

**John S. Callender**

*Free Will and Responsibility: A Guide for Practitioners.*

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This book is published in Oxford's 'International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry' series, and the practitioners of the title are professionals in the field of mental health (Callender is himself a psychiatrist). The project around which this book is focused, introducing philosophical debates concerning free will and moral responsibility to these professionals in a manner that will aid them in their work, is an intriguing one. But this book attempts much more. It aims to survey the main currents in normative ethics and meta-ethics, and much of moral psychology, as well as recent developments in the psychology, neuroscience and evolutionary biology of morality. Moreover, it is not content with presenting the rival views; the book also takes sides on these issues, and presents original arguments of its own. It is doubtful that such an ambitious project could be successfully carried out; in any case, the book does not pull it off. Instead, it is a mixture of good and bad.

First the bad: the meta-ethics is easily the most poorly handled part of the book. There are many mistakes: moral realism is described as an error theory; the claim is ascribed to Mackie; naturalism is described as a variant of moral realism; the argument from queerness is misunderstood; and the argument in favor of a non-cognitivist anti-realism is very weak. That latter argument consists in an appeal to the alleged difficulties of knowing moral properties and in a reminder that people disagree in their moral views. These are not considerations to which the proponent of moral realism will want to give much weight.

Next the good: though also marred by some mistakes—in particular, a persistent confusion between uncaused events and indeterministically caused events—the section on free will advances some genuinely interesting ideas. In particular, Callender's suggestion that accounts of free will ought to be constrained by artistic experience is likely to prove productive. As Callender says, it is plausible that the experience of artistic creation shares some characteristics with the experience of freedom—for instance, a feeling of creativity and spontaneity—but also has some interesting differences from the kinds of actions we typically hold out as paradigms of free action. In particular, aesthetic creativity does not seem to require consciousness of the springs of one's actions; indeed, some artists seem to think that genuine creativity is incompatible with too much self-awareness. It is a pity that Callender did not spend far more time and space on this question, because it is the single most interesting element of the book but is dealt with relatively quickly. In particular, the discussion would have been benefited from a consideration of the psychological literature. That literature supports Callender's contention that certain aspects of creativity do not require—indeed may even benefit from an absence of, consciousness—but this seems to apply only to what the psychologists call 'insight' problems, i.e. problems requiring a sudden change in how we

see things. There is much more to creativity than insight, and these other aspects of creativity do not seem all that different from paradigm free acts. Callender also neglects the small but insightful philosophical literature exploring the overlap between aesthetic experience and free will. (Here the work of Paul Russell is the landmark.)

The discussion of free will picks up themes from earlier chapters on morality. Unfortunately, this entails that the weaknesses of Callender's discussion of meta-ethics leak into the discussion of free will. In particular, Callender suggests that the scope of our freedom extends to our moral principles, in the sense that we can and must choose them. This proposal, strongly reminiscent of Sartrean existentialism, will strike many as confused. It is also hard to square with much of the literature on moral cognition. When reviewing this material, Callender ignores those many theorists (such as Marc Hauser) who think that moral norms are innate. At points like this, the absurdly over-ambitious nature of the undertaking trips Callender up. Whereas gaps like failing to consider this work are forgivable in philosophical work, they are serious in a book claiming to review the relevant literature. These kinds of failings are inevitable in a book that tries to do so much.

The second half of the book is devoted to the relevance of the foregoing for psychiatry. Here Callender reviews some of the literature on psychopathology, including psychopathy, dissociative identity disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as more or less ordinary failures of self-control, and he asks about the responsibility of sufferers. He goes on to argue, plausibly, that psychotherapy can contribute to the freedom of the agent. There is relatively little that ought to be contentious here, except the oft-repeated claim that because psychotherapy increases the freedom of agents by identifying causes of their behavior, it threatens our sense of ourselves as libertarian agents. There are two grounds for rejecting this claim. First, it confuses causation with determinism: there is nothing inconsistent with libertarianism in the demonstration that our behavior is caused. Second, it is contentious that we have a sense of ourselves as libertarian agents. Callender claims throughout the book that libertarianism is intuitive, but the experimental literature on the topic has thrown up mixed results.

There is much here that is useful to philosophers seeking an overview of relevant literature on moral cognition and the neuroscience of morality, as well of the aspects of psychopathology most likely to be relevant to assessing the responsibility of offenders. The philosophical claims are sometimes suggestive, though they are never developed in sufficient detail to be anything more. It is a curate's egg of a book: good in parts. The most frustrating feature is that it could have been so much better: Callender's mistakes Callender's could so easily have been corrected without the book needing a substantial rewrite. A book that is good in part could so easily have been much better.

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