

## Preface and Acknowledgements

Accounts of human and animal action have been central to modern philosophy from Suarez and Hobbes in the 1500s to Wittgenstein and Anscombe in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century via, among many others, Locke, Hume, Reid, Kant, and Hegel. Philosophies of action have thus greatly influenced the course of both moral philosophy and the philosophy of mind. This volume gathers together specialists from both the philosophy of action and the history of philosophy with the aim of re-assessing the wider philosophical impact of action theory. It thereby explores how different notions of action, agency, reasons for action, motives, intention, purpose, and volition have affected modern philosophical understandings of topics as diverse as those of human nature, mental causation, responsibility, free will, moral motivation, rationality, normativity, choice and decision theory, criminal liability, weakness of will, and moral and social obligation. In so doing, it aims to both understand contemporary questions in the philosophy of action by tracing their development across half a millennium, and to re-interpret modern philosophy through the lens of action theory (but see Zielinska's essay for skepticism concerning the latter possibility).

The form and contents have grown organically out of the *Philosophical Accounts of Action 1500-2000* conference that took place at Chancellor's Hall, Senate House, University of London, 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013. I organized this under the auspices of *The Institute of Philosophy*, School of Advanced Study, as the result of a bid that won their annual conference competition for 2012/13 on the theme 'Philosophy 1500-2000'. The conference was further supported by a large conference grant from *The Mind Association*. I would like to express my gratitude to both institutions, as well as to Julian Dodd, Ali Shahrar, and Barry Smith for their massive organisational help, and to numerous anonymous referees for their helpful comments on individual papers and the volume as a whole.

What follows is not, however, a publication of the conference proceedings. Numerous additions and amendments have been made, with the aim of offering a more rounded picture of philosophy of action during this period than was feasible at a two-day conference in the UK. That said, it has been impossible to represent every philosopher since 1500 who had something interesting to say about action, including some of my personal favourites.

With this in mind, I have strategically refrained from commissioning on some of the more theorists who had previously made it into the historical section of *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, which I co-edited with Timothy O' Connor (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), namely Sartre, Chisholm, von Wright, and Ricoeur. The main impetus behind this shift was to avoid biasing the volume too heavily towards the twentieth century. For this reason, and not without agent regret, there is also

little mention of Arendt, Austin, Danto, Davidson, Frankfurt, Heidegger, Marx, Merleau-Ponty, Oakshott, Prichard, Ross, and others, most of whom were covered in *Reasons and Causes*, which I co-edited with Giuseppina D'Oro in 2013, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Davidson's famous article. Instead, the present volume finds new space for thinkers who were largely absent from that publication, including Cavendish, Collingwood, Conway, Fichte, Kotarbiński, Leibniz, Mill, Spinoza, Suarez, and von Mises as well as (to a lesser extent) Bacon, Bentham, Comte, Dray, Durkheim, Garfinkel, Hart, Hempel, James, Menger, Mill, Parsons, Rousseau, Slutskii, Smith, Spencer, and Sidgwick.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of the authors for their incredible work and patience during the past few years. I hope that even those who share my anti-consequentialism will agree that it was all worth it in the end.

CS

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