

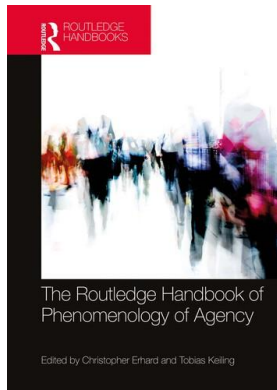
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THE VARIETIES
OF ACTIVITY

Hans Reiner's contribution

*Christopher Erhard***Introduction**

It is often said that finite conscious animals like us are essentially active *and* passive beings – both *agents* and *patients*. Just think of Kant's famous thesis in the *Critique of Pure Reason* according to which human cognition results from the receptivity/passivity of sensibility and the spontaneity/activity of understanding (cf. e.g. A51/B75). This Kantian *entanglement thesis*, as we might call it, seems easily generalizable to almost all human experiences. At this very moment, for instance, while I'm actively typing words, I am also passively affected by the smooth hardness of my notebook's keys that affects my writing activity. Indeed, it seems hard to imagine episodes of either "pure" activity or "pure" passivity. As long as we are conscious and alive, we seem to be inextricably both.

Given this peculiar entanglement of activity and passivity, what exactly does it mean to be active on the one hand, and passive on the other hand? How are we to draw the line between these two experiential modalities? What is the role of activity and passivity in the mental lives of (rational) human animals like us? How are activity and passivity related to other central ideas in philosophy of mind and action theory such as rational and intentional agency, intentionality in general, and free will?

Questions like these set the agenda for a heavily neglected work written within the phenomenological tradition,¹ namely Hans Reiner's 172 pages dissertation *Freedom, Willing, and Activity. Phenomenological Investigations Towards the Problem of Free Will*^P (1927). Reiner (1896–1991) studied philosophy with Husserl and Heidegger at Freiburg, where he also submitted his doctoral thesis in 1926, which was supervised by Husserl (see Husserl's (1994: 464–466) assessment). After the war, Reiner became a professor of ethics at Freiburg, focusing on moral issues and the development of a phenomenologically grounded *Wertethik* (Reiner 1974, 1975). While Reiner's later work is more often referred to, his early dissertation is mostly forgotten, although it serves as a foundation for his later writings.

In this chapter, my primary goal is expository in nature, thereby also pleading for reconsidering Reiner's 1927 book, both for historical and systematic reasons.

To begin with, Reiner's book is not only the first systematic phenomenological treatment of the classical problem of free will but also extraordinarily rich in content and full of concrete analyses and distinctions, all of which gravitate around our list of opening questions.³

In addition to that, as I will argue, Reiner's work can be read as a *bridge* between (early) Husserlian phenomenology and the (allegedly) more action-oriented ("enactivist") existentialist phenomenologies developed by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. Call this the *bridge thesis* with respect to Reiner's early work.

On my interpretation, the bridge thesis manifests Reiner's historical importance within the phenomenological movement with respect to human agency. This can be seen from the fact that he does not only cover self-reflective deliberated intentional actions but also more subtle and spontaneous activities that need not be guided by antecedent decisions or "prior intentions" (Searle 1980). This broad focus also makes him interesting within the context of contemporary Analytic philosophy of action. According to the standard picture within this tradition, the "problem of action" consists in finding the "mark" of the rational-*cum*-intentional "deeds" of persons which are contrasted with things "merely happening" to them (Davidson 1971). An underlying assumption of this view is that all "events" a human animal is involved in can be exclusively and exhaustively divided into rational-*cum*-intentional action on the one hand, and passive occurrences on the other hand.⁴ In contrast to such a dichotomous view, Reiner draws a more nuanced picture that allows for numerous intermediate "stages" (156) between full-fledged rationalizable action and more basic levels of activity. Thus, an important systematic upshot of his phenomenological analyses is what we might call Reiner's *variety thesis of activity*, according to which human agency is not restricted to rational-intentional "deeds," but covers various forms or ways of activity, all of which are experientially manifest to us in at least a minimal way, or, if one prefers, for which there is something it is like to *do* them:

(Variety Thesis)

There is a variety of mutually irreducible kinds of phenomenally manifest activity.

Reiner's variety thesis can be understood as a systematic complement to the historical bridge thesis. In particular, the former is to be understood in the sense that besides the (standard) cases of intentional action, there are also *non-intentional* activities which are nonetheless more than "mere happenings." In contrast to the still widespread classical Davidsonian *dichotomy* (intentional actions vs. mere happenings) Reiner thus pleads (at least) for a *trichotomy* (activity: intentional or non-intentional vs. passivity). The examples Reiner offers for such non-intentional, or better pre- or sub-intentional, activities include laughter and crying, quick and habitual movements, spontaneous shifts of attention, but also breathing and yawning. By extending the notion of activity, Reiner opens up the possibility of enlarging the notion of responsibility and personhood beyond those "deeds" that result from a person's reflectively conscious beliefs, desires, and intentions.

Although Reiner's primary goal is to offer a solution to the free will problem (cf. § 1; Reiner 1931), his book mainly deals with preparatory analyses of activity, action, and willing. In fact, only §§ 27–29 and the conclusion concentrate on human freedom. In light of this, and given the focus of this volume on the phenomenology of agency, I will also concentrate on Reiner's analyses of activity and intentional action, only in passing commenting on the theory of freedom. In doing so, the variety thesis will serve as my reference point. Accordingly, the chapter is structured as follows: In part one, I outline elements of Reiner's phenomenological method. In the next section, I present Reiner's final picture of human activity in some detail by means of a four-field schema. This schema represents Reiner's version of the variety thesis. In the next section, I introduce Reiner's novel notion of the "inner

will,” and shall argue that he uses it in order to include forms of non-deliberative actions he dubs “given activity” (§ 26). Before concluding the chapter, I will shortly highlight interesting parallels between Reiner’s and Harry Frankfurt’s accounts of will and agency.

Reiner as a phenomenologist

From the very beginning Reiner makes clear that he wants to approach the problem of free will and action from a phenomenological perspective (cf. §§ 1, 30; Reiner 1931). What does that mean?

First, a phenomenological account should never start with premature definitions, but rather develop the relevant notions gradually by carefully *describing* and “*evinced (aufweisen)*” the concrete phenomena we always-already “designate and experience (*erfahren*) as free in our pre-scientific daily life” (1).⁵ Most of Reiner reflections thus consist in “analyses of the conscious experiences (*Bewußtseinslebnisse*) in which freedom manifests itself” (3). In this sense, freedom, activity, and action are conceived as phenomenally manifest dimensions that can be reflectively pointed out by means of “self-observation (*Selbstbeobachtung*)” (67) from the first-person point of view. Note that Reiner uses the Husserlian notion of *Erlebnis* in a very broad sense such that it encompasses both active and passive mental acts, processes, states, and attitudes that are, however minimally and pre-reflectively, phenomenally conscious (cf. § 10). As Reiner points out in § 21, “consciousness” can be used both in a transitive (relational) and intransitive manner, and he argues that an experience can be intransitively conscious without thereby being a transitive and “higher-order” intentional object for that subject. This entails that activity and freedom can be experienced by the agent without *eo ipso* being intentional objects. On such a view, even subtle and marginal activities such as absent-mindedly, automatically, and even post-hypnotically induced actions (101, fn. 2) can be characterized as “conscious.” Depending on whether *Erlebnisse* are “performed (*vollzogen*) actively or passively,” Reiner calls them “activities (*Tätigkeiten*)” or “experiences (*Erleben*),” respectively.

In light of this terminology, it seems worth mentioning that Reiner takes for granted that human activity and passivity have their own peculiar phenomenal dimensions. In other words, there is *what-it-is-likeness* both for *being a patient* (as in feeling one’s arm rising in virtue of external forces) and for *being a doer* (as in raising one’s arm spontaneously). Activity amounts to a “specific form of consciousness (*eigenartige[] Bewußtseinsform*)” (18). Given that the standard cases for what-it-is-likeness or *qualia* in contemporary philosophy of mind are restricted to passive sensory experiences such as feeling pain or sensing redness,⁶ it should be emphasized that classical Phenomenology has a much more flexible notion of consciousness including both the active and passive side of mentality. Moreover, the phenomenal dimension of activity and passivity does not consist in “raw feels,” i.e. non-intentional sensations; quite the contrary, it also includes their *intentional* dimensions since (most) *Erlebnisse* are directed toward something distinct from themselves. As such, they have meaningful intentional objects, and the job of the phenomenologist consists in elucidating the “sense” (29) which is involved in our mental episodes. As I will show, Reiner offers a very rich intentional analysis especially of volitional actions.

Second, in addition to the descriptive and reflective exploration of the agentive phenomenal-*cum*-intentional dimension of activity, Reiner aims at discovering the *essence* of the relevant phenomena as they occur in human beings like us, i.e. in “embodied (*leibbegabte*) finite persons” (2). In contrast to an empirical investigation based on “induction,” Reiner seeks an “essential consideration (*Wesensbetrachtung*) of human freedom” (2).

Reiner's intentional descriptions are therefore to be understood as essentially and necessarily true "synthetic *a priori*" statements.

However, besides applying these well-known Husserlian tools, Reiner also introduces a couple of novel methodological concepts.

One important notion is the so-called subjective "human sphere of power (*menschlicher Machtbereich*)" (38).⁷ A (type of) mental episode M is a member of this sphere if and only if it belongs to the essence of finite embodied beings like us that *we can do or realize* M. Moving at least some of our limbs, for example, belongs to the subjective sphere of power. Within this sphere Reiner introduces several sub-distinctions, two of which are especially important for our purposes. *First*, there is the distinction between the "absolute" and the "profective" or "conditional" (39) sphere of power. Episodes within the absolute sphere can be performed *immediately* or *directly* by trying to do so (e.g. raising one's arm).⁸ In contrast to this, activities belonging to the "profective sphere" (from the Latin *proficere* = doing something for . . .) can only be performed as a result of a previous "absolute" performance, but not directly at will. This is because a profective act essentially relies on a passive occurrence which must be "given" (29) to us. As examples for a profective activity Reiner mentions finding an adequate expression for a thought, or finding the solution for a problem (27–8). These are a profective processes because we cannot find a suitable expression directly by willing to do so – finding, like discovery, cannot be "forced." This is not within our absolute sphere of power, in contrast to simply saying something or uttering a sentence. All we can immediately do is endeavoring, striving, or making an effort as a result of which we might eventually find a solution or a suitable expression (cf. Reiner 1931: 58). If we are successful, Reiner claims, the resulting "entire act" (28) of finding the solution exhibits a "peculiar mixture of activity and passivity" (27). On the one hand, it contains a passive moment, namely an "idea (*Einfall*)" (28), a kind of Aha! moment. On the other hand, such an Aha! experience is not a purely passive occurrence, but rather presupposes active striving and attentional resources. Profective experiences thus illustrate a kind of process that cannot be easily captured by the standard dichotomy between intentional actions and "mere happenings" since they essentially incorporate both an active and a passive dimension. Generally speaking, for Reiner, the contrast between the active and the passive is not to be regarded as a contradictory opposition, but rather as a spectrum (cf. § 30) the poles of which can be blended into "mixtures" (29), "hybrid character[s]" (103), and various "complications" (47). Although the event of *finding* the solution for a puzzle is in some sense happening to me, it differs sharply from a passive sensation such as pain or hunger that can occur to me out of the blue. This is because the act of *finding* is essentially experienced as an accomplishment or *fulfillment* (*Erfüllung*) of the previous "absolute" activity of *looking for a solution*.⁹

Besides the distinction between the absolute and the profective sphere, Reiner introduces a distinction between the "creative" and the "deletive" sphere of power. Processes within the creative (or instead deletive) sphere are those (types of) episodes whose initiation (or instead termination) lies within our subjective (absolute or profective) sphere of power. Perceptual experiences, e.g. belong neither to the creative nor to the deletive absolute sphere of power. In fact, they are a subset of the profective sphere. This is because I cannot bring, say, a visual perception of a chair about, or stop it from existing, *just by trying to do so*. This is not so much because perceiving a chair is a factive episode that requires the chair's actual existence, but rather because perceptual experiences are *au fond* passive episodes whose occurrence requires that they are ultimately *given to me*. In contrast to perceiving a chair, visually imagining a

chair belongs both to the creative and the deletive absolute sphere of power since I can (in principle) initiate and terminate such an imaginative episode at will.¹⁰ For Reiner, these are not mere empirical truths, but rather essential truths about the nature of perception and imagination in relation to human powers in general.

By means of these two distinctions within the overall subjective sphere of power, Reiner develops a detailed “material investigation” (38 f., 151), which is supposed to figure out which kinds of experiences are in principle within our power (cf. §§ 11–15, 18–24). In this spirit, Reiner explores how sensations, perceptions, judgments, volitions, feelings and emotions, position takings, imaginings, intentional actions, decisions, intentions, and other kinds of episodes are related to the “human sphere of power.”

Reiner’s variety thesis: a four-field schema

Summarizing the main ideas of Reiner’s book is not an easy task. This is mainly because Reiner draws from various authors, offers a huge number of examples and distinctions, thereby tending to proceed rather casuistically and eclectically. Accordingly, in his assessment of Reiner’s dissertation, Husserl (1994: 464–466) remarks that the reader is likely to get confused by the uncountable distinctions that do not seem to crystallize into a final unified view. This impression is justified to a certain extent. However, in Section § 21 of the published version of his dissertation (p. 98), Reiner draws a (basically) “four-field” schema that encapsulates the core distinctions of his account. (The original schema is reprinted at the end of this chapter.) My main goal in this section is to elucidate this schema, in order to substantiate Reiner’s variety thesis of activity.

The gist of Reiner’s view is constituted by two essentially different though closely related and non-exclusive ways of being active, namely bodily “motor activity (*Bewegungsaktivität*)” or “activity of moving oneself (*Aktivität des Sich-Bewegens*)” on the one hand, and rational “activity of the will (*Willensaktivität*)” on the other hand.¹¹ While *Willensaktivität* is typically self-reflectively (or at least saliently) conscious, *Bewegungsaktivität* can also occur in a relative non-conscious, “sub-liminal” manner. To each of these two forms of agency corresponds a distinctive contrary phenomenon, namely passivity (“mere happenings”) in the case of motor activity, and “pre-free (*vorfreie*)” experiences in the case of volitional activity.¹² All in all, a four-field schema emerges:

Reiner’s Four-Field Schema	<i>Activity of the will (rational-cum-intentional action or merely “innerly willed” activity)</i>	<i>Inactivity of the will (pre-free experiences)</i>
<i>Bodily motor activity</i>	<i>Field I</i> <u>Examples:</u> deliberately tidying up your desk, laughing, crying	<i>Field III</i> <u>Examples:</u> absentmindedly wiggling your toes while reading, breathing, yawning
<i>Bodily passivity</i>	<i>Field II</i> <u>Examples:</u> mentally calculating 3 ⁶ , refraining from eating chocolate	<i>Field IV</i> <u>Examples:</u> pain, remembering X on the occasion of seeing Y (association)

In what follows, I will explain each field of this schema. I shall begin by elucidating the notion of willed activity (Fields I and II), which is the most elaborated one in Reiner's book.

Field I: Imagine that you are (deliberately) cleaning up your chaotic desk. This is an example of what Reiner calls an "action (*Handlung*)" (§§ 15, 18–19). According to Reiner, this is also a paradigmatic instance of a "full activity (*volle Aktivität*)" which is based on "self-determination of one's own future life (*Selbstbestimmung des eigenen kommenden Lebens*)." This idea of *self-determination* serves as Reiner's paradigm for all volitional activity (Fields I and II). It is an essentially forward-looking activity in which the agent tries to realize a certain goal or purpose which is consciously represented and whose "realization" she positively evaluates. In doing so, the agent "controls (*lenken*)" (17) her life which she experiences as being within her own power, and which she actively brings about: she is a "self-actor (*Selbsttäter*)," (17) and not a passive "spectator" of her experiential life.

Elaborating on these initial ideas, Reiner draws from Husserl's Third *Logical Investigation*, and argues that intentional actions are certain *mereologically structured units* that consist of distinguishable "partial acts (*Teilakte*)" (90) or "moments" each of which plays a well-defined role within the action as a whole. In addition to that, Reiner defends a *volitionalist view*, according to which the nature of intentional action is spelled out in terms of the multifaceted phenomenon of the human will. In sum, Reiner distinguishes four main aspects of intentional actions:¹³ (I) The irreducibly *modal* "awareness of one's own power (*Bewusstsein des eigenen Könnens*)" – in brief: the "I can (*Ich kann*)." A twofold manifestation of the will in terms of a (II) "volitional stance (*Willensstellungnahme*)" on the one hand, and (III) an "intent(ion)," "resolve," or "decision" (*Vorsatz, Entschluss, Entscheidung*) on the other hand, and finally, (IV) the "performance" or "execution (*Ausführungstätigkeit*). Let me comment on these in turn.

Ad (I). Reiner claims that intentionally performing (or trying to perform) an action *A* requires an occurrent awareness of one's own power to perform *A*: I cannot intentionally try to *A* unless I take myself to be able to *A*. This "taking" must not be understood as an explicit judgment or thought, but rather as a non-inferential "immediate awareness (*Innesein*)" (27, fn. 1) of being up to the task, so to speak. Thus, it is more like a *savoir-faire* (basically knowing how to move or halt my mind or body), rather than an explicit *savoir-être* (knowing that I can do certain things). The awareness of power thus captures the phenomenal moment of *up-to-me-ness* that is contained in voluntary action. Reiner mainly uses perceptual vocabulary to describe the *I can*: it is a sort of "sight (*Sicht*)" (22f., 160f.) of my practical possibilities in a certain situation; but it could also be described as a *feeling*.¹⁴ Importantly, this feeling of power ("I can do *A*.") can occur apart from the corresponding cognitive and self-conscious belief or judgment ("I believe that I can do *A*."), and also *vice versa*: It is possible to believe that one is able to *A* without actually *feeling* capable. The *I can* thus exhibits a certain cognitive impenetrability – a phenomenon known from various emotive experiences. Furthermore, Reiner argues that although the *I can* is necessary for the motivational structure of intentional action, it is not in itself an action or activity, but rather a receptive awareness that must be "given" to the subject. To be more precise, the *I can* results from so-called "motivated passivity" (§ 3) or association. In our example of cleaning up the desk, my action is motivated by the feeling of being able to clean it up, which, in turn, might be non-inferentially motivated or "afforded" by the untidy look of the desk. The *I can* also plays a crucial role for Reiner's theory of freedom since it *opens up* our sphere of power in the first place. Without this experience, our freedom would be phenomenologically mute, so to speak. Thus, the awareness of power can be characterized as a necessary (though insufficient) condition of free will.¹⁵ In this sense, freedom requires the "sight of one's own ability (*Sicht eigenen Könnens*)" (160).

Ad (II). In addition to the awareness of power, “volitional stances (*Willensstellungennahmen*)” constitute a further indispensable part of intentional action. Using Brentanian vocabulary, Reiner describes these stances as emotion-like experiences (*Gemütsbewegungen*) (53). Like standard cases of emotions such as joy or grief volitional stances are characterized by a positively or negatively attuned intentional orientation in virtue of which they are inherently “interested” in their object (cf. 110ff., 132) thereby caring about their goals. A volitional stance can also be a mere “wish” (72) without agential commitment, or a “(dis)approval” of some already obtaining state of affairs (cf. Reiner 1974: § 19). Besides, these stances can be either patent experiences or latent “attitudes (*Einstellungen*)” (cf. §§ 28–29) that need not be occurrently phenomenally conscious all the time. Noematically speaking, stances are essentially directed toward “transcendent” (69) *state of affairs*.¹⁶ In this respect, they resemble propositionally structured “pro-attitudes” (see Davidson 1971). They want the *world* to be in a certain way. In our example, I want *that* my desk is tidied up again. Reiner further claims that volitional stances have a *normative dimension* and are essentially *responsive* experiences. This is because they are founded on evaluative feelings or, to use Husserl’s phrase, *Wertnehmungen* that immediately grasp axiological features of the intentional correlate. Volitional stances thus “answer” to an apprehended value through a kind of felt (not necessarily moral) “oughtness (*Sein-Sollen*)” (74, 106) that is dependent upon my personal interests: that the desk is tidied up again appears to me a valuable state of the world that is *demande*d by its actual untidiness. Thus, my volitional stance is a responsive attitude toward this felt demand, and makes the corresponding state of affairs appear as something that ought to be the case.

Besides their constitutive role for intentional agency, volitional stances also make up the core of Reiner’s theory of freedom and personhood. Although they are not essentially active episodes, but typically passively motivated and unreflectively adopted stances that belong to the protective sphere of power, Reiner eventually argues that we *can* become reflectively aware of them, which, in turn, opens up the possibility of critically evaluating and thereby endorsing or rejecting them (cf. §§ 28–29). Thus, there is a sense in which we are free with regard to our own will (cf. § 27).¹⁷ A person, for Reiner, is essentially constituted by the whole (hierarchical) system of latent and patent volitional stances that guide and inform her actions and evaluative attitudes (cf. 153).

Ad (III). According to Reiner, states of affairs do not exhaust the things I want to be realized when I act intentionally since I also want to be the one who realizes them. In other words, in intentionally acting, I not only want the *world* to be in a certain way, I also want *myself* to act in a certain manner. This points to a fundamental ambiguity of the German term *Wille/Wollen*, which Reiner refers to in terms of the “double intentionality of the will” (69). In particular, Reiner claims that there are two essentially different kinds of volitional experiences involved in intentional actions. These two kinds of willings have different noetic features and noematic correlates, to use Husserl’s terms. Besides the volitional stance, there is the “act of resolve (*Entschluß*),” “intent (*Vorsatz*),” or “forming of an intent (*Vorsatzfassen*),” all of which are ultimately rooted in an act of *decision*. But what does it mean, phenomenologically, to take a decision? In contrast to volitional stances, decisions are primarily directed toward the agent’s “executorial performance (*Ausführungstätigkeit*),” not toward the transcendent states of affairs she thereby wants to realize in the world (cf. 71, 90).¹⁸ In this sense decisions contain an implicit *self-reference*. I must be aware of the activity I decide upon as being within my sphere of power: deciding to clean up my desk requires taking *myself* to be able to do this. My will thus has, to use Searle’s terminology, a causally self-reflexive “world-to-mind direction of fit” (Searle 1980). Moreover, decisions, again in contrast to

stances, are intrinsically active phenomena that must be *performed* by the subject in order to exist (cf. § 25). Reiner also claims that decisions are not emotion-like experiences like volitional stances, but more akin to spontaneous “speech acts” such as assertions or promises (cf. 75). As such, decisions can be taken in a rather “cool” intellectual manner, which entails that the value of the performance decided upon can be purely instrumental. In the case of the chaotic desk, it is both possible to love or hate to do the tidying up; I can also be emotionally indifferent or relatively neutral, and just do the job because it serves as means to an end I appreciate. Note also that Reiner carefully distinguishes between decisions and choices (cf. §§ 8–9), where only the latter necessarily involve an awareness of at least two practical possibilities. By contrast, deciding can be a “simple activity” (22). Despite these essential differences, Reiner holds that decisions and volitional stances are intimately related. To be more precise, decisions are one-sidedly founded on volitional stances: one cannot take a decision without relying on a volitional stance. On the other hand, it is possible to adopt a volitional stance without *eo ipso* taking a decision. I might, for instance, strongly want that my desk looks orderly again without doing anything about it – because of *akrasia*, laziness, procrastination, or any other inner or outer obstacles.¹⁹ With regard to Reiner’s initial characterization of intentional action in terms of “self-determination of one’s own future life,” decisions play a crucial role. This is because decisions are essentially future-directed acts that rely on a reflexive *self*-awareness, which, in turn, depends on the *I can*. In deciding to *A*, I “posit” the performance of *A* as to be “put into play by me (*von mir ins Spiel zu setzen*)” (71).²⁰

Ad (IV). Finally, the decision brings about the *performance* or *execution*, the active “core part” (79) of action (cf. 57–62, 80ff.). In virtue of the performance, the will (volitional stance + decision) becomes a *causally efficacious* and *perceivable* part of reality – at least in the case of bodily constituted actions. But performances are not movements of our bodies and/or minds *simpliciter*, but rather founded processes having several bodily and mental “strata (*Schichten*)” (81). A (normal) bodily performance, for instance, is essentially founded on a bodily movement which is both kinesthetically experienced “from within” and perceived “from without” (cf. 58). This does not mean that the performance is an overt bodily movement *caused* from within and monitored by means of perception, because the relation between willing and performance is not only a causal but also a motivational one. The performance is *experienced as fulfilment* and “*realization*” of the will. It is (experienced as) the coming into being of the content of the will, and it brings – if all goes well – the willed state of affairs about. This motivational causation is not mechanical or ballistic in nature since neither the volitional stance nor the decision vanish as soon as the performance sets in; both remain “actual” during the performance into which they are, as it were, *absorbed* (79ff., 143). Thus, for Reiner, the structure of action is not only phenomenally, intentionally, mereologically, and motivationally complex but also *cumulative* in nature: all mental progenitors of the performance are still “alive (*lebendig*)” (80) when the realization (= whole action) takes place.

Let me sum up Reiner’s extremely detailed phenomenological description of voluntary (bodily) action (=Field I). A rational voluntary action *A* is a unified act or experience consisting of four not necessarily successive partial acts fused together into one highly structured unitary whole: an occurrent feeling of power (“I can do *A*”) + a volitional stance directed toward a valuable state of affairs *p* + a decision to *A* in order to realize *p* + an act of execution.

Field II: Up to now, I have described Reiner’s account of volitional bodily action in some detail. He also touches upon “purely ‘mental’ action (*rein ‘geistige’ Handlung*)” (81), and claims that intentional bodily and mental actions are structurally “analogous” (81). This entails that the fourfold mereological structure from above (*I can* + volitional stance + decision + execution) can also be found in mental actions. Take the example of mentally calculating 3^6 (=729).

According to Reiner, this action is made up by a volitional stance directed toward the state of affairs of *knowing the result of 3⁶* together with the intention to *perform* the required calculatory activity. Besides, I must also take myself to be able (or at least to be able to try) to calculate the result. Field II also covers “hybrid” (156) forms of willed activity, namely “volitional acts of forbearance (*willentliche Unterlassung*)” (98, 156). Take the action of consciously *not* eating a delicious piece of chocolate. For Reiner, this is an instance of genuine mental activity that is accompanied by bodily passivity.

In the remaining part of this section, I shall comment on the so-called “pre-free sphere” (98) which comprises both non-volitional bodily movements (Field III) and utterly passive experiences (Field IV). This sphere is called “pre-free” since the notion of freedom cannot be meaningfully applied to it (cf. § 31). Freedom essentially requires an awareness of power which, in turn, relates to our volitional capacities. According to Reiner, this awareness of will-power is missing in Fields III and IV.

Field III: The “motor activities” pertaining to Field III emerge relatively late in Reiner’s book (cf. §§ 21, 25–26, 30), and are only discussed briefly. Reiner’s examples include breathing, blinking, yawning, and stretching your limbs absent-mindedly while lying in bed. Given that most of these motions seem to have a rather “sub-personal” or reflex-like nature, one might be surprised that Reiner includes them among his *phenomenological* descriptions. According to Reiner, indeed, these movements are phenomenologically characterized by a felt active (bodily) movement, which he describes as an “instinctive (*triebmäßig, triebhaft*)” (58, 102) motion of “going out of oneself (*aus sich Herausgehen*)” (99). In contrast to bodily movements guided by the will, these “vital movements” (Reiner 1931: 57) do not exhibit intentionality in the object-directed sense of Brentano–Husserl.²¹ Nevertheless, they are not supposed to be mere mechanical, reflex-like, and passive happenings initiated from without. In contrast to utterly unconscious bodily processes such as (undisturbed) digestion or blood flow, these vital activities can be *directly* influenced and modulated by the will, although they are not in themselves willed movements (cf. 97). Just think of the various breathing techniques we can use to influence our respiratory circles. Unfortunately, Reiner does not engage in a more elaborate analysis of these primordial activities.

Field IV: The last field includes passive experiences that are neither accompanied by active bodily movements nor are initiated, guided, or sustained by the will. Positively speaking, this “sphere of passivity” is characterized by a certain *absorbedness* of the ego. The subject is “captured (*Ergriffenheit*)” (16) by the presence of some “content (*Inhalt*)” (16), which can be immediately present, but also be remembered or expected. In this sense, being phenomenologically passive involves adhering to the present contents of the mind, the dimension of the future and the possible remaining temporarily out of sight. Passivity thus involves a sense of “givenness.” Moreover, a passive experience *centripetally* affects the subject, whereas in being active we experience ourselves as *centrifugally* moving toward the world. As an example, think of a salient bodily pain that imposes on you and absorbs all of your active resources.

Starting with these initial characterizations, Reiner distinguishes two forms of experiential passivity, namely *purely affective* and *motivated passivity* (cf. § 3). When we are passively affected by a “stimulus (*Reiz*)” (10) such as a sudden noise or pain, our consciousness is, so to say, frozen, and completely occupied by these contents. Motivated passivity, by contrast, involves an “internal meaningful connection from one act to another” (9). It occurs in all cases of *association*, in which one object reminds us of another. But this movement from one act to another happens independently from and sometimes also against the subject’s self-conscious will. In being passively motivated, Reiner writes, consciousness “jumps by itself (*springt von selbst*)” (6) from one object to another.

With regard to the general relation between activity and passivity, Reiner holds that *activity must always be motivated by passivity* (24–26, 62–64, 89, 114, 166): “there is no activity without a . . . concretely enabling passivity” (157). This is supposed to be a non-empirical, a priori “eidetic law (*Wesensgesetz*)” (62, 114). To mention just one example, Reiner argues that in order to act intentionally the agent must become aware of being able to perform the relevant action. But this awareness or feeling of power, as already mentioned, must ultimately be “given” to the agent: which practical possibilities are open to me must *dawn on me*, so to speak. Intentional actions are thus essentially founded on a passively motivated component. This can be seen as a phenomenological confirmation of the Kantian entanglement thesis mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, at least in one direction: all three forms of human agency (Fields I–III) essentially comprise passive or receptive components.

The extended (inner) will: why volitional agency includes more than rational-*cum*-intentional action

Up to now, Reiner’s description of volitional activity (Fields I-II) looks rather traditional. Ignoring the details for a second, he follows a venerable tradition dating back to thinkers such as Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kant who take the will to be a rational, autonomous, and causally efficacious power of human beings that can be exercised with regard to cognitively presented goals.

In this section, however, I will try to show that Reiner introduces a further notion of willing that does not fit smoothly into this rationalistic tradition. To be more precise, Reiner argues that besides volitional stances and decisions/intentions, there is a third manifestation of the human will, which he calls “inner will” (*inneres Wollen*). With respect to the four-field schema, the inner will is supposed to extend the field of volitional activities beyond the sphere of rational and decision-based actions in the narrow sense. In other words, there are will-based activities that do not involve planning, (forming of an) intention, “prior intention” or even “intention in action” (Searle 1980), or taking a decision. Paradigmatic cases of such activities are unreflective emotional reactions like anger, smiling, frowning, laughter, and crying, but also spontaneous perceptual or cognitive shifts of attention. Although these experiences need not be grounded on a previous or simultaneous decision, they still involve the will because they are to some extent “innerly willed,” i.e. *endorsed, admitted, or sustained* by the agent. These activities also show that the standard Davidsonian dichotomy between rational-*cum*-intentional actions and “mere happenings” is not fine-grained enough.

But what is this *prima facie* mysteriously sounding “inner will” supposed to be? Let’s take the case of spontaneous laughter as an example. Although laughter is typically not initiated by a decision or intention to laugh (apart from, let’s say, actors pretending to laugh on stage), it does not seem to be something that “merely happens” to us – like a pain or itch. Unless laughter turns into hysterical laughter or is triggered physiologically (through tickle or otherwise), it seems to be a *personal* process that *we* are living-through. (The way someone laughs or smiles can tell us a lot about the kind of person s/he is.) Furthermore, laughter usually does not occur out of the blue, but rather emerges as a specific response to a certain situation we are faced with. It is difficult to specify the precise patterns which make us laugh, but often a certain disharmony or incongruence is involved to which we spontaneously respond, although we are fully aware that our laughter won’t effectively change the situation. To put it into Sartrean terms, one might characterize laughter as a “magical,” i.e. non-instrumental,

“transformation of the world” (Sartre 1939). According to Reiner, in normal cases of laughter, we “devote (*Hingabe*)” (132) ourselves to the situation “without any inhibition (*Hemmung*) and reflection” (132). It is this sense of “devotion,” endorsement, or identification that is captured by the notion of the inner will. The laughter may involuntarily begin, but for it to unfold, we must to some extent actively *give in, let it happen, or go along with it*. So, what Hanna and Maiese have recently written about anger can equally be said about laughter:

Again, consider normal anger. . . . it seems that we can *always* choose either to continue to work ourselves up into an absolute fury (say, by trying to shout even louder) or to begin to calm ourselves down (say, by trying to lower one’s voice). Thus it seems that, even if it begins involuntarily, the process of normal anger can always eventually be voluntarily escalated or suppressed to some extent. To be sure, for people with pathological anger management problems, it is a very different story. But that is *abnormal* anger, and not what we are talking about.

(Hanna and Maiese 2009: 243–244)

On my interpretation of Reiner, the role of the inner will is precisely to organize or modulate such spontaneous ways of behavior either by letting them happen (or even escalating) or by resisting or suppressing them.

Importantly, this phenomenon of “letting it happen” or “resisting” does not require an extra additional higher-order reflective act. It can rather happen “seamlessly (*bruchlos*)” and “without further ado (*ohne weiteres*)” (77, 130, 134). Thus, the inner will is an inbuilt aspect of the very activity it accompanies and modulates. In this context, Reiner argues that his notion of inner will is supposed to be a volitional variety of Brentano’s “inner awareness (*inneres Bewußtsein*)” (§ 26). As is well-known, Brentano holds that all conscious mental phenomena involve an inbuilt reflexivity or self-awareness. In conjunction with Brentano’s view that consciousness is also characterized by “intentional inexistence” (Brentano 1874/1995: 68), it follows that every act has *two objects*, namely a “primary” and a “secondary” one.²² While an “outer” object is intended primarily, the act serves as its own secondary object. On such a one-level account neither “reflective grasping (*reflexives Erfassen*)” nor “noticing (*Bemerken*)” (129) is necessary for an act to be phenomenally manifest. Now, just like Brentano’s inner consciousness, Reiner’s inner will is not a second-order volitional stance, but rather a pre-reflective and non-attentive “consent (*Zustimmung*)” (128) to one’s own experiences on the basis of which the agent “devotes” (124, 134) herself to the primary object. In contrast to decisions or “prior intentions,” the inner will essentially unfolds *synchronously* with the willed activity, accompanying and molding it from beginning to end. Therefore, the inner will can be understood as an *internal structuring* and *re-organization* of the agent’s mental life. In this way, Reiner claims, the inner will accounts for the difference between an experience that just occurs to or happens in us, and an active episode we go along with or try to resist. In virtue of the inner will, the passively occurring urge to laugh spontaneously and “without further ado” grows into the activity of laughter; the subject “simply follows a tendency (*einfaches dem Zuge Folgen*)” (134). This minimal form of volitional activity in terms of the inner will is also called “given activity” (§ 26) since it requires neither priming or premeditating acts nor even an additional effort or intervention through the agent.

A further dimension of the inner will consists in its “ego-centrality (*Ich-Zentralität*)” – a term Reiner borrows from Pfänder (1911). The core idea is that activities shaped by the inner

will stand in a special relation to the active subject. Willed actions are essentially “performed by me” (*von mir vollzogen*); they do simply not occur *to* or *in* me – like “eccentric” or “peripheral” experiences (125). This “by-me-ness,” as we might call it, contributes to the fact that the agent *identifies* herself only with her willed activities; she *owns* her voluntary doings, as a result of which she can also be made morally responsible for them.²³ (Interestingly enough, we often blame people for laughing or the way they laugh. Some people, for example, laugh in a vulgar manner, and we criticize them for doing so.) On Reiner’s view, inner will and centrality are co-extensional notions such that a mental episode is innerly willed if and only if it is also performed centrally:

To begin with, in the case of volitional activity (*Willensaktivität*) the act of resolve, which essentially constitutes the character of activity, is always necessarily performed by the ego-center. And the same goes for the execution of the action, which must also emerge from the central ego in order to be and remain a genuinely volitional execution and not degenerate into a mere “mechanical” and pre-free doing. Thus, centrality is an essential feature of activity in the sense of voluntariness (*Willentlichkeit*). But this also holds conversely, since voluntariness is an essential constituent of centrality! That is, no act performed by the ego-center could be an act of pure intuition (*reine Anschauung*); and there is no volitional stance which exhausts itself in being directed towards the intentional object. On the contrary, every central act of the ego, even if it is not brought about by another act of the will, incorporates a certain inner consent (*innere Zustimmung*) of the will to the act itself! (128)

Since all will-based activity – in contrast to mere motor activity – is a form of self-determination, the inner will, which is at the *root* of all higher-forms of willed activity (volitional stances, decisions/intentions, executions), also amounts to a form of minimal self-determination. This is because the inner will is *reflexively* built into an ongoing and present process of activity.

Reiner and Frankfurt

Before closing this chapter, a brief comparison between Reiner’s rather novel notion of inner will-*cum*-centrality and the more familiar account of volitions, decisions, identification, internality, and “wholeheartedness” developed by Harry Frankfurt (1998) might be helpful. To begin with, Frankfurt often describes situations in which the desires of an agent stand in conflict with one another. In order to move on, a decision is needed. According to Frankfurt (1998c: 170), the “decision determines what the person really wants by making the desire on which he decides fully his own. To this extent the person, in making a decision by which he identifies with a desire, *constitutes himself*.” This can be understood in terms of Reiner’s claim that the inner will involves centrality, which, in turn, is constitutive for the things that “really” matter to the person. Reiner even holds that the essence of the agent qua (moral) person *consists* in her hierarchically structured volitional life. For the “essence of the person,” Reiner writes, “action and doing are . . . ultimately irrelevant; above all, her positional stances constitute her essence” (153). A further similarity concerns the status of the “passions.” Frankfurt holds that “there is a useful distinction to be made, however awkward its expression, between passions with respect to which we are active and those with respect to

which we are passive” (1998b: 60). He spells this difference out in terms of internal (=active) and external (=passive) emotions, which, in turn, depend on the way the respective passions are embedded within the overall will-structure of the person. In a similar vein, Reiner refers to the inner will in order to account for the difference between emotions merely occurring “in us” and emotions essentially performed “by us.” (cf. §§ 26–27). Reiner’s notions of inner will and centrality thus play a similar role like Frankfurt’s idea of internality. In doing so, both authors accept the idea that “passions” are not unequivocally passive occurrences – a view that also goes against the standard Davidsonian dichotomy between things we intentionally do and things “merely happening to us.” A difference between both accounts is that Frankfurt frequently appeals to *higher-order* desires and decisions in order to account for the internal/external distinction, whereas Reiner’s inner will is basically a *first-order* phenomenon that need not but can be fostered by higher-order attitudes or decisions.²⁴

The parallels between Reiner and Frankfurt even run deeper since in his theory of freedom Reiner heavily relies on the idea that personal freedom consists in the particular way in which we actively relate to our volitional stances. That is, genuine freedom of the will (in contrast to mere freedom of action) concerns our “ability (*Können*)” to actively endorse or reject lower-level volitional stances by means of higher-order stances, thereby molding the structure of our volitional lives (cf. §§ 6, 27–29; Reiner 1931: 60–66). For Reiner, thus, freedom of the will is the (non-uniquely determined) higher-order capacity to actively identify with some of our lower-level volitional stances. However, on a lower level, freedom is already at play when we, by virtue of the inner will, pre-reflectively endorse and go along with certain tendencies (cf. 134). So, for Reiner, spontaneous laughter and smiling are manifestations of human freedom. Frankfurt defends a similar hierarchical picture of freedom according to which it “is these acts of ordering and of rejection – integration and separation – that create a self out of the raw materials of inner life” (1998c: 170). Decisions thus create an “orderly arrangement” (1998c: 173) of my “inner life” by transforming it into an “integrated whole” (1998c: 174). As is well-known, this active and ultimately harmonious hierarchical organization of one’s “inner life” is central for Frankfurt’s notion of personal freedom (Frankfurt 1998a). The parallels between Reiner and Frankfurt could be spelled out in more detail, but this would go beyond the purpose of this chapter. I shall therefore close with some final remarks.

Closing remarks

Reiner’s early work is a good and rich illustration of what the Munich phenomenologist Moritz Geiger’s calls the “passion of phenomenology,” namely “seeing the differences” (Geiger 1933: 4). Thus, my primary goal of this chapter was to summarize the essential “differences” Reiner claims to have discovered within the realms of human passivity and activity.

Apart from the detailed analyses especially of rational-*cum*-intentional actions, I think we can draw three important lessons from Reiner’s phenomenology of agency: (1) there is a sense of willing, namely the “inner will,” which is operative even when explicit decisions or self-reflective intentions are not involved. In terms of this inner will, emotional reactions and “passions” like anger or laughter, but also spontaneous and non-deliberative movements of the body or the mind can be genuinely active. The inner will can thus be understood as a minimal form of activity in terms of which the agent structures or organizes her mental

life, even if she does not deliberately take decisions or plans anything. In this way, a great variety of human agency comes to the fore (see Reiner's *variety thesis*). (2) The standard picture in Analytic philosophy of action suggests that human agency can be neatly separated into fully "rationalizable" acts we intentionally and deliberately do on the one hand, and things "merely happening" to us on the other hand. From a Reinerian perspective, this view should be replaced by a triadic picture. On such a view, innerly willed but not full-blown intentional doings lie in between the two poles of passivity and full-fledged rational-cum-intentional action. In this regard, Reiner's work can also be understood as a *bridge* between a more "intellectualistic" phenomenological tradition (represented, arguably, by early Husserl) and later phenomenologically oriented philosophers (such as e.g. Buytendijk and Plessner 1925, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty), the latter highlighting the importance of unreflective spontaneous actions. (3) On Reiner's nuanced view of human experience, pure activity or spontaneity is a myth. All activity, be it grounded in the "inner will" or self-reflectively planned, is essentially *re-active* in nature and *entangled* with passivity from the very start since it responds to something "given" that matters to us, thereby calling on us to take a stance.²⁵

Related topics

Chapters 2 (on Pfänder & Husserl), 3 (on Pfänder), 6 (on von Hildebrand), 21 (Hanna), 24 (De Monticelli), 25 (Figal).

Appendix: Reiner's schema of human activity (quoted from p. 98 of his 1927 book)

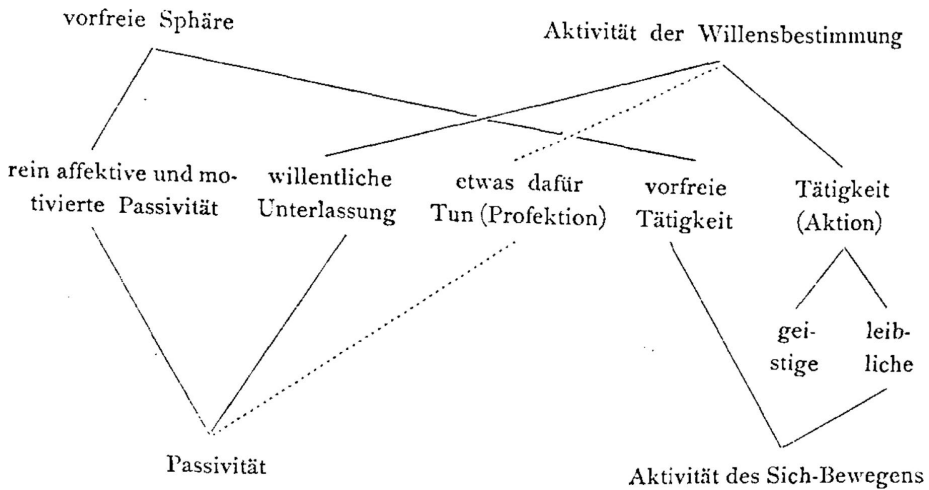


Figure 7.1 Reiner's schema of human activity

Notes

- 1 Spiegelberg (1982: 250f.) and Ricœur (2007: 38, 40, 78) are notable exceptions since both mention Reiner briefly.
- 2 I refer to Reiner (1927) by mentioning the page and/or section number in brackets. All translations into English are mine. For a succinct summary of his dissertation, see Reiner (1931).
- 3 To be sure, there has been done significant work on related topics by Brentano, Husserl, Pfänder (1911), von Hildebrand (1916), Scheler (1921), and Stein (1922), all of whom are referred to by Reiner. However, as far as I can see, Reiner offers the first systematic phenomenological *monograph* dedicated to the interconnections between activity, will, and freedom.
- 4 This dichotomous assumption is also criticized by Frankfurt (1998b: 58–59).
- 5 By this move, Reiner also accepts Husserl’s *epoché*. He thus claims that there is a “fundamental priority of the immanent–phenomenological question in contrast to the natural–scientific attitude” (141, fn. 2).
- 6 A thoroughgoing critique of this “mainstream stingy-ism” (Kriegel 2015: 6) can be found in Kriegel’s *The Varieties of Consciousness*.
- 7 There is also an *objective* “sphere of power” which refers to those transcendent things and states of affairs we can bring about through activities belonging to the *subjective* sphere (cf. § 10).
- 8 In this respect, the absolute sphere contains “basic actions” (cf. Danto 1965).
- 9 Reiner’s projective sphere strikingly resembles Strawson’s (2003) notion of “catalytic,” “prefatory,” or “priming” action. Like a projective activity, a catalytic action is “an action of setting oneself to produce some content or another” (235), whose completion cannot be directly achieved at will. See also Figal’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 26) where the author emphasizes the complementarity of voluntary and involuntary aspects in human activity.
- 10 Even when I am pathologically haunted by images of chairs, it still makes sense to try directly to stop imagining them.
- 11 Reiner seems to be committed to a possibly problematic dualism between bodily activity on the one hand, and mental activity of the will on the other hand. However, on a benevolent interpretation, *bodily Willensaktivität* amounts to a certain kind of bodily or *leibliche* activity, i.e. not to a purely and inner mental act of the will – and bodily activity *sans* volition amounts to another species of bodily activity. Thus, there are two distinct kinds of *bodily* agency. Reiner’s repeatedly remarks that the forms of agency in Fields I and III “rest on completely different foundations (*Grundlagen*)” (157). On my reading, however, they should be understood as species of a common genus. But the nature of this common genus remains a problem; see Erhard (2019). Let me add that, phenomenologically speaking, the distinction between bodily and mental agency is a gradual, not a categorical one. Even when I am refraining from doing something without moving my body (in the sense of locomotion, see Field II), for instance, there is still a sense in which *I am doing something with my body*, e.g. holding still. “Purely” mental actions seem to be a myth – at best a pathological or borderline phenomenon (cf. the *locked-in-syndrome*).
- 12 However, to make things even more complicated, Reiner also acknowledges “pre-free actions” (*vorfreie Handlungen*, § 21) that are based on previous or potential explicit activity of the will.
- 13 Note that, as Kriegel puts it, the “essential relation” between these parts is “not temporal, but compositional.” (Kriegel 2015: 84). It is therefore not necessary to perform the partial acts successively since we can also act *in one sweep*. Note also that Reiner finally lumps the first two components (I can + volitional stance) together so that he ends up with a threefold structure of intentional action (cf. 79, 91).
- 14 See Schmid (2011: 229) who explicitly argues that the “sense of ability” is essentially not a cognitive state, but rather an “affective attitude.”
- 15 Of course, free will requires not only an awareness or feeling of power but also its accuracy or veridicality (cf. 119f.).
- 16 This idea stems from von Hildebrand (1916).
- 17 Reiner’s conception of freedom of the will resembles later accounts of freedom in terms of “existentialist” choices. It also comes close to Frankfurt’s theses concerning higher-order volitions and their role for freedom (cf. Frankfurt 1998a, b, c). See below.
- 18 Cf. Kriegel (2015: 87): “[I]n the first instance, you decide on an action and want a state of affairs. . . . More generally, decisions appear primarily directed towards actions . . . , desires primarily toward

- states of affairs.” The desires or “pro-attitudes” in contemporary action theory roughly correspond to Reiner’s notion of *Willensstellungnahme*.
- 19 Reiner describes various “modalities” of volitional stances (§ 19). I can, for instance, “decisively (*entschieden*)” or hesitatingly want that *p*. These modifications resemble Husserl’s doxic modalities in *Ideas I*.
- 20 As already mentioned, Reiner also acknowledges cases of “pre-free action (*vorfreie Handlung*)” (101; see § 21); i.e. intentional actions directed towards the realization of a state of affairs that are *not* guided by an actual act of resolve, examples of which include habitually and absent-mindedly performed actions. However, Reiner claims that such actions must have been performed previously on the basis of an explicit decision. This is why he also calls them “post-free (*nachfrei*) actions” (102).
- 21 Or is there a sense in which breathing, for instance, has an “intentional object”? Probably not, if “object” is taken in a narrow sense. More broadly conceived, however, it seems plausible to think of breathing as a future-directed striving that inherently though blindly aims at something. At what? Maybe just at relief from a felt bodily tension or pressure. Conceived as a form of striving that can be *fulfilled*, breathing thus has a “correlate” though not an “intentional object.”
- 22 Cf. Brentano (1874/1995: 119): “Every mental act is conscious; it includes within it a consciousness of itself. Therefore, every mental act, no matter how simple, has a double object, a primary and a secondary object.”
- 23 Reiner’s notion of centrality resembles the contemporary notion of *agent causation* or “self as source.” On such a view, not only events or states of affairs but also substances or subjects *as such* can be genuine causes (see e.g. Horgan, Tienson, and Graham 2003, and the chapter written by Horgan and Nida-Rümelin in this volume). Several passages in Reiner’s book point in this direction (cf. 140, 152). He claims, for instance, that central acts are “caused from the I itself (*aus dem Ich heraus Gewirkte[s]*)” (165).
- 24 This is of course possible and often the case. The more an experience is backed up harmoniously by higher-order stances, the higher is the resulting degree of freedom or, as Reiner puts it, the degree of “wakefulness (*Wachheit*)” of the person (cf. §§ 28–29).
- 25 Research on this chapter was supported by a scholarship granted by the *German Research Council* (ER 819/2-1 and ER 819/2-2). I am grateful to Dan Zahavi and Robert Hanna for helpful comments on previous versions.

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