# The Action-Theoretic Basis of Practical Philosophy

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In the philosophical tradition ever since Aristotle theory of action has been regarded as an essential and indispensable basis of the core disciplines of practical philosophy, which should explain, among others, how prudential rationality, moral behaviour, responsibility, freedom or autonomy are possible. We find such explicit action theory underpinnings of their respective ethics or theories of rationality in Aristotle, in Epicurus, in Stoic philosophy or later, in modern times in Locke, in Hume or, to a minor degree, in Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer - to name only a few.

One main reason for such endeavours to give an action theoretic foundation to practical philosophy seems to be this: before we can make ethical prescriptions and recommendations or give rational advice on how to act, we must know what actions are, what intentional actions are, how they function and what causes them, in particular what their deliberative origins are and how such prescriptions and recommendations can influence our decisions.

Subsequently theory of action lost its importance in philosophy with the development of scientific empirical psychology and with the upsurge of rationalist and *a priori* conceptions of philosophical research during the 19th century. Only in the 1950s has it been embraced again as independent branch of philosophical research. And much research has been done since then concerning the concepts of 'action', 'intention', 'intentionality', 'explanatory reason', about mechanisms of control and self-control, as well as on the nature of mental states, on mental causation, the grounds of our decisions and autonomy and many other related questions.

An important feature of philosophy of action over the last 50 years has been its reestablishment as a discipline of its own and its - compared to previous theorizing - relative independence from the rest of practical philosophy. The latter feature, however, has also had negative consequences: often abstract questions seem to have made themselves independent as interesting puzzles, and nowadays the fundamental function of action theory for practical philosophy is rarely recognized. On the other hand these days in ethics as well as in theory of practical rationality there is a strong and growing tendency to support the latter theories by (mostly implicit) action theoretic hypotheses, and there is much talk about "(motivating) practical reasons". As shall be shown below, giving an action-theoretic foundation to normative theories of practical rationality is quite right and necessary for their sound justification. However the action-theoretic hypotheses presently used mostly remain not only inadequately explicated or completely implicit but usually are also not much reflected, ad hoc and cannot stand up to critical scrutiny. So both

practical philosophy as well as philosophy of action, nowadays suffer from deficits due to insufficiently consideration of the other side.

The aim of this volume is to recall the relation of philosophy of action to practical philosophy and to develop it by working out some pieces of philosophy of action that are particularly interesting in this respect. The aim of the rest of this introduction is to explain the significance of the various parts of philosophy of action for practical philosophy in more detail and to place the contributions to this volume into this framework.

## 1. The three parts of the philosophy of action

Philosophy of action does not have *the* one or only a handful of questions. It comprises several types of theories differing in the respective kinds of propositions they are aiming at and even in the methodologies as well as the sorts of arguments used to substantiate them. In this respect at least three areas or parts of philosophy of action can be distinguished.

*1. Conceptual analysis:* A first part of action theory is conceptual analysis, as the result of which concepts like 'action', 'intention', 'intentional', 'voluntary', 'premeditated', 'deliberate', 'unconscious action', 'automatic action' etc. are defined. These definitions serve also for setting the stage, i.e. for determining what action theory is about. Sometimes ordinary language analysis or reconstruction of our intuitive understandings of these concepts are proposed as the right methods for this part of action theory. Although ordinary language and intuition harbour a wealth of experience and reflection, these two methods seem to be too simplistic because there is already too much theorizing in this part of action philosophy, far beyond what is implicit in that treasure. The action theoretic concepts listed above share a particular feature; they all designate something that is very valuable in a certain respect in contrast to their opposites: action vs. mere behaviour, intentional action vs. unintentional action etc. And the theorizing often deals with exactly what makes these things valuable and why. So a more adequate methodological understanding of this part of action philosophy proposes that the concepts in question have to be defined in such a way as to capture what is valuable about their objects. The method for doing this could be to scrutinize the intuitions about the respective objects and new hypotheses about their nature, that is whether they capture what is valuable or makes a value difference and then to stick with those that are most revealing in this respect. This method may be called "*idealizing hermeneutics*" because it tries to understand our intuitions, but filters out those which best capture the particular value. The particular value of action for example, could consist in controlling the environment from the (our) inside; this control in turn explicates the idea of accountability. Or, to give another example, instead of regarding wayward realizations of one's intentions as an intellectually pretentious puzzle, which roughly has to be resolved by reconstructing common sense intuitions, one could define them in a way that explains why the particular value of intentional action is no longer realized.

*2. Action and decision explanation:* Another part of action theory tries to clarify how actions are to be explained, in particular: what intentions are empirically, how they "produce" actions, how we decide, what explanatory practical reasons are, how they "work", how they come into being, what their (potential) content is, etc. If one accepts a Humean kind of causality and a Hempel-Oppenheim type of covering-law conception of action explanation this explanatory part of action theory has to rely heavily on scientific psychology of action and empirical decision research. The differences vis à vis the respective scientific psychologies are: (i) Explanatory action philosophy does not undertake empirical observations but uses the material provided by scientific psychology. (ii) It systemizes this material and develops explaining theories on its basis (thus explanatory action philosophy is nearer to theoretical psychology than to empirical psychology). (iii) Explanatory action philosophy has its own aims of theorizing, namely perhaps: to provide the practically significant information, on a not too microscopic level, needed in normative practical philosophy, in particular all possible influences of cognitions on our actions (it does not aim at providing the most detailed and technically universally exploitable laws, as scientific psychology does). If, on the other hand, one does not accept the orthodox conception of action explanation the first and currently principal task of explanatory action philosophy is to develop a philosophically and methodologically satisfactory heterodox concept of 'explanation'. (This, of course, was the main topic of the explanation-understanding debate.)

*3. Advice regarding the basis and enforcement of decisions:* A further part of philosophy of action should explicate and determine what free, self-controlled, autonomous or authentic actions and decisions are and explain how they are possible: What are good mechanisms of self-control? If acting autonomously consists in not being forced but realizing some sort of real self, core or essence of the self where does this core etc. consist of and how does it translate into actions? If free decisions are more than undetermined decisions what are the standards they should meet? etc. An action philosophy that gives answers to these questions is already normative (in a broad sense), or more precisely: it, at least implicitly recommends certain ways of deciding and acting. Such recommendations should be based on identifying and developing different ways of deciding and acting, on methodically assessing them and on choosing as well as proposing a good or the best among them. By offering (implicit) recommendations this part of action philosophy is immediately practical; and the way of developing these proposals resembles inventing instruments and techniques. So this part of philosophy of action may be called "practical-technological".

Most of normative (in a broad sense that includes the advisory) practical philosophy is also practical-technological in the just explained sense. Because of this methodological and functional community, the practical-technological, advisory part of action philosophy can already well be considered a part of normative practical philosophy. Conceptual analysis and action explanation on the other hand have more an *ancillary* function for normative practical philosophy. The claim that action theory is an indispensable *basis* of practical philosophy holds to a stronger degree for them.

The three parts of this book correspond to this tripartition of action philosophy. And the three keywords of the main title, *Intentionality, Deliberation and Autonomy*, which take up central concepts of the respective parts, shall stand for these three parts of action philosophy.

## 2. Part I: action-theoretical conceptual analysis and practical philosophy

What can action-theoretical conceptual analysis contribute to practical philosophy? According to the above sketched method of an idealizing hermeneutics, conceptual analysis in action philosophy first of all has to understand the particular meaning and value of action, intention etc. Though explicitization of these values sometimes seems trivial because they regard deep-rooted self-understandings, it nonetheless may be helpful in orienting e.g. the basic conceptualization of ethics or the theory of practical rationality. A case in question is this. One fairly general understanding of the sense of action says: By acting intentionally we, or more precisely the central parts of our mental personalities, exert control of our bodily behaviour (and some mental events) from within and thereby, via its effects and implications, shape - of course to a limited degree - what is happening in the world according to our aims, desires, intentions etc. This implies an instrumentalist view of actions: actions may have intrinsic value too but they are mainly and first of all instruments for shaping the world. Now this understanding of intentional action leads ethics roughly into a consequentialist [1] direction. If the central task of ethics is to prescribe or recommend actions (or to propose prescriptions for actions) and if the sense of actions is to shape the world according to our intentions then ethics makes the most adequate use of these instruments if it makes its prescriptions and recommendations with the intention to shape the world according to moral ideals, with the help of the prescribed actions. Of course, the consequentialist predisposition of actions as such does not *exclude* a kind of deontologism that sees the aim and content of morals in certain kinds of actions themselves (and in preventing other kinds of actions for their own sake) or an ethics of good will, where the good will is the only thing that is unreservedly good [cf. Kant, GMS BA 1]. However, such ethics makes inadequate use of actions and squanders their potential.

Another, much more direct, contribution of action-theoretical conceptual analysis to practical philosophy is the analysis of those terms that denote the various types of ascribability of actions as well as their consequences to persons and thus differentiate various types of responsibility as well as the (possible) reach of morals: 'action', 'omission', 'intentional', 'voluntary', 'knowing', 'premeditated', 'reckless', 'negligent', 'unconscious' etc. The practical importance of these analyses is underlined by the fact that (criminal) law has to deal with the same questions and does so in a very differentiated manner, often giving answers similar to those of philosophers.

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[1] "Consequentialist" here is meant in the general sense of: regarding a theory that stresses the importance of actions' consequences (and measures their value in terms of their consequences' value), - and not in the narrow sense of the misnomer introduced by Scheffler: regarding utilitarianism or ethics that prescribe welfare maximization (cf. Samuel Scheffler (1982), *The Rejection of Consequentialism,* Oxford: Clarendon.).

However, one point should be underlined again. If the conceptual part of action theory also has an ancillary function for (normative) practical philosophy then it should meet this requirement by considering, analyzing and evaluating the practical relevance of the respective objects. And the final definitions should reflect this value (cf. the example of wayward realizations of intentions mentioned earlier).

The chapters in the first part of this book contribute in different ways to an action-theoretical conceptual analysis relevant to practical philosophy.

*Fred Adams* and *Annie Steadman* discuss the concept of 'intentional action' and confirm the simple view, i.e. the thesis that intentionality presupposes the respective intention, by rejecting an objection from folk judgments. Thereby they also criticize (folk) intuitionism and relativize the importance of such folk judgements for the philosophical endeavour. The simple view itself is one part of the view that intentional action shapes the world according to our intentions. And it also captures the legal distinction between intentionally and knowingly.

*Ralf Stoecker* develops a (neo-)ascriptivist conception of actions, i.e. the view that action sentences ascribe responsibility to a person for certain events, where this responsibility consists in the fact that the event in the end can be explained by the person's deliberation. Stoecker defends this view against several objections and emphasizes its merits. Of course, this theory has an immediate practical philosophical relevance in that it conceives actions in terms of the practical philosophical notion of 'responsibility': acting is being responsible.

*Sandro Nannini* defends a causalist understanding of actions from a naturalistic viewpoint. In particular he discusses the problem: how can the mental contents (of intentions) as such cause respective actions as opposed e.g. to a wayward causation of the same behaviour? The practical interest behind this question, of course, is to explain freedom of action, i.e. how our thoughts can control the world. Nannini proposes an adverbial theory of mental content and an explication of the content's influence through neuronally different ways of causing.

*Geert Keil* discusses the problem of deviant realization of intentions, which is at the heart of defining 'intentional action': when can we say that a certain course of events does not only correspond to our intentions but was also controlled by us? Keil gives a new, double answer to this problem. There is no *general* way to characterize the "right" causal genesis of intentional action because the world is ontologically denser than our descriptions of the intended world in our intentions. And deviant causal chains depart from what the agent would *ex post* qualify as an intended course of events.

*Neil Roughley* discusses a particular question of the relevance of action-theoretical distinctions to ethics: has the difference between doing something knowingly (collateral consequences) and doing it intentionally any significance for the moral appraisal of this action? In particular, might doing something morally bad only knowingly sometimes lead to its being permitted - as the doctrine of double effect maintains? Or are there other moral uses of this distinction? Roughley develops a new criterion for distinguishing between knowingly and intentionally and then answers all these questions in the negative.

# 3. Part II: the use of action and decision explanation for practical philosophy

That normative practical philosophy has to be based on the explanatory part of action theory, or more precisely on the decision psychology developed in action theory, for many is still more obvious and today better visible than the foundational function of action-theoretical conceptual analysis. The most general argument for this dependency is that normative theories of deliberation and practical reason for being reasonable need information about the empirically necessary structure and the open spectrum of different ways of deliberation and practical reasoning. On the other hand, this kind of dependency is strongly contested by foundational externalists in ethics and in the theory of practical rationality. In opposition to the latter and sustaining the former view, the following *dependency thesis for normative ethics* shall be defended:

A sound justification of morals depends heavily on substantial empirical action-theoretical information about human decision-making (motives, ways of deciding etc.).

Before substantiating this claim by some more specific arguments let me introduce some distinctions of several forms of internalism and externalism in ethics (and analogously in the theory of practical rationality). "*Effective internalism*" here shall mean the claim that an adequate justification of morals (perhaps only under certain, though usually fulfilled conditions) among others has to produce the motivation to adopt these morals and some motivation to follow them; *effective externalism* says that such motivation is not necessary for an adequate justification of morals. So effective internalism is an adequacy condition for justifications of morals. "*Foundational internalism*" here shall denote the claim that the motivational conditions of effective internalism can only be fulfilled by the justification's recourse to motives that precede the justification; *foundational externalism* says that for meeting the requirements of effective internalism no such recourse to pre-existing motives is necessary. In particular, foundational externalists assume that an externalist justification of morals (i.e. a justification that does not make recourse to pre-existing motives) can provide the necessary motivation via the power of reason. David Brink, for example is an effective externalist; Kant is an effective internalist but a foundational externalist; and Bernard Williams is an effective as well as foundational internalist. (In addition to the two forms of internalism mentioned so far there is semantic internalism, which, however does not concern us here.)

The argument for the dependency thesis for normative ethics proceeds in three steps.

1. Effective externalism is inadequate. There are four possibilities for effective externalism. (i) The justification in accordance with effective externalism does not motivate, and consequently the justified moral is not (practically) embraced and consequently not put into practice. In this case the justification is pragmatically useless; we can do well without it; and from a practical viewpoint there is no need to discuss it. (If somebody is theoretically interested in it and has no better things to do he may discuss it from a theoretical standpoint. But this is not practical philosophy.) (ii) The *justification* of moral is not motivating in the required sense but the proposed *moral* is motivating nonetheless because of other reasons. In this case too the justification is pragmatically useless and

we can ignore it from a practical viewpoint because it is superfluous for the moral subjects' practically adopting this moral; subjects ignore it in practice. (iii) Even though the justification in accordance with an effectively externalist framework has not been *designed* to meet the standards of effective internalism, it is motivating because its author by chance has invented a justification that actually is effectively internalist. This would be the case where the justification is only subjectively (i.e. for the arguer) but not objectively effectively externalist. (iv) The justification is motivating by chance, independently of its content, because some other particular (circumstantial) condition is fulfilled - the arguer might e.g. be recognized as an authority. But then again, like in case (ii), the justification in its content is practically useless and can be ignored. To sum up, justifications of morals on the basis of effective externalism, that is without aiming at motivation to moral action, are not sound because they are practically irrelevant and thus miss the essential function of practical justification.

2. A justification of morals on the lines of foundational internalism, obviously and by definition, recurs to pre-existing motives for moral action and therefore needs empirical information about them.

3. Foundational externalism, finally, tries to achieve the required motivation to act morally by externalist justifications, which do not recur to pre-existing motives. Foundational externalism (at least implicitly) assumes that the externalist justification or the belief justified by it, i.e. a belief that the moral in question has a certain justifying property *F*, by themselves provide the necessary motivation, where the *F* in question has nothing to do with one's pre-existing motives and might e.g. be 'is just', 'is rational' or 'is universalizable'. However that a certain kind of cognition, that moral *m* is *F*, leads to a motivating type of adoption of moral *m* is an empirical, causal relation and not analytical. So it is a question of our empirical motivational makeup whether the foundationally externalist assumption is true. And in order to follow the foundationally externalist justification strategy one needs empirical action-theoretic information as to whether such an *F* exists and what its exact content is.

Please note that the third step of the argument just given does not say that foundational externalism is false but only that it relies on empirical action-theoretical information about our decisions, too. Whether the foundationally externalist assumption is true or whether foundational internalism is right in denying this is yet another, empirical action-theoretical question. Stressing this point still more: the very question of whether foundational internalism or externalism is right is an empirical action-theoretical question about human motivational and decisional makeup.

A further, independent argument for the dependency thesis is this. Christine Korsgaard has distinguished between motivational skepticism about practical reason and *content skepticism about practical reason*, where the latter refers to doubts that pure practical reason can establish (the content of) moral duties or desirabilities.[2] A fairly general argument for content skepticism is that reason as such can establish truths about possible actions or even about complete moral systems, but

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[2]     Christine M. Korsgaard (1986), 'Skepticism about Practical Reason', in her: *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1996, pp. 311-334; in particular p. 311.

it cannot establish relevances or importances; it cannot say which of those indefinitely many truths is the practically relevant one in the sense that if this truth about an action or moral system holds the action shall be executed and the moral system be adopted respectively. From reason's standpoint all truths have the same value, which consists in their being true. Practical relevance in an action-directing way can only derive from practical attitudes like desires, intentions or feelings. If this is so then even for establishing the material content of morals we need empirical action-theoretic information about which practical attitudes humans have and how they influence decisions.

A dependency thesis similar to the one for normative ethics also applies to the theory of practical rationality; and it can be defended rather analogously in three steps.

1. Effective externalism about theories of practical rationality leads to practically irrelevant systems and criteria of practical rationality and therefore is inadequate.

2. Foundational internalism about theories of practical rationality may not, at a first glance, seem to lead to the claimed dependence because very weak forms of such theories do not seem to need such empirical information. One might argue: subjective expected utility theory e.g., of course *refers to* motivating preferences but it does not need to *know* them; it can simply recommend a way of defining utilities over such preferences - whatever their content is - and then recommend maximizing the subjective expected utility. However, this argument forgets the immensely rich empirical action-theoretical information about the structure of our decisions behind the advices of subjective expected utility theory, namely that we are beings with basic and non-basic preferences, which can be quantified, that we can integrate utilities and probabilities in the recommended way, that we are able to choose and then to realize the action with the highest expected utility etc. Sometimes these presuppositions are even contested, and exactly for such empirical reasons a different criterion of practical rationality is proposed. Thus even weak theories of practical rationality try to adjust their advices to rather general structural features of human decision-making and therefore need the respective empirical information. Stronger theories of practical rationality need even more information about our decision-making. They try to fit the recommendations for rational decision much more on the structural reality of our empirical decision-making.

3. The most important form of foundational externalism in the theory of practical rationality is value objectivism, i.e. the theory that there are values in the world whose worth is independent of anybody's preferences or (implicit) criteria for such preferences. Many philosophers contest value objectivism. But this is not the place to enter into this discussion. So let us assume value objectivism to be true and people to be able to truthfully assign objective value predicates $V_1$, $V_2$, ..., $V_n$ to certain objects. Now in order to fulfil the motivational requirements of effective internalism the respective value judgements, i.e. judging 'object $a$ is $V_i$', must be motivating to some degree in correspondence with the objective value. However motivating is an empirical, causal relation. And in order to be motivated in the right way by such value judgements our *motivational* system must be made up as to be "sensitive" exactly to judgements of the kind '$a$ is $V_i$'; for each value predicate $V_i$ there must be at least one motivational counterpart, i.e. a motivational structure that uses $V_i$ as the criterion for assigning motivation to the realization of the objects that are $V_i$. If our motivational system is sensitive in this way to some value predicate $V_i$ is an empirical action-

theoretical question and is not settled by reason or by some analytical implication of the truth of '*a* is $V_i$'. (From a motivational viewpoint, value objectivism and value subjectivism here are on a par. The difference between them regards the issue as to whether or not values can be attributed independently of such motivational counterparts.) Therefore, for ascertaining the foundations of our practical valuing, for establishing the practical, motivational reach of our value judgements (there may be value judgements without corresponding motivation and vice versa) and for being motivationally effective, objective value theories have to use empirical action-theoretical information about human motivation.

There is again a second general argument for the dependency thesis about the theory of practical rationality, analogous to the argument for content skepticism about practical reason. 1. *Value subjectivism*, roughly, is the theory that values are always relative to a value-subject, whose structures or criteria define which things have which value, such that the values' content is determined by these structures. The structures that define these contents may be motivational, emotional/feeling-related or simply the organic functioning of the subject, i.e. in the end the subject's survival. 1.1. If the subjective values are motivation-based, i.e. if they are defined by our motives, empirical action-theoretic information about our motives is required to determine their content. 1.2. In case of values defined by emotional structures or by survival the values' content is not determined directly by our motivational structure. However if these values are to have some practical bearings, as is required for their being relevant in a theory of practical rationality, the non-motivational values must be "taken up" or "represented" by our motives or desires, which simply "repeat" those values or interpret them. So for establishing and understanding the content of such values in the version relevant for practical rationality we again need empirical action theoretical information about how our motivational structure deals with them. 2. *Value objectivism* holds that values are non-relational but "defined" or given by the value object itself. Therefore these values are completely independent of subjective structures. However if these values are also to be values *for us* and if they are to have some practical bearings, then what has been said about non-motivational subjective values (case 1.2) also applies to them: They must be represented in some way by our motives; and for establishing their practically interpreted content we need information about how our motivational system deals with them.

Currently there is a fashionable overflow of talk about unclear "practical reasons". Taking into account the two dependency theses just defended should give more substance to the theorizing about practical reasons and hopefully bring back to earth accounts that presuppose obtaining the practical and motivational relevance of their unclear "practical reasons" for free.

The chapters in the second part of this book examine the nature of explanatory practical reasons (i.e. the reasons that actually lead to our decisions), and, in particular how they can contribute to the rationality and autonomy of our actions.

*Hugh McCann* presupposes an objectivist conception of the good and proposes a strong solution to the motivational problems such a conception might have. According to his proposal, desires motivationally represent what is objectively good. Objective values exercise some tug on us, and we

apprehend them. Conative desires, but not cognitive judgements, are the receptors of these values and they represent them in motivational terms. Only on this basis can desires be rational, and objective values practical. One consequence of this conception is that an examination of desires leads us to the content of objective values.

*Robert Audi* compares theoretical and practical reasons and examines the (possible) rationality and objectivity of the latter. Or more precisely, in both cases he distinguishes between (objective) reasons proper and reason states, i.e. beliefs and desires, where the reasons are the content of the reason states. Some results of Audi's comparison are the following. Although beliefs and desires have different directions of fit, also desires and desirability mostly are grounded in (e.g. hedonic) experiences. However the rationality of (instrumental) desires depends on the rationality of beliefs but not vice versa. A further asymmetry is that beliefs have propositional contents whereas desires have infinitive contents and therefore are neither true nor false.

*Christoph Lumer* first sketches a comprehensive empirical theory of practical reasons: What are intentions? How are they connected to (probabilistic) beliefs about action implications and intrinsic desires? What kind of intrinsic desires do we have and how do they develop? What kind of motives for acting morally do we have? In the second part of his chapter he outlines very strong implications of this empirical theory for the theory of practical rationality and for ethics.

*Michael Bratman* develops a normative model of particular practical reasons, which he calls "anchors of deliberation". He characterizes these anchors functionally from a normative viewpoint, namely as such valuings in a deliberation that can provide its agential authority and autonomy. For fulfilling this function such anchors must be rather stable, though potentially revocable; they may differ interpersonally but stand in a complex relation to judgements about the best. Bratman empirically identifies personal policies as one type of such anchors, where personal policies are commitments to certain standards (e.g. to act as a professional philosopher) or to certain types of reasons (e.g. not to act from envy) in one's deliberation.

## 4. Part III: theory of autonomy and practical-technological philosophy

The third part of action philosophy gives advice regarding the basis and enforcement of decisions by saying what free, self-controlled, autonomous or authentic actions and decisions are. Because of its practical-technological aims and methodology and because it deals with actions in general it is already part of normative (in the broad sense) practical philosophy. On the other hand, like the latter it must be based on the ancillary parts of action theory, in particular on action-theoretical empirical information about our ways of deciding and about how actions come into being. The general reason for this claim is again that whoever wants to give reasonable advice - in this case advice regarding the basis of our decisions - must be informed about the possible courses to follow and their relevant implications - in our case the possible bases of decisions and the consequences of their use.

Let me show this in a more concrete way for the theory of practical freedom. The first part of the theory of freedom is the theory of freedom of action. Freedom of action, roughly, consists in the capacity to do what one intends.[3] This capacity means that the intentions produce the respective basic action in a controlled way. For clarifying this capacity further empirical action theory is required to explain what intentions are and by which control mechanisms they produce the action. The other part of the theory of practical freedom is the theory of freedom of decision. Freedom of decision, formulated deliberately vaguely, consists in the fact that the decision is reached in the right way. There are at least three main approaches to what counts as "right" in this context: (1) incompatibilism, which demands that the decision not be determined, (2) rationalism, which requires the decision to be rational, and (3) autonomy theory, saying that a free decision may not be determined by constraints or coercion extraneous to the subject but must have its origin in the subject's essence, core etc. Ad (1): As a minimum answering the question of whether incompatibilist freedom is possible or actually realized in our world requires information about the origins and possible causes of our decisions. Furthermore, incompatibilism can be differentiated into two main directions. *Monistic incompatibilism* holds that indeterminacy of decision is necessary and sufficient for the decision to be free. Monistic incompatibilism is a rather implausible position because it cannot explain why undetermined, and therefore completely contingent, decisions without any differentiation should be good.[4] Therefore most incompatibilist maintain *pluralist incompatibilism*, which says that indeterminacy of decision is necessary but not sufficient for the decision to be free, further conditions must be fulfilled; and such conditions may be those of rationalism and autonomy theory. Ad (2): If free decisions are (more or less) identical to rational decisions then for developing such a theory of free decisions everything that has been said in the last section about the action-theoretic underpinnings of the theory of practical rationality holds true, in particular the dependency thesis. Ad (3): Finally, an autonomy theory of free decisions needs strong information about the possible ways and sources of our decisions, in order to be able to decide which of them are deep-rooted and are part of or express the subject's core or essence.

Beyond the theory of practical freedom there are further branches of research in the practical-technological part of action philosophy: theory of self-control, of responsibility or of authenticity. But what has been said about the necessary empirical action-theoretical underpinnings of the theory of practical freedom holds for these theories analogously. They all (at least implicitly) give advice: What are good forms of self-control? When are we responsible? What does authenticity require? And because these theories give advice they need information about the possible paths to follow in the respective fields and about the consequences of the possible courses. And, of course, giving such justified recommendations about the basis and enforcement of decisions is already a good piece of normative practical philosophy.

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[3]     Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1704), *New essays on human understanding. (Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain.) Translated and edited by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press 1996, II,xxi,8.

[4]     Leibniz, New essays (fn. 3), II,xxi,15; 50.

All the chapters in the third part of this book discuss the analytic or empiric conditions of freedom of decision, mostly in terms of autonomy. So they all try to contribute to determining or to establishing the conditions of one of the most fundamental aspects of good decisions, which in turn are quasi necessary for good actions.

*Michael Quante* first argues that incompatibilist theories of free decisions can only be plausible if they are what above has been called "pluralist" so that incompatibilist and compatibilist theories of freedom both have to develop a satisfying concept of autonomy. He goes on to contribute to such a conception by offering a solution to Kane's manipulation argument, according to which a person who is under covert non-constraining control allegedly cannot be autonomous. Quante's solution is that education is a form of covert non-constraining control and that the right form of education with a gradual release of control, exactly in contrast to what Kane claims, makes autonomy possible.

*Gottfried Seebass* defends what is usually called "incompatibilism" [5] and criticizes compatibilism with a wide range of arguments. His main argument is that determinacy, in the sense of all events being fixed, does not permit alternative courses of action; as a consequence there would not be different options between which we could decide and hence no freedom of choice. An argument against easy attacks on incompatibilism is that the latter may appear in the form of advocating a partial indeterminacy.

*Carl Ginet* defends incompatibilism against a particular and strong objection, namely that indeterminism implies that actions cannot be up to the agent. He attacks in detail four more or less strong arguments in favour of this objection. As a result he claims the contrary, i.e. *U*: an action can be uncaused and up to the agent. Finally, he makes even the stronger claim, that *only* uncaused actions can be up to the agent.

*Alfred Mele* defends the possibility of free will against Libet's respective attacks that experimental findings show that unconscious preparation of actions precede the forming of a conscious intention, such that the latter has no decisive role or only the function to eventually veto what has already been unconsciously prepared. Mele criticizes Libet's interpretation of his data; in particular he presents several strong arguments that what Libet takes to be intentions actually are only *urges* to act.

*Carlos Moya* develops an objectivist theory of free decisions. Accepting ultimate control as a necessary condition for free decisions he shows that determining freedom in conative terms must lead to an infinite regress. Therefore he proposes a cognitivist, rationalist approach to defining 'freedom of decision', where freedom is reached by recognizing objective evaluative truths. Such cognitions guarantee authorship, control of the value judgements and responsibility for them, where the authorship is independent of the originality of the value judgement.

*Thomas Spitzley* examines the implication relations between autonomy and weakness of will and defends the thesis that a weak-willed person is not autonomous with respect to the weak-willed action she performs. For proving this claim Spitzley develops some necessary conditions of autonomy. Then he shows that the conditions of several approaches to weakness of will (those of

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5    Seebass himself finds the terms 'compatibilism' and 'incompatibilism' misleading because they distract our attention of the main problem, namely to develop positive and sufficient conditions of freedom of choice.

Hare, Watson, Davidson, Ainslie and Ursula Wolf) imply the violation of one or the other, surprisingly different, conditions of autonomy.