

Can Determinism Be Reconciled With Epicureanism? (Admin Edit - No, But Let's Talk About Why Not)

Post by "Eikadistes" of September 24, 2022 at 10:10 AM

[Quote from waterholic](#)

isn't determinism rejected by Epicurus? How can Epicureanism and determinism co-exist in Onfray's mind?

[Link to the video](#)

You are correct that Epicurus rejected strict determinism. A primary point of contention Epicurus had with Democritean atomism was his determinism. If you have not come across it yet, I recommend reading Karl Marx's doctoral dissertation "*The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*" which addresses this point:

[Full text of "Marx, Karl Doctoral Thesis The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature"](#)

(Marx gets a few things wrong, but it is an interesting and somewhat surprising read)

Onfray positions himself in a long line of hedonists and materialists *in general*, but is not necessarily an Epicureanism *in particular*. However, based on your description, Onfray is not arguing for strict determinism, but rather, what we might call a compatibilist proposition, wherein determinism and indeterminism are not seen as being mutually exclusive.

While I try to avoid placing Epicurus within the buckets on modern philosophical categories, compatibilism might be the appropriate bucket in which to place him. Onfray seems to agree with Epicurus that "*some [events] [...] happen by necessity and some by chance, and some are within our control*" (Letter to Menoikeus).

Regarding "free will", we tend to look upon the concept with scorn, not because of the proposition of indeterminism, but because the concept of "free will" is a Christian form of (*pseudo*-)indeterminism that is contextualized within the domain of a Creator deity. The term "free will" is problematic for materialists, but not indeterminism, itself.