The present study has broadly two objectives: (1) to elucidate the concept of action and some other related concepts and (2) to defend a causal theory of action. 'Action' has a wide variety of senses, though these senses are related to one another in complicated ways. There are a number of contrasts which we wish to express by using the same word 'action'. We distinguish between changes or movements which agents directly bring about and those which happen to them, between human actions which are done for reasons and behaviour of animals, between a state of a man who chooses to remain motionless and a state of someone who is fast asleep, between the motionlessness of a conscious agent and the motionlessness of a stone, between events that are due to interventions of agents and events which occur independently of such interventions. There are other contrasts as well. The question 'what is the nature of an action?' is sometimes asked in order to find an answer to the question 'what constitutes an action in contrast to its antecedents and consequences?' Besides, there are different perspectives - metaphysical, moral, legal, scientific, etc. - which highlight different
contrasts. The question 'what is an action?' is context-specific and an answer that may be satisfactory in one context may not be so in another. It is contended that the different theories which have been presented as alternative answers to the same problem are often answers to different problems or answers from different perspectives, and therefore are not conflicting but complementary. I have tried to emphasize the complex nature of the concept of action by bringing out the multiple ambiguities of the action-terms with the hope that attention to them will facilitate better understanding of some of the standing disputes in philosophy of action.

It is often argued that reasons for actions are not causes of action and that explanations of action in terms of reason are not causal explanations. In the third and fourth chapters I have argued against these contentions. The critics of causal theory maintain that a free, deliberate human action which an agent does for some reason cannot be said to have been caused by those reasons. But this contention would be contrary to common sense. If after due deliberation I decide to act in one way rather than another, my decision has a cause. If I am asked "why did you do that?" I can meaningfully answer by pointing out the considerations, which weighed in favour of my decision. Thus the 'why' in the
question: 'why did you do that?" besides satisfying the standards of rationality appeals to its cause. To deny the causal efficacy of reason would be to deny that persons can be rationally influenced. People often influence other people by rational persuasions such as by providing information which might change their perception of the alternatives. Such influences are effected through reasons for actions. I subscribe to the view that freedom is not incompatible with causality. On the contrary, an uncaused action, if there could be any, will not be a free and responsible action of an agent. Agency presupposes physical, vital and conscious nature of a being. The categories body, life, mind and agency have a natural ordering such that each successive category presupposes the preceding one. An agent's body is the basis of his intervention in the world. Thus our positive actions are irreducibly physical and causality is ineliminable from any satisfactory account of action sequence. I argue for the thesis that reasons are causes of action and that the traditional objections against this view can satisfactorily be met. I have subscribed to the view that a minimal bodily action is a willed movement. I have tried to give a defence of a qualified version of the theory of volition in chapter five. It can be said that much of the objections to the
theory comes from the ambiguity of the words 'willing' and 'volition' and are on account of the misunderstanding of the logic of mental terms. I try to meet the standard objections against the theory. In the penultimate chapter I examine the three theories regarding the location of action and argue in favour of the theory that a basic action has two elements. It is a willed movement in which the willing and the movement are causally connected.

In the last chapter I return to the analysis of the concept of action by exploring some of the various ways in which negations can affect actions while it remains true that the agent has done something. We thus arrive at certain novel senses of action by reflecting on the negativity that can characterize our actions. I have tried to show how the controversies in Action Theory have their genesis in the choice of action paradigms.

I have been much influenced by the writings of philosophers whom I have acknowledged at appropriate places in the dissertation. The philosophers who have most influenced me are Donald Davidson, Arthur C. Danto, Lawrence H. Davis and Brian O'Shaughnessy despite my occasional disagreements with them. It is needless to say that the shortcomings which, I am sure, would be many are solely mine.

S. K. M.