <i>Gelassenheit</i> <i>Sacha Golob</i>	96
9	Edith Stein: psyche and action <i>Antonio Calcagno</i>	110
10	Action in the phenomenology of Alfred Schütz <i>Michael Barber</i>	121
11	Determined to act: on the structural place of <i>acting</i> in Sartre's ontology of subjectivity <i>Simone Neuber</i>	134
12	Emmanuel Levinas: freedom and agency <i>Michael L. Morgan</i>	147
13	Hannah Arendt: plural agency, political power, and spontaneity <i>Marieke Borren</i>	158
14	Merleau-Ponty and agency <i>Thomas Baldwin</i>	175
15	Paul Ricœur: a phenomenological hermeneutics of meaningful action <i>Timo Helenius</i>	189
16	<i>Operari Sequitur Esse</i> : Hermann Schmitz's attitudinal theory of agency, freedom, and responsibility <i>Henning Nörenberg</i>	208
17	Hubert Dreyfus: skillful coping and the nature of everyday expertise <i>Justin F. White</i>	219
18	Life is an adventure: László Tengelyi's phenomenology of action <i>Tobias Keiling</i>	235

<b>PART II</b>	
<b>Systematic Perspectives</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Phenomenology of Agency 1: General Issues</b>	<b>263</b>
19 On the satisfaction conditions of agentive phenomenology: a dialogue <i>Terry Horgan and Martine Nida-Rümelin</i>	264
20 <i>Ambulo!</i> : structures of phenomenology and ontology in action <i>David Woodruff Smith</i>	300
21 Will-power: essentially embodied agentive phenomenology, by way of O'Shaughnessy <i>Robert Hanna</i>	314
22 The phenomenology of agency and the cognitive sciences <i>Shaun Gallagher</i>	336
<b>Phenomenology of Agency 2: Aspects of Agency</b>	<b>351</b>
23 The phenomenology of free agency <i>Galen Strawson</i>	352
24 The phenomenology of rational agency <i>Roberta De Monticelli</i>	362
25 Acting, choosing, and deliberating <i>John J. Drummond</i>	376
26 Involuntariness: actions and their context <i>Günter Figal</i>	388
27 Moral experience: its existence, describability, and significance <i>Uriah Kriegel</i>	398
<i>Index</i>	415



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# INTRODUCTION

*Christopher Erhard and Tobias Keiling*

The stimulus for editing this volume on the “phenomenology of agency” can be traced back to what Terry Horgan, John Tienson, and George Graham wrote in 2003:

In philosophy of mind... there has been a wide-spread, and very unfortunate, tendency to ignore the phenomenology of doing altogether – and to theorize about human agency without acknowledging its phenomenology at all, let alone seeking to accommodate it. It is time to get beyond this major philosophical blindspot.

*(Horgan/Tienson/Graham 2003: 332)*

The first challenge for an attempt to overcome this blindness, however, is to say more about what the desired addition to the theory of action is since there are at least three meanings associated with “phenomenology”. First, the term can be used as an *historical* designation to refer to a philosophical tradition founded by Edmund Husserl which is still alive today. Second, there is the *methodological* sense, according to which “phenomenology” refers to a certain way of philosophizing. Importantly, and with a view to the history of the phenomenological tradition in particular, there are several methodological ideas that may all be phenomenological in spirit but are by no means synonymous or equivalent. Just to mention some of them: “saving the appearances”, “returning to the things themselves (*Sachen selbst*)”, “describing the essential structures of lived-experiences (*Erlebnisse*)”, “theorizing from the first-person perspective”, “letting something be seen”, “intentional analysis”, “intuiting essences”, “constitutive analysis”, “transcendental analysis”, “hermeneutics of facticity”, “analysis of the normativity of meaning”, “eidetic variation”.

Clearly, different approaches to the problem of human agency emerge relative to these ideas that have been associated with “phenomenology” as a philosophical method, and it is quite unclear how they relate. For instance, the attempt to identify essential, “eidetic” structures of agency can be associated with but does not follow by necessity from a methodological preference for the “first-person perspective”, and although these ideas have as a matter of historical fact been combined by authors such as Husserl, argument would be needed to show why a phenomenological methodology should include these two distinct ideas. Although often taken as self-evident, the relation between the historical and the methodological implications of “phenomenological” philosophy becomes the more controversial the closer one

looks. In particular, it cannot do to concentrate on merely one author as representative of “phenomenology” in the historical and the methodological sense.

To further complicate matters, a third, weaker and not necessarily related meaning must be distinguished. According to this *experiential* sense of “phenomenology of agency”, the term refers to an agentive phenomenal dimension, the “what-it-is-likeness” of performing an act or action, if such can be distinguished. This is the sense in which Horgan, Tienson, and Graham are using the term in passage quoted earlier. Although there is clearly a connection between what they require of a philosophical account of agency and the starting point of many accounts of phenomenological method, to specify this connection is a related, but different task, as is working to this end with the help of authors from the phenomenological tradition. All chapters of this volume in one way or another relate to at least one of these senses of the term “phenomenology”, but it should not be assumed that the term is used synonymously or equivalently. Editing this collection, we rather hope to highlight the range and diversity of approaches to human agency that are phenomenological in one sense or another, even if this entails showing that the question as to a positive and definite proposal for how to understand phenomenology is still an open issue. We would expect this volume to stir rather than settle a discussion of that question.

There are two further goals for this volume, associated more closely with its two parts. First, we wish to portray the richness of phenomenological accounts of human agency. It is for this reason that perhaps little-known phenomenologists such as Alexander Pfänder, Edith Stein, Adolf Reinach, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Hans Reiner are also covered in the chapters of the first part. Because these authors worked in the first decades of the 20th century, recognizing that they have made substantial contributions to the question of agency in their own right modifies a received view according to which the phenomenological tradition only began to take human agency seriously when more “enactivist” philosophers such as Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Paul Ricœur entered the stage. Quite the contrary: not only did Husserl work extensively on the notion of action (*Handlung*) and related lived-experiences such as volitions, strivings, and intentions; many of his early followers developed succinct analyses of the realm of human activity.

In this vein, one important aim of Part I of our collection (*Important Figures: From Brentano to Tenggelyi*) is to challenge Uriah Kriegel’s recent claim that “the golden decade of conative phenomenology ... arrives only in the French Philosophy in the 1940s” (Kriegel 2013: 538). As scholars have become increasingly aware through more recent editions and translations of Husserl and his first-generation followers, an earlier “golden era” of conative and agentive phenomenology already took place roughly between the publication of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (1900/1) and 1927, when Heidegger’s *Being and Time* was published. Engaging with more recent discussions and basic questions concerning human agency, the chapters in Part I show that the history of phenomenology is not a mausoleum of dead ideas and thinkers but occasion for a fruitful dialogue with the past.

Second, Part II of our collection (*Systematic Perspectives*) gathers papers by eminent scholars with quite different backgrounds all of whom make use of at least one of the three notions of “phenomenology” in their work. In this way, we want to underline that a phenomenological approach is relevant, if not indispensable in the treatment of fundamental problems in the philosophy of action. While the papers in roughly the first half of this second part focus on general issues concerning the phenomenology of action, the contributions in the second section address specific aspects or dimensions of human agency such as freedom, rational action, deliberation, choice, and morality.

## Introduction

Some of the contributors to this Handbook also participated in a conference entitled “Phenomenology in Action” that took place in 2016 at the University of Munich (LMU). We would like to thank the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) and the *Münchener Universitätsgesellschaft* (MUG) for funding this conference. Moreover, we would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their help during the evaluation process of the contributions. We also want to thank the contributors for all the work they have put into this project and also for their patience. Finally, we thank Tony Bruce and Adam Johnson from Routledge who were invaluable in realizing this volume.

Christopher Erhard, Munich  
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## PART I

# Important Figures

From Brentano to Tengelyi



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# 1

## FRANZ BRENTANO'S CRITIQUE OF FREE WILL

*Denis Seron*

The German philosopher Franz Brentano is usually portrayed not only as one of the founding fathers of the so-called phenomenological tradition but also as having played a significant role in the history of contemporary ethics, through his theory of value and will. In spite of this, Brentano offered no proper theory of action in the vein of later attempts by direct or indirect followers. His ethics is basically about feelings, and feelings can be ethically right or wrong even if they intrinsically involve no reference to action. This is so even in the case of desire: for example, you can desire that the weather gets warmer (Montague 2017: 113). However, Brentano's account of volitions does make reference to action.<sup>1</sup> Insofar as Brentano bequeathed us a fully developed theory of the will of his own, it can be said that he indirectly contributed to the theory of action. This is particularly true of his critique of free will, which this chapter aims to discuss and explore.

Brentano intended to investigate free will in the fifth of the six planned books of the *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, devoted to emotion and will (Brentano 1924: 1, engl. trans.: xxvii, 1925: 110, ftn., engl. trans.: 254) – a book which, unfortunately, he never wrote. Most of Brentano's reflections on this topic are found in Part 3 of his 1876–1894 Vienna lectures on practical philosophy that were posthumously published as *The Foundation and Construction of Ethics* by Franziska Mayer-Hillebrand. Other relevant sources include the second volume of the *Psychology* and the 1889 lecture *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*.

Before beginning, three points should be underlined. First, Brentano considers the will neither as a sufficient nor even as a necessary condition for freedom: there can be volitions that are not free as well as free acts – for example “the pangs of remorse over an earlier transgression, malicious pleasure, and many other phenomena of joy and sorrow” – that are not volitions (Brentano 1925: 110–111; engl. trans.: 254–255). Second, the problem of freedom, as Brentano sees it, has to do with time and causation. As such, it belongs to genetic rather than to descriptive psychology.<sup>2</sup> Third and finally, Brentano is interested in the freedom of will rather than freedom of action. In his Vienna lectures on ethics, he makes a distinction between the *actus a voluntate imperatus* and the *actus elicitus voluntatis* (Brentano 1952: 235; engl. trans.: 147).<sup>3</sup> The former is the action that you desire to bring about; the latter is your act of will itself. As we will see, Brentano's extended discussion of the determinism–indeterminism debate is mostly about the *actus elicitus voluntatis*.

## Determinism and empiricism

The most striking feature of the mature Brentano's approach to free will is its uncompromising determinism.<sup>4</sup> A crucial aspect of this determinism is what could be called Brentano's "actualism" – an epistemological view which follows from his radical empiricism (another aspect, his so-called necessitarianism, will be considered later on). At first glance, it seems natural to think that the free will issue has to do with the possibility or impossibility to act or will otherwise than we actually do. Our will is said to be free insofar as we could, at least in some cases, want to act differently. But Brentano rejects this idea – which he attributes to Descartes (Brentano 1952: 242; engl. trans.: 151). The reason for this is that, at a more general level, he considers reference to possible events incompatible with his empiricism. Thus, he heavily criticizes how John Stuart Mill appeals to "possibilities" in order to dispense with the non-empirical assumption of real things beyond appearances (Brentano 1930: 130; engl. trans.: 77).

In his critique of indeterminism, Brentano repeatedly emphasizes that, since merely possible volitions are not given in experience, no empirical argument can support the indeterminist's principle of alternative possibilities:

It is just as impossible for the determinists to perceive that we cannot do otherwise as for the indeterminists to perceive that we can. Only concrete facts can be perceived; not possibilities, impossibilities, or necessities.

*(Brentano 1952: 269; engl. trans.: 167)*

The indeterminist contends that we are not determined to will this or that, and that this indetermination of the will is empirically evident. In other words immediate consciousness, that is, inner perception, tells us that (at least when the opposite motives are of equal weight) we are able to will the opposite of what we are willing now. To this, Brentano objects that "we can only perceive what is actual, not what is merely possible" (Brentano 1952: 246; engl. trans.: 154). Knowledge of possibility is derivative, that is, acquired on the basis of the experience of what is actual. But how could the indeterminist validly infer that she can will non-A from her experience that she wills A?

In the same vein, an argument in favor of indeterminism may be that "our will occasionally withstands a passionate desire with resolution and energy, but then leaves off the battle in a state of exhaustion, only to renew its resistance after a pause" (Brentano 1952: 251; engl. trans.: 156). In such cases, it seems that the will is not determined, but resists motives that would determine it if it didn't resist them. Brentano's objection to this argument is that no experience can ever support it and hence that it is purely fictional. What does the indeterminist mean when she says that the will struggles against desires? She cannot have in view here the (present) act of will, for the act of will must come after the motives and thus does not exist yet. Does "the will" denote the ability to will? The ability to will is not the sort of thing that can act or offer a resistance to anything: "It is simply a potentiality." Hence, Brentano concludes, the correct interpretation is not that the will battles against the motives, but that "one motive battles against another."<sup>5</sup>

Two points should be noted before we move into a closer discussion of Brentano's determinism. First, Brentano constantly assumes that, if the free will dispute makes sense, then it can and must be resolved on the basis of experience alone. It is worth noticing that the same concern prompted Brentano to warn against the use of abstract phrasings such as "I have overcome my passion" or "My inclination to do my duty overcame my leanings towards

pleasure.” Because abstracts are no more than fictions, we should say instead: “One part of myself gained a victory over another part of myself” (Brentano 1952: 251; engl. trans.: 156). Second, Brentano’s empirical approach to free will does not involve abandoning all talk of dispositions as nonsensical. The key point is rather that, since habits and inclinations cannot be perceived, but only derived from perceptual experience (Brentano 1968: 119, 238–239; engl. trans.: 93, 172), they have no (empirical) reality except insofar as they function as actual motives for actual actions.<sup>6</sup>

### Brentano’s demonstration of determinism

Brentano provides a detailed demonstration of determinism in his Vienna lectures on ethics. The issue at stake concerns the will rather than action. By determinism, Brentano means the view that the will is causally determined. Thus, he seems to take it for granted that, within certain limits that are fixed by internal and external conditions, the *actus a voluntate imperatus* is free (Brentano 1952: 235 ff.; engl. trans.: 147 ff.). In short: you can do what you want, within certain limits. Brentano’s contention is that not the willed action, but the will itself is causally determined. A second point to keep in mind is that the determinism–indeterminism dispute is not about freedom in general, but only about freedom in the sense of being “free from necessity” (Brentano 1952: 235; engl. trans.: 147). The question is whether the *actus elicited voluntatis* – the act of will – is “necessarily determined,” that is, caused in such a way that its cause is not the will itself and that it makes it necessary for it to be so and so.

The third part of the Vienna lectures is devoted to establishing successively that indeterminism is very improbable (Brentano 1952: 276 ff.; engl. trans.: 172 ff.), that it lacks explanatory power (Brentano 1952: 279 ff.; engl. trans.: 173 ff.), and that it is necessarily false. I shall here restrict myself to the final argument.

Brentano distinguishes between an extreme and a moderate form of indeterminism. The former is the view that the will simply has no cause. The latter holds that the will has no cause that makes it necessary (Brentano 1952: 267; engl. trans.: 166). The moderate indeterminist admits that the will may be determined, but denies that it is determined *necessarily* (Brentano 1952: 283; engl. trans.: 175). In Brentano’s view, both extreme and moderate indeterminism thus defined involve the assumption of an “absolute accident,” that is, of something that is not necessarily determined. Brentano’s aim is to demonstrate that this assumption is self-contradictory (Brentano 1952: 281 ff.; engl. trans.: 174 ff.). His argument takes the form of a *reductio ad absurdum* and runs as follows:

- 1 As an empiricist, Brentano requires his determinism as well as his critique of indeterminism to be empirically grounded. If determinism holds that the will is causally determined, then necessary causal relations must be somehow accessible to experience. Let us first consider causality. Brentano agrees with Hume that *outer* experience does not make us directly acquainted with anything such as causation, and hence that physical causality is no more than a relation of temporal antecedence between events. However, unlike Hume, he claims that we do experience causal relations in *inner* perception. Brentano cites inference and will as examples of such relations (Brentano 1952: 283; engl. trans.: 175). Your act of drawing a conclusion based on premises is caused by previous acts of judgment; your act of willing something as a means is caused by your act of willing the end it is a means to.
- 2 Inner perception teaches us that these causal relations are such that if a process A causes another process B, then B is made necessary by A. A conclusion necessarily follows

from given premises; a volition necessarily derives from other volitions. That is why both are amenable to a priori treatment: volitions are subject to genetic laws that are the “main psychological foundations of ethics”; acts of reasoning are subject to genetic laws that provide the “principal psychological foundations of logic” (Brentano 1925: 67–68, 109; engl. trans.: 224, 253). Since it is conceptually true that the effect *must* take place when the cause occurs, the concept of a non-necessitating cause is self-contradictory. Therefore, “moderate indeterminism contradicts itself when it says that motives are causes that can bring about acts of will, but need not necessarily do so” (Brentano 1952: 283; engl. trans.: 175).

- 3 Accordingly, the only option left to the indeterminist is to endorse the stronger view that the will has no cause whatsoever, namely extreme indeterminism. But Brentano claims to demonstrate that this latter view, too, involves contradiction. More generally, Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason – the “law of causality” to the effect that it is impossible for something to exist out of nothing – is an analytic truth. Brentano’s demonstration proceeds (very roughly) as follows (Brentano 1952: 287 ff.; engl. trans. 177 ff., 1970: 137 ff.): (3a) “Something is” is necessarily equivalent to “something is present.” (3b) Necessarily, everything that is (present) is subject to *continuous* temporal changes. In Brentano’s terms, this means that everything that is must be a beginning, an end, or an inner border of a time lapse, and that between beginning and end there must always be some interval, however small: nothing can abruptly begin and end at the same time. (3c) Brentano then asks us to imagine a white dot on a black table, and to suppose that it is contingent absolutely speaking. Then, there is no necessity for the dot to exist, and it is even much more likely to cease to exist, a moment later. But if so, the dot is both beginning and end at the same time – which is assumed to be impossible. Therefore, the concept of an “absolute accident” and hence extreme indeterminism are self-contradictory.<sup>7</sup>
- 4 Since both extreme and moderate indeterminism are necessarily false and are the only possible forms of indeterminism, determinism is necessarily true.

Obviously, the argument is controversial in many respects. First, even supposing that, as claimed in step (2), causality involves necessity, one may object, following Thomas Reid, that motives are not efficient causes and that a motive, by its nature, does not make the motivated action or volition necessary, with the consequence that the agent can be regarded as morally responsible even though determinism is false and her actions and volitions are contingent. Brentano, however, does not take the objection seriously and considers the motive-cause distinction as a sophism:

To be sure, Thomas Reid thought we ought to distinguish between motives and causes, for motives can move us to act, but cannot themselves act. But was this anything more than a mere sophism? If motives impel us to action, they are clearly working in conjunction with other factors; that is, determining along with other factors. Hence, as motives, they are operative causes of the will.

(Brentano 1952: 262; engl. trans.: 163–164)

Second, all of the first three steps are supposed to be intuitively evident on the basis of inner perception. This entails, for Brentano, that they are necessary in virtue of the empirical concepts being used. For example, Brentano views the “law of causality” as an analytic judgment, that is, as deriving from the analysis of concepts abstracted from experience. It is all but clear, however, why inner perception supports the law of causality, or the view that causality involves necessity, and not the indeterminist’s alternative possibilities view.

## An ethics of *Bildung*

An objection Brentano considers crucial is that the determinist runs the risk of falling into a kind of fatalism. What Brentano calls “fatalism” is either the view that actions are entirely independent of the will or the view that actions are dependent on the will but that the will itself is determined by the *character* conceived of as a set of inclinations that are given once for all. Brentano attributes the former – “pure or Asiatic fatalism” – to Oedipus and the latter – “modified fatalism” – to Schopenhauer (Brentano 1952: 261; engl. trans.: 162–163). The problem with fatalism is that it absolves us from any moral responsibility for our actions and thus “throttles all effort and ambition” (Brentano 1952: 245; engl. trans. 153); the will either has no control over actions or is innately determined to will this or that. Since modified fatalism involves the view that the will is necessarily determined, it is tempting to think that the same problem arises for determinism as well. But Brentano claims that the objection does not hold up to scrutiny, or at least that it does not compel us to embrace indeterminism.

In fact, Brentano’s variety of determinism differs not only from pure fatalism by maintaining that actions are dependent on the will but also from modified fatalism in its denial that the character is entirely innate and out of the will’s control. In opposition to both pure and modified fatalism, Brentano claims that “not only our behavior but also our character is partially dependent upon our will” (Brentano 1952: 261; engl. trans.: 163). To recapitulate: pure fatalism is the view that the will does not determine action; modified fatalism holds that the will determines action, that it is determined by the character, and that the character is not determined by the will; Brentano’s determinism holds that the will determines action, that it is determined by the character, and that the character is determined by the will.

Brentano is quite emphatic on this latter point, which he takes to be decisive. In his estimation, the idea that the character is determined by the will is a knock-down argument not only against fatalism, but against indeterminism as well. Indeed, by denying that inclinations causally determine the will, the indeterminist, too, must hold that we have no control over our will and thus that every effort to improve it is useless. Whether determined by immutable inclinations or not determined at all, our will remains something we have no causal influence over. Thus, the agent cannot be held as responsible for her action; she is “not the actor, but merely the stage upon which the act takes place” (Brentano 1952: 280; engl. trans.: 174). In this sense, indeterminism “is the doctrine that the will is not free” (Brentano 1952: 280; engl. trans.: 173–174).

By contrast, Brentano’s view is that, since our will is causally determined by our inclinations, we do possess the power to improve it by improving our inclinations, i.e. our character. This leads him to propose what we may call an ethics of *Bildung*. Determinism, as Brentano sees it, holds not only that the will is determined by motives but also that “it is the necessary result of the circumstances at hand and of our intrinsic disposition, which is constructed primarily by previous exercises of the will” (Brentano 1952: 265; engl. trans.: 165). The underlying idea is this: the will has some influence on the motives that causally determine it; therefore it can indirectly act upon itself through exercise and self-discipline. Taking up Aristotle’s concept of habit as a “second nature” (Brentano 1952: 261; engl. trans.: 163), Brentano claims that it is in our power “to work on our character by forming (*Bildung*) good habits or by improving our natural inclinations” (Brentano 1952: 265; engl. trans.: 165). Of course, such effort towards self-improvement would make no sense if determinism were false, that is, if our character and inclinations did not somehow determine our will and, hence, our actions.

This entails that education as well as all forms of self-improvement through practice must play a prominent role in moral life as Brentano conceives it. For example, asceticism should



not be practiced as an end in itself, but only as a means of learning moderation (Brentano 1952: 384; engl. trans.: 234; also 237–238; engl. trans.: 147).<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Brentano makes a plea for “good manners” as a means to self-improvement:

Good manners can also be regarded as a practice ground; we ought to maintain them even where neglecting them would give no offence – even, indeed, when we are alone. Bear in mind the story of the Englishman who always changed for dinner, even though he was the only white man living among the natives. We ought to take care about our clothing even at home, for such matters should become second nature.

(Brentano 1952: 384–385; engl. trans.: 234–235)

Finally, education is given a central place in Brentano’s account. Indeed, a modified fatalist may object that Brentano’s argument is somehow circular: the effort towards self-improvement itself needs to be willed and thus motivated accordingly, with the consequence that you cannot make such effort unless you already have good inclinations. The objection falls away, however, if good inclinations can be acquired through education. As Brentano puts it, one’s will can influence not only one’s own thoughts and affects but also “the powers of other people” (Brentano 1952: 236; engl. trans.: 147).

### Concluding remarks

To conclude with, Brentano presents his determinism as fully compatible with both the law of causality and the view that we are morally perfectible and responsible for our actions. In fact, his claim is even stronger, since he maintains that determinism is the only way to make sense of our moral perfectibility and responsibility. Brentano proposes an interesting variant of virtue ethics based on the idea of self-improvement. Opposing the view that moral life consists in resisting inclinations that would otherwise cause the agent to act badly, he asks us to conceive of the will as being necessarily determined by inclinations and having to strive actively to improve them through self-discipline.

### Related topics

Chapters 23 (Strawson), 27 (Kriegel).

### Notes

- 1 Cf. Brentano (1925: 115; engl. trans.: 257; Montague 2017: 114): “Every volition or striving in the strict sense refers to an action. It is not simply a desire for something to happen but a desire for something to happen as a result of the desire itself. An act of will is impossible for someone who does not yet know, or at least suspect, that certain phenomena of love and desire directly or indirectly bring about the loved object.” Brentano’s theory of will is well-documented in the literature. See, among recent works, Montague (2017), Kriegel (2017), and Kriegel (2018: Ch. 7). By contrast, there has been very little research on Brentano’s critique of free will. The only study I am aware of is Modenato (1981).
- 2 The distinction between “descriptive” and “genetic” (or “physiological”) psychology is central to Brentano’s epistemology. The latter states laws that apply to the “succession of mental phenomena.” The former’s task is to clarify psychological concepts. See Brentano (1982) and my comments in Seron (2017).
- 3 This distinction is drawn from Aquinas. See *Summa Theologiae*, Part II-1, Quest. 6, Art. 4, and the helpful comments in McNerny (1992: 20 ff.).

- 4 Brentano seems to have embraced some form of indeterminism in his first writings. See Kraus' note in Brentano (1925: 291; engl. trans.: 254). In his later work, he himself presents his view as a form of "determinism." In the contemporary terminology, however, it would be better seen as a form of compatibilism (Kane 1985: 9; Krantz 1999: 265), insofar as it does not deny all moral freedom. Despite his determinism, Brentano actually agrees with the following three theses: (1) the action is free within certain limits, (2) the will is free in the sense of not being subject to compulsion (no one can compel us to will anything), (3) the will is free in the sense of "self-determination," that is, in the sense that "we are not so totally determined by external circumstances that our self is not a causal factor" (Brentano 1952: 236 ff.; engl. trans.: 147 ff.).
- 5 This view bears close similarities with Leibniz's critique of the liberty of indifference (Leibniz 1990: § 47, 195 ff.). Leibniz, like Brentano, claims that we resist our bad inclinations and thus "become masters of ourselves" not by the power of the will, but by "methods and stratagems" that help us enforce other inclinations and give them the upper hand. I thank Basil Vassilicos for this reference.
- 6 Brentano makes this objection to the Freudian unconscious in Brentano (1968: 238–239; engl. trans.: 172): "It is true that some have denied the existence of these unconscious dispositions and have instead postulated unconscious acts which only occasionally re-emerge into consciousness, but this is bad psychology."
- 7 Brentano's indeterminism can be regarded as a consequence of his metaphysical "necessitarianism." Brentano's temporal argument in favor of his necessitarianism poses some technical difficulties that are discussed in Nathan (1971). Its discussion by Nathan is however flawed in some respects, because Nathan ignores the fact that the kind of necessity Brentano actually has in mind is analytic necessity. For discussion on the "law of causality" and its metaphysical or theological implications, see also Janssen (2012: 250 ff.).
- 8 See Brentano's distich in Brentano (1955: 168; engl. trans.: 107): "If you lust after pleasure it stays out of reach: / But it comes on its own if you strive for the best."

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### Further reading

U. Kriegel (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Franz Brentano and the Brentano School* (New York: Routledge, 2017) is a fine collection of essays devoted to all aspects of Brentano’s thought, including his ethics and his theory of the will (chapters 11, 20, and 21). Although somewhat out of date due to recent research advances, D. Jacquette (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) is still useful. Written by a leading figure in the field, U. Kriegel, *Brentano’s Philosophical System: Mind, Being, Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) offers an excellent and in-depth overview of Brentano’s philosophy as a whole (on his theory of the will, see Chapter 7).

## 2

# PHENOMENOLOGY OF WILLING IN PFÄNDER AND HUSSERL

*Karl Mertens*

“We are human beings, freely willing subjects who are actively engaged in our surrounding world, who continuously have a part in shaping it” (Husserl 1989a: 4, translated in Bernet et al. 2005: 157; cf. Husserl 1989a: 24). This is how Husserl, in his first article for the Japanese journal *The Kaizo*, published in 1923, describes human action. Speaking of ourselves as “freely willing subjects” and as “actively engaged in our surrounding world,” Husserl concurs with a traditional view of action, arguing that it is our free will that enables us to actively influence the course of the world. In other words actions are constituted by free will. In the following, I will mainly focus on reflections elaborated by Husserl in 1914 in a section entitled *On the Phenomenology of Will*, which he added to his lecture course on *Basic Questions of Ethics and Value Theory* held in 1908/09 and 1911 (Husserl 1988: 102–125). A major impetus for this section can be traced back to Husserl’s intense interest in Alexander Pfänder’s article *Motives and Motivation*, which was published in 1911. Husserl carefully studied and annotated Pfänder’s article (cf. Schuhmann 1973: 94ff.).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in the *first part*, I begin by sketching the decisive conceptual distinctions that allow us to understand both the similarities and the differences between Husserl’s and Pfänder’s positions. In the *second part*, I address a controversial aspect of Pfänder’s analysis: his assumption that willing “includes the immediate consciousness of self” (Pfänder 1963a: 135, 1967: 22). The *third part* outlines and critically discusses Husserl’s concept of action as realization of the will as developed in his 1914 considerations. In this context, I pinpoint what I consider to be the relevant shortcomings in Husserl’s analysis of willing and acting by discussing some aspects of our experience of action which he seems to neglect and which should instead be integrated into a proper phenomenological account of action.

### **Theory of action as a theory of willing: Husserl’s reading of Pfänder**

Both Pfänder and Husserl analyze the sphere of willing in relation to its temporal structure. Recognizing some crucial and structural temporal differences, they operate distinctions within this sphere. Thus, in contradistinction to the willing directed toward a future action, which Husserl calls “resolution-will” (*Entschlusswille*) or “purpose-will” (*Vorsatzwille*), Husserl refers to the willing that is constitutive of the execution of a current action as

“action-will” (*Handlungswille*) (Husserl 1988: §§ 15f., pp. 106ff.). Regarding the willing that temporally precedes the action, “purpose” (*Vorsatz*) and “resolution” (*Entschluss*) describe different relations between the action-will and the willing that actually precedes the constitutive willing of an action. As a “purpose,” the willing appears as a sudden act referring to a future action. However, if the willing is preceded by a process of reflection, the so-called “deliberation of the will” (*Willenserwägung*), then the willing can be characterized as a “resolution” (*Entschluss*) directed toward a future action or, if conflicting possibilities are rejected, as a “decision” (*Entscheidung*) (cf. Husserl 1988: 111).

A somewhat similar distinction, albeit formulated in different terms, can be found in Pfänder, who distinguishes “action of willing” (*Willenshandlung*) and “act of willing” (*Willensakt*). The act of willing, also described as the “act of volitional proposing,” is directed toward a future action. The action of willing, the “volitional execution of what is willed” (Pfänder 1963a: 126, 1967: 15), instead indicates for Pfänder a willing that cannot be separated from the execution of the action.<sup>2</sup> Whereas action, according to Husserl, necessarily implies an action-will (which more or less corresponds to Pfänder’s action of willing), Husserl’s purpose-will or resolution-will don’t necessarily have to precede the action. In contrast, Pfänder’s act of willing precedes the action of willing (cf. Pfänder 1963a: 134, 1967: 21), even though the action of willing possibly may follow “immediately, without hesitation, upon the act of willing” (cf. Pfänder 1963a: 126, 1967: 15). Therefore, we can say that, according to Pfänder, an action of willing is based on an act of willing. Besides, a purpose, resolution, or act of willing do not need to be performed at all.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, at least in Husserl’s phenomenology of willing, a form of willing that is a constitutive condition of action is differentiated from a form of willing that is not a constitutive condition of action. It is for this reason, according to Husserl, that also the willing directed toward a future action can only be carried out by the decisive action-will, directly linked to the action. Therefore, in terms of a theory of action, the determination of the action-will is the essential point, since every action is constituted as an action through the present realization of an action-will. By contrast, Pfänder primarily focuses on the determination of the psychic sphere of the willing. In this context, Pfänder emphasizes the character in virtue of which willing is fundamentally separated from “mere strivings and counterstrivings” (Pfänder 1963a: 133, 1967: 20). Accordingly, we can distinguish a phenomenological approach to willing as an autonomous phenomenon of consciousness (in Pfänder) and a phenomenological approach to willing as *constituens* of human action (in Husserl).

These different interests in the sphere of willing can also be related to a remarkable terminological divergence: both Pfänder and Husserl are using the term “act of willing” (*Willensakt*). However, while Pfänder in his fundamental distinction of acts of willing (*Willensakte*) and actions of willing (*Willenshandlungen*) classifies the willing itself as a form of action, Husserl only makes use of the term “act of willing” (*Willensakt*) within the overall terminological classification of the sphere of acts he is interested in; “act of willing” covers purpose, resolution and action-will (cf. Husserl 1988: 103). Compared with this rather artificial use, when it comes to an explication of the aspects of willing that are constitutive of action, Husserl does not terminologically refer to the willing itself as an act or an action. In fact, willing seems to characterize the action as an action in the first place. Husserl concisely expresses this by terminologically referring to the willing constitutive of action as action-will (*Handlungswille*).

Apart from such differences in the overall conception of Husserl’s and Pfänder’s phenomenology of willing both Husserl’s and Pfänder’s elaborations are of importance for a phenomenological theory of action. Indeed, both investigate the structures of intentionality

which are constitutive for actions, and discussing what is distinctive for both views and possible shortcomings in the overall approach may help to generally improve the phenomenological account of action.

### The volitive experience – a problem in Pfänder’s analysis

From a methodological point of view, Pfänder and Husserl consider willing to be a phenomenon of subjective experience accessible to descriptive analysis, which is the task of phenomenological reflection. Yet, in turning to Pfänder’s studies on acts of willing, one encounters at first glance a highly problematic description of the phenomenon of willing. According to Pfänder, willing “includes the immediate consciousness of self” (Pfänder 1963a: 135, 1967: 22) – i.e. willing means being aware of oneself as the one who is willing, grasping one’s own ego and turning it into the subject of the action that follows the will. Precisely because the ego is the subject of a willful action, and thus because the action relevantly depends on the ego, willing should be distinguished from striving. This is expressed by Pfänder in the following passage:

The act of willing (*Willensakt*) refers to one’s own ego. If . . . it is to be a genuine act of willing, then one’s own ego must not be merely thought about but must itself be immediately grasped and must be made a subject referent of a practical proposing. Thus willing, but not striving, includes the immediate consciousness of self.

(Pfänder, 1963a: 135, 1967: 22)

This definition of willing given by Pfänder seems to be far too ambitious, for willing doesn’t necessarily imply explicit self-consciousness. If, for instance, I want to get bread in the morning, I am instantly aware of the objective of my voluntary action (which is to get some bread). However, a rather exceptional context would be required for me to become somewhat aware – not to mention explicitly aware – of *myself* and *my* willing of the project. For instance, the family morning chaos leads me to forget about what I actually want (*will*), or rather, wanted (*wollte*). In that case, I could remind myself and recall what was actually willed. But even in such cases, I’m not necessarily conscious of *myself*. More specific situations will be required. On the way to the bakery, I might meet a friend and explain to her why I absolutely want to buy the bread at the organic bakery. In doing so, I may become aware of myself as someone who does not simply want to buy some bread, but at the same time wants to be ecologically aware. Self-awareness does not generally come along with volitive experience, but is manifest only in forms of more distinct higher-order willing.<sup>4</sup>

When Pfänder considers self-awareness to be an integral moment of willing, at best he can refer to very specific experiences, whose impact on a philosophical analysis of willing, i.e. an analysis interested in *general* structures of willing, should be questioned. However, Pfänder does indeed care about the determination of such general structures. This becomes obvious with regard to the systematic role that the recourse to self-awareness plays in Pfänder’s phenomenology of willing. For it is self-consciousness – as the quoted passage indicates (cf. Pfänder 1963a: 135, 1967: 22) – that provides the decisive criterion for the distinction between acts of willing (*Willensakte*) and strivings (*Strebungen*). However, with this determination of willing, Pfänder seems to disregard his own concept of a carefully descriptive, phenomenological-psychological analysis of the phenomena in question.<sup>5</sup>

The outlined criticism is backed up by Husserl’s own annotations of Pfänder’s article, where he writes: “Is it appropriate that *in every actual ‘I will’*, the I itself must be an object?

An actual ‘self-consciousness’ must be accomplished (as Pfänder states)? . . . I can will, just as I can judge without thematically ‘objectifying’ the I.”<sup>6</sup> In line with this thought, Husserl points out that I become aware of myself in and through an act of reflection, explicitly reminding myself – even in a linguistic form – that it is me who wants (*will*) this or that. In this context, the self-consciousness of a willing person – in most cases retrospectively – becomes thematic and explicit in situations of communicative self-assurance as described earlier.<sup>7</sup> That in willing the “I” is not objectified, according to Husserl, does not mean that willing is not experienced by an “I.” However, this is a common feature of every kind of act-consciousness and its modalities and does not uniquely characterize willing:

The peculiarity of willing lies of course in its *entanglement with the I (Ich-Heringezogenheit)*. But first of all, this is a *common feature* of (*gegenüber*) all ‘acts’ in their concise meaning. . . . There are different ‘positionings’ (*Setzungen*) and ‘sentences’. And there are fundamental theses and modalities of fundamental theses everywhere.<sup>8</sup>

However, looking at Pfänder’s statement in the context of other remarks, one could come to the conclusion that Pfänder himself might even basically agree with the objection.<sup>9</sup> The method he is aiming at in his *Phenomenology of Willing* is described as a “‘subjective’ method.” Hence, Pfänder’s analysis refers to the consciousness of the willing subject. But for Pfänder, this method does not amount to an introspective approach that requires the possibility of a “direct observation of the immediately experienced” (Pfänder 1963a: 7; own translation). The self-observation in question rather refers to a remembered consciousness. Consequently, instead of referring to an introspective approach, Pfänder rather refers to a “retrospective method.”<sup>10</sup> In doing so, he remains consistent with Husserl’s concept (mainly explicated in the 1920s) of the generally retrospective character of reflection.<sup>11</sup> In the light of such a retrospective self-attention, we can also understand the following observation made by Pfänder: “The act of willing . . . is an act of self-determination in the sense that the ego is both the subject and the object of the act” (Pfänder 1963a: 135, 1967: 23). This is not to imply that the willing subject, while performing her act of willing, is aware of the self-centered character of its willing, but only to show that it can retrospectively become aware of this reference to herself:

In this context, ‘consciousness of willing’ is not to be understood as the *knowledge* of the fact that one now wants (*will*) something, but as the state of consciousness that is given when someone wants (*will*) something, irrespective of the fact whether s/he states or notes that s/he wants (*will*) this now.<sup>12</sup>

(Pfänder 1963a: 6; own translation)

Pfänder even goes one step further. In conjunction with the earlier quoted passage taken from *Motives and Motivation*, he elaborates that willing is linguistically expressed in sentences with the structure “I will P” or “I will not P.”<sup>13</sup> From this angle, light can be thrown on the term “subject referent” (*Subjektsgegenstand*), which, in the just outlined critique, has been interpreted as thematic self-consciousness. This, however, is a misunderstanding – at least if one consults Pfänder’s 1921 *Logic*. In this context, the term “subject referent” gains significance in connection with the analysis of the judgment (*Urteil*) and the respective state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) (cf. Pfänder 1963b: 38ff.).<sup>14</sup> With that in mind, the self-consciousness which is linked to willing can be taken as subject referent from an analysis of sentences about willing. Regarding the ontological state of affairs underlying the logical judgment expressed in



a sentence like “I will P” or “I will not P,” the I has to be understood as subject referent which pronounces its willing. Therefore, regarding the reference to an explicit self-consciousness, the (earlier quoted) claim that “willing . . . includes the immediate consciousness of self” (Pfänder 1963a: 135, 1967: 22) should be carefully interpreted. However, this does not change the crucial point: according to Pfänder, willing is essentially connected with the possibility of a practical and free self-determination of the willing person. And concerning this point, Husserl fully conforms with Pfänder as, for instance, becomes clear in the passage from *Kaizo* quoted at the beginning (Husserl 1989a: 4; cf. Husserl 1989a: 24; cf. Ubiali 2010: 245ff.).

This consideration can be understood as phenomenological, as long as the linguistic reference is interpreted in a heuristic sense. In this sense, Pfänder makes some occasional remarks on the meaning of our common speech for phenomenological-psychological analysis, when he considers linguistic expressions as a heuristic starting point for the examination of consciousness. However, according to Pfänder, what is linguistically expressed must be exposed in the phenomenological analysis of consciousness (cf. e.g. Pfänder 1963a, 6, 140, 1967: 26). How we linguistically express our willing, therefore, reflects a phenomenological state of affairs which is supposed to be revealed as a fact of consciousness by a retrospective and linguistically directed analysis. For this to succeed, the memory and verbalization of an experience must, for its part, be measured by the remembered and the verbalized, that is to say, by the experience itself. This basically seems possible when we admit that we can even criticize the adequacy of a retrospective linguistic determination of our willing, if an adequate linguistic expression of our pre-linguistic experience is not or not yet available.

This possibility shows that what is outlined by means of memory and verbalization cannot simply be identified with our pre-reflexive experience. Retrospective attention, reflection, and linguistic expression are not sufficient when we want to explore our actions and willing. In that respect, Pfänder’s recourse to self-consciousness is under-determined from the phenomenological point of view; it only designates a place holder for a more precise determination of the experience of willing. Conversely, Pfänder’s methodological reflections point to the difficult claim of a purely descriptive phenomenological analysis, particularly when willing is concerned. Apparently, what is elaborated in phenomenological reflection is not merely a description of our experience. Rather, phenomenological reflection establishes something, creates its object, especially if – which is often the case with phenomenologists – it is emphatically understood as distinguished, original, or even actual experience. Husserl’s elaborations on the constructive nature of the analysis of essences or ideas (cf. e.g. Husserl 1959: 218, 245f., 456, 504, 1962: 282, 1970: 304) and particularly Merleau-Ponty’s observations on the phenomenological reflection as a “truly creative act (*une véritable création*)” (Merleau-Ponty 1945: iv, 2005: xi) in the preface of *Phenomenology of Perception* clearly outline this. But nevertheless these approaches are of a phenomenological nature insofar as they enable us to better understand the phenomenal world of our experience. In the following, I will critically discuss the interrelation between a phenomenological-productive reflection and its phenomenal adequacy with a view to Husserl’s elaborations on the phenomenology of willing in more detail.

### **Husserl’s concept of action as realization of the willed and the question of its phenomenal adequacy**

In a brief and concise examination of the difference between willing and wishing, which can be found in his analysis of the sphere of willing from 1914, Husserl claims that the realization of the willed is crucial when studying action from a philosophical point of view:<sup>15</sup> According



to Husserl, wishing cannot be defined as a practical act, or as willing in the broadest sense (Husserl 1988: 103). The wished is known not to be feasible in practical terms. Conversely, the willed is known to be practically realizable in some way – whether it be certainly, probably, possibly, etc. The concept of realizability or feasibility can be specified here if we assume the following: *first*, the willed is to be understood as *being feasible for me, the agent*; willing does not aim for the willed to merely somehow happen, but to happen because of me. *Second*, it is not a question of the actual feasibility of the willed, but rather of me, the acting person, becoming aware of an imagined possibility that I can actualize, i.e. I (the agent) have to be *aware of the willed as feasible* (cf. Husserl 1988: 104). Since I can actually wish for something without willing to realize it, even if I am aware of the fact that I could (actually) realize it, the awareness of the feasibility can only be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the willing.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, *third*, when differentiating between willing and wishing, the meaning of *I am willing to realize something* must be explained. However, this kind of phrasing, in its almost tautological form, does not say much. It can rather be interpreted as a kind of blank space, to be filled by a more precise analysis of willing. And *fourth*, willing and wishing, in the actual act of willing, are intertwined in many ways; their differentiation is merely of *heuristic and explanatory importance*. This is not to imply that wishing and willing can be distinguished in every case.<sup>17</sup>

In his reflections on the meaning of the *fiat* Husserl attempts to determine more precisely the characteristic of the willing that actualizes, mentioned as third point, and with a certain emphasis.<sup>18</sup> He writes:

Consciousness in a way does not say: ‘It will be, and therefore, I want it’ (*‘Es wird sein, und demgemäß will ich es’*); but: ‘Because I want it, it will be.’ (*‘Weil ich es will, wird es sein.’*) In other words, the will pronounces its creative ‘let there be!’ (*‘Es werde!’*). The establishment of the will equals the establishment of the realization. But realization here does not only stand for something becoming real, but making something real, the achievement of realization. But this is something inherently foundational (*Ureigenes*), and its origin lies in the peculiarity of the consciousness of willing, and can only be understood from there.<sup>19</sup>

(Husserl 1988: 107; own translation)

If one wants to know how paradigmatic examples of this type of realization look like, one can think of cases like the following: a person wants to do something and does it. For instance, I want to go to the movie tonight, and then I go to the movie; I want to call someone and then do so. What is to be realized in the near or distant future, toward which the will of a person is directed, is given as the goal of the realization previous to acting. With respect to this goal, the action as realization of the willed can be judged as successful or unsuccessful. Trivially, these examples also illustrate that the realization of every willing directed toward the future, i.e. in Husserl’s notion a purpose or resolution, can be basically jeopardized. Suppose I want to go to the movie, but meet a good friend in the foyer that I haven’t seen for a long time. We decide to have a beer together. This shows that the initial willing can be modified or even revised between the moment we plan and the realization of this plan. According to the interpretation outlined earlier, Husserl agrees. Nevertheless, for Husserl, every action is to be understood as the realization of a willing, more precisely, of an action–will, which is the constitutive moment of the action itself. The decisive realization which is constitutive of the action is therefore to be understood as the immediate realization of the willing. Wherever a modification or revision of the resolution–will or purpose–will is noticeable, we should, for

logical reasons, bring into play an appropriate (new) action-will. For instance, now, I don't want to go to the movie anymore, but go for a beer with my friend.

Since in this case the model of a willing directed toward future action is applied to the case of the current willing, the problem of the explanation of revising and modifying the action shifts to the current voluntary action itself.<sup>20</sup> The relation between action-will and the current action (constituted by the action-will) thus turns into a microscopic copy of the relation between resolution- or purpose-will and future action. It is to be assumed that the action-will that underlies the action takes a temporal-processual course.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Husserl considers the willing of action as a perpetual creative source which from phase to phase, from moment to moment, creates the willed as a current reality. Here, a now is to be marked as the beginning of the creative production and another now is to be marked as the end of the action. Furthermore, by considering the temporal horizons of the past and future of the action as voluntary horizons, i.e. as horizons of the creative production, Husserl is able to describe the realization of the action-will during acting by means of the constant metamorphosis of these horizons. With the initial phase, the future horizon of the action is given as the "creative future" of the yet to be realized. Since every current now of the action passes over into an ever new now, the horizon of the creative production changes. The "creative production" becomes a "creative present," something actually created, and finally turns into a "creative past." By completing the action, the finished action as a whole sinks into ever more pasts. Husserl expresses this specific dynamic of the creative activity passing from one present to another by means of his terminology of intention and fulfillment which he developed in relation to the concept of evidence. In every phase, there is an intention of the will directed toward the creative content of the next phase; at the same time, the former intentions are being fulfilled (cf. Husserl 1988: 111). In this case, the term "intention" (*Intention*) does not only refer to the particular moment of the yet unfulfilled state of being directed toward (something) as it can be found in every intentional act, but it also denotes, as the literal sense of "intention" implies, a voluntary, intentional state of being directed toward the realization of the willed. In this context, the term of fulfillment corresponding to the term of intention designates the active realization of the intention of the will. The individual intentions of the will are being kept together by the continuous unity of the willed action. In this sense, Husserl states:

In every now, the direction of the will and the creative 'Let there be!' pass through the continuity of the moments of the will; with every new current moment of creation, a prior intention of the will, directed toward its content, is being *fulfilled*.

(Husserl 1988: 111; own translation)

This description of the realization of the action-will in the performance of the action undoubtedly seems quite artificial. This could be the case because Husserl is interested in a description of typical characteristics of voluntary action comparable to Weber's ideal type. However, according to the previously outlined concept of phenomenological reflection, we can only judge the phenomenological acceptability or even merely the plausibility of such a construction if we ask ourselves in what way such a theoretical analysis of the will contributes to a better understanding of voluntary action. Well, it seems that there are phenomena of action which can be well understood by way of Husserl's analysis. In order to illustrate this, I'd like to take up an example Searle uses in his book *Intentionality*. Here, Searle describes the action of a skiing beginner who (intentionally) takes a left turn as follows<sup>22</sup>: "For a beginner to make a left turn, he must put his weight on the downhill ski while edging it into the slope,

stem the uphill ski, then shift the weight from left to right ski, etc., all of which are reports of the content of his intentions in action” (Searle 1983: 100). When describing this action by the means Husserl’s phenomenology of willing provides, one will have to distinguish different phases of willing, which are directed toward the individual phases of action. The skier, while taking the left turn, first wants to shift his weight to the downhill ski, and while doing so, his intention of will is already directed toward the execution of the next phase, edging the downhill ski. Moreover, he will be anticipating the further phases of stemming the uphill ski and the shifting of weight. At the moment when his action-will focuses on edging the downhill ski, his intention of will already focuses on stemming the uphill ski, while shifting the weight on the downhill ski is retentionally present to him as a past, voluntarily produced action, etc.

The acting of a beginner who is learning a challenging motion or technique provides a good example for the detailed analysis of willing, going from phase of action to phase of action. Whoever wants to learn a complicated movement such as skiing will oftentimes be explicitly encouraged to structure her action in phases and to carry it out step by step, in a very conscious way. The previously outlined continuum of current phases of willing seems to correspond to the conscious experience of a skiing beginner.<sup>23</sup> However, the consciousness of an untrained individual might just give an example for a lack of clarity and sovereignty in the voluntary action. In the way that the current phase of willing pushes to the fore, the proceeding willing of the next and subsequent action phases vanishes. The skiing beginner, in his/her acting, again and again will be fully oriented by the upcoming partial action. So, while edging the downhill ski, all of his/her effort may be focused on stemming the uphill ski. Especially, if this doesn’t succeed due to his/her insufficient skills s/he may hardly be aware of the proceeding willing which is directed toward the next motion sequences, aiming at finishing the left turn. Given the focus on willing about what is to come next, the skiing beginner will have to revise his/her original willing again and again. The nature of the external conditions as well as his/her insufficient skills will then undermine the sovereign performance of the originally willed action and the willing will be limited to getting back in control of the action. In view of such cases, Husserl’s description of a willing which takes into account several phases of action simply appears to be cognitively overload. What someone intends to do in essential parts depends on the situation and the skills of an agent. Thus, despite the appearance, the action of the beginner, whose willing must be characterized as momentarily due to insufficient control over his/her own action, cannot be considered a suitable example for Husserl’s analysis of willing.

But even looking at the confident willing of a skilled skier doesn’t provide a better example for Husserl’s analysis. Compared with the narrowness of the willing in the case of the beginner, it is now the vastness and complexity of the willing that cannot be covered by Husserl’s analysis. Hence it is unlikely that the willing of the experienced individual is directed toward the step-by-step execution of a left turn, but instead, for example, toward going down the slope by making some elegant turns on the edge. But it is not just a matter of wider phases of action that are characteristic here. The willing of the experienced individual is rather characterized by a fundamental complexity and openness. For instance, the experienced skier, while navigating down the slope, positions himself/herself in front of a less experienced skier and tries to lead him/her down the slope quickly in order to catch the last lift with him/her. At this point, multiple desires conjoin and cannot be separated to gradually pass through individual phases of willing. Occasionally, the experienced skier becomes aware of current phases of action and phases of willing, often when special incidents

require his/her attention and, if necessary, force him/her to modify or even revise his/her willing and acting. Thus, as opposed to the case of a beginner, the confident willing of the experienced individual doesn't turn out to be the execution of a will as a whole passing through different phases, but a complex and basically open form of willing. The complexity and dynamics of such willing and our practical experience cannot be covered sufficiently by the means of Husserl's meticulous analysis of the willing constitutive of the action.

According to Husserl, the action-will which is constitutive of the action is clearly defined with respect to what is willed. The realization of the willing is to be understood as the practical execution of the willed, in relation to which the action is determined as fulfillment of an intention of the will. However, this analysis becomes problematic wherever in the course of the action aspects arise that lead to an understanding of the executed action which characterizes it not just as a mere realization of the willed. If one attempts to understand cases of specification, modification, and revision of a will using the means provided by Husserl's analysis, there is always a critical moment when the former intention of will is being replaced by a new one. Every modification of the will necessarily has the character of an abrupt change, of a new initiative of the will, which cannot be incorporated into the consistent course of action together with the former willing. These difficulties ultimately result from Husserl's neglect of the constitutive significance of situational conditions of acting, which can interfere with initiated action, accentuate it, redefine it or even provide the opportunity for initiatives of new action.

One could object against this interpretation that, according to Husserl, willing as a founded act is dependent on the perception of a situation (cf. Husserl 1988; 109). This is right. And therefore, it is possible to understand by means of Husserl's analysis how the perception of a new situation may influence the willing.<sup>24</sup> However, taking recourse on the structure of intention and fulfillment, an action must in every case be well determined by a corresponding willing or, more precisely, by the "fiat" which is defined by an intention, the willed content, going to be fulfilled in advance. As a consequence of this conceptual frame, every development of willing must be traced back to a concretized, modified, or even revised "fiat" induced by the perception of the situation, providing a new intention going to be fulfilled in advance. However, on the basis of Husserl's analysis, we cannot understand an action lacking a well-defined willing. At best, we understand it as an action merely referring to the intention of a superordinate willing.<sup>25</sup> And if a defined willing is modified or changed, Husserl's analysis is even obliged to introduce a new will constituting a new action. In short following this line, there is no analytic possibility to understand the *unity* of an action which in its process is modified or even revised.<sup>26</sup> The microscopic splitting of the unity of acting in always new moments and phases of willing gets into trouble wherever we modify our willing and acting due to what happens while performing a voluntary action. In this respect, events, bodily behavior, and situations befalling the agent play a constitutive role for the willing of agents, too. Therefore, Husserl's emphatic understanding of human agency by taking recourse on "freely willing subjects" (Husserl 1989a: 4, translated in Bernet et al. 2005: 157) at least must be completed by taking into account the constitutive meaning of aspects of passivity and situatedness which are involved in the constitutive process of shaping an agent's willing. Willing subjects are essentially also affected from what is not under their control.<sup>27</sup>

### **Related topics**

Chapters 3 (on Pfänder), 17 (on Dreyfus), 20 (Smith), 25 (Drummond).

## Notes

- 1 Husserl was engaged in questions of willing and acting also in his later studies, e.g. in the context of his considerations on the lived body (*Leib*) and the person in his *Ideas II* (Husserl 1952, 1989b) or in his explanations on the sphere of mind, feeling, and willing (*Gemüts-, Gefühls- und Willens-sphäre*) in his ethical reflections from 1919 until 1924 (cf. Husserl 1989a, 2004, 2012, and, partly, 2002). In addition and particularly the announced publication of the third volume of *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins* in the Husserliana series will provide illuminative analyses about the active phenomena of willing and acting as well as the passive sphere of willing regarding phenomena like tendency, inclination, striving, or appetite (*Tendenz, Neigung, Streben, Trieb*) (cf. Melle 2015: particularly p. 10). Regarding the relationship and confrontation between Husserl and Pfänder, this chapter, however, is restricted to Husserl's 1914 theory of will because this piece is developed in confrontation with Pfänder's theory of willing. For a more comprehensive study of Husserl's theory of willing cf. Vargas Bejarano (2006).
- 2 Husserl's "resolution" corresponds to Pfänder's "act of choosing" (*Wahlakt*), which can be described as an exceptional case of the act of willing (cf. Pfänder 1963a: 136f., 1967: 23f.).
- 3 The action-will (which is constitutive of the action) is the crucial issue in Husserl (1988: §§ 15 and 16; esp. pp. 107 ff.). On the relationship between purpose and action-will see Husserl (1988: 111); regarding the relation between resolution-will and action-will, see Husserl (1988: 109f., 111f.). There is no explicit reference to be found in Husserl with respect to his phenomenology of willing from 1914, indicating that resolution and purpose can stay unimplemented; however, it seems to me that this factually follows from Husserl's elaborations. In contrast, Pfänder explicitly says that "an act of willing . . . can take place without an action of willing following it immediately or following it at all" (Pfänder 1963a: 126, 1967: 15). In a certain way, the question of the relation between action and action of willing remains unanswered. However, even within the scope of Pfänder's phenomenology of willing, it may be assumed that an action usually implies the execution of an action of willing. But Pfänder also uses the notion of an appetite-action (*Triebhandlung*) as an action performed without the will (Pfänder 1963a: 113, 120). So, strictly speaking, there are actions that are not rooted in the will.
- 4 It seems to be no coincidence that examples of the self-consciousness of willing subjects generally imply a self-relation which, in structural respects, corresponds to Frankfurt's (1988) concept of second-order volitions as a necessary condition for personal existence. However, the willing subject can also become aware of herself on the level of a pre-personal self-relation – namely where she becomes aware of her own willing in opposition to the willing of others.
- 5 In contrast to other approaches, "that, in order to consequently stick to their general view, are not afraid to hurt the facts," Pfänder speaks of "piety" "toward the psychic facts" (Pfänder 1963a: 5; own translation). At a different point he mentions that "at first, the phenomena of consciousness must be recognized completely and thoughtfully" (Pfänder 1963a: 10; own translation).
- 6 This quotation as well as the following quotation is to be found in manuscript A VI 3/7, cited from Schuhmann (1973: 108f.; own translation). A similar critique of Pfänder can be found in Stein 1964: 96f., particularly 97, Stein 2016: 123ff., particularly 125:

We do not completely agree with this analysis, either. The object of volitions is what is willed or what the will posits. In experiential terms, a self-determination of a future attitude is only present in the willing of a future act, not in the simple willing of an attitude to be realized. Thus, in simple willing the "I" is not an object. On the contrary, it is always experienced on the subject side as follows "I" shall give being to what is not.

- 7 With regard to the thematic objectivation of the self, Husserl states: "I am doing it, when pronouncing it, first mentioning it to others . . ., or mentioning it to myself" (Schuhmann 1973: 109; own translation).
- 8 Quoted from Schuhmann 1973: 109; own translation.
- 9 In the view of the following considerations, I would like to correct my interpretation of Pfänder as developed in Mertens (1998: 132), which merely follows Husserl's remarks about Pfänder.
- 10 The decisive passage states:

This so-called "subjective" approach does not necessarily consist in a direct observation of the immediately experienced; as such an observation (as in the case of willing) is mostly impossible. The "subjective" approach, perforce, rather takes recourse to the determination of immediate

or more distant memories. Hence this ‘introspective’ method or method of ‘inner observation’, as it has been erroneously called, is not actually ‘introspective’, but mostly ‘retrospective’.

(Pfänder 1963a: 7; own translation)

11 Cf. especially the analyses of phenomenological reflection in Husserl (1959: 86ff.).

12 Cf. Pfänder 1963a: 16f.; own translation:

This feeling of the self (*Ichgefühl*) . . . at the same time always is a feeling of relatedness to something. The feeling of the self and the “objective” content are always given at the same time, and in the course of this, the feeling of the self already involves the relation of the self to the content. Self (*Ich*), relation of the self to a content and “objective” content are only the separated, distinguishable moments of the state of one consciousness. For the state of consciousness of the existence of a content can be considered from two sides, the side of the self and the “objective” side. . . . It is for the fear of the conscious-self (*Bewußtseins-Ich*) (that is associated with something which is of metaphysical character, and therefore despised) that some psychologists, without being aware, rather use the term of consciousness instead of the term of self.

13 Pfänder 1963a: 134; own translation (slightly deviating from the English translation in Pfänder (1967: 21)).

14 Cf. Spiegelberg in his annotation 13 in Pfänder (1967: 22), who, in relation to the earlier quoted passage (Pfänder 1963a: 135, 1967: 22), points to Pfänder’s distinction “between subject-concept (*Subjektsbegriff*) and predicate-concept (*Prädikatsbegriff*), as constituents of the logical proposition (*Urteil*),” on the one hand and between “subject-referent (*Subjektsgegenstand*) and predicate-referent (*Prädikatsgegenstand*), as constituents of the ontological state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) projected by the proposition,” on the other hand.

15 Cf. for the following Mertens (2010: 469ff.); cf. also Nenon (1990: 302ff.).

16 Husserl seems to point to this indirectly when he writes (Husserl 1988: 104; own translation, italics from me): “Anything which is possible can be wished for, but not *just* anything which is practically possible.” This implies: what is practically possible can be wished for as well. Of course, apart from this, we can also wish for things that are not practically feasible.

17 In fact, simple examples will illustrate a difference that allows us to explain what it means that our willing, as a rule, is related to wishing as well. According to Husserl, willing includes wishing as “reasonable implication” (*Implikation im Sinne der Vernunft*), i.e. willing something without wishing for it would be unreasonable, if it is not willed for the sake of something else we wish for. *In this sense* wishing can be considered as founding the act of willing (cf. Vargas Bejarano 2006: 123). However, it is not a “real implication of the wishing within the willing” (*reelle Implikation eines Wünschens im Wollen*). For I can will something that I don’t wish for. In the first case, it is about the desirability of the willed (i.e. that which is willed is desirable); the second case refers to the question whether a current wishing is actually required for the willing. De facto, this does not have to be the case (Husserl 1988: 105; cf. Vargas Bejarano 2006: 124, who emphasizes the difference between willing and wishing).

18 Husserl adopts the notion of “fiat” from William James (Melle 1992: 287f., 1997: 176f.). It seems that the function of Husserl’s “fiat” roughly corresponds to Pfänder’s concept of “initiating impulses” (*Willensimpulse*) which is only indicated in *Motives and Motivation* (cf. Pfänder 1963a: 126, 1967: 15f.).

19 Husserl’s elaborations match Searle’s distinctions of directions, more precisely, directions of fit as well as directions of causation of visual perception and intentional action. Searle characterizes visual perception by its “mind-to-world” direction as well as the reverse direction of causation, inasmuch as mental states in perception must comply with the world, because mental states are being caused by things and events that happen in the world. Conversely, he characterizes intentional action by the direction “world-to-mind” and the direction of causation “mind-to-world” (Searle 1983: 97).

20 Cf. Husserl (1988: 107f.; own translation):

The creative “Let there be!” ( “*Es werde!*”), which is essential to the establishment of the will (*Willenssetzung*), can be (something) currently creating – the will is action-will, executive will, actually creating –, or, it can only be directed toward creating, a future creation.

21 Cf. for the following especially Husserl (1988: 110).

22 I think it is worth mentioning that Searle’s description applies to a historical state of ski technique (approximately of the early 1980s); with the introduction of Carver-Ski, Searle’s description would have to be modified considerably.



- 23 The following critique conforms in the main line with Dreyfus (1993). Dreyfus has renewed his criticism after Searle's objections (cf. Searle 2000, 2001) in Dreyfus (1999) – obviously referring to the (at that time) unpublished articles of Searle. Searle 2005 retries the critique of Dreyfus (referring to Dreyfus 1999). Cf. also McDowell's discussion of Searle in McDowell (2011).
- 24 And even more: regarding Husserl's later phenomenology, the previous criticism must be mitigated. Here the notion of horizon-intentionality and life-world is connected with an essential contextualization.
- 25 In this case, one might try to constitute the unity of action by implementing an overall intention of the will. For instance, I want to give a talk by reading from a script. During the lecture I notice that the audience is not paying attention, so I put the script aside and start to speak freely. Here, the intention of the will to give the talk is consistent. This is both true and trivial. But at the same time, when trying to understand in what way the lecture style thereby changes, recourse to the overall intention of the will to give the talk is not decisive. It excludes salient considerations: for instance, the particularity of the situation, which we assess in light of past experience, as well as the availability of specific skills and one's knowledge of them. This becomes even more obvious in cases of creative actions, which are characterized by the fact that, in their course, they develop a novel type of action.
- 26 In addition, since the initial point of an action is a concrete willing, a well-defined "fiat", Husserl's analysis presumes a gap between behavior and action and provides no understanding of the essential connections between behavior and action, i.e. how an action may be shaped in the sphere of behavior (cf. Summa and Mertens 2019). In contrast, regarding this point, it seems fruitful to consider the field of strivings as Pfänder does in the first section of *Motives an Motivation* (Pfänder 1963a: 128ff., 1967: 16ff.). Probably Husserl's analyses regarding the passive sphere of willing, especially the phenomenon of tendency, which will be published in the third volume of his *Analysen zur Struktur des Bewusstseins*, will deliver important supplements and even corrections of this picture drawn from his 1914 theory of willing.
- 27 Once more, I am very indebted to many persons. Above all I would like to thank Nicole Graf for her excellent translation of the first draft written in German, Tyler Friedman for his reliable critical view (as native speaker) of this manuscript, and Michela Summa for her well-trying critical and instructive comments. In addition, I am grateful to Christopher Erhard and an anonymous referee for helpful comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

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# 3

## ALEXANDER PFÄNDER'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF MOTIVATION

*Genki Uemura*

### Introduction

We often activate our volitional capacity for some reasons. For instance, I go to bed *because* it is late at night; you decide to escape from the university campus *because* the weather is too lovely to attend the afternoon seminar. What is, then, the relation that holds between these voluntary activities and reasons?

According to the Munich phenomenologist Alexander Pfänder, this problem calls for phenomenological considerations. In his 1911 paper “Motive und Motivation,” he writes: “The relation of the grounds [i.e., reason] to the decision of the will is not put into it by the interpretation of an outside observer but *is experienced in the actual facts, hence is present in them phenomenally*” (Pfänder 1911: 141 [tr. 27], translation modified, our italics). Since Pfänder calls the relation between the volition and its grounds *motivation*, his contention here is that phenomenology is indispensable for understanding motivation. In fact, his phenomenological analysis of motivation is meant to support the following claims which must have some imports for our theorizing about actions in general.

- 1 Motivation is not causation.
- 2 Motives (i.e., grounds of the will) are mind-transcendent entities.
- 3 A judgment on one’s own ought does not necessarily yield motivation.

The aim of this chapter is to reconstruct and assess Pfänder’s phenomenology of motivation and the three claims he defends through it.<sup>1</sup> In section “Pfänder’s method of phenomenological description,” we outline Pfänder’s method of phenomenology in so far as it concerns with our topic. In section “The structure of Pfänder’s argument in ‘Motive und Motivation,’” we clarify the structure of his argument in “Motive und Motivation.” With these preliminary considerations at hands, we reconstruct his phenomenology of motivation in section “Phenomenology of motivation.” Sections “The nature of motives and motivation” and “The connection between ought-judgment and motivation” are devoted to the exposition and examination of his arguments for (1), (2), and (3).

Before starting the discussion, let us make clear what we will *not* do in the sections to follow. We will *not* take issue with skeptics about the very existence of a phenomenal character (or a set of such characters) peculiar to volitional experience. In what follows, we assume that there is something it is like for us to have volitional experience and that it is irreducible for it is barely fruitful to look for an argument for the so-called *agentive* or *conative* phenomenology in Pfänder and other classical phenomenologists. As Kriegel observes, “[i]n the phenomenological tradition, the existence of both cognitive and conative phenomenology is often taken to be unproblematic” (Kriegel 2015: 83; see also 75–83 for his own defense of the irreducibility of conative phenomenology). The philosophical significance of classical phenomenology for this issue, if any, lies in their phenomenological analyses of voluntary experiences, of which Pfänder’s discussion of motivation is an example – or so we shall argue.

### Pfänder’s method of phenomenological description

As Moritz Geiger, another prominent figure in the Munich school of phenomenology, points out, Pfänder appeals to an analogy with space and material objects in his phenomenological descriptions of various experiences (cf. Geiger 1933: 10). Pfänder sheds light on his target phenomena by utilizing terms that we usually associate with space and matter. For instance, Geiger writes:

That love is characterized by Pfänder as “looking-up [*aufblickend*]” does not mean that he regards love as something spatial. Rather, the concept of direction [*Richtungsbegriff*] is something entirely general that is never confined to space but realized in sentiment as well as in space.

(Geiger 1933: 10–11)

In this section, we give a brief outline of what Geiger calls the method of “analogical description” (cf. Geiger 1933: 11) in so far as they are necessary for the discussion in the rest of the chapter. (As we will discuss at the end of this section, Geiger’s interpretation of Pfänder’s method is not without problems. For the sake of the simplicity, however, for a while we assume that this interpretation is correct.)

A key idea behind Pfänder’s method of phenomenology is that the world consists of two different kinds of reality (*Wirklichkeit*). This point is made clear for the first time in *Einführung in die Psychologie*. There he claims that while natural sciences investigate on one kind of reality called “material,” phenomenology or psychology has to do with the other kind of reality (cf. Pfänder 1904: 8). Note, however, that the issue is not whether such “mental [*psychisch*]” reality exists, but what it amounts to (cf. Pfänder 1904: 12). The existence of the second reality is now taken for granted, because, even though it is easily missed in natural sciences, we never doubt it in our ordinary life (cf. Pfänder 1904: 13). Pfänder further holds that the mental reality makes humans and animals something more than merely material entities like machines (cf. Pfänder 1904: 13–16). In other words, the mental reality is made up of varieties of experience, which must be absent in the machines.

Another important difference between the material and mental realities is that the latter is *not spatial*: “The application of these spatial predicate to *mental* reality has no sense” (Pfänder 1904: 52). This implies that the mental reality is immaterial since every material object is in space. Contrary to what one might expect, however, Pfänder does not mean to make the mental reality entirely isolated from the material reality. Instead, like many other classical

phenomenologists, he emphasizes that consciousness is not like a capsule because it involves the world that transcends it. But how does this cohere with his claim that the mental reality is not spatial? To this question, Pfänder answers that a portion of the material reality, which is not *in* the mental reality, is nevertheless *on the periphery* (or *limit*) of it, when a subject has the object-consciousness (*Gegendsbewußtsein*) such as perception (cf. Pfänder 1904: 208; see also Uemura and Yaegashi 2012: 255–258). It is beyond the present aim to examine whether and to what extent this claim is convincing. What is important for our purpose is that it obviously presupposes the analogy between the mental reality and space.

Pfänder develops his method of description in “Motive und Motivation.” In this short piece, he makes some distinctions by means of the analogy of the mental reality with space and material objects. Among these distinctions, what matters for the present concern are one (a) between real versus phenomenal causes, and another (b) between the “I-center [*Ich-Zentrum*]” or “I-core [*Ich-Kern*]” and the “I-body [*Ich-Leib*].”

(a) Pfänder illustrates his notion of phenomenal cause through some examples (cf. Pfänder 1911: 130 [tr. 18]). When a heard-noise (*gehörtes Geräusch*) arouses in a subject a striving (*Streben*) to look at a particular position of her surrounding, her striving has the heard-noise as its *phenomenal* cause. This phenomenal cause should not be identified with the real cause of her striving, which is a complex set of certain psychophysical conditions.

Even though Pfänder himself contends with giving examples in this context, we can clarify his claim in terms of his idea of analogical description. His discussion seems to be led by the observation that we sometimes experience an object as arousing something in us. To capture such an experience, we can describe its object as the *cause* of experience: just as material objects are causally connected to each other, an analogous connection is also found in the mental reality and its periphery. The analogy with material objects helps us to realize that the concept of cause is also applicable to items in the mental reality.

(b) According to Pfänder, a subject of experience, which he calls “the I [*das Ich*]” is structured by the I-center and the I-body that surrounds it (cf. Pfänder 1911: 130 [tr. 18]; note that they are called “ego-center/core” and “ego-body,” respectively, in the English translation). Nowhere in his 1911 piece, however, does he explain what this distinction amounts to. As he makes explicit later, his claim could be justified well only after considering various mental facts with that distinction (cf. Pfänder 1916: 67).<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, we do not deal with this issue in detail. For our purpose, it suffices to highlight a role, perhaps among others, that is played by the distinction.

Let us start with one of the reasons why Pfänder brings the notion of the I into his phenomenology in the first place. As pointed out in the earlier passage from Geiger, Pfänder holds that the direction is found not only in the space of the material reality but also in the mental reality. For him, the having-an-object of an experience, which is a characteristic of the non-spatial mental reality, could be described as a direction. Being a direction, however, it must have departure and end points. According to Pfänder, the I serves as either of those points, depending on the kind of experience it has. While, for instance, an experience of striving has a “centrifugal” direction from the I to its object loved, an experience of the arousal (*Erregung*) is a “centripetal” one from an object to the I (cf. Pfänder 1911: 128–130 [tr. 16–18]).

It is at this point Pfänder appeals to the distinction between the center and the body of the I. By this distinction, he describes different ways in which strivings figure in our experience (cf. Pfänder 1911: 130–131 [tr. 18–19]). Most of our – namely grown-up humans’ – strivings, he claims, take place in the I-body. Such a striving, which is called eccentric or off-center