

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

Post by "Don" of February 25, 2024 at 1:47 PM

My opinion is that we have to acknowledge that *there is no such thing as "the swerve."*

It was an innovative thought experiment by Epicurus (and Lucretius who mentions it) given the atomic parameters he was working with at the time. Yes, it has parallels or we can overlay the *basic* idea onto modern quantum physics, but the overlay doesn't fit perfectly because it wasn't designed to! But atoms do not move like Epicurus and Democritus thought/said they did. Quantum particles do not move like that. Plus, Epicurus could very well have thought that atomic motions could engender free will because everything was atomic movement, including sensations. And, yes, we know that chemical and biological processes are at the heart of sensation, but they're NOT like Epicurus proposed them. We don't intercept atoms from outside us into channels in our ψυχή (psyche) leading to memories and thoughts. Again, we can make analogies and see Epicurus's atomic movements and swerves as precursors or metaphors of how actually "the way things are." But we are not constrained by Epicurus's physics! Science has come a long way in the last 2300 years, and using outdated terms and ideas to argue for free will is not going to get us anywhere in the year 2024 CE. We need to work with the material world at hand as it is currently understood. That's why I find Mitchell intriguing... and no I haven't had a chance to read any of his stuff in the last couple hours. This is just a visceral reaction to our continuing to talk about whether the swerve leads to free will. Unfortunately, I find it similar to discussing whether God has anything to do with our free will. That's it for me right now.

[Epicurus | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)