

Book Review

Griffith, M. (2013). *Free will: The basics*. Routledge: London

Reviewed by Wayne C. Evens, PhD
Bradley University

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Meghan Griffith, Ph.D. is an associate professor of philosophy at Davidson College who specializes in metaphysics, free will, moral responsibility and action theory. She has published in these areas. This is her first book.

The book, as the title suggests, is very basic. It briefly summarizes the many arguments philosophers have made for and against free will. It reaches no conclusions, nor, does it present the arguments in great detail.

In the "Introduction," the author defines free will as the ability to make choices. She identifies determinism as the challenge to free will. She further links free will to moral responsibility. Chapter 2, "The Compatibility Issue," discusses determinism. She focuses on the kind of determination that involves laws of nature. The book discusses compatibilism, the idea that free will requires determinism, and incompatibilism, the idea that determinism and free will are not compatible. Chapter 3, "Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities," discusses the impact of various positions on moral responsibility. It introduces the concept of "could have done otherwise" and discusses how the various positions deal with this. Chapter 4, "Some Current Compatibilist Proposals," introduces mesh theories. Mesh theories claim that freedom is an appropriate mesh between actions and interstates. It also discusses the reason actors choose to act, which asserts that agents must be able to understand and value their reasons for acting. Various responses and objections to this view are discussed. Chapter 5, "Some Current

Incompatibilist Proposals," discusses the possibility that thoughts and decisions are caused, various philosophical views of how this is possible, and objections to this view. Chapter 6, "Other Positions," discusses other possibilities for understanding the problem of free will. Chapter 7, "Free Will and Science," discusses quantum physics and the issues of unpredictability, and, again, discusses the various formulations and objections to this position. Chapter 8, "Where Does This Leave Us?" sums up the arguments and explores why it is important to study free will.

The book closes with the statement, "Even if, from a practical standpoint, we must choose, reflecting on whether our choices are genuine and what needs to be true in order for them to be so, tells us a great deal about ourselves, our values, and our relations to one another."

The summaries presented in the book are very brief and serve to introduce the basics of the many arguments for and against free will. Each chapter has a fairly extensive list of further readings or suggested readings that would allow the reader to further explore the arguments. The author acknowledges that the nuances of the arguments are not included in this book. The book might be useful as a supplementary text in a human behavior course if one were going to address the free will issue.