

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

Post by "Onenski" of February 24, 2024 at 7:34 PM

I guess the best role I can have is to be a healthy critic of arguments in this debate. Instead of being a defender of Free Will Skepticism.

[Pacatus](#), Mitchell is a libertarian. In philosophical community, there are just a few libertarians just like there are a few free will skeptics (compatibilism is the established position for majority). Contemporary libertarians don't say that everytime we take decisions that event is an uncaused cause. Sophisticated libertarians think that it's enough to affirm that sometimes human beings make free choices (for example, in very important moments in your life, or for others when you are in the best circumstances, so that you take the more informed and rational choice).

So far as I know, Mitchell thinks that the brain can be modeled as a quantum computer that evolved to take choices the best as possible, evaluating complex information of environment. The best way this can be done, for him, it's by developing free will (taken in the leeway sense).

If I'm wrong in this interpretation, then Mitchell would be a compatibilist. I suggest to discuss how the Epicurean notion of Free Will should be understood (as a libertarian or as a compatibilist account). For compatibilist, determinism and free will are compatible. I guess that may be in contradiction with the common passages on the topic.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

By providing how small is the degree of the swerve you have a theory that allows both for the swerve of the atom giving rise to "choice" while also allowing the rest of the universe to proceed in a uniformly mechanistic way.

([Cassius](#), surely your interpretation is stronger than what I'm going to critic.)

This fragment imply an *ad hoc* explanation (that is, a very specific solution to explain a phenomenon, but without more general application in the theory). If the swerve only explains free will but doesn't have any other consequence, then it's *ad hoc*.

And the critic can be worse, there could be a vicious circle.

1. The swerve explains free will.
2. Free Will is the only reason for arguing in favor of the existence of the swerve.

If this is true, neither of them have a real basis. I'm sure this is not what you mean, but I write this to nudge you, so that we can develop a better argument.

I'd like to add this:

So far as I understand, the swerve is a mechanism to introduce indeterminism to the world. By definition is an uncaused cause (a slightly deviance from the direction the atoms have, that deviance is uncaused by any prior event). If the swerve is not indeterministic, then Epicurean position becomes a compatibilism (because the world would be deterministic and there would be free will, just like Epicurus affirms).

If the indeterminism stays in the level of the microscopic, it would be useless to explain free choices of the agents. Indeterminism should extend to macroscopic events. And for not being an *ad hoc* explanation, we need more instances of free (random) events.

I hope this comment can be useful to develop and strength your ideas. 😊