

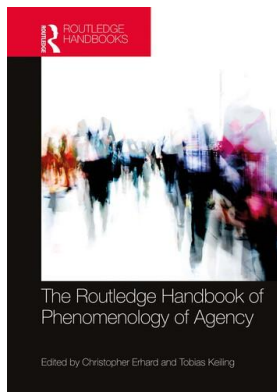
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### Operari Sequitur Esse

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## *OPERARI SEQUITUR ESSE*

### Hermann Schmitz's attitudinal theory of agency, freedom, and responsibility

*Henning Nörenberg*

According to a widespread account of human agency, the usual way to understand an action is to know what caused the conduct in question not in a purely physical sense, but rather in terms of motivation or reason (cf. Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 157). In this perspective, a satisfactory account of why I am walking to the fridge would not entail many details about the connections between my neuronal and muscle activities. Instead, one would expect information about specific connections between some of my beliefs and desires on the basis of which, for instance, my intention of having a drink is formed: I  $\varphi$  in order to  $I$ . In this sense, actions are intentional. In many cases, however, I act before I have a chance to deliberately decide to act:

If, upon approaching the bus stop, I see the bus pulling away, I might start running to catch it. If you stop me and ask, 'Are you trying to catch the bus?' my answer would be yes, that was my intention.

*(Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 159)*

That is, this action, too, is intentional, although the intention is nothing separate from the action, but rather "in" it (cf. Searle 1983: 88) in the form of a pre-reflective awareness of what one is actually doing (cf. Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 158, 160).

Sometimes, however, matters are more complicated. Consider the following case: on September 8, 2015 at the Röske collection point in Hungary, camerawoman Petra László was filmed kicking and tripping migrants who were fleeing the police. The video attracted widespread media attention. The majority of the viewers had no difficulties in identifying a blameworthy conduct and reacted with indignation. The incident eventually resulted in a charge with antisocial, violent behavior and caused László's employer to fire her. Many viewers of the video in question ascribed a racist motivation to her. In a public apology, László acknowledged that what she did was "bad" (cf. Srinivas 2015). That is, in a certain respect, she had no difficulties in identifying a blameworthy conduct either. However, she denied any racist motivation and described her conduct as a panic reaction in the face of a large number of migrants running in her direction rather than a full-blown intentional action: "I started to panic and as I re-watch the film, it seems as if it was not even me" (cf. *ibid.*). In a later interview, however, she stated she was "trying to help the police."<sup>1</sup> Apart from the

obvious attempt to regain interpretational sovereignty, the different accounts László tries to give (no genuine intention, just panic reaction; helping the police) may also point to a serious difficulty with making unambiguous sense of what she actually did in that moment.

In this and many other, less extreme cases, there seems to be a difficulty with understanding an action, a difficulty that is absent in cases such as trying to catch the bus. It seems that this difficulty cannot be resolved in terms of a more fine-grained account of intentional action, e.g. by distinguishing a pre-reflective sense of what one is doing from unintentional consequences of this doing. Rather, László's remark that "it seems as it was not even me," her insistence that "I'm not a heartless, child-kicking racist" (cf. Holdsworth 2015) as well as the accusations in social media she attempts to reject with her apology revolve around another way of understanding an action. This understanding sets out with a question of the following kind: "What kind of person must I be that I could actually do this?" (cf. Scheler 1921: 24; Schmitz 1973: 585). Rather than on particular intentions, the focus of this way of understanding an action is on the person, the agent or, more precisely, on the relevant disposition, stance, or fundamental *attitude* with which the agents act.

An interesting version of such an attitudinal theory of agency can be found in the work of the German phenomenologist Hermann Schmitz. Schmitz belongs to the postwar-generation of philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel (both of whom he studied with under Erich Rothacker) that was highly motivated to critically understand what had happened before and under Nazi rule. The focus of Schmitz's work, however, is not so much on failures of public reason, but on questions of personhood and bodily existence. According to Schmitz, these latter aspects are crucially involved in shaping the background against which something emerges as a good reason or as demanding one's respect. Schmitz's theory of attitude (*Gesinnung*)<sup>2</sup> as the fundamental way in which the individual engages with the world and which cannot be exhausted in terms of intentions is part of his comprehensive investigations concerning personhood, subjectivity, and human freedom. A first version of that theory was formulated in Schmitz's 1973 book *Der Rechtsraum* (literally: *The Space of Law*), but the argument has been slightly revised in his 2007 book *Freiheit* (*Freedom*). A condensed English version of the argument can be found in the final chapter of *New Phenomenology* (Schmitz 2019: 123–133). It does not only draw on Heideggerian phenomenology but also on arguments from German Idealism, existential philosophy, and P.F. Strawson's descriptive metaphysics. According to Schmitz's theory, a person's actions are grounded in that person's character (*operari sequitur esse*), agency is conceived in terms of "self-efficacy" (*Selbstwirksamkeit*), and human freedom and responsibility have their appropriate place in the attitude rather than in willing or intending.

In the following, I will flesh out these claims by sketching Schmitz's attitudinal theory of agency. The first section aims to delineate the concept of self-efficacy in the context of human agency. Then, I introduce the notion of "subjective factuality" (*subjektive Tatsächlichkeit*) which is crucial for Schmitz's argument that the attitude of a person satisfies the conceptual conditions for self-efficacy. Finally, I present and discuss the notion of attitude and attempt to clarify the sense in which the attitude of a person is supposed to be a form of self-efficacy.

### Agency as self-efficacy: conceptual considerations

Schmitz develops his notion of agency in the context of his theory of human freedom and moral responsibility. Freedom, in this sense, is a necessary as well as sufficient, non-trivial<sup>3</sup> condition of moral responsibility (Schmitz 2007: 22). The most central trait of freedom is what Schmitz calls "independent initiative" (*unabhängige Initiative*), that is, the capacity to

bring or to refrain from bringing a state of affairs into being by oneself, to make or to abstain from making it a fact (Schmitz 2007: 29). The term “to bring something into being” intends a specific form of causation and covers a broad spectrum from moving one’s finger to realizing a plan (Schmitz 2007: 41). The relevant capacity is independent in as much it is, in a particular sense, not determined by any objective fact, but only effected by itself.

The existence of such an initiative is not only relevant to our normal practices of holding each other responsible but also to an even more fundamental condition of human life: the practically lived confidence in there being something that is actually depending on oneself. According to Schmitz, the loss or absence of such confidence would tangibly impair a person’s willingness to make an effort and result in *ennui* (Schmitz 2007: 23).

Before he begins to argue for the existence of a person’s independent initiative, Schmitz suggests a set of conceptual conditions that any candidate for the initiative in question would need to satisfy. To begin with, the independent initiative must carefully be distinguished from other forms of causation: the color of my hair or the size of my nose may be triggering causes of instances of attraction or repulsion in other people, but none of these causes would count as cases of free, independent initiative or agency. That is, being a distinct form of causation, the initiative in question must be related to the agent in a sufficiently intimate manner (cf. Schmitz 2007: 48). Only if this is the case, our practices of holding each other responsible as well as our practically lived confidence that something is up to us are ultimately more than wishful thinking.

Whereas authors such as Sartre or Arendt would more or less identify the agent with that initiative (cf. Sartre 1956: 457; Arendt 1998: 177), Schmitz resists that conclusion, since it would imply conceptual problems with regard to one’s responsibility for what one fails to do (Schmitz 2007: 47). More generally and in terms of ontology, he suggests conceiving of the relevant cause as a particular fact rather than a particular object. Causation, according to Schmitz, is a relation between facts. Thus, he looks for a sufficiently intimate *property* of the agent.

According to these conceptual specifications, the independent initiative is formally a fact that is its own cause (*causa sui*), i.e. a peculiar form of self-efficacy (Schmitz 2007: 48). Schmitz attempts to mount this form as an ontological alternative to determinism on the one hand and indeterminism on the other hand. Schmitz takes determinism to amount to the claim that every non-analytic fact *F* has a sufficient cause being a fact distinct from *F*, while indeterminism consists in the claim that there are non-analytic facts that have no cause in another fact (Schmitz 2007: 48–49.). In this respect, self-efficacy means, ontologically, that there is at least one non-analytic fact that is its own cause (Schmitz 2007: 49). Moreover, Schmitz insists that we have experiential access to this form of self-efficacy, which makes it distinct from other forms of causation (Schmitz 2007: 47).

Schmitz further delineates the notion of independent initiative as self-efficacy by distinguishing it from related notions such as choosing, the opportunity to do otherwise or control over one’s own behavior. For starters, the independent initiative is distinct from making one’s choice in as much as this would entail confining oneself to an option in the conviction of having more than one option (Schmitz 2007: 33–39). Such a conviction, however, is absent in cases of spontaneous actions that we nevertheless consider to be worthy of moral praise or blame. Schmitz mentions spontaneous acts of bravery and cowardice in dangerous situations, but one might also think of the László case mentioned in the introduction. Cases of negligence, too, are subject to our practices of holding each other responsible although the person held responsible lacked the conviction of having other options in the crucial moment.

Although initiative and choice are distinct from one another, Schmitz also assumes a close connection between them (Schmitz 2007: 23). That is, the conviction of having several options is one of the possible backdrops against which one's initiative may play out so that in this case such playing out amounts to making one's choice. In turn, a choice that was essentially determined or sufficiently caused by something else than one's independent initiative would be anything but a choice (cf. Schmitz 2007: 35). Thus, choosing depends on initiative. Moreover, in as much as one confines oneself to one of several options in the light of reasons, choice and the independent initiative enabling it are also relevant to rational conduct.

Another concept that is not identical with but dependent on there being an independent initiative is the actual opportunity to do otherwise: someone has the opportunity to do otherwise, if he or she in a given situation is able to choose independently from real – i.e. not only imaginary – options. And since choosing is not an essential trait of the initiative in question, the opportunity to do otherwise isn't either (Schmitz 2007: 34ff.).

Schmitz even holds that one's independent initiative does not necessarily amount to control over one's own behavior. In this sense, even a person obeying to an irresistible drive could be free. In such scenarios, freedom as independent initiative would have to be located in one's approval, in one's consent to the inevitable. Schmitz cites the example of an addict giving up the futile fight against his drive and allowing himself to surrender. Pushing the intended notions of freedom and independent initiative to an extreme, Schmitz also considers *amor fati* as a form of freedom: a falling person is free if she does not resist but resigns herself to her fate (Schmitz 2007: 32–33). With this claim, Schmitz probably parts with the usual accounts of our sense of agency, since the latter seem to adhere to some form of control as a necessary element of agency.

### The notion of subjective factuality

Having conceived of self-efficacy in terms of there being at least one non-analytic fact that is its own cause and having ruled out notions such as choosing or self-control for explicating the causal power in question, Schmitz needs to show how this concept actually applies to human reality. Therefore, he mounts a complex argument that is supposed to establish that

- a one's *attitude* (*Gesinnung*) by which one involves oneself with the world is the sufficiently intimate property the having of which is its own cause,
- b precisely such an attitude is the appropriate target of our normal practices of praising and blaming, and
- c there is no reason to deny a certain independence of that attitude.

In short, causal power on one's own initiative consists in the attitude one invests in one's affective involvement with the world and, thus, in the way one minds what is going on (cf. Schmitz 2007: 71).

The first steps of the argument introduce Schmitz's notions of *subjective factuality* (*subjektive Tatsächlichkeit*), *affective involvement* (*affektives Betroffensein*), and *attitude* (*Gesinnung*). As these three notions are highly interrelated, it is a matter of taste with which to begin. Usually, Schmitz begins with the relevance of subjective factuality and I will do the same here.

Under the notion of subjective factuality Schmitz addresses central insights pertaining to the phenomenology of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Schmitz, however, articulates his notion in critical distance to what he takes to be the implications of more mainstream

concepts of subjectivity and self-consciousness. In his view, subjective factuality is logically as well as experientially prior to the self. But what is subjective factuality supposed to mean?

Objective facts such as “It is raining,” “Caesar crossed the Rubicon,” or “Martin loved Hannah” can, in principle, be predicated by anyone who has sufficient knowledge and articulation. In contrast, subjective facts such as “I’m in love with Sally,” “I’m sorry for my mistake,” or “I hope Jim will get by” entail the nuance of a first-personal character, i.e. the “mineness” (*Meinhaftigkeit*) of what is going on and what could, in principle, be predicated only by the relevant person in their own name (cf. Schmitz 1969: 27–77, 1973: 527 ff., 2007: 55 ff.; Schmitz et al. 2011: 248–249).<sup>4</sup> “Mineness” refers to the fact that it is irrevocably oneself and no other who is involved in the fact in question in the stated way. The relevant nuance cannot be substituted by any amount of more detailed objective facts about oneself (exact date and place of birth). None of these facts could add any reference to oneself – while the latter is what the nuance of “mineness” is all about (Schmitz et al. 2011: 248). Thus, subjective facts cannot simply be reduced to neutral or objective ones.

Schmitz often illustrates this with the example of one’s own sadness which is supposed to function as a stand-in for any fact that could only be predicated by the respective person in her own name:

If, for instance, I sincerely say “I am sad”, this contains more than saying that Hermann Schmitz, disregarding the fact that I am him, is sad, i.e. the actual affectivity and intensity of personal involvement. This surplus persists despite the complete equivalence of the propositional contents of both facts. In both cases, the same person is determined by means of the same fact including the affective involvement that is a necessary part of sadness. Nevertheless, the subjective fact is richer than the neutral one. This difference does not concern the propositional content, but the factuality, which is richer in the case of subjective facts than in the case of the pale objective ones. The difference lies not in a merely private inner mode of presentation as against an external one of objective facts. This is plain to view in that the personal pronoun “I” as well as its equivalents cannot simply be replaced by a proper name, as in the case of neutral facts, if we are reporting on facts of affective involvement.

*(Schmitz et al. 2011: 249)*

In contemporary discussions, “mineness” has also been broadly investigated as a primitive form of self-awareness implicated in experience (cf. Zahavi 1999). In Schmitz, this form of self-awareness is called “affective involvement” and is systematically linked with a theory of the feeling body (Schmitz et al. 2011: 248–249). The body, in this sense, is not the physical body, that is, for instance, the body from the point of view of a third person observing my arm movement, but rather the feeling body that is felt in various instances of contraction, constriction, tension, relaxation, pulsation, and expansion. Schmitz argues that the sense of “mineness” – along with the sense of reality – is first and foremost provided by contracting and constricting tendencies such as fright or pain, for they present one’s situation in terms of a narrow here and now which also implicates a “me.” On the other hand, expansive tendencies involved, e.g. in joy entail at least an echo of an constricting tendency in so far as they entail a sense of getting away from the latter (cf. Schmitz et al. 2011: 249–250).

### **The notion of attitude**

Affective involvement, Schmitz says, is *Janus-faced*: on the one hand, it entails the aspect of passive experience, i.e. one’s being touched by or exposedness to what is going on,

e.g. hunger, pain, exuberant joy, or attraction. On the other hand, it also entails the rather active aspect of resonating with, responding to, caring for, engaging with what is going on (Schmitz 2007: 61; Schmitz et al. 2011: 254). Human beings can undergo hunger grumpily, patiently, wailingly, or aggressively (Schmitz 2007: 69). They can engage their pain in a stoic or a whiny manner. They may resonate approvingly with the joy that seizes them or they may not allow themselves to go along with that feeling unselfconsciously (Schmitz et al. 2011: 254). Except for extreme cases, which will be addressed further below, both the passive and the active side cannot be separated from one another, although their connection may be more loose or more tight.

Similar observations can be found in the late Husserl's notes on affectivity (*Affektion*) that have recently been published: in affectivity, there is not only an impact on the subject; the latter is also provoked to a prompt and more or less spontaneous response in terms of turning toward the relevant issue, to get involved or concerned with it in this or that way (Husserl 2014: 34ff.). In a certain sense, both, impact and response, are one (Husserl 2014: 40). Husserl, too, emphasizes that the response is the way in which "I am active" (Husserl 2014: 41), grounding it in the notion of "interest" (Husserl 2014: 40, 44) which describes the way in which we are "living into the world" (Husserl 2014: 76).

More generally, this active aspect of engaging in one's experiences is not alien to phenomenologists. For instance, Scheler calls that aspect "functional quality of feeling" and illustrates it with the differences between suffering, bearing, or enjoying pain (Scheler 1954: 270). The early Heidegger calls it "enactment sense" (*Vollzugsinn*) of the relevant phenomenon (Heidegger 1995: 63). Sartre (1956: 456f.) addresses the relevant aspect under the name "projet originel" and argues that the individual's fundamental project shapes the very facticity of the situation – a thought that, as we will see below, Schmitz seeks to reformulate within his own account (cf. Schmitz 1973: 566–570). In this context, however, one may also think of Arendt's notion of acting as the way in which we "insert" ourselves into the human world (Arendt 1998: 176f.).

In the context of his own investigation, Schmitz calls the active aspect of affective involvement the individual's "attitude" (*Gesinnung*) in order to relate the intended phenomenon to what he takes to be our normal sense of responsibility (Schmitz 2007: 69). Simultaneously, he shifts the scope of the phenomenon in question from transcendental or other forms of *constitution* to a peculiar, experientially accessible form of *causation*. In short, the attitude is the phenomenon that satisfies the conceptual conditions for an independent initiative outlined earlier.

Schmitz argues that our normal practices of praising and blaming ultimately refer to the agent's attitude rather than to their intentions or decisions. This is most obvious in cases of spontaneous acts of bravery or cowardice as well as in cases of negligence. In all these cases we may admit that the agent was not in the position to carefully reflect on what they should (not) do, although we insist to praise or blame the agent. Schmitz cites the drastic example of a mother nodding off nearby a lake and later finding her child fallen into the water (Schmitz 2007: 34). Strictly speaking, she *did* nothing wrong, rather she *failed to do* something, namely attending to her child. Likewise, she did not choose the wrong option, for she did not choose between the alternative to either nod off or be vigilant in order to prevent the child from drowning. But very likely she would blame herself in bitter remorse: "How could I have been so unmindful?" That is, what is blameworthy is her *attitude* conceived as the way in which she was engaged in the situation.

According to Schmitz, we need more than the actual occurrence of the relevant reactive attitudes in us (cf. Strawson 2008) or the intersubjectively projectible patterns of rationality



they are forming (cf. Helm 2017) in order to account for the appropriateness of our practices of blaming and praising in the cases just mentioned. Schmitz uses his phenomenological theory of the intertwining of passive and active aspects of experience to argue that we are actually right in praising or blaming another person's or our own attitude. This is because it does make a difference how we are engaging the situation in which we find ourselves – a difference that under certain circumstances can become morally relevant – and because the relevant engaging constitutes a fact sufficiently intimately related to ourselves.

A person's attitude constitutes a considerable part of her character or, in Arendt's words, *who* that person is (cf. Arendt 1998: 178). Whether we tend to undergo hunger and pain wailingly or patiently, or whether we are or are not prone to indulge in *schadenfreude*, for instance, is a matter of our character and, in the given context, it is defining us more intimately than, say, facts about the color of our hair. Other relevant aspects of a person's character, which under certain circumstances may also compensate, outbalance, or even conceal the attitude, consist in that person's "countenance" (*Fassung*) which is related to the ancient notions of *ethos* and *habitus* as well as in the person's bodily dispositions (Schmitz 2007: 113). These and other factors are involved in the formation of intentions and volitional acts such as concentrating one's attention, mental calculation, or bodily movement (Schmitz 2007: 121). However, Schmitz holds that among these factors, the attitude is most relevant in terms of freedom and responsibility: a person's causal power, i.e. their power to bring something into being by their own independent initiative, is not so much a matter of intending something, but rather the attitude as the way in which the person is engaged in what affects them (Schmitz 2007: 71). Obviously, this does not exclude that the way in which a person engages the situation could and should be accompanied by her reflection and deliberation.

However, it is not necessary that a person can choose her attitude or is in full control of it. While Schmitz acknowledges the kinship between his notion of attitude and Sartre's *projet originel*, he hastens to state that he is more skeptical than Sartre regarding the actual purview of self-efficacy and chances to change one's own attitude overnight (Schmitz 1973: 568–569). This is not to deny that a human subject can reinvent itself, but such a feat seems to involve long and arduous processes of self-formation. This, at least, seems to be the general thrust of related concepts such as the Greek notion of *daimon* or the "intelligible character" introduced by German Idealists (Schmitz 1973: 581f.). Apart from a few backdoors for choosing one's own character before birth or in the non-empirical, intelligible realm which would be rather difficult to defend these days, the notions in question amount to the idea that one's character is by and large inaccessible<sup>5</sup> to oneself and is only revealed in one's actions: *Operari sequitur esse*, as Schopenhauer quotes Thomas Aquinas (cf. Schopenhauer 1972: 693).

### Attitude as a form of self-efficacy

However, if a person's attitude is supposed to be that person's independent initiative by which she exercises causal power in the world, and if that attitude is by and large inaccessible to the person, in what sense, then, is it supposed to be independent and self-efficacious? The remaining steps of the argument aim to clarify precisely this.

The next step is supposed to establish the following: subjective factuality, i.e. the subjectivity of facts relevant to the first-personal character of experience, is an accomplishment of precisely that active aspect of affective involvement called "attitude" (Schmitz 2007: 69). In order to show this, Schmitz refers to extreme experiences in which the subject is so overwhelmed that her active response becomes inoperative and the subject turns into an



indifferent observer of what is going on. As an illustration, Schmitz quotes a report from Erwin Bälz who had witnessed an earthquake in Tokyo. Bälz reports a sudden and total alteration:

All higher affective life had gone out, all compassion for others, all concernment with possible harm, even the interest in the endangered friends and relatives and in my own life were gone, though my mind was completely clear [. . .]. I stood there and considered all these disastrous events around me having that cool concentration of someone monitoring a fascinating experiment.

(Bälz 1901: 718; cf. Schmitz 2007: 66; own transl.)

Schmitz interprets this kind of experience in terms of an absence of “mineness” in the sense of subjective factuality.<sup>6</sup> Thus, subjective factuality goes hand in hand with the active aspect of affective involvement. Elsewhere, Schmitz also argues that the way in which one engages pain corresponds to the intensity by which that pain is experienced as oppressive, constricting, and, according to Schmitz’s theory of subjective factuality, self-involving (Schmitz et al. 2011: 16). If this is correct, the hypothesis of there being an intimate relation between subjective factuality, bodily sense of constriction, and attitude as the active engagement with the situation is further supported and the attitude is a *sine qua non* for “mineness,” i.e. it causes (*bewirkt*) subjective factuality.

Now, the final step of the argument applies these ideas in order to show that the attitude satisfies the conceptual conditions for self-efficacy. This is how it is supposed to work: the attitude brings about the *subjectivity* (though usually not the *content*) of facts; yet the existence of one’s own attitude and its respective character are subjective facts themselves (Schmitz 2007: 69–70). These latter facts, however, are even trivially and causally self-sufficient. Thus, the attitude is self-sufficient and causes its own subjectivity. That is, it causes itself as a subjective fact and, thus, constitutes the *causa sui* (self-efficacy) that was looked for (Schmitz 2007: 70). Thus, human freedom is the freedom of one’s attitude, and therefore a person is morally responsible for her attitude precisely by virtue of her attitude (*ibid.*). This final step of the argument has the following structure:

- P1: The existence and quality of one’s attitude are subjective facts (especially in the context of praising and blaming).
- P2: No subjective fact can have an objective fact as its sufficient cause.
- P3: One’s attitude is the sufficient cause of the subjectivity of any fact.
- C: Therefore, the attitude is the sufficient cause of itself as a subjective fact.

Initially, this may sound like a formal trick, but unpacking the premises will reveal that the argument is built on Schmitz’s phenomenological theory of subjective factuality and affective involvement. To begin with, the existence of one’s own attitude and its respective character are subjective facts (P1) insofar as one cannot help to acknowledge that these facts entail self-reference, i.e. that they are intimate facts about oneself. We can clearly see that this acknowledgment of self-reference is relevant in the drastic example of the negligent mother blaming herself (“How could *I* have been so unmindful?”), but there are, of course, less dramatic cases of acknowledging that this or that is one of one’s own character traits. Arguably, even a statement such as “as I re-watch the film, it seems as it was not even me” in the given context should not be interpreted as the speaker’s inability to acknowledge that something

about *herself* is revealed, but rather as the speaker's (current) inability to smoothly integrate the revealed trait into the *image* she has of herself.

Furthermore, Schmitz explains that the claim about the attitude accomplishing its own subjectivity would not be valid if subjective factuality were a mere add-on to otherwise plainly objective facts (Schmitz 2019: 129–130). Although he does of course not deny the existence of objective facts, Schmitz insists that there is no route that would lead from objective facts to subjective ones without the subject's active involvement with these facts – which is precisely that subject's attitude. In this sense, no subjective fact can have an objective one as its sufficient cause (P2).

Schmitz illustrates this claim with the case of Phileas Gage (Schmitz 2019: 130): after an accident causing a severe lesion of his brain, Gage's character – or, more precisely, his attitude – was fundamentally altered. There is no doubt that the lesion in question caused a particular objective fact, i.e. the fact of there being an altered attitude in the complex of states and events usually referred to by “Phileas Gage.” However, according to Schmitz, this is not the case for the subjective, i.e. self-involving or mineness-implicating fact that could have been predicated by no one else than by Gage himself by saying, for instance: “I, Phineas Gage, used to be a man of reliable stance, but now this has been thoroughly shaken” (ibid.). The nuance of mineness entailed in this fact about Gage cannot be accomplished by any enhanced precision of plainly objective facts, but requires the active part of affective involvement to be operative – even though this part has, objectively speaking, fundamentally changed in character. Thus (P3), it is the attitude that is the sufficient cause – not for the objective content of the fact, but for the nuance of mineness in virtue of which it is a subjectively meaningful fact (Schmitz 2007: 69–70).

If this is correct, then the attitude is at least one suitable candidate satisfying the conceptual conditions for self-efficacy and is therefore a key element of human agency.

### Concluding remarks

Schmitz's theory of attitude or *Gesinnung* as heart of human agency is built on his doctrines of self-consciousness as affective involvement and subjective factuality. In comparison to Sartre's account, for instance, his theory is more modest with respect to the actual purview of self-efficacy. Although we have seen that there may be examples for the attitude's effect on the *that* and *how* of experience, e.g. the subject's engaging their pain, Schmitz hesitates to generalize such examples. Consider, for instance, Sartre's hyperbolic claim that “[i]f I am mobilized in a war, this war is *my* war; it is in my image and I deserve it [ . . . ], everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war” (Sartre 1956: 554). The attitudinal theory of free agency provides valuable conceptual tools for making sense of a claim such as “this war is *my* war,” namely by referring to the link between “mineness” and active self-involvement. However, whether it really would have been down to me to prevent, stop, or modify that war as an objective fact in any meaningful way cannot be sufficiently established within the framework presented. In this respect, Schmitz restricts himself to explaining the attitude's role in choosing and intending. However, he also offers further arguments that are supposed to defeat the determinist's claim to a thoroughgoing causal explanation of the lifeworld in order to make room for the lived confidence that there really is something that actually is *up to us* (cf. Schmitz 2007: 75–108).

Although I cannot go further into detail, the references to Arendt I made throughout this chapter suggest that there is also high potential for mutual elucidation of her account of human action and Schmitz's attitudinal theory of self-efficacy. That is, for instance, the theory of attitude provides us with valuable conceptual tools when it comes to making sense

of the “disclosure of the agent in speech and action” (Arendt 1998: 175), while Arendt’s discourse can help us understand further implications of that theory.

Moreover, the attitudinal theory of agency is compatible with more recent accounts of “unreflective freedom” in important respects. Rietveld (2013), for instance, conceives of unreflective action such as running to catch the bus as a form of “allowing” oneself to be responsive to relevant situational affordances (see also Dreyfus 2007). The fact that an individual responds to these affordances rather than others is, at least in part, related to the fundamental way in which they engages the world. Whereas the “softy,” if I may say so, modifying one of Sartre’s favorite examples, may not find anything in the situation that motivates him to run for the bus (“it is futile, anyway”), a more agonal character may find that it is worth a try.

We have also seen how Schmitz links the agent’s attitude as their independent initiative with choosing, rational conduct and the opportunity to do otherwise. However, with regard to Schmitz’s attempt to establish the attitude as an instance of self-efficacy, as it has been stated, a couple of open questions remain. For instance, his shift from transcendental constitution to a peculiar form of causation and, in line with this, the relation between “mineness” in terms of minimal selfhood and “mineness” in terms of subjective factuality surely deserve further discussion. Furthermore, the way in which one’s attitude is experientially accessible to oneself should be fleshed out in more detail. However, even if we hesitate to follow Schmitz’s argument for attitudinal self-efficacy in every respect, the phenomenon of attitude is, arguably, a key element of human agency.

### Related topics

Chapters 11 (on Sartre), 14 (on Arendt), 17 (on Dreyfus).

### Notes

- 1 Cf. Toporkova (2015). The English translation of the quoted sentence can be found in *RT*, October 21, 2015; <https://www.rt.com/news/319316-reporter-hungary-refugees-facebook/> [last accessed on 19 April 2018].
- 2 Linguistic annotation: unfortunately, Schmitz’s technical term *Gesinnung* has not been translated into English in a consistent manner. The relevant concept is referred to as “attitude” (Schmitz et al. 2011: 254), but also as “stance” (Schmitz 2019: 129).
- 3 “Non-trivial” is supposed to mean that the condition in question is not simply logically implied in the concept of moral responsibility (cf. Schmitz 2007: 22).
- 4 It is important to stress that subjective factuality is not simply an effect of that predication. Schmitz regards such predications as a good didactical vehicle to explain the difference between objective and subjective facts. However, he does not see any reason why subjective facts should not apply to babies and animals just because they do not have the linguistic capacities to state them.
- 5 In this context, “inaccessible” does not mean “experientially inaccessible,” but rather “hard to influence at will.”
- 6 This is probably one of the most crucial points at which Schmitz’s notion of subjectivity diverges from the one suggested by Zahavi (1999). As far as I can see, the latter would insist that, despite the alteration Bälz describes, the first-personal givenness of experience remains in place in some minimal form.

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