



Freedom Regained: The Possibility of Free Will

Julian Baggini

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Do we have free will? It's a question that has puzzled philosophers and theologians for centuries, remains one of the most intractable, and feeds into numerous smaller social, political and personal concerns. Are we products of our culture, or free agents within it? Are our neural pathways fixed early on by a mixture of nature and nurture, or is the possibility of comprehensive, intentional psychological change always open to us? What role does our brain play in the construction of free will, and how much medical evidence is there for the existence of it? What exactly are we talking about when we talk about 'freedom' anyway?

In this cogent and compelling book, Julian Baggini explores the concept of 'free will' from every angle, blending philosophy, neuroscience, sociology and cognitive science. *Freedom Regained* brings the issues raised by the possibilities - and denials - of free to vivid life, drawing on scientific research and fascinating encounters with expert witnesses, from artists to addicts. It will provide a new understanding of our sense of personal freedom - and change the way the reader will think about their own choices.

Freedom Regained: The Possibility of Free Will Details

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Dylan Bartlett says

A fantastic contribution to the debate. Baggini writes clearly and illustrates the ideas and arguments with effective examples.

Greg Gauthier says

Baggini does a fantastic job of dismantling the black-and-white dilemma of freedom versus determinism, and makes a strong case for thinking about the problem in terms of degrees (as a problem of 'vagueness', as it's called in traditional analytical circles). The more I study philosophy, the apparent it is to me that all philosophical problems are problems of vagueness: freedom, beauty, truth, goodness, happiness, and knowledge all involve layers of complex vagueness. One might argue that it is precisely the job of the philosopher to suss out the objects of clarity from this fog. I am inclined to be sympathetic to such an argument. But Baggini says that some things like freedom are inherently gray, and attempting to impose a black-and-white regime on the idea is a mistake. He doesn't reference this explicitly, but I am reminded of a famous Christian prayer that sums the final chapter of this book nicely: Lord, give me the courage to change the things I can, the patience to suffer the things I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference...

Daniel says

A birthday present, so not my usual choice of book, but i still enjoyed it. He managed to blend in bits and bobs from neuroscientists, artists, judges etc without losing the flow of the book. The conclusion was a bit garbled but the rest was great.

Elara Shurety says

so shitty lmao

Paul Ataua says

'Freedom Regained' touches on most of the main positions in the free will/ determinism debate, and Baggini manages to present the arguments in a totally accessible way. There is little new or astounding here, but maybe there doesn't need to be. It reads well and stimulates. Who could ask for more?

Stephen Palmer says

Free will is one of the most contentious - if not the most contentious - subjects for philosophical enquiry, but Baggini in his excellent book makes his arguments, examples and conversations a delight to read. He takes on reductionists such as Sam Harris (who denies human beings have free will) and neuroscientists in particular in this no-holds-barred, but very readable survey.

Baggini's conclusion is that we do have free will, that philosophers using reductionist or individualist templates (i.e. ignoring the fact that human beings live in societies) are blind to what's in front of them, and that free will is not a thing in itself of which we have all or none but rather a gradient of possibilities. He also links these conclusions to the nature of human responsibility, in a superb argument against those who think modern neuroscience means we are all slaves either to our genes or to our biochemistry.

At the end of the book the 'ten myths of free will' are stated then argued against, with a qualifying coda about the place of government in this debate.

Always a clear thinker, Baggini has the rare gift of conveying exactly what he thinks to the general reader. This is the second book by him that I've read, and I'm sure I'll be reading more.

Vanessa says

2.5 stars. Review to follow.

John Turton says

Excellent, very clear. I just wish that I could remember all the arguments

Charlie says

This is a great contribution to the free will debate. I understand the arguments on all sides much better now. The matter is considered from many different angles and offers a rebuttal to those who simply dismiss compatibilism without seriously engaging with it. The free will debate is still far from settled, although now I do lean more towards compatibilism having read this.

Abbey says

Every review I've read has been terribly enthusiastic about this book. And don't get me wrong, I thought it was really interesting - intelligent and challenging. But I can't deny that there were a few things that irritated me about it. The author seemed to assume that the reader would automatically agree with his assessment of various theories and arguments, leading to statements like "No-one could deny..." - well, actually, why couldn't they? It annoyed me that he couldn't seem to admit that people might seriously disagree with him

(unless they were actually philosophers, in which case it's fine). Also, there are two or three times where his sentences literally just don't make any kind of sense. But all in all it was a fairly decent read.

Maja Šoštari? says

Very informative read. I was in dire need of some clarity on the subject, and this book provided me with such clarity from multiple perspectives (the artist's perspective is masterfully written). At times the author is slightly repetitive, which always turns me off, but he certainly offers insightful ideas. The free will debate is everything but black and white - and the book addresses some of the nuances that most of us easily overlook.

Elliot says

Super clear and engaging, highly recommend.

Justin says

I enjoyed the clear manner of writing. It was relatively easy to understand. It felt like I was listening to a buddy talk philosophy to me over a beer at lunch. The thing I didn't like about this book was it wasn't clear what the point was. Of course the last chapter sums up what Julian thinks about freedom but leading up to the last chapter was a study of what freedom wasn't. I kept waiting for an explanation of what freedom is, in Julian's mind, and felt let down by the last chapter. It was an interesting read but didn't sell me on the concept because the concept wasn't made clear.

Jessika Malo says

This book makes you think deeper at the subject of free will and autonomy. I felt that the writer was presenting rather a lot of different ideas and approaches about free will and leaving the reader to decide for himself/herself (How fitting). I liked the chapters and how they were titled and characterized. I have to say though that the dryness of the philosophical aspect of the book lead me to put aside and then go back to it again to be watered by few spills of examples or readings by other opinions. Still, the writer did a good job approaching the subject and its treatment.
