



The Stubborn System of Moral Responsibility (MIT Press)

Bruce N. Waller

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The philosophical commitment to moral responsibility seems unshakable. But, argues Bruce Waller, the philosophical *belief* in moral responsibility is much stronger than the philosophical *arguments* in favor of it. Philosophers have tried to make sense of moral responsibility for centuries, with mixed results. Most contemporary philosophers insist that even conclusive proof of determinism would not and should not result in doubts about moral responsibility. Many embrace compatibilist views, and propose an amazing variety of competing compatibilist arguments for saving moral responsibility. In this provocative book, Waller examines the stubborn philosophical belief in moral responsibility, surveying the philosophical arguments for it but focusing on the system that supports these arguments: powerful social and psychological factors that hold the belief in moral responsibility firmly in place. Waller argues that belief in moral responsibility is not isolated but rather is a central element of a larger belief system; doubting or rejecting moral responsibility will involve major adjustments elsewhere in a wide range of beliefs and values. Belief in moral responsibility is one strand of a complex and closely woven fabric of belief, comprising threads from biology, psychology, social institutions, criminal justice, religion, and philosophy. These dense interconnections, Waller contends, make it very difficult to challenge the belief in moral responsibility at the center. They not only influence the philosophical arguments in favor of moral responsibility but also add powerful extraphilosophical support for it.

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