This new volume of philosophical papers by Bernard Williams is divided into three sections: the first, ‘Action, freedom, responsibility’, the second, ‘Philosophy, evolution and the human sciences’, in which appears the essay which gives the collection its title, and the third, ‘Ethics’, some of the essays in which are closely related to his 1985 book *Ethics and the limits of philosophy*.

Like the two earlier volumes of Williams’s papers published by Cambridge University Press, *Problems of the self* and *Moral luck*, this volume will be welcomed by all readers with a serious interest in philosophy. It is published alongside a volume of essays on Williams’s work, *World, mind and ethics: essays on the ethical philosophy of Bernard Williams*, edited by J. E. J. Altham and Ross Harrison, which provides a reappraisal of his work by other distinguished thinkers in the field.
Making sense of humanity
For
Jonathan
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Preface

This is a collection of philosophical papers that I have published since 1982. It includes one paper, ‘Resenting one’s own existence’, that has not been published before (though some of the material in it has been). I have made small revisions, at least, to most of the papers, and one or two, in particular the first chapter, have been substantially rewritten.

I have not included reviews, replies, or pieces that seemed too closely tied to their occasions. I have also left out some essays in the history of philosophy, because their topics were too distant from the rest of the collection, and one or two papers that overlapped too much with my book Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, which was published in 1985. I have included, however, some papers that are quite closely related to that book but which, I hope, contain enough that is independent of it: in particular, ‘The point of view of the universe’ (about Henry Sidgwick), and ‘Ethics and the fabric of the world’ (about J. L. Mackie). I have added some cross-references between the chapters, to Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, and to a more recent book, Shame and Necessity (published in 1993).

The chapters originally appeared as follows, and I am grateful to those who have given permission to reprint:

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Oxford, May 1994

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