

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

Post by "Onenski" of February 25, 2024 at 12:12 PM

In order to improve the account on the swerve I thought about the following argument. It is important to identify the flaws in it, possibly [Martin](#) or [DavidN](#) can help us.

1. Assumption: The swerve is the basis for sustaining free will (leeway freedom a.k.a. the capacity to have done otherwise).
2. Definition: the swerve is a random deviance of the movement of atoms. Is an uncaused cause.
3. Definition: determinism is the affirmation that every event in the Universe is caused by prior events. Indeterminism can be defined as the falsity of determinism: the affirmation that not all events are caused by prior events.
4. The swerve works indeterministically; introduces indeterminism (for 2 and 3)
5. Incompatibilist premise: leeway freedom is incompatible with determinism.
6. The swerve can have effects only on the microscopic level or both in the microscopic and macroscopic level.
7. If the swerve has effects only in microscopic level, the indeterminism (for 4) occurs only in this level, so that the macroscopic level operates in a deterministic way. (This is actually Sapolsky's point of view defended in "Determined"). If this is the case, then the swerve is not the basis for leeway freedom (For 1 and 5)
8. If the swerve has effects on both the microscopic and macroscopic levels, then there is indeterminism (for 4) in both levels. This means that there are events that weren't caused by prior events (that is, the swerves). (For 6 and 7)
9. The swerves either occurred only in one moment in the past and the rest of the time the world worked and works deterministically or they occur continually.
10. If the swerves occurred only once, or just in the past and the rest of the time the world worked deterministically, then the swerve is not the basis for leeway freedom (for 1, 5 and 9).
11. The swerves happen continually (for 9 and 10, and the affirmation of Lucretius (Book ii) that the very existence of bodies need the swerve).

12. Events can have multiple effects and be caused by multiple events (as pointed out by [DavidN](#)). Besides, scientific reasoning tell us that the same event has the same cause(s): if a phenomenon happens in certain circumstances by events A, B, C, we will expect that in the same circumstances under the same events A, B, C, we will have the same phenomenon.

13. The swerves are unpredictable and their effects are unpredictable as well (for 2 and 4)

14. If the swerve occurs continually and unpredictably (for 11 and 13), it would be less probable that the same circumstances for a phenomenon repeat (Considering 12). It seems that there will be new circumstances continually and there would be new and different events continually.

15. The basis for regularities and laws in nature is the repetition of phenomena.

16. The swerve doesn't permit to explain regularities in nature (for 14 and 15). (From this we can conclude that human behavior is impossible, but let's consider more things.)

17. Free Will is the basis for moral responsibility (if a person acts freely, she's responsible for her action). A person can't be responsible for something beyond her control (in a strong sense, as the capacity to have done otherwise, the leeway sense). (For 1)

18. Human behavior is under the unpredictable effects of the swerves (for 8 and 13), so we can imagine at least the following scenario: James intends to do A in order to have certain effects. The swerve can produce events between the intention to do A and the action A, and between the action A and its intended effects. So, sometimes he has success in his intention (he does A), sometimes the action doesn't occur (because there are unpredictable events that produce other events different to James intention), and sometimes the action A has different effects than those intended by James.

He needs lucky to act and to have the effects he wants.

19. If human choices are not the outcome of their will, their behavior is beyond their control and they're not responsible of it. If the outcomes of actions are beyond reasonable control of the agents, then they're not morally responsible for them (for 17 and 18).

20. If agents are not responsible of their actions, then they don't have free will (for 17).

21. Agents don't have free will (for Modus tollens of 19 and 20) [Modus tollens is an inference that say that if we have the conditional "If A then B", it is equivalent to "if not B then not A". So if we have "Not B". Then we infer "not A"]

22. Given that 21 is the product of assuming 1 and leads to it's negation, there's a contradiction.

23. If an assumption leads to a contradiction, then we should conclude that it's false. So, the swerve is not the basis for free will.

If the argument is valid, then the swerve will need revision. So far I inferred that the swerve occurs continually and its effects are on the macroscopic level, but these characteristics are problematic.

Contemporary libertarians tend to restrict the scope of indeterminism, but one needs to be careful, because there's the risk of ad hoc explanation.

Another option is to take a compatibilist account of free will, but that would make the swerve an useless concept.

Probably you have the impression that determinism is one of the "Four Horsemen", but if you think carefully on a strong indeterminism, you may want to include it as well.