

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

Post by "DavidN" of February 23, 2024 at 4:27 PM

## [Quote from Onenski](#)

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

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.

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.

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The fact that Causes exist does not necessitate determinism, this is a False Dichotomy fallacy. A cause could lead to multiple outcomes and in reverse any given event can have multiple causes, as Epicurus already theorizes. In reality A does not necessitate B. This is one of the reasons root cause analysis is difficult and most people are not successful at it.

The reason determinism requires proof rather than the other way around, atleast on this thread, is because the question at hand is not whether or not the universe is deterministic but is epicureanism deterministic or even compatible with determinism. Which is Not part of my argument you addressed. And because I loath the practice of applying theoretical science outside of it's intended field. When Quantum gravity becomes hard science Sapolsky can republish his book and not be a jerk in my eyes.

As for Sapolsky's **science**, his **version** of quantum mechanics requires that we eliminate singularities, alter the currently accepted notion of the big bang and accept new theories in there place, of quantum gravity, and of multiple quantum universes that removes variables

rather than adding variables. In all of this I find his math to be at the very least overly convenient if not simplistic. Like Planck's Blackbody, instead of dealing with the variables he simply finds ways to eliminate them. Which is what I had suspected in my previous comment before even diving into his work.

Back to the matter at hand, Epicurus. I don't believe hard determinism can be reconciled with Epicureanism, but to be fair let's say it can. You would need to tackle the swerve, because as long as the swerve exists a cause or set of causes can lead to a number of effects or none at all, thus determinism cannot exist. Without the swerve you effectively render epicurean physics **Democritean**. You would then have to go through all the material and reconcile every instance where choice is required, because the concept of choice would require a non-deterministic universe. In deterministic terms choice simply becomes effect. Effectively rendering the philosophy pointless, IMHO.

#### [Quote from Onenski](#)

The idea of Free Will Skepticism it's not that people don't make choices. The idea is that those choices are not independent of prior causes (in fact, that they are constrained totally, even if we don't see it). People will keep making choices, the difference will be how independent they think they are.

Two fallacies here, one [Persuasive definition](#), choice is improperly used or defined here. If a choice is completely constrained, as your trying to prove, it's not a choice it becomes effect following cause. Secondly [affirming the consequent](#) fallacy, again just because B does not mean A. Free will is choice, prior cause does not negate choice but informs choice, it is the very reason for choice. In fact without prior cause what choice would we have, there would be nothing to choose. If your hung up on the word free let's examine freedom. Some people think freedom can only exist in a vacuum, but in reality freedom cannot exist in a vacuum, it is a concept devoid of meaning in a vacuum. Freedom can only have meaning in the face of tyranny, choice can only have meaning when cause and effect exist. Prior causes create our environment, the situation, the consequences, that inform, but do not necessitate our actions. The fact that my choice could be for any hundreds of reasons, is essential to free will not the antecedent of it.

Your argument also makes choice into [machina](#) by turning it into simple cause and effect. For this to be true machina and sentience must be closer than they actually are in reality. Which I find to be even more of an oversimplification on the part of determinists in behavior than in physics. Having a background in AI I can assure you this is not the case. It makes my blood boil every time someone compares the glorified word processors that are the current generation of large language transformer modules to true AI. They aren't even good language models yet. Yet even some scientists make the mistake of granting them the mantle of sentience. This simply isn't the case even though they have the capacity to learn they don't have the capacity to deviate from they're programming, only the ability to add to their library. This is the crux of the argument. Machina have to be right, even if its only within their limited understanding of

what that is. It cannot deviate from that, any deviation is in error. I on the other hand, have on occasion, chosen to be wrong, just to be a dick rather than in error. I am sentient, I have that choice, I get to sit in jail for a nite just to feel free. You could say that I have some internal drive towards that outcome created by some prior cause, but this does not necessitate the outcome. In fact prior cause gives me a greater range of outcomes not less, thus where you see constraint I see tools of expression, of freedom. In that instance I know and understand what I'm doing, I have the choice to do the right thing and not be a dick, to simply walk away, an easier choice to be honest. I know and understand that in the moment, but because I have the freedom to choose in that instance I decide to take the road less traveled. A decision, a choice.