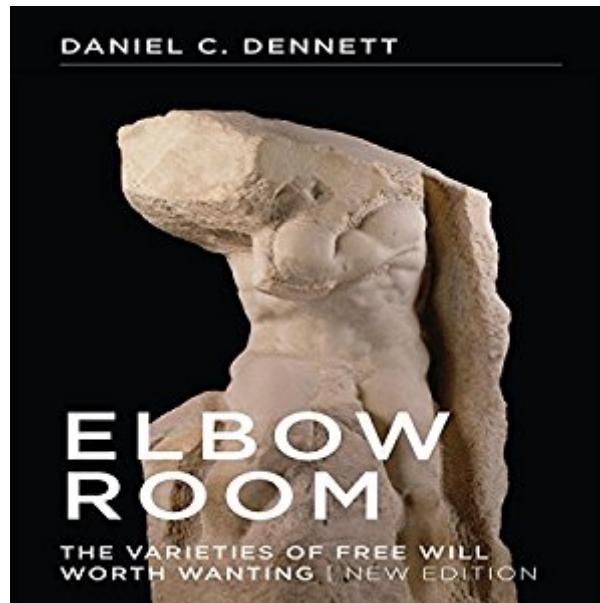




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Elbow Room: The Varieties Of Free Will Worth Wanting



Synopsis

In this landmark 1984 work on free will, Daniel Dennett makes a case for compatibilism. His aim, as he writes in the preface to this new edition, was a cleanup job, "saving everything that mattered about the everyday concept of free will while jettisoning the impediments". In *Elbow Room*, Dennett argues that the varieties of free will worth wanting - those that underwrite moral and artistic responsibility - are not threatened by advances in science but distinguished, explained, and justified in detail. Dennett tackles the question of free will in a highly original and witty manner, drawing on the theories and concepts of fields that range from physics and evolutionary biology to engineering, automata theory, and artificial intelligence. He shows how the classical formulations of the problem in philosophy depend on misuses of imagination, and he disentangles the philosophical problems of real interest from the "family of anxieties" in which they are often enmeshed - imaginary agents and bogeymen, including the Peremptory Puppeteer, the Nefarious Neurosurgeon, and the Cosmic Child Whose Dolls We Are. Putting sociobiology in its rightful place, he concludes that we can have free will and science, too. He explores reason, control and self-control, the meaning of "can" and "could have done otherwise", responsibility and punishment, and why we would want free will in the first place. A fresh listening of Dennett's book shows how much it can still contribute to current discussions of free will. This edition includes as its afterword Dennett's 2012 Erasmus Prize essay.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

Excellent. Danial Dennett is the best at writing for the average person about these complex philosophical issues. I wish he had been my philosophy teacher when I was in college. It would have made more sense to me then had he been explaining things.

Excellent and nuanced book which does a good job of refuting the deterministic view that free will is an illusion. Good to read after reading Sam Harris's "Free Will".

This book is not about what the title suggests. It is somewhat related to free-will and the philosophy therein, but it's misleading to say its about "the varieties of free-will worth wanting". The vast majority of the book is about him giving color on aspects this area of philosophy. The marketing blurb at the top claims its about a defense of compatibilism -- it's not. It's a peripheral discussion of the issues, and while some of what he says can be construed to be somewhat critical of hard determinism, there is no defense per se. It's a very misleading title. Get the book if your looking for some color on free-will and determinism etc. I wouldn't buy it if i knew that. Aside from not being about types of free-will, the book feels hastily written and incomplete. The book appears to suffer from organizational issues, and doesn't present any arguments for (or against) anything in any direct ways, everything is indirect and lackadaisical. I purchased this book to sample Dennet's views on the varieties of free-will, and am surprised to report that apparently there aren't any 'free-wills worth wanting' since he forgot to include them in the book! His other book "Consciousness Explained" actually suffers from the same problem. Buy this book if a meandering exploration of free-will is your style. He presents decent quotes, metaphors and his favorite intuition pumps so if your unfamiliar with the general issues of free-will you might like it. Just beware if your looking for his perspectives on the types of free-will worth wanting.

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