VANESSA CARR

CURRICULUM VITAE

Post-Doctoral Fellow

Institut für Philosophie, Universität Leipzig
Beethovenstraße 15
04107 Leipzig
Email: vanessa.carr@uni-leipzig.de
Website: vanessancarr.com
Tel: +44 (0)7838 475 395

RESEARCH INTERESTS

AOS	Philosophy of Action and Mind, Metaphysics
AOC	Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Cognitive Science, Epistemology, Early Modern Philosophy, Wittgenstein's Philosophy

---

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

2018 - Present	Post-Doctoral Fellow, Humboldt Project, University of Leipzig Independent research; teaching seminars; organising talks.

EDUCATION

2014 - 2019	PhD Philosophy (Pass without corrections), UCL Thesis: *Movers and Makers* Summary: When we act intentionally, changes and states of the world come about, and they come about as a result of our intentional actions. We bear a particular kind of responsibility for those changes and states that come about as a result of our intentional actions, which I call agential responsibility. But what more can be said about what it is to be agentially responsible for a change or states of the world? That is the question that this thesis addresses. It is argued here that, contrary to a wide variety of contemporary views, it is not an essential part of what it is to be agentially responsible for a change or state that the agent causes that change or state. It is put forward that agential responsibility is a primitive form of responsibility, not to be accounted for in terms of causal responsibility. Primary Supervisors: Dr Rory Madden, Professor Michael Martin Examiners: Professor Jennifer Hornsby, Dr Ann Whittle
2012 - 2014	MPhilStud Philosophy (Informal Distinction), UCL Thesis: *The Causal Efficacy of Inanimate Composite Objects* Supervisor: Dr Luke Fenton-Glynn
2009 - 2012	BA (Hons) Philosophy, Psychology, and Physiology (First Class), University of Oxford Thesis: *Anosognosia as a Two-Factor Delusion* Supervisor: Professor Martin Davies

---

PUBLICATIONS

Carr, Vanessa (2019). 'Created, Changeable, and Yet Acausal?' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 119 (3):325-334.

PAPERS IN PROGRESS

'The Importance of Being Creative: On The Creation and Change of Abstract Artefacts.'

'The Significance of Transitive Action Verbs.'

'No Objection to Object-Causation.'

'Are Two-Way Powers Causal Powers?'

AWARDS

Aristotelian Society Student Bursary (2017).

Full AHRC Doctoral Award, London Arts and Humanities Partnership (2014 - 2017).

Durham Emergence Project Scholarship to participate in Durham Emergence Project Summer School (2014).

Wollheim Prize for most promising MPhilStud thesis, based on thesis outline, draft chapter, and oral examination, UCL (2014).

Jacobsen Scholarship for MPhilStud fees, UCL (2012 & 2013).

St Anne's College Vacation Laboratory Studentship to develop a research project with Dr Anne Aimola-Davies' Neuropschyology team, at University of Oxford Psychology Department (2011).

International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU) Scholarship for Summer School at University of Copenhagen: 'Kierkegaard - The Individual in Global Society' (2011).

College Scholarship, for distinction in Part 1 examinations, St Anne's College, University of Oxford (2011).

TALKS

Are Two-Way Powers Causal Powers?
'Two-Way Powers', Action-Network Annual Meeting, University of Leipzig (Jul 2019).

No Objection to Object-Causation
Humboldt Seminar, University of Leipzig (Nov 2018).

The Importance of Being Creative
Humboldt Colloquium, University of Leipzig (Feb 2018).
Agency Workshop, University of Tübingen (Apr 2019).

Created, Changeable, and Yet Acausal?
Postgraduate Session, Joint Session of Aristotelian Society & Mind Association (Jul 2018).

The Causal Interaction Problem for Abstracta
Departmental Symposium, UCL (Nov 2017).

Agency, Causation, and Deviance
UCL-Leipzig Workshop, Leipzig University (Jun 2017).
The Cognitive Science Research Group, New College of the Humanities (Jun 2017).

Movement of the Body and Causation by the Agent
Graduate Philosophy Conference, University of London (Mar 2017).

Davidson's Challenge for Irreducible Agent-Causation
Workshop on Agency and Causation: Formal and Conceptual Issues, Ghent University (Oct 2016).

Demystifying the Agent-Causation Debate
Cumberland Lodge Graduate Conference, UCL (Oct 2016).

The Agent's Causal Role in Action
London-Warwick Mind Forum (Nov 2015).
Open Minds Conference, University of Manchester (Jul 2015).

Getting Over the Overdetermination Argument
Philosophy Graduate Conference, UCL (Sep 2015).

RESPONSES

Response to *Is There a Feeling of Bodily Ownership?*, Annual London-Berkeley Philosophy Conference, UC Berkeley (May 2017).

Responses to *Causal Exclusion and the Limits of Proportionality* and *Causal Essentialism and Arbitrariness*, The Society for the Metaphysics of Science Conference, University of Geneva (Sep 2016).

Response to *How Not to Naturalise Action*, Philosophy Graduate Conference, UCL (Sep 2014).

Response to *The Translucency of Phenomenal Character*, Graduate Philosophy Conference, University of London (Feb 2014).

OUTREACH

Presentation: *Princess Elisabeth and Me: A Feminist Doing Philosophy, or Doing Feminist Philosophy?*, Sixth Form Philosophy Society, Sevenoaks School (Nov 2017).

Presentation: *What is a Human Person?*, Year 12 Widening Participation Scheme, University College London (Jul 2015).

Presentation: *What Exists?*, Philosophy Forum, Stuart Low Trust: a charity that organises activities for Islington residents experiencing social isolation or mental distress (Jan 2015).

Facilitator, Philosophy Forum, Stuart Low Trust (2014 - 2015).

TEACHING

Main Instructor:

Know-How (Leipzig). 'Young Researchers' Masters course. Course design, seminar leader (2019-2020).

Mental Activity (Leipzig). Masters course. Course design, seminar leader (2019).

The Metaphysics of Causation (Leipzig) Mixed undergraduate course. Course design, seminar leader (2018 - 2019).

Advanced Tutorials: Platonism & Dualism (UCL). 3rd year undergraduate course. Course design, tutorial leader (2018).

Essay Writing (UCL). 1st year undergraduate workshop. Workshop design, workshop leader. (2016, 2018).

Course Assistant:

History of Philosophy II: Early Modern (UCL). 1st year undergraduate course. Seminar leader. Lecturer: Dr Rory Madden. (2016, 2017, 2018).

Topics in Metaphysics: Causation and Modality (UCL). 3rd year undergraduate and graduate course. Seminar leader. Lecturer: Dr Simona Aimar. (2015, 2016).
  • One-off Lecture: *Reducing F to G*. (Nov 2016).

Metaphysics (UCL). 2nd year undergraduate course. Seminar leader. Lecturer: Dr Luke Fenton-Glynn. (2015).

Knowledge and Reality (UCL). 1st year undergraduate course. Seminar leader. Lecturer: Dr Rory Madden. (2014).

Empathy (UCL). 3rd year undergraduate course. Seminar leader. Lecturer: Dr Cressida Gaukroger. (2014).

ACADEMIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION

Refereeing:

Dialectica (2017, 2018); *Topoi* (2017); The Society for the Metaphysics of Science Conference (2016).

Co-organising:

Göttingen/Chicago/Leipzig Graduate Conference (2020); Leipzig Graduate Workshop on Know-How with Prof. Michael Kremer (2020); Leipzig Humboldt Colloquium (2019); Leipzig Humboldt Conversations Series (2019); UCL Philosophy PhD Work in Progress Group (2015-2016); 'Language, Truth, and Reality' UCL Philosophy Reading Group (2015 - 2016); 'Objectivity, Space and Mind' BPPA Masterclass (2015); UCL Philosophy Graduate Conference (2013).

Departmental Administration:

Head Teaching Assistant, Philosophy Department, UCL (2017 - 2018).

LANGUAGES

English (native language); Italian (advanced); German (intermediate); French (elementary).

REFERENCES

Dr Rory Madden
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy
University College London
r.madden@ucl.ac.uk

Professor Michael Martin
Wilde Professor of Mental Philosophy
University of Oxford
(Also Mills Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at UC Berkeley)
michael.martin@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

Professor James Conant
Alexander von Humboldt-Professor
University of Leipzig
(Also Chester D. Tripp Professor of Humanities at the University of Chicago)
james_ferguson.conant@uni-leipzig.de

Professor Jennifer Hornsby
Professor of Philosophy
Birkbeck University of London
j.hornsby@bbk.ac.uk

Professor Ian Phillips
Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Brain Sciences
Johns Hopkins University
ianbphillips@jdu.edu

PhD THESIS OUTLINE

When we act intentionally, changes and states of the world come about, and they come about as a result of our intentional actions. We bear a particular kind of responsibility for those changes and states that come about as a result of our intentional actions, which I call agential responsibility. It is argued here that, contrary to a wide variety of contemporary views, it is not an essential part of what it is to be agentially responsible for a change or state that the agent causes that change or state. It is put forward that agential responsibility is a primitive form of responsibility, not to be accounted for in terms of causal responsibility. I reach the conclusion that agential responsibility is primitive by way of the following stages:

Ch.1 is a ground-clearing chapter, in which I do two things. First, I say more to clarify the notions of 'intentional action' and 'results of action'. Second, I outline the pre-existing nature of the debate in the literature regarding the nature of action. I identify problems with several kinds of theories of action in terms of causation by events or states (event/state-causal theories of action). These problems have prompted a rejection of such theories in favour of theories of action in terms of causation by the agent that does not reduce to causation by either events or states (agent-causal theories of action). I outline the various kinds of agent-causal theories of action in the literature.

The rest of thesis argues that these agent-causal theories of action fail, and that the nature of this failure suggests that agential responsibility is a primitive form of responsibility.

However, it is often supposed that agent-causal theories of action fail on account of their appeal to causation by agents that does not reduce to causation by events or states (irreducible agent-causation); it is supposed that there is no irreducible agent-causation. In Ch.2, I argue that the appeal to irreducible agent-causation is *not* what is defective in agent-causal theories of action. I first defend the possibility of causation by *objects* that does not reduce to either causation by events or causation by states. I then defend the possibility of causation by *macrophysical objects*, such as human beings, from the charge that if any entities cause effects it is only the entities of fundamental physics, which do not include macrophysical objects.

In Ch.3, I begin one argument for what I take to be the true problem with agent-causal theories of action. Here I make the case, against a number of agent-causal theorists, that actions are events, on a broadly Davidsonian conception of events. As well as presenting the argument for an event-ontology of action, I defend both the argument and the ontology from various objections that have been put forward.

The major significance of the event-ontology of action for agent-causal theories of action is brought out in Ch.4. Here I maintain that there is no plausible way of combining the event-ontology of action that is defended in Ch.3 with an account of action as a causing by the agent of its results. Attempts to do so present a picture of action on which the embodied agent is implausibly alienated from the bodily movements and mental experiences that result from their bodily and mental actions. I argue that this alienation is avoided only if basic actions are identified with their resulting changes; and this cannot be accommodated by agent-causal theories. In making my case for this, I defend the existence of basic actions, on a newly defined sense of 'basic'.

In Ch.5, I turn my focus towards two arguments for an agent-causal theory of action that have been put forward by Hornsby (2011), and are more widely endorsed. Both of these arguments appeal to a particular semantics for transitive action verbs. I oppose these particular semantics, and offer an alternative. Moreover, I suggest that where this alone does not undermine the argument for an agent-causal theory of action, the argument fails elsewhere. I conclude that agent-causal theories of action are poorly motivated.

Finally, I argue that consideration of kinds of action that are rarely considered in action-theory reveals the full inadequacy of agent-causal theories of action. The kinds of action in question are those of creating and changing what I call *abstract artefacts*. These entities are abstract in the sense that they can each have multiple concrete instances and they can exist without having any concrete instances; they are artefacts in the sense that they are created by human agents. In Chapter 6 I defend the existence of changeable abstract artefacts. Then, in Ch.7, I argue that in at least certain acts of creating or changing abstract artefacts, there are action-results that are caused neither by the action nor by the agent, and are instead *non-causally determined* by the agent's action.

In concluding, I outline how the failures of agent-causal theories of action indicate that agential responsibility cannot be accounted for in terms of causal responsibility. This outcome in turn points to the plausibility of understanding agential responsibility as a primitive form of responsibility.