



Juergen H. Franz: Geist und Handlung. Wilfrid Sellars' Theorie des Handelns im manifesten und wissenschaftlichen Weltbild. Wuerzburg, Koenigshausen & Neumann, 2010 (ISBN 978-3-8260-4327-7). 535 pages.

Juergen H. Franz: Mind and Action. Wilfrid Sellars' Theory of Action in the Manifest and the Scientific Image of the World. Wuerzburg, Koenigshausen & Neumann, 2010 (ISBN 978-3-8260-4327-7). 535 pages.

The book is available in German language only.

Abstract: This book is dedicated to the old and recent question, how actions on human beings can be explained plausibly. The objective is to reflect this explosive and still controversially discussed problem of explaining actions from a philosophical perspective and to develop adequate solutions. Thereby, a detour is followed, which, however, turns out as particularly useful. It is a detour via the philosophy of action presented by Wilfrid Sellars, which is inseparably connected with his well known philosophy of mind. Although his philosophy of action already belongs to the tradition, its actuality is remarkable. In this book, his philosophy of action is reconstructed systematically, completely and critically for the first time. Going beyond Sellars, this book follows the sophisticated enterprise to argue for alternate solutions solving the problem of explaining actions. These solutions are in particular characterized by the fact that they overcome the well known drawbacks of traditional reason explanations and causal explanations of action.

Content: The ten main chapters are titled as follows:

- Chapter I: Introduction
- Chapter II: Historical Context
- Chapter III: Contemporary Debate on Philosophy of Action
- Chapter IV: Intention, Will, and Action
- Chapter V: Practical Syllogism and Explanation of Action
- Chapter VI: Theory of Action and Philosophy of Mind
- Chapter VII: Can Reasons be Causes?
- Chapter VIII: Theory of Action as a Synoptic General View
- Chapter IX: Actions in the Manifest and the Scientific Image of the World
- Chapter X: Alternate Ways of Explaining Actions

The book contains an extended reference list, a person index, and a keyword index.

Theses: The book defends one key thesis on the explanation of actions and four key theses with respect to Sellars' theory of action. The key thesis on the explanation of actions is:

Reason explanations have the status of an explanation, and the power to explain actions autonomically and completely. Causal explanations also have the status of an explanation but not the power to explain actions, but rather the immanent body motions only. It is a fallacy to assume, that causal explanations can empirically be completed to an explanation of action.

The four theses on Sellars' theory of action are answers to four questions. In the following the four questions and the answering theses are given.

Question 1: In which way does Sellars phrase the problem of explaining actions?

Thesis 1: Sellars phrases the problem of explaining actions as the philosophical problem of the relationship of the content and the act of the mental. Under certain conditions, this problem proves to be the problem of the relationship of the manifest and the scientific image of the world.

Question 2: How does Sellars solve the problem of explaining actions?

Thesis 2: Sellars claims an irreducible relationship of mental contents and mental acts. This implies an irreducible relationship of reasons and causes and, hence, and irreducible relationship of non-causal and causal explanations of action. Ergo: Non-causal explanations of action are autonomous.

Question 3: Is Sellars' position reasonable?

Thesis 3: Sellars' arguments for the autonomy of non-causal explanations of action, grounded his philosophy of mind, are reasonable. However he fails with his assumption that actions can also be explained logically stringent as well as causally.

Question 4: What is the relevance of Sellars' answers with respect to the contemporary theory of action?

Thesis 4: Sellars' investigations on the theory of action, albeit belonging to the traditional theory of action, allow implications which not only anticipate several basic approaches of contemporary theories of action, but also open ways to a new understanding of explaining actions.

Biography: Juergen H. Franz has received a Diploma degree in communication technology from University of Applied Sciences Koblenz and from Technical University of Munich and a M.A. degree in Philosophy from FU Hagen. He has a Ph.D. in communication engineering and a Ph.D. in philosophy. He was guest professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi and at other international universities. At German Aerospace Establishment he was head of a research department. Since 1992 he is professor for communication systems and philosophy of technology at University of Applied Sciences Duesseldorf. He has published ten books and more than sixty papers.