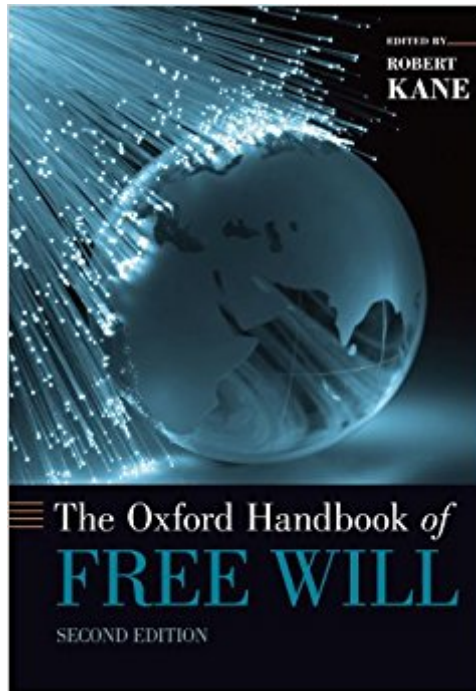


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The Oxford Handbook Of Free Will (Oxford Handbooks)



Synopsis

This second edition of the Oxford Handbook of Free Will is intended to be a sourcebook and guide to current work on free will and related subjects. Its focus is on writings of the past forty years, in which there has been a resurgence of interest in traditional issues about the freedom of the will in the light of new developments in the sciences, philosophy and humanistic studies. Special attention is given to research on free will of the first decade of the twenty-first century since the publication of the first edition of the Handbook. All the essays have been newly written or rewritten for this volume. In addition, there are new essayists and essays surveying topics that have become prominent in debates about free will in the past decade, including new work on the relation of free will to physics, the neurosciences, cognitive science, psychology and empirical philosophy, new versions of traditional views (compatibilist, incompatibilist, libertarian, etc.) and new views (e.g., revisionism) that have emerged. The twenty-eight essays by prominent international scholars and younger scholars cover a host of free will related issues, such as moral agency and responsibility, accountability and blameworthiness in ethics, autonomy, coercion and control in social theory, criminal liability, responsibility and punishment in legal theory, issues about the relation of mind to body, consciousness and the nature of action in philosophy of mind and the cognitive and neurosciences, questions about divine foreknowledge, providence and human freedom in philosophy of religion, and general metaphysical questions about necessity and possibility, determinism, time and chance, quantum reality, causation and explanation.

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Customer Reviews

This Handbook contains everything you need to answer all your queries on the issue of free will. The editorship is simply superb. Essays are arranged in a highly meaningful order. A large proportion of the book is on explaining and defending compatibilism, including a whole host of forensic dissections of Frankfurt-type cases, i.e. counterexamples to the Principle of Alternate Possibilities. There are also three articles on libertarianism (the one on Noncausalist libertarian theories, however, is a very difficult one). After the aforementioned comprehensive deliberation on compatibilism, semi-compatibilism, and libertarianism comes the real treasures of this book. These are the articles written by Derk Pereboom, Saul Smilansky, Ted Honderich and Manuel Vargas, and are truly enlightening. They inform the reader why the free will debate may perhaps be simplified by reducing certain conceptual confusion. I'll quote Smilansky here: "That is the human condition: Our being reflective, choosing creatures who ought to be treated as responsible agents, and who are allowed to live out the consequences of our choice; but we are at the same time determined beings, operating as we were molded" (page 432). Honderich is likewise sagacious, pointing out that there seems to be two different conception of freedom: "voluntariness" as opposed to "origination" (p. 449) and this may contribute to the ongoing dispute. Vargas's article on revising the definition of free will is equally informative. As if these are not exciting enough, the final part of the book (Part VIII, pp 499-576) offers evidence from neuroscience, psychology and experimental psychology to back up the viability of the concept of free will. In particular, it is explained well why Libet's experiments are not that worrying.

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