



Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life

By Derk Pereboom

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Derk Pereboom articulates and defends an original conception of moral responsibility. He argues that if determinism were true we would not be morally responsible in the key basic-desert sense at issue in the free will debate, but that we would also lack this kind of moral responsibility if indeterminism were true and the causes of our actions were exclusively states or events. It is possible that if we were undetermined agent-causes-if we as substances had the power to cause decisions without being causally determined to cause them-we would have this kind of free will. But although our being undetermined agent causes has not been ruled out as a coherent possibility, it's not credible given our best physical theories. Pereboom then contends that a conception of life without the free will required for moral responsibility in the basic-desert sense would nevertheless allow for a different, forward-looking conception of moral responsibility. He also argues that our lacking this sort of free will would not jeopardize our sense of ourselves as agents capable of rational deliberation, that it is compatible with adequate measures for dealing with crime and other threatening behavior, and that it allows for a robust sense of achievement and meaning in life. Pereboom's arguments for this position are reconfigured relative to those presented in *Living without Free Will* (2001), important objections to these arguments are answered, and the development of the positive view is significantly embellished.

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Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life By Derk Pereboom Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1728987 in Books
- Published on: 2014-05-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.30" h x .80" w x 9.30" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 232 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Pereboom's book is a wonderful addition to the moral responsibility debate, which not only organizes the contemporary responses to the worries of the Hard Incompatibilism, but also quite helpfully engages with those responses to press the discussion and our understanding forward. For those new comers interested in the state of the contemporary debate which are either interested in Hard Determinism or worried about the prospects of alternative views given Determinism this book is a helpful guide for finding your footing. And for those already familiar with the literature, it will be a welcome addition to your library." -- *Journal of Value Inquiry*

"This new book will be a vital resource for students of free will and moral responsibility: it is a state-of-the-art defence of one of the central positions in the debate, elaborated by its foremost exponent. Of particular interest will be the ways in which Pereboom's thinking has evolved over the years and the thoughtful attention he gives to criticisms of his earlier work." -- *Mind*

About the Author

Derk Pereboom is Professor of Philosophy at Cornell University. He is the author of *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge 2001), *Consciousness and the Prospects of Physicalism* (Oxford 2011), and of articles on free will and moral responsibility, philosophy of mind, and the history of modern philosophy, especially Immanuel Kant.

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Angela Powers:

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