

Episode 168 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 21

- Chapter 10 - The New Freedom 01

by certain characteristics which they develop (7-10). Atomic make-up may be responsible for disorderly motion in their mind atoms (10-11),⁵¹ but it does not follow that they cannot make decisions which override those motions. One is reminded here Lucretius' insistence that even though the atomic composition of the mind at birth determines an animal's natural temperament, nothing prevents our learning to overcome that temperament.⁵² Even the natural coward, Epicurus would say, can use his rationality to learn courage.

Shortly after the lacuna, the relationship of 'developments' to the self's responsibility is amplified. Implicitly, at birth we *are* just atomic mechanisms. The self becomes responsible as soon as the animal develops a certain type of characteristic

⁴⁹ Cf. text quoted in note 18 above. It is not clear what the hallmark of a 'wild' animal is, but it is a good bet that the term covers the same ones as are picked out in *RS XXXII* as incapable of forming a social contract and hence beyond the realm of justice and injustice. The comparison with *RS XXXII* (as also that with Lucretius II 251-93) supports my assumption that ζῷα are the unspecified neuter subject. Cf. also P.M. HUBY, *The Epicureans, animals, and freewill*, «Apeiron» 3 (1969), pp. 17-19.

⁵⁰ For another Epicurean appeal to the non-identity of our conscious selves with our constituent atoms, see Lucretius III 847-61.

⁵¹ Glenn Most has persuaded me that it is more natural to take ἐ[τ]ίθης (10) as referring back to φύσις (8) than to αἰτίαν (10), as I originally thought. (On the latter reading 10-12 would be making almost the same point as 18-20).

⁵² Lucr. III 288-322.