

# Updated FAQ Entry: Why Should I Care About Epicurean Physics When So Much Science Has Changed In The Last 2000 Years?

Post by “Don” of June 17, 2026 at 6:50 AM

There's a lot of philosophical jargon flying through this thread, and I'll freely admit some of it is going over my head. For y'all's consideration:

[Incompatibilist \(Nondeterministic\) Theories of Free Will \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)

[Causal Determinism \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)

[Determinism versus Determinism | Issue 141 | Philosophy Now](#)

## [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

Epicurus argued rightly that the two are not compatible, so he was what we call an anti-compatibilist.

But that last link states (*emphasis added*)...

## Quote

Morally speaking, determinists are mainly divided into two camps, namely compatibilists and incompatibilists. *The incompatibilists argue that determinism completely negates the possibility of agent causation, and therefore moral responsibility.* On the other hand, compatibilists claim that moral responsibility is still applicable under determinism. They are both contrasted to libertarians, who defend moral responsibility through believing in free will, dismissing determinism.

Epicurus clearly thought we could be held accountable for our choices, so if you're saying Epicurus was a determinist (which I'm not sure is correct - he states the exact opposite of that in Menoikeus) he would have to be a compatibilist according to that article.

## [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

When it comes to humans the acquisition of pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the only true determinant forces of human behavior and all other motivations are illusory. This is determinism.

I didn't understand determinism in that way. I understood determinism to mean "roughly speaking, the idea that every event is necessitated by antecedent events and conditions together with the laws of nature." Epicurus writes:

#### Quote

even though *some things happen by necessity*, some by chance, and some by our own power, for although necessity is beyond our control, they see that chance is unstable and there is no other master beyond themselves, so that *praise and its opposite are inseparably connected to themselves*. [134] Because of this, it is better to follow the stories of the gods than *to be enslaved by the deterministic decrees of the old natural philosophers*, because necessity is not moved by prayer; and such a one accepts that Fortune is not a god, as the *hoi polloi* understand (for a god does nothing in a disorderly or haphazardly manner); And it is not the uncertain cause of everything, for one cannot think it can grant good or evil for a person's blessed life; however, it does furnish for oneself the starting point of great goods and great evils, [135] believing that *it is better to be unfortunate rationally than fortunate irrationally because it is better to have been deciding the noble way in accomplishing one's actions and to have been foiled than having decided the bad way and to succeed by means of chance*.

Just because our ultimate motivation is either pursuing pleasure or rejecting pain, that doesn't to me mean our choices are deterministic. Unless I'm misunderstanding the use of that term.