

Paul Thyry (Baron D'Holbach / Mirabaud) - French / German Sympathizer With Some Epicurean Ideas

Post by "Onenski" of December 27, 2023 at 6:34 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Can I assume that if I were to say: "There is no such thing as free will" that this means that I am not actually choosing anything and that everything always is predetermined by forces outside of my conscious mind?

For me, another way to see it, [Kalosyni](#) ,

is that the fact that you believe in free will has an explanation that goes beyond your control. It means that you grew up in a certain context, with some genes, certain hormones, that you've had certain experiences, live in a certain cultural context, etc. that explain why you have that belief.

It doesn't mean that you are like a puppet that it's controlled by someone else, it means that even your desires and beliefs are the product of a chain of events prior to you. It also means that there's not a Self above your body who can make choices: you are your body and this body it's immerse in a natural world with laws and different levels of explanation.

It also means that we, human beings, don't have a very special ability, which suspiciously other animals don't have, to make choices out of nothing. Even our small choices have their context and explanation.

Unfortunately, debate on free will tends to focus on very local choices, not in the history of how your intention was formed. For some people is more important to prove that I made certain choice freely, without see any context of my history, than to see what brought me here to choose that thing.

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Would that entail that there is no randomness in the system? That every event is perfectly predictable?

There's an important nuance to make. There can be unpredictability even under deterministic processes. In chaotic systems, which can be understood under deterministic functioning, we can't predict the results, but that doesn't mean they are random.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Aren't emergent properties a form of randomness?

That also apply to emergent complexity.

For relevant purposes randomness present in quantum mechanics it's not strong enough to produce relevant consequences to the functioning of neurons (which can be the first level of explanation of human behavior).

I've read these things in Sapolsky's book *Determined* (another recent book about this is Kevin Mitchell's *Free Agents*, this was suggested by [Godfrey](#) last Wednesday).

As I said up, I think this neuroscientific discussion can be enriching for epicurean philosophy, because as it's understood in the debate, Epicurus was a libertarian about free will. That means that, arguably, Epicurus thought that a deterministic world is incompatible with free will. But between those two options he defends the existence of free will, which imply that we live in an indeterministic world (that's why he defends the swerve).

Kevin Mitchell defends that the brain has evolved to work in an indeterministic way so that it can make choices that permits an adaptation to a very changeable world (like a quantum computer). Sapolsky, on the other side, defends that human behavior works in a deterministic way, so we're not morally responsible of what we do.

See you later, guys! 😊