

## Book symposium on Robert Sapolsky's *Determined: A Science of Life Without Free Will*

Jesús Zamora Bonilla (Guest Editor)

One of the most influential books of the last years on the debate about free will, and probably the most controversial one, is Robert Sapolsky's *Determined: A Science of Life Without Free Will* (Penguin Press, 2023). Digging deeper on the biological details the author had explored in previous works, the book meticulously explores how every aspect of our behaviour is determined by events we don't really have a choice about, and also patiently examines the possible repercussions that the realization that free will is an illusion may have on the moral and legal aspects of our lives. Following the invitation of the editors of *Teorema*, here we present five papers discussing different arguments and ideas contained in the book, together with professor Sapolsky's answers and comments. The first paper, "What does 'free will' mean?", by Vonasch, Danielson and Mele, is an attempt at clarifying the meaning of the concept through a psychological laboratory experiment, trying to show that the common understanding of the term by ordinary people does not necessarily coincide with the philosophical or metaphysical content presupposed in Sapolsky's 'hard incompatibilist' sense. The second paper, "Undetermined: free will in real time and through time", by Kevin Mitchell, argues about the biological function and grounds of agency and judgement, as a source of order in a rather chaotic physical substratum where random events are prevalent. The three following papers are more philosophical than scientific; actually, the third and the fourth ones parallel in some ways the topics of the first and the second. In particular, Mark Balaguer's "Sapolsky-freedom and libertarian-freedom" is a paradigmatic exercise in conceptual analysis, arguing for a variety of libertarianism that may be compatible with the biological facts mentioned by the author of *Determined*, whereas Gloria Andrada's "Agency in a deterministic world" emphasizes the social and cultural aspects which may give agency a role in our lives. Lastly, Jesús Zamora Bonilla "The place of choice and norms in a world of inevitable events" is the most sympathetic one with Sapolsky's denial of free will, and tries to refine some arguments of the book such that they may become more compelling, in particular the idea that agency, norms and moral judgment can be compatible in some ways with a vision of the world in which all our choices are determined by events we don't control. Robert Sapolsky's response to these five papers, "In defence of our lives as biological machines", doesn't strictly follow the order of the published comments, but presents his arguments in a more thematic fashion. We hope the texts collected here serve the philosophical community to keep making progress in this long-lasting fascinating debate.