

VANESSA CARR

CURRICULUM VITAE

Post-Doctoral Fellow

Institut für Philosophie, Universität Leipzig
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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 - Post-Doctoral Fellow, Humboldt Project, University of Leipzig
 Present 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 Significance of Transitive Action Verbs.'
 'Bodily Movement and Causation in Action.'
 'The Importance of Being Creative: On The Creation and Change of Abstract Artefacts.'
 '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' Neuropsychology 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).
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TALKS

- The First Person in Action*
Workshop on *Subject and Object* manuscript by Adrian Haddock, Utrecht University (Feb 2020).
- The Significance of Transitive Action Verbs*
Humboldt Seminar, University of Leipzig (Jan 2020).
- 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:

Philosophy (2020); *Dialectica* (2017, 2018); *Topoi* (2017); The Society for the Metaphysics of Science Conference (2016).

Co-organising:

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); German (advanced, B2); Italian (advanced); French (elementary).

REFERENCES

Dr Rory Madden
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy
University College London
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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)
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Professor Jennifer Hornsby
Professor of Philosophy
Birkbeck University of London
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Professor Ian Phillips
Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Brain Sciences
Johns Hopkins University
ianbphillips@jhu.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.