

# Determinism vs. Indeterminism

The debate over the issue of predestination vs. free-will is clouded by the semantics involved. The term “predestination” is pretty well understood. It refers to God being in control of and predetermining specific events or outcomes. The main outcome in question is our final destiny after death, usually described as only one of two possible alternatives, salvation in Heaven or eternal damnation in Hell.

If our decision to accept or reject the Gospel of Christ is freely-made, without coercion by God, then it is easy to deduce that God is just in holding us morally accountable for this decision, and is perfectly justified in imposing the ultimate penalty of eternal separation from Himself. In this case, the decision as to how we will be spending eternity rests squarely on our shoulders, not God’s. Under this scenario, God merely accommodates what we choose to do with our lives, which is to live independently, apart from Him.

This makes complete sense, unless you believe in predestination, in which case our final destiny instead rests squarely in the hands of God. Of course, this would be fine and dandy if God were to ultimately “save” everyone. However, if you are not a universalist, then the doctrine of predestination is repugnant, because God would be condemning the majority of the human race to eternal hell without giving anyone a real choice in the matter. Arminianism arose in response to the Calvinistic doctrine predestination.

If man truly does have free-will, then God would only be saving all if all were to freely choose to become saved. But, how can God “cause” everyone to “freely” choose to become saved? Are not “causation” and “freedom” mutually exclusive?

Neither the Calvinists nor the Armenians are correct.

The correct answer has to do with understanding the difference between indeterminism and determinism. These terms have different meanings in the realm of physics, particularly quantum physics, than they do in every day usage. To most of us, “indeterminism” is equated with “free-will” and “determinism” is associated with “predestination.” But in physics the terms have nothing to do with causation, only with results. At the sub-molecular level, according to Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, it is impossible to determine a particle’s destination if you at the same time try to measure its current position and/or velocity. Experiments have proved, beyond any shadow of doubt, that the future position of the particle can only be expressed as a range of probabilities. We can closely, but not accurately, predict where the particle will most likely end up after it collapses from the wave. The smallest particles that make up our physical universe continually blink into and out of existence with each Planck unit of time, which is only  $1.2 \times 10^{-17}$  seconds. Each time a particle “disappears” into the quantum vacuum it assumes a “super-positioned” state, with wave-like characteristics. Then it “reappears” as a particle again. We can predict within a very narrow range where it will most likely reappear, but, in truth, it can reappear literally anywhere in space-time, even millions of light years away.

This is a brief description of what Physicists call “indeterminism.” Indeterminism means that the future state of any particle, and by extension, any larger grouping of particles (ie. large objects), cannot be determined by prior causes. These “future states” cannot be predicted and are a result of purely random processes.

This does not, however, mean that the outcomes are not caused. It simply means that regardless of the cause (ie. God or random processes), the result cannot be known or determined in advance. It is possible to narrow down the range of most probable future states based on a bell curve. In other words, most of the

time the particle or object will end up very close to where it was “aimed,” but not exactly. The ends of the bell curve also represent possible outcomes, but very improbable ones.

I’m going to go out on a limb here and speculate as to the way God achieves his ultimate goals for mankind without violating man’s freedom. I believe it is God’s intention to give man genuine freedom to make good and bad choices in life. At the same time, He places limits on that freedom. In addition to allowing us the freedom to choose good and evil, He also subjects us to a law, which is consistent with Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. I like to call this the Law of Reciprocity or the Law of Sowing and Reaping. The law operates within a range of probabilities, not certainties. In other words, our good choices are not always rewarded and our evil choices are not always punished. Over time, however, a pattern emerges, based on probabilities, whereby good is consistently rewarded over time. The reverse is also true, that over time evil is consistently punished. The result, if given enough time, is that all of us eventually learn that it is in our best interests to do good rather than evil. We all eventually grow and learn through this process, making better and better choices as time goes by.

As I have often stated in my writings, Christian Salvation (ie. being molded into the likeness of Christ) is an ages-long process. Nothing, I repeat, nothing is self-caused. God is the first cause of everything. It is God who created us and set everything into motion. While it is true that truly random processes are at play, the final result is not in question, because God also established the Law of Sowing and Reaping, which virtually guarantees that in the end all will eventually arrive at God’s preordained destination.