

McConnell, T.C. (2000) Hugh McCann's *The Works of Agency* (Cornell University Press, 1998) in *Ethics* 110(3) (April), pp. 656-657. Made available courtesy of Univ. of Chicago Press: <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/>

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McCann, Hugh J. *The Works of Agency: On Human Action, Will, and Freedom*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998. Pp. x+238. \$49.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

This book consists of eleven chapters, six previously published between 1972 and 1991. Chapters 1–2 concern the ontology of action. McCann defends a fine-grained approach, according to which when John Wilkes Booth moved his finger, thereby firing a gun, thereby killing Lincoln, he performed multiple actions. But in the spirit of conciliation, chapter 2 shows that action theory must also leave room for entities of a coarser sort in order to account for the unity of agency. Chapters 3–6 contrast two views about the foundations of actions. According to the causal theory, what counts as basic action is the motion of the bodily part in question being properly caused by a motivational state of the agent. The volitional theory, by contrast, does not seek to reduce agency but, rather, treats overt actions as grounded in the interior doings of the agent, which are known as voli-

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ter's advances in a posteriori argument for it based on empirical evidence about paralytics. Chapters 7–9 deal with freedom and the will, arguing against compatibilism and for an account of the formation and execution of intention that can be understood in noncausal terms. Chapters 10–11 address issues of practical

rationality, such as akrasia and whether it is ever rational for agents to try to achieve goals that they believe they will not accomplish.

As is typical of McCann's work in action theory, this book is well written, thorough, and interesting.

T. M.