

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

Post by "Onenski" of February 22, 2024 at 11:53 PM

Hi, everybody. You know that I sympathise with Hard Incompatibilism (the idea that we don't have free will nor moral responsibility).

The debate is: we human beings assume that we are free to choose what we do and we assume that every event in the universe can be explained by prior causes. For incompatibilists these two assumptions are, evidently, incompatible. Those who affirm that we are free and responsible (so that the world is indeterministic) are libertarians (traditionally in the debate Epicurus is considered a **libertarian**).

Those who defend that every event has prior causes are **determinists**.

**Compatibilist** think that, in fact, both assumptions are compatible: we can affirm that we have free will and we are morally responsible in a deterministic world. I think Epicurus is not a compatibilist.

Hard Incompatibilism says that if the world is deterministic or indeterministic is the same: we have no free will, nor we are morally responsible.

1. I'd like to suggest a question: why the burden of proof is on the side of skeptics of free will and not the other way.

2. [Kalosyni](#) , I think you mention something about the capacity of control. The idea of deterministic views is that that capacity can be explained scientifically by previous causes. From my perspective, accepting determinism doesn't need to imply that you have to be in your house doing nothing. Instead, it implies to understand that you are not exempt to the chains of causes in the universe. If the notion of "agency", as Martin prefers to refer instead of "free will", is associated with self-control, I guess determinism would say that agency can be explained. So, agency would not be incompatible with determinism. But, I don't know what [Martin](#) thinks.

2. [Cassius](#), the ethical worry is one of the motivations but not the justification:

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

In other words, this debate is usually driven by ethical issues rather than simply wanting to know more about "natural science."

The debate is metaphysical with ethical implications. Philosophers want to know in favor of which conclusion we have better arguments. The same applies to the metaphysical question on the existence of God, universals, the existence of time, and so on. So, the main reasons to

accept determinism, compatibilism or libertarianism are metaphysical not ethical.

3. [TauPhi](#), the ethical implications bring up consequences on our human practices. In a world in which we accept as a fact that we are free and responsible of our actions we consider that rewards, punishments, jail, gratitude, resentment, guilt, proud, and others, are justified. If we thought differently, we'd have reasons to change those practices. Effectively, as Peter Strawson argues, we have reactive attitudes (guilt, resentment, proud, forgiveness, gratitude, etc.) and it's hard to feel differently when we interact with other people. However, our practices can be unjustified anyway.

4. [DavidN](#), your reconstructions are straw-man fallacies. The Victimhood argument particularly, besides being more ironic than descriptive, goes into revictimization. Addictions, for example, are public health problems, not a mere matter of choice.

The chapter dedicated to Quantum Mechanics in *Determined* I think is very reasonable. Do you think was simplistic?

5. I highly recommend to read Sapolsky's *Behave*, even more than *Determined* in order to understand his point. Sapolsky offers a reconstruction of the causes of behaviour. The evidence he finds obviously is not conclusive, but he adds to the debate the picture some people need to see how strongly, using [Pacatus](#) terms, our decisions are constrained.

I believe that Epicurean philosophy and Free Will Skepticism can be reconciled, but in order to do so I will need a deeper understanding of both things and a better capacity to explain my ideas. 😊