

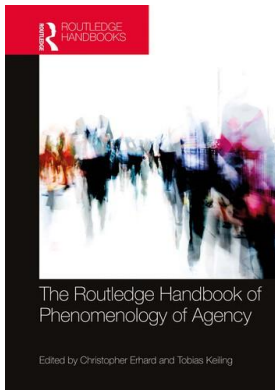
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### Acting, choosing, and deliberating

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# ACTING, CHOOSING, AND DELIBERATING

*John J. Drummond*

Tom has Parkinson's disease and experiences tremors of the bodily extremities. Susan blushes when embarrassed. Are these bodily events actions?<sup>1</sup> It seems not, since they are something that happens to people, something they *undergo* rather than something they *do*. These bodily events are neither initiated by the person nor under the person's control, but when we *do* something, we think we initiate and control the bodily events. Hence, it seems that an action is, minimally, a bodily performance that is (i) initiated by the agent and (ii) under the agent's control. Moreover, it also seems to be part of the sense of an initiated action that it is aimed at some end, at realizing an (apparently) good (desirable) state of affairs. Hence, it seems also that for a physical performance to be an action it must be (iii) aimed at an end. So, for example, when I unthinkingly reach for my glass to take a sip of water or when I take a break from writing and stand before an open refrigerator trying to remember what I came to get, I initiate and control the action, and the action is aimed at the end of quenching my thirst or satisfying my hunger, even if I am not explicitly aware of the end while reaching for the glass or walking to the refrigerator.

With these preliminaries in mind, this chapter first distinguishes three senses of "action." The second section turns to the most complete sense of action—chosen actions—and the third section to the question of deliberation and its relation to choosing. I shall frame the discussion around some Husserlian distinctions, but I aim neither to expose nor interpret his views. My aim is, rather, to sketch a position that allows for the multiple possibilities that arise when we consider actions.

## Acting

An action satisfying the three aforementioned conditions—I shall call it a "voluntary action," although in a slightly different sense from Aristotle [*Nic. Ethics*: 1111<sup>a</sup>22–25, Aristotle 1984])—grasps a present situation as bad, deficient, unsatisfying, or unacceptable in some respect and evaluates an envisioned situation as good and as realizable by a determinate bodily performance. The envisioned good may be a condition or state in myself, such as being an honest person, and it is realized in performing the action—telling the truth—itself. Or the envisioned good may be some product or external state of affairs that is realized as an effect of my action, say, making an omelet. Husserl calls the (implicit or explicit) volitional intention

that initiates and governs a voluntary action the *fiat*, the “let it be done” (Husserl 1988: 107). The transition from the evaluation of the envisioned end as (apparently) good to the *fiat* is mediated by desire. The envisioned good disclosed by the evaluation is taken as desirable, and the *fiat* directs us to that desirable good as something to be realized through a bodily performance. The *fiat*, in other words, emptily intends the envisioned, realizable good and is inseparable from the performance that realizes (or attempts to realize) it (Melle 1997: 180). At every moment of the action, we have a partial fulfillment of the *fiat*, and the action continues just so long as the *fiat* is operative. As Ullrich Melle (1997: 181) puts it, “during an action we have an intention of the will that constantly maintains itself as an empty intention that simultaneously constantly acquires the fullness of satisfaction through a constantly creative positing.”

The phenomenological notion of the *fiat*, the empty volitional intention as fulfilled in a temporally extended action, recognizes that the action explained is part of a more comprehensive activity that unfolds over time. Michael Thompson’s claim that the fundamental mode of explaining action is “naïve action explanation” (Thompson 2008: 86) involves the same recognition. A naïve action explanation explains breaking eggs as follows: “I am breaking eggs because I am making an omelet” (Thompson 2008: 85). Thompson contrasts such naïve action explanations with “sophisticated” (philosophical) explanations that appeal to wants or desires as the *explanans* of a voluntary action (Thompson 2008: 86–87), for example, “I am breaking eggs because I want to make an omelet.” Thompson does not deny that sophisticated explanations can be given for actions, but he thinks them secondary to and dependent upon naïve explanations. A difficulty in Thompson’s account from a phenomenological perspective is that phenomenology is concerned not with explanation but with the description of the intentional structure of action, and naïve action explanations mask that structure.

The *fiat*, I have said, is founded upon an evaluative sense, which is, in turn, founded upon the non-axiological properties of the valued object (e.g., a thing, situation, or event) (see, among others, Husserl 1970b: 636–639, 1988, 252; Stein 1989: 100–101; Pfänder 1913: 340; Brentano 1995: 60–61; Drummond 2013: 252). In the case of evaluation, an emotion—the evaluating experience—is motivated by the thing’s non-axiological properties and the ascription of the value-attribute to the thing is justified by those same properties. Fear, for example, apprehends the dog as dangerous. Why? Because the dog is charging me directly while baring its teeth and growling. Those non-axiological features are the (motivating) reasons for my experiencing fear and the (justifying) reasons for my sense that the dog is dangerous. Similarly, in the case of action, and precisely because the *fiat* is motivated by a desire engendered by the evaluation, the search for the reasons for the action would move “downward” toward the intentionally motivating layers of sense. So, *contra* Thompson, the naïve explanation “I am breaking the eggs because I am making an omelet” includes as part of its meaning that I want an omelet. The naïve explanation, while parsimonious, gains its explanatory force from the fact that I desire an omelet. Intentional motivation, at least initially, moves “upward” to more complex meanings: non-axiological properties found an affective, evaluative meaning rooted in those properties, and the value-attributes disclosed by the emotion found, with the mediation of desire, the *fiat* and the actions undertaken to fulfill it.

Many have inferred from the relation between evaluation and voluntary action that the feeling- and emotion-experiences in which we value objects contain in themselves inclinations and motivations to act in certain ways and thereby serve to explain and justify our actions, at least in part. It is an undeniable, but contingent, fact that emotions motivate

desires and actions; it is not the case that desire with its attendant tendency to action belongs essentially to every emotion-type or to every emotional episode. The view that emotions incline us to act presupposes that the desiderative belongs to the emotive. Linda Zagzebski (2003: 116), for example, speaks of the affective dimension of an emotional experience—the bodily feelings that belong to the emotion—as “pushy.” Her basic idea is that pleasurable feeling states “push” us toward actions that will maintain or increase the pleasure, while painful feeling states “push” us toward actions that will lessen or end the pain. While it is clear that desire presupposes an emotive evaluation of a (apparent) good, the emotion, as I shall argue, does not necessarily involve desire and its “pushiness.” For Zagzebski, it is the subjective condition that motivates action, but I agree with many of the early phenomenologists that it is the value disclosed in the emotional experience—the (apparent) good or (apparent) bad—that “pulls” us toward action.

Robert Roberts too believes that emotions in general, even if not universally, incline us to act. Roberts views emotions as “concern-based construals” (Roberts 2003: 64, 2013: 46), and he distinguishes a basic concern tied to the emotion’s affective dimension and a consequent concern or motivation tied to action (Roberts 2003: 144, 2013: 116). He defines fear, for example, as follows: “X presents a threat to Y of a significant degree of probability; may X or its threatened consequences for Y be avoided” (Roberts 2013: 113). The basic concern in fear is the avoidance of danger; this motivates, on Roberts’s view, the consequent concern to do something that will remove the danger. The consequent concern motivates the action.

Against views that claim that the tendency to action is an aspect of an emotion, I would note that there are emotions whose “performance dimension” terminates in the *expression* of the emotion. Emotions involve undergoing physiological changes and sensing these in bodily feelings (Drummond 2020), but our bodies express our emotional experience in ways that go beyond these undergoings. There is, in other words, emotion-motivated behavior that falls short of action. Emotion-motivated behaviors are (i) initiated by us, but (ii) only sometimes under our control, and (iii) lacking an end. Emotion-motivated behaviors are physical enactments of the emotions they express. Whether or not they are under our control I shall call them “incomplete actions.”

Consider, for example, Joe who is angered by someone’s comment in a meeting. Joe undergoes an acceleration of his heart rate, a rise in the skin temperature of his fingers, a tightening of the muscles in his abdomen, jaw, and around the eyes, and the clenching of his fingers. In these none of the conditions for action are satisfied. Suppose, however, that Joe also completes the clenching of his fingers and pounds his fist against the table. In forming and pounding his fist, Joe initiates the action, although, assuming he is not being theatrical, it is not clear whether he controls it. Whereas the physiological changes Joe *undergoes* are intrinsic to the emotion, the physical performance he *undertakes* in pounding his fist on the table is not intrinsic to the emotion. On the assumption that Joe is *not* being theatrical, he has no *desire* to pound the table. There is no end he seeks to realize in pounding the table; Joe is not acting for a *reason*. He just *reacts*—emphatically—to the comment made by his colleague. Emotion-motivated behavior, in brief, is incompletely acting; it consists wholly in—that is, is exhausted by—expressing the emotion.

Another reason to doubt that emotions incorporate a desiderative moment is that some emotions, for example, awe and wonder, do not incline us to act. They involve bodily expressions similar to surprise reactions but not desire; they tend instead to arrest action. Joy too seems to terminate in bodily expressions, that is, in emotion-motivated behaviors: smiling, jumping for joy, raising both arms after scoring a goal, punching the air, and so forth. But they are not aimed at an end. Nor does desire seem a component of emotion when we

are “struck” by value (Mulligan 2009: 154). Such experiences are often expressed by an exclamation or interjection, such as “How sad” upon hearing of a colleague’s serious illness, or “How vulgar” upon witnessing someone’s behavior, or “Such generosity” upon hearing that someone has made a magnificent gift to an institution. The sadness, disgust, and admiration underlying such exclamations neither arouse desire nor motivate actions arising from the emotion itself.

When emotion does incline us to act, the relation between the emotion and the action is made complex by the mediating role of desire. In the examples above, the emotions do not motivate action insofar as they do not motivate desire. When, however, an emotion does motivate a voluntary action as, say, in fear’s motivating flight, it first motivates the desire that, in turn, motivates the volition. That is, the desire motivates both the *fiat* that emptily and implicitly intends the end and the action that is the processual fulfillment of the *fiat*. The good as realizable is the object of a desire, but it is the volition, the *fiat*, that initiates the action that will realize that good. In such a case, in brief, the voluntary action is (i) initiated by the *fiat*, (ii) controlled by the *fiat*, and (iii) aimed at an end.

Husserl stresses the fact that the desire or wish is not the willing: “Mere wishing is not willing; it contains nothing of the practical modalities and is not itself a practical act, an act of the will in the broadest sense” (Husserl 1988: 103; see also Melle 1997: 179). I can wish for the impossible or for what is past (or both, as in “I wish I did not have that second piece of pie at dinner last night”), but the wishing that is relevant for the will and for action is a wishing for what is practically possible, what is realizable in action. This wishing takes the form of desire.

While the willing is founded on and inseparable from desire (Husserl 1988: 105), it is not reducible to it. As Michael Bratman argues, volitional intentions

are subject to characteristic norms of consistency and means–end coherence. Roughly, she is rationally required not both to intend A and intend B if she believes that A and B are not co–possible; and, again roughly, she is rationally required to be such that if she intends E and believes M is a necessary means to E then she intends M.

(Bratman 2012: 73; see also Husserl 1988: 221–224)

Such norms, however, do not apply to desires. It is not irrational to desire both A and B even when knowing that their objects are non–compossible or to desire E while not desiring M. Moreover, it is also a volitional norm that when one wills to do *A*, and nothing interferes, one does *A*. We do not resist doing *A* once we have willed it, but we do regularly resist some desires.

In summary, then, we can characterize the intentional structure of voluntary actions as follows:

- a Subject *S* perceives (remembers, imagines, judges) an object *O* (a thing, situation, event, etc.) as having non-axiological properties *x*, *y*, and *z*;
- b *S*’s perceiving (remembering, imagining, judging) *O* as *x*, *y*, and *z* motivates an intentional feeling or emotional experience that evaluates *O* as having the value–attribute *b* (bad, deficient, unsatisfactory);
- c *S* envisions *P* (which might be a modification of or replacement for *O*) as having non-axiological properties *d*, *e*, *f*;
- d *S*’s envisioning *P* as *d*, *e*, *f* motivates an intentional feeling or emotional experience that prefers *P* (to *O*) as having the value–attribute *g* (good);

- e *S*'s preferring *P* as *g* motivates a practicable desire for *P*;
- f *S* wills (the *fiat*) the voluntary action *H* realizing *P*; and
- g *S* (voluntarily) performs *H* realizing *P* (a performance that over time fulfills the *fiat*).

It is important to stress that the multiple aspects of voluntary actions are not sequential. It is not the case that (a) through (g) follow one another in time. The motivating and founding relations obtaining among the various aspects are relations of sense, of meaning or significance, that have experiential import. The experience analyzed is the action as a whole, and (a) through (g) are internal, structured aspects of the voluntary action that realizes *P*.

### Choosing

Voluntary action, the progressive completion of a volitional intention (*fiat*) that initiates and controls a physical performance aimed at a desired end, executes what Husserl in 1914 (1988: 107) calls an action-will (*Handlungswille*), a notion that parallels John Searle's concept of intention-in-action (Searle 1983: 84, 2001: 44). Chosen actions differ from voluntary actions in that they not only aim at an end but are undertaken *in the light of* that end. In choosing, in other words, the agent has an *explicit* volition to attain the end. I choose to eat as a snack a piece of fruit (rather than, say, a chocolate sundae) *for the sake of* my health. It is not merely that I, as a matter of desire, prefer the fruit to the sundae and (merely) voluntarily eat the fruit; I choose the action with an eye toward the end of health (Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics*: 1111<sup>b</sup>26–27). The eating of the fruit is (iv) chosen *as conducive* to the end (Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics*: 1112<sup>b</sup>12, 1113<sup>a</sup>3–12; see also Sokolowski 1985: 11). Chosen action involves a decision, that is, choice and deliberation and, to that extent, reflection and reason.

Let us reconsider Joe's emotion-motivated behavior of pounding his fist on the table in anger. But now let us assume that he is being theatrical in order to ensure that his anger is noted. Joe is now acting for a reason. He is, however, not only acting *toward* an end; he undertakes the (chosen) action of pounding his fist *in the light of* the end of ensuring that his anger does not go unnoticed by the one who made the comment that angered him. To take another example, Bobby, a basketball coach, is angered by what he takes to be a bad call by a referee that could be crucial to the outcome of the game. He picks up his chair and tosses it out on the floor. At this point, his "action" might, like Joe's original, non-theatrical pounding of his fist on the table, simply be an emotion-motivated behavior—an incomplete action—that emphatically (and dangerously) expresses his anger. Joe and Bobby in these examples are "acting" (behaving, incompletely acting) *in* anger. Suppose, however, that when Bobby throws his chair onto the floor, he aims it at the referee hoping to hit him in the legs and injure him. Bobby is now choosing and acting in the light of an end: to exact revenge. Bobby is now acting *from* anger and for the posited end of injuring the referee.

With these ideas in mind, we can outline the intentional structure of chosen actions:

- 1 Subject *S* perceives (remembers, imagines, judges) an object *O* (a thing, situation, event, etc.) as having non-axiological properties *x*, *y*, and *z*;
- 2 *S*'s perceiving (remembering, imagining, judging) *O* as *x*, *y*, and *z* motivates an intentional feeling or emotional experience that evaluates *O* as having the value-attribute *b* (bad, deficient, unsatisfactory);
- 3 *S* envisions *P* (which might be a modification of or replacement for *O*) as having non-axiological properties *d*, *e*, *f*;

- 4 S's envisioning *P* as *d, e, f* motivates an intentional feeling or emotional experience that prefers *P* (to *O*) as having the value-attribute *g* (good);
- 5 S's preferring *P* as *g* motivates a practicable desire for *P*;
- 6 S posits *P* as the end to be realized;
- 7 S posits *H* as the chosen action (best) conducing to *P*;
- 8 S wills (the *fiat*) the voluntary action *H* as realizing *P*; and
- 9 S (voluntarily) performs *H* as realizing *P* (a performance that over time fulfills the *fiat*).

The fundamental difference between chosen action and voluntary action is located in (6), (7), and (8). There are two positings [(6) and (7)] present in chosen action that are not present in voluntary action. The consequence of this difference is that the agent in chosen action [(8)] wills the *action* (recognized as conducive to the end) be done *as* conducing to the end, whereas the agent in voluntary action wills that the *object of desire* be realized by acting. The positings in chosen action explicitly and thematically focus the end and the conducing action in a manner that the intentional structure of voluntary action does not.

Moreover, when choice intends a future chosen action—the kind of willing Husserl had in mind when he spoke of a resolve (*Entschlußwille*) or a plan (*Vorsatz*) to do something—the prior [(8)] intention-to-do-in-the-future takes the form of intention-in-action when the action commences. Searle (1983: 94) argued that the prior intention-to-do *causes* the intention-in-action that in turn causes the bodily movements that together with the intention-in-action make up the action. John McDowell (2011: 3) argues against Searle that the prior intention-to-do *becomes* the intention-in-action. Whereas it is a feature of Searle's view that the object of the intention-in-action is the bodily movements that belong to the action, McDowell argues that when one starts to do what one had a prior intention-to-do, e.g., to cross the street when the light turns green,

one's intention, now in action, is still directed at crossing the street, not at the limb movements that need to happen if one is to do that. In saying what the prior intention was an intention to do, one mentions a time: when the light turns green, in my example. When its time comes what was a prior intention takes a new shape as an intention in action, provided the agent does not forget the intention, knows the time has come, is not prevented from acting accordingly, and does not change her mind.

(McDowell 2011: 3)

McDowell focuses our attention on the unity of the overarching intention controlling both the prior intention—the choice that posits *H* as the action conducing to the end and the *fiat* regarding *H*—and the intention-in-action:

at any time in the course of crossing the street, what one still needs to do is to go on from the point one has reached to the other side of the street. But the same structure fits projects with more complex shapes, such as baking a cake or building a house. In these cases, when we spell out what is required if one is to finish what one is doing, at the moment at which one is some way into doing it, we need to introduce things to do with more complex relations to what one has already done.

(McDowell 2011: 6–7)

The intention-to-do as transformed into the intention-in-action continues to control and govern the performance of a chosen action throughout the course of the action, that is, as



long as the action continues. In phenomenological terms, at every moment of a chosen action we have a partial fulfillment of the *fiat*, and the futural character of a prior intention-to-do—whether that prior intention is continuous or non-continuous with the chosen action—endures in the intention-in-action but diminishes as the action moves toward completion.

Searle's and McDowell's distinction between prior intention and intentions-in-action appeals to the temporal distinction between intending a future act and intending while acting, as does Husserl's distinction between resolve (*Entschlußwille*) and action-will (*Handlungswille*). My distinction between voluntary action and chosen action, by contrast, is based on the explicit positings of the end of an action and of the action's conduciveness to that end. While the notion of voluntary action coincides with those of intention-in-action and *Handlungswille*, the notion of chosen action does not perfectly coincide with those of a *prior* intention and *Entschlußwille*. Choice, just as much as simple volition, can be concurrent with the action—a point that reemphasizes the idea of the *identity* of the intention in chosen actions and the intention-in-action—or it can be prior to the action in which case the intention in the chosen action *becomes* the intention-in-action.

### Deliberating

Choosing, we have said, involves deliberation and, therefore, reflection and reason. It is an activity proper to human persons. But what is it to deliberate, and how is it related to chosen actions? We have also said that choice can be occurrent—which I understand as concurrent or immediately continuous with the chosen action—but it can also be prior to action as in instances of resolving or planning to do something in the future. Must, however, deliberation be concurrent with the choosing?

When reflecting on features of the criminal code of the late German Empire, Adolf Reinach noted “remarkable antinomies” (Reinach 1989: 279) in our understanding of deliberation, one of which is that meritorious actions count as less meritorious when done “without any deliberation” and also when done “only after long deliberation.” If, in other words, the agent takes *no* time to deliberate, the agent acts impetuously; if the agent takes *too much* time in deliberating, the agent is insufficiently attuned to what is right to do in certain kinds of circumstances. How do we reconcile the conflicting claims that there must be some deliberation for chosen actions, but not too much? Deliberation is the reflective reasoning about ends and conducting actions that underlies items (6) and (7) in the outline of the intentional structure of chosen action, the moments specifically concerned with choice. Having evaluatively identified choiceworthy ends, the agent deliberatively determines which end(s) will be pursued given her abilities, interests, and concerns. Deliberation also determines what action (best) conduces to the chosen end given the particulars of the situation in which the agent is to act.

Persons are embodied, social, practical, and minded beings. A minded—better, minding—being is first of all an intentional being (Drummond 2012: 25, 2019), and I use the term “intentional” here in its broad sense of “directedness to” rather than its specifically volitional sense. We can speak of a pre-reflective directedness both to objects in the world and to the flow of experiences to which the experiences of objects belong. The latter encompasses the momentary experience's retentive directedness to prior experience as well as an anticipatory or envisioning directedness to yet-to-come experiences. It accounts, in short, for our first-personal, pre-reflective self-awareness (Drummond 2006: 217–218). We can also speak, however, of the directedness of empty intendings toward fulfillment, and here we find the teleological dimension of mind. In our discussion of *Handlungswille* and intention-in-action, we have seen the interconnection of the teleological sense of



directedness and the sense of directedness as object- and self-awareness (Drummond 2006: 218). The *Handlungswille* is (non-thematically and implicitly) directed to an end to be realized as the object of (my) desire, and this intention is gradually fulfilled in the action initiated and governed by the *fiat*.

For the purpose of discussing deliberation, we can summarize the intentional structure of the choice involved in chosen action as follows:

C is a choice that issues in action *H* as (i) having end *P*, (ii) grounded in the valuation of *P* as good (or apparently good) and desirable and of the action *H* as good (or apparently good) in its own right, and (iii) conducive to realizing *P*.

Deliberation, then, is an exercise of reason that bridges the axiological and practical spheres. It begins in axiological reason's evaluation both of the choiceworthiness of the end we pursue in action and of the (proposed) actions conducive to it, and it terminates in practical reason's determination of the ends to be pursued and the actions to be undertaken.

There is, however, one constraint on our deliberation about ends. The *telos* of intentional experience, we have argued elsewhere, is *truthfulness*, that is, apprehending things and states of affairs as they truly are, having appropriate affective and evaluative attitudes toward them, and acting rightly in response to and on the basis of our truthful cognitions and attitudes (Drummond 2010: 413). The achievement of evidenced truth in all the domains of reason is the full, autonomous exercise of reason (Husserl 1989a: 33). An autonomous rational agent "decides" for herself what is a true cognition, an appropriate emotion or attitude toward things, and a right action (Husserl 1989b: 281–282). Better, an autonomous rational agent reflectively and consciously *appropriates* as her own conviction what is evidently experienced (Drummond 2010: 415). In doing so, she becomes self-responsible—responsible for her beliefs, attitudes, and actions, for who she is—and therein flourishes as a human person.

The presence of self-responsible truthfulness as a fixed, albeit formal, end for human agency provides the context for understanding the habituation of judgments, beliefs, and attitudes that constitute non-occurrent deliberation concerning the ends we shall adopt and our reasoning concerning the actions most conducive to those ends. The reflective, deliberative agent evidentially and self-responsibly confirms or disconfirms the evaluations of ends as well as the principles of action embedded in the evaluative and moral concepts that we, by and large, inherit. An autonomous rational being strives toward evidentially fulfilling the passively acquired judgments, beliefs, and emotional attitudes that make up her traditional or cultural inheritance. Her understanding of these concepts is further affected by her experience of how she and others have acted in situations to which these concepts are relevant. At the moment of action features of the situation evoke and bring into play these concepts, the agent's previous appropriations or rejections of them, and her understanding of what actions are well suited to the situation. When she gains the evidence that allows her self-responsibly to appropriate, revise, or reject these acquisitions, she adopts them, their revisions, or their contraries or contradictions as convictions. Such convictions inform her subsequent judgments, valuations, and choices.

The self-responsible agent who without occurrent deliberation can act rightly and toward good ends has already weighed competing goods, and she has already considered the rightness or wrongness of actions conducing to these ends. She has done so in a reflective, deliberative, and self-responsible activity accomplished over time in such a way as to dispose her toward a certain kind of action in certain kinds of circumstances. These appropriated convictions— "habituallities," as Husserl calls them (Husserl 1970a: 66–67)—make up our

dispositions to pick out what is salient in certain kinds of situations, to have certain kinds of attitudes toward them, and to act in typical ways. This process of appropriation or rejection in the light of direct evidence is the ongoing process of deliberation that allows us to understand how an agent can act rightly without occurrent deliberation and why too much deliberation reveals an undeveloped or underdeveloped sense of the good and the right.

Since these previous judgments were not originally intended for the present circumstances, non-occurrent deliberation yields only a sense of the specific kinds of action that might be undertaken in the present. Where deliberation is non-occurrent, in other words, prior deliberation yields the sense of a *specific* action—that is, a certain *kind* of action—as appropriate for the particular circumstances in which the agent finds herself. The particular determination is undertaken on the basis of my perception of the current situation. But all that is needed for that to occur is the current perception that is informed by my already achieved sense of what ends are desirable in this kind of situation and of what actions are appropriate to achieving them (Cooper 1986: 22–24, 58).

Let us consider an example. Jane is on her way home from work and walking toward the bus stop. Seeing her bus starting to pull away from the curb, she, without occurrent deliberation, begins to run or to wave her arms (or both) in the hopes that the bus driver will see her, stop the bus, and wait for her to board. Is Jane’s action voluntary or chosen? Both are possible. While the lack of occurrent deliberation suggests she is acting (merely) voluntarily, she might already be aware of the “correctness”—in this case, the efficacy—of such actions. If her sense of the efficacy of the actions is simply assumed from prior observations but is not reflected upon and deliberated in the past, then she is acting voluntarily; she is just doing “what one does” in such a situation. But if her sense of that efficacy involves prior reflection and deliberation, her action would be chosen. When Jane, informed by past experience but not by past deliberation and choice, just runs and waves her arms there is only a *Handlungswille* and intention-in-action. If, by contrast, she is knowingly acting to get home and runs and waves her arms because she knows, given where she is in relation to the driver’s field of vision, that running and waving her arms best conduces to attracting the bus driver’s attention, then she is choosing on the basis of her *non-occurrent*, prior deliberation. That prior deliberation specified for her the type of things she could do to attract the driver’s attention, while the perception of her relation to the driver’s field of vision shapes her choice from the available alternative actions.

Karl Mertens has argued that Husserl’s account of *Handlungswille* relies on “a non-descriptive differentiation between will-intention and its corresponding fulfilling action” (Mertens 1998: 133). Husserl, on Mertens’s view, understands volitional intention on the model of empty intention and its fulfillment, where the empty intention involves a positing of a determinate state of affairs to be realized. This structure is clear in willing future action (*Entschlußwille*), but it is not in *Handlungswille*. On Mertens’s view, “although will and action in Husserl’s analysis of volitional action are inseparable, the distinction between intention and fulfillment of action-will can be pointed out in reflection” (Mertens 1998: 132). Mertens acknowledges that “we often constitute the determination of an action-will only after the performed action. But this constitution should not be confused with a mere description of the action as it is performed” (Mertens 1998: 133). Hence, Mertens argues, Husserl is guilty of reading the structure of the future intention of *Entschlußwille* back into *Handlungswille*.

The view I have outlined avoids this issue, and I think Husserl too can avoid it. The key is to distinguish thematic (explicit) and unthematic (implicit) volitional intendings. This is the basis on which I have distinguished chosen action from voluntary action. Chosen action involves thematic positings of the end of the action and of the action as conducing to that end;

voluntary action does not. In voluntary action there is an unthematic volitional directedness rooted in the desire for a certain state of affairs—a desire that motivates action—as opposed to chosen action's thematic volitional directedness to the state of affairs *as* an end to be realized.

Moreover, Husserl distinguishes determinate from indeterminate intentions. While this distinction is important in discussions of cognition—the fulfillment of a cognitive intention relative to a practical interest involves gaining enough determination in the fulfilling sense as is demanded by our interest in the object—it is of crucial importance in volitional intentions. The performance of a willed action takes some time, during which the willing is progressively fulfilled. Just as perceptual experience revises and more precisely determines our sense of the perceived object, volitional intentions involve a certain amount of indeterminacy regarding the details of the action to be performed and of the final result. This, I maintain, is true of both prior volitional intentions and intentions-in-action.

On the view suggested here, voluntary action is *occurrently* always a *Handlungswille* and intention-in-action. However, in some cases, that intention-in-action is the becoming of a prior deliberation; in that case, the action has the intentional structure of a choice, although its first-personal character is different from what we find in an *Entschlußwille* wherein the non-occurrent deliberation and choice is passively re-appropriated rather than actively and occurrently made. In other cases, however, there is only the *Handlungswille* and the intention-in-action, which are informed by past experience, although not by past deliberation and choice. If someone were to demand from Jane reasons for acting as she did, she could offer them only as an *ex post facto* deliberation identifying the motives and justification for her action, but this does not change the character of the action *as performed* from a voluntary action to a chosen action.

Mertens also claims that even if Husserl could overcome the first problem by more carefully distinguishing the *ex post facto* rationale of an action from the structure of the action itself, his account makes it “impossible for a volitional action to surprise its agent” (Mertens 1998: 133). Any action is, in a sense, creative, since it brings into existence a new state of affairs. Three considerations speak for the possibility of surprise. First, in fulfilling a volitional intention, as in fulfillment in general, there can be resistance or recalcitrance arising from features of the situation or the things involved in the action. Second, recalling that in intention-in-action the *fiat* is gradually fulfilled over the course of the action, we can note that when the empty intention is also indeterminate to some degree, the action not only fulfills but also further determines the nature of the intention-in-action, the *fiat* itself, as the action unfolds. Third, there can be actions whose end is simply the activity itself and its development, for example, Jackson Pollock's “drip painting” or, as it is sometimes called, “action painting.” As Harold Rosenberg (1952) put it, “What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event . . . The big moment came when it was decided to paint. . . Just TO PAINT.” In such cases, of course, creativity in the result is just the point, but there remains an unthematic and indeterminate willing of that result along with the intention-in-action itself. The volitional intention is to let the process develop and determine its own direction and result. These considerations show that there can be frequent “course changes” or further determination in acting or a willing of the activity itself as the end, and these can lead to both surprise and an unforeseen creativity.

### Resolve

To resolve or to plan to do something (*Entschlußwille*) intends the realization of an end or purpose in the future. An agent might, for example, will an end that can be attained only by repetition of the same action. Eileen practices the piano, for example, in order to become a

good piano player. As a young child just beginning to play the piano, Eileen did not realize that end in the very act of practicing. Nor did she realize it as immediately contiguous with any particular instance of practicing. It is only by repeatedly practicing over a long time that Eileen becomes a good piano player, and it is only by continuing to practice that Eileen remains a good piano player. The commitment to realizing that end informs and renews the present commitment to practice.

Another possibility occurs when I deliberate and choose now to act later. A student, for example, decides as a sophomore that she wants to apply to graduate schools. She will not actually apply until her senior year. Her choice to apply to graduate school does not immediately produce an application. In this sense, her volitional intention remains empty, not to be fulfilled until she actually applies. Nevertheless, the future she foresees with this decision affects her present in a variety of ways. She must plan and do those things that will put her in a position to apply to graduate schools: choose a major and the right courses within the major, gather information about the schools to which it would be best to apply, consider which of the papers she has written would provide a good basis for the writing sample she must include in her applications, and so forth. Although her action of applying to graduate school is in the future at the time she decides to apply, her resolve to undertake that action in the future shapes her present planning.

More importantly, these possibilities reflect the structure that is at work in the commitments around which we organize our lives: commitments as a spouse, parent, philosopher, teacher, citizen, and so forth. For the committed agent, practical reason recalls the effective force of past reflection, deliberation, and action into the present just insofar as that force is relevant to determining what I should do here and now. For the committed agent, the present is conceived in relation to the future-oriented commitments that organize her life, among which the priorities she establishes might sometimes shift as the circumstances of her life change. Resolve and planning of this sort are a way of willing what we shall be(come). And for the flourishing agent, these choices are constrained by and simultaneously realize the overarching, second-order good of truthful self-responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

### Related topics

See Chapters 2 (Husserl), 20 (Smith), and 26 (Fiala).

### Notes

- 1 This chapter will focus on actions involving a bodily performance. As will become clear in the discussion of the role of intentions in acting, this does not mean that actions lack a mental aspect. Nor does it mean that there are no purely mental actions as, for example, contemplating.
- 2 I am grateful to anonymous referees for helpful comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

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