

# Graphic - Arch-Enemy of Determinism and Skepticism

Post by "Cassius" of June 5, 2020 at 9:11 AM

## They Are Self-Refuting

For this sort of account [Determinism] is self-refuting, and can never prove that everything is of the kind called 'necessitated'; but [the proponent of Determinism] debates this very question on the assumption that his opponent is himself responsible for talking nonsense. And even if he goes on to infinity saying that this action of his is in turn necessitated, always appealing to arguments, he is not reasoning it empirically so long as he goes on imputing to himself the responsibility for having reasoned correctly and to his opponent that for having reasoned incorrectly. But unless he were to stop attributing his action to himself and to pin it on necessity, he would not even be consistent. On the other hand, if [he uses] the word 'necessity' of that which we call our own agency, he is merely changing a name.... [Epicurus On Nature, D.S. translation]

Lastly, if anyone thinks that he knows nothing, he cannot be sure that he knows this, when he confesses that he knows nothing at all. I shall avoid disputing with such a trifler, who perverts all things, and like a tumbler with his head prone to the earth, can go no otherwise than backwards. And yet allow that he knows this, I would ask (since he had nothing before, to lead him into such a knowledge) from whence he had the notion what it was to know, or not to know; what was it that gave him an idea of Truth or Falsehood, and what taught him to distinguish between doubt and certainty? [Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, Book 4, Daniel Browne edition]

## They Are Impossible to Live By In Practice

The first men to give a satisfactory account of causes ... turned a blind eye to themselves ... in order to hold necessity and accident responsible for everything. Indeed, the actual account promoting this view came to grief when it left [them] blind to the fact that in [their] actions [they] were clashing with [their] doctrine; and that if it were not that a certain blindness to the doctrine took hold of them while acting, they would be constantly perplexing themselves; and that wherever the doctrine prevailed, they would be falling into desperate calamities, while wherever it did not they would be filled with conflict because of the contradiction between their actions and their doctrine. [Epicurus On Nature, D.S. translation]

And though reason is not able to assign a cause why an object that is really four-square when near, should appear round when seen at a distance; yet, if we cannot explain this difficulty, it is

better to give any solution, even a false one, than to deliver up all Certainty out of our power, to break in upon our first principle of belief, and tear up all foundations upon which our life and security depend. For not only all reason must be overthrown, but life itself must be immediately extinguished, unless you give credit to your senses. These direct you to fly from a precipice and other evils of this sort which are to be avoided, and to pursue what tends to your security. All therefore is nothing more than an empty parade of words that can be offered against the certainty of sense. [Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, Book 4, Daniel Browne edition]

# Arch-Enemy of Determinism and Skepticism

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## Epicurus

# Master-Builder of Human Happiness



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**Post by "Cassius" of June 20, 2020 at 9:19 AM**

Poster Elsewhere:

I tend to doubt claims of self-refuting arguments because, like here, they seem more semantic than anything. For instance, I've read from a number of determinists who'd admit at once they're not responsible for reasoning correctly, nor any non-determinist reasoning (so they think) incorrectly. Even if they were inconsistent though that wouldn't show determinism is false, just that a person is determined to act in one way. If they're a determinist, they might be inconsistent, as determined by necessity. The fact that certain views can't be lived out easily doesn't tell you much about if they're right or not.

Cassius:

Yes MC but therein is exactly the point - it is necessary to examine the foundations of what we think are right and what we think is wrong, and in the end there is no one who has an ultimate absolute claim to authority. The self-refuting argument may ultimately "prove" nothing from an "objective" point of view, but that is because there IS no "objective" point of view. The "self-refuting" argument is 100% satisfactory to me for that reason - because it tells me that the advocate of the argument is a manipulator and liar, and that I want nothing to do with him. It would be my view that the best friends I will have in life will also live to the same standard. That is the only standard of proof that I can ultimately have, or ultimately that I need. There IS no higher standard of proof than our own canonical faculties (senses, anticipations, feelings). The advocate of a self-refuting argument is leading you to mistrust and put aside those faculties.

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**Post by “Cassius” of June 20, 2020 at 9:32 AM**

## Thomas Jefferson to John Adams

*August 15, 1820 (responding to a letter Adams had previously sent to Jefferson):*

It's crowd of scepticisms kept me from sleep. I read it, and laid it down: read it, and laid it down, again and again: and to give rest to my mind, I was obliged to recur ultimately to my habitual anodyne, 'I feel: therefore I exist.' I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them matter. I feel them changing place. This gives me motion. Where there is an absence of matter, I call it void, or nothing, or immaterial space. On the basis of sensation, of matter and motion, we may erect the fabric of all the certainties we can have or need.

