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Epicurus' Insufficient Arguments for Sovereign Freedom

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Chapter 1

In this essay, I will argue that Epicurus' arguments for "sovereign freedom" are insufficient. By sovereign freedom, I mean "deliberation and self-determined choice based upon one's rational capacity." In other words, sovereign freedom is a rational deliberation to freely choose one action or another without internal or external necessity; the action is ultimately up to us. Although there may be "seeds" or physical dispositions which have an influence upon one's rational deliberation, "nevertheless there is something in our chest capable of fighting and resisting" LS 20 F (Lucretius 2.251-93) these influences by means of rational deliberation and free choice. There exists an autonomous, self-governing will. In modern philosophy, this definition is similar to libertarian free will. However, to avoid the minute dissimilarities between sovereign freedom and libertarian freedom, I will use the former terminology.

By revealing how Epicurus fails to establish sovereign freedom, it will be shown that Epicurus, unintentionally, puts forth a compatibilist philosophy. However, this type of compatibilism differs from Stoic compatibilism, for example, in that it is a theory which combines physical indeterminism with psychological determinism. This type of compatibilism inversely mirrors Chrysippus' philosophy, for example, who argues for a kind of theory which combines physical determinism with psychological indeterminism.

It is common knowledge that the *Stoics* believe every physical event is determined by antecedent causes, and which necessitate all events in the world: "The Stoics [describe fate as] a

sequence of causes, that is, an inescapable ordering and interconnection” LS 55 J (Aetius 1.28.4). By physical determinism the Stoics mean that every physical event, whether external or internal, is *universally* determined by the rational principle which permeates and sustains the world. The Stoics call this principle many names: “God, intelligence, fate, and Zeus are all one, and many other names are applied to him” LS 46 B (Diogenes Laertius 7.135-6). Although Chrysippus argues that *individuals* can have self-originating freedom when their rationality has matured to a certain point (i.e. the wise man), everything is nonetheless determined by antecedent causes which necessitate the given effect: “Chrysippus says that fate is a certain natural everlasting ordering of the whole: one set of things follows on and succeeds another, and the interconnexion is inviolable” LS 55 K (Gellius 7.2.3).

However, the Epicureans found Stoic physical determinism unacceptable, due to the seemingly necessary conclusion that our choices and actions are not ultimately up to us and, consequently, undermine moral responsibility “The man who says all events are necessitated has no ground for criticizing the man who says that not all events are necessitated. For according to him this is itself a necessitated event” LS 20 D (Epicurus 40). Thus, Epicurus argues that physical determinism is untenable, since if every physical event is necessitated by antecedent causes, then there would be no freedom. In order to escape the implications of a physically determined world, the Epicureans introduce the concept of the swerve: “Epicurus’ reason for introducing this theory was his fear that, if the atom’s motion was always the result of natural and necessary weight, we would have no freedom, since the mind would be moved in whatever way it was compelled by the motion of atoms” LS 20 E (Cicero 21-5).

There are multiple interpretations of the swerve, largely due to the fact that we have no remaining evidence of Epicurus’ account of the swerve. I will expand upon the varying

interpretations in my atomism section. But, for now, and for the sake of simplicity, I will analyze the swerve in the singular. The concept of the swerve is usually analyzed as the motion of an atomic particle that, at no specific time or place, swerves from the uniform motion of its fellow atoms, and thus introduces a physically indeterministic quality into the world: “Epicurus thinks that the necessity of fate is avoided by the swerve of atoms” LS 20 E (Cicero 21-5). Although indeterministic, this atomic swerve is not uncaused; it is caused by the atom’s own nature: “Don’t you know, whoever you are, that there is also a free movement in atoms, which Democritus failed to discover but Epicurus brought to light, a swerving movement, as he demonstrates from evident facts” LS 20 G (Diogenes of Oenoanda 32.1.14-3.14). There is a “free movement in atoms”; the cause of an atom swerving is the atom’s own nature. In other words, the physical, individual atoms that conglomerate and form all objects in the universe have, as their own nature, an indeterministic quality. Therefore, the Epicureans believe that this atomic swerve renders physical determinism false. Although the atomic swerve is not usually an argument in and of itself for sovereign freedom, it is a necessary condition, since our decisions and corresponding actions would appear to undermine freedom if the universe is physically determined.

Since the atomic swerve is a necessary condition for sovereign freedom, this is the foundation of Epicurean sovereign freedom. However, this swerve is, using Stoic terminology, only an auxiliary cause: “[T]he auxiliary cause signifies assistance, and service alongside another... So an auxiliary cause is one which was present while its effect was coming about” (Frede 35). Even assuming that Epicurus is accurate in his physical description of the world, Epicurus realized that this argument is insufficient in and of itself; the atomic swerve, in conjunction with self-formation of character (from rational deliberation), is necessary and

sufficient for sovereign freedom: “For the nature of their atoms has contributed nothing to *some* of their behaviour, and degrees of behaviour and *character*, but it is their *developments* which themselves possess all or most of the responsibility for certain things” LS 20 B (Epicurus 34. 21-2). The Stoic definition of an auxiliary cause is paramount in understanding the swerve, since an auxiliary cause is not a transitive type of causation. In other words, the auxiliary cause (the atomic swerve) does not cause character development (from rational deliberation), which in turn causes sovereign freedom. It is a slanted swerve which must occur before sovereign freedom can occur. Since the Epicureans do not expand upon various types of causation in regard to the swerve, the Stoic conception of an auxiliary cause is more helpful in understanding the swerve: “But, Chrysippus, disapproving of necessity and at the same time wanting nothing to happen without antecedent causes, distinguishes between kinds of cause, in order to escape necessity while retaining fate. ‘Of causes’, he explains, ‘some are complete and primary, others auxiliary and proximate. Hence when we say that all things come about through fate by antecedent causes, we do not mean this to be understood as ‘complete and primary causes’, but ‘by auxiliary and proximate causes’” LS 62 C (Cicero 39-43). This helps to clarify what type of causation Epicurus appears to espouse. A swerve, by itself, is insufficient for sovereign freedom, but which alongside (and prior) to character development, is sufficient. The swerve must be present before character development can come about, but it does not directly cause character development.

The Stoic definition of an auxiliary cause helps in explaining the relation between the atomic swerve and character formation, which is necessary for sovereign freedom: “Epicurus is arguing that since we start with a wide range of (‘seeds’) for character development our actual direction of development is not physically predetermined but ‘up to us’” (LS 108). The atomic swerve is an auxiliary cause that, in conjunction with rational, self-formation of character, is

sufficient for sovereign freedom. But, now I must make a distinction between sovereign freedom and effective volition, in order to clarify the supposed difference between animals and humans, for instance.

By effective volition, I mean “a voluntary action based upon one’s desire.” It is an action that is in accordance with one’s desire, such as a dog eating his bowl of food. The dog wants to eat his food, and voluntarily acts in accordance with his immediate desire. Animals and children, for example, have effective volition, but usually lack sovereign freedom because of their inadequacy to deliberate and act according to their rationality, and thus, at this point in their rational maturity, they are unable to shape and form their own character. Epicurus believes it would be strange to hold most animals and children morally responsible for their effective volition, due to their lack of rational maturity: “Epicurus allows that some animals have rationality....But in general Epicureans tend to deny that animals have rationality, since they clearly lack the higher functions of reason which enable humans to reflect on and change their lives as whole, and, ultimately to grasp the truths of Epicurean philosophy...” (Annas 90). The atomic swerve is sufficient for effective volition, but not for sovereign freedom. Self-formation of character is necessary for sovereign freedom. Consequently, Epicurus attempts to make a distinction between effective volition and sovereign freedom by emphasizing the importance of rational deliberation and self-formation of character in the case of sovereign freedom. However, I will argue that he does not succeed.

Thus, my argument will go as follows: by using the Stoic conceptions of an auxiliary cause and rational maturity (in regard to self-formation of character by rational deliberation), I will argue that Epicurus’ arguments for sovereign freedom are insufficient; consequently, it will

be shown that Epicurus succeeds in only arguing for effective volition, and thereby establishes the philosophy of “inverse compatibilism.”

My thesis contains three *central* parts, each part corresponding to an aspect of Epicurus’ argument that is insufficient, thus revealing the insufficiency of sovereign freedom. The first part of my argument will show how Epicurus’ second condition for sovereign freedom – self-formation of character – is psychologically determined, thereby undermining sovereign freedom. This is because that in order to form one’s character, one must have emergent properties, such as rational deliberation. And, these emergent properties are over and above the physical constituents on which the emergent properties supervene. And, once these emergent properties arise, they are psychologically determined by the atomic conglomerates that make them up, or else one’s emergent properties (such as rationality) would be random and influenced by chance occurrences, and therefore one’s actions would not be ultimately up to him.

Secondly, even if Epicurus escapes this dilemma, another problem arises: begging the question. If Epicurus’ conditions for sovereign freedom are sufficient without being psychologically determined, he will in turn, be begging the question: In Epicurus’ attempt to argue for sovereign freedom, which arises from the conjunction of an atomic swerve and self-formation of character, he implies that humans already have emergent rationality before sovereign freedom emerges; humans already have the ability to form preconceptions, deliberate rationally, and form their characters. However, how can one form preconceptions and be aware of their rational capacity to form their characters if the sovereign freedom on which these things depend, has yet to emerge?

Lastly, even if Epicurus can escape this problem, he will have another dilemma: the problem of human essence. Preconceptions and rational deliberation are dependent upon one’s

empirical experience, and thus are dependent upon one's environmental stimuli. There is no innate human essence; everything is learned from empirical experiences. Although Epicurus treats human beings as a unique type of species, it does not appear that there is an innate human essence that differentiates humans from other animals, except for their 'seeds.' In other words, horses, apes, and humans are all different species, but there is no teleological or pre-determined essence that would separate one from the other. Although each species have different 'seeds', or dispositions, such as horses for fast running and humans for deeper thinking, there is no human essence in the sense that there is no teleological nature or special status that makes humans non-animals.

And, if everything is learned from empirical experiences, one's sovereign freedom cannot arise, for example, for someone locked in a closet his whole life. In other words, even though there is physical indeterminacy, once one's sense-impressions are perceived by the perceiver, they are psychologically ingrained in the perceiver. One's perception is limited to his experiences and, consequently, his corresponding preconceptions are limited to his experiences, as well. In other words, one's sense impressions determine his preconceptions. Although Epicurus attempts to escape this problem by suggesting that humans have an innate *potential* towards rational deliberation, he is nonetheless contradicting himself by implying that humans have an innate essence, like the Stoics believe. And, this is incompatible with Epicurus' staunch empiricism.

Chapter 2

However, before I argue that Epicurean sovereign freedom is untenable, I must explicate the concepts and complexities within sovereign freedom, Epicurean atomism, Epicurean epistemology, and Epicurean psychology. Moreover, I will clarify the similarities and differences between the Stoics' conceptions of these issues in order to better highlight Epicurus' philosophical points.

STOIC AND EPICUREAN SOVEREIGN FREEDOM:

Firstly, I will elucidate the distinction between Epicurean sovereign freedom (ESF), and Stoic sovereign freedom (SSF). The Epicureans and Stoics both attempt to argue that there exists, in some sense, a sovereign will. The Stoics, for example, believe that everything is determined; in other words, the universe as a whole is determined by physical and logical causation. However, within this deterministic universe, there is room for individual SSF. The existence of individual SSF occurs at a determined time and place when, through a dynamic relationship between external stimuli (*phantasia*; an auxiliary cause), the corresponding proposition which impresses upon the agent's mental composition, and the agent's receptivity and assent towards the auxiliary cause, there emerges a unique and new psychological composition in the mind of the agent. This new psychological composition is an actualization of an intrinsic and previously undeveloped rationality: "It is only if reason accedes to the impulsive impression that it will constitute an actual impulse. So a human impulse, a rational impulse, will have two elements: a certain kind of impulsive impression and an assent of reason to that" (Frede 37). This occurs because of the intrinsic nature of human beings. Rationality is an intrinsic quality of humans, and such that it must be nurtured until it reaches the point of maturity (i.e. the

wise man). At a specific moment, an external *phantasia* impresses its propositional content upon the agent's mind. If an agent, through this dynamical relation, has reached a point of rational maturity, the agent's previously inexistent SSF is actualized: "According to the Stoics, there is this much continuity between being a child and being a mature human being-that as grown-up human beings we continue to have impulsive impressions. The discontinuity lies in the twofold fact that these impulsive impressions now have a completely different character and that in themselves they no longer constitute an impulse sufficient to impel us to do something. To move us they require an assent of, or acceptance by, reason" (Frede 36). In other words, an auxiliary cause (such as *phantasia*), is sufficient to explain effective volition in animals, but not sovereign freedom; mature rationality is necessary. Human children, for example, must mature in their rationality before they actualize their SSF. Mature rationality, in conjunction with *phantasia*, is necessary and sufficient. When this occurs, an agent is now truly free, and his actions are up to him; he has sovereign freedom.

The Stoic conceptions of an auxiliary cause and rational maturity are of the utmost importance in understanding Epicurean sovereign freedom. In the case of the Stoics, *phantasia* is the auxiliary cause which is necessary for SSF. In the case of ESF, however, the atomic swerve, and not *phantasia*, is the auxiliary cause to sovereign freedom. Since the auxiliary cause must be indeterminate, according to Epicurus (or there would be no freedom), the swerve fits this necessary condition. And, this must be present before ESF can come about. It is not a direct type of causation, where the atomic swerve gives rise to ESF. Instead, it is an auxiliary cause that must be present before character development, and eventually, ESF, can occur. The atomic swerve is sufficient to explain effective volition in animals, for example, so this must be present before ESF can come about. However, unlike animals, humans supposedly have ESF, and thus

there must be another condition in addition to the already established atomic swerve, or else humans would only have effective volition. This condition is self-formation of character (from rational deliberation). Furthermore, rational maturity and self-formation of character arise from preconceptions. But, before I clarify how these emergent properties arise from preconceptions, I will explain the foundations of Epicurean atomism, Epicurean epistemology, and Epicurus' conception of emergent mental states.

EPICUREAN ATOMISM:

Epicurus posits that everything is composed of atoms and void. Although he argues that other things, such as complex objects and color, are “real,” (conglomerates and emergent properties), all the building blocks of the universe are nonetheless small, indivisible particles of matter. There are an infinite number of atoms but they have a limited (albeit wide) array of shapes and sizes. Furthermore, by their own intrinsic nature, these atoms fall “downwards”; they move in a uniform manner through infinite void. Like his predecessor, Democritus, Epicurus argues that atoms move in a uniform motion, and at the same speed. However, Epicurus adds another type of movement: the atomic swerve. This is when an atom randomly swerves from its trajectory by a minimal interval; he introduces the swerve because if atoms move in the same direction at the same speed, they would never collide and form more complex compounds; by means of the swerve, atoms can collide and amalgamate with one another to form compounds. Since there is a multitude of atomic shapes, atomic compounds can form numerous different objects and properties, such as stars, humans, and colors. However, the opposite occurs as well – when complex compounds disperse into less complex atomic bodies - such as when one dies. In

fact, all matter and energy in the universe remains constant, or else things could come from nothing, or things could be destroyed into nothing LS 4 A (Epicurus 38-39). Furthermore, Epicurus argues that both void and atoms are infinite, for if the void is infinite but the atoms finite, atoms could never collide with another. Additionally, if the atoms are infinite and the void finite, there would be no room for the atoms to move. Epicurus captures this double dilemma when he writes: “For if the void were infinite but the bodies finite, the bodies would not remain anywhere but would be travelling scattered all over the infinite void, for lack of the bodies which support and marshal them by buffering. And if the void were finite, the infinite bodies would not have anywhere to be” LS 10 A (Epicurus 41-42).

More importantly, however, is the fact that if everything were a result of antecedent causes (from atoms), there would be no freedom. Thus, the swerve is of the utmost importance: “For it is not through the impact of another atom that an atom swerves. How, after all, can one be struck by another if atomic bodies travel perpendicularly in straight lines through their own weight, as Epicurus holds? For it follows that one is never driven from its course by another, if one is never even touched by another. The consequence is that, even supposing that the atom does exist and that it swerves, it swerves without a cause. Epicurus’ reason for introducing this theory was his fear that, if the atom’s motion was always the result of natural and necessary weight, we would have no freedom, since the mind would be moved in whatever way it was compelled by the motion of atoms. Democritus, the originator of atoms, preferred to accept this consequence that everything happens through necessity than to rob the atomic bodies of their natural motions” LS 20 E (Cicero 21-5). Future writers, such as Lucretius, state that Epicurus strongly disagreed with Democritus, and emphasizes that atoms have an innate, indeterministic quality.

However, since there is no remaining evidence of Epicurus' account of the swerve, there are multiple interpretations of the swerve's relation to volition. The first interpretation is put forth by David Furley, who posits that when volitions occur, no swerve occurs. In other words, when an animal or human acts according to his desires, a swerve has already occurred in the past which makes the present volition possible: "Atomic swerves are very rare events, posited only to guarantee that the course of a man's life is not *entirely* pre-determined; otherwise, however, our volitions are produced mechanistically by the combination of our settled characters and the influence of our environment" (Purinton 256). Consequently, when one acts, there is no swerve involved in that specific action, since the necessary, indeterministic condition has already been met. There has to be at least one swerve that has occurred in the past in order for one's volition to escape physical determinism.

A second interpretation is put forth by Don Fowler. He asserts that a swerve occurs before (and for) every volition. These indeterministic swerves are common, and they are necessary for all volitions. It is not the case that volitions happen without preceding swerves: "Swerves, which are not at all rare events, cause the mental acts of focusing on images of actions which must occur before volitions can occur, but, once we have imagined an action which seems desirable to us given our characters, volitions follow mechanistically" (Purinton 256). In other words, the swerve is an immediate cause of one's volition, and which is a necessary and indeterminate event for all volitions. Without this indeterminate swerve, one's volitions would be determined by physical necessity. Therefore, these swerves make all volitions free from physical determinism, and thus one's corresponding actions are free.

Englert espouses another interpretation: a swerve happens directly after someone chooses to act in a certain way. The swerve follows one's volition and is, in a sense, the *anima* that

causes the body to move. In other words, when one chooses to act in a certain way, the swerve is then the connective between choice and action: “After we have made up our minds to do something at once, we must wait for a swerve to initiate the desired bodily motion; the wait, fortunately, is very short, because swerves are not at all rare events” (Purinton 256). This interpretation seems to parallel Lucretius’ quote: “For without doubt it is volition that gives these things their beginning for each of us, and it is from volition that motions are spread through the limbs. Don’t you see how also when at an instant the starting gates are opened the eager strength of horses can nevertheless not surge forward as suddenly as the mind itself wishes? For all the mass of matter has to be stirred up throughout the body, so that stirred up through all the limbs it may in a concerted effort follow the mind’s desire. Thus you may see that the beginning of motion is created from the heart and proceeds initially from the mind’s volition, and from there is spread further through the entire body and limbs” LS 20 F (Lucretius 2.251-93). The swerve follows the mind’s volition, and carries out the corresponding action in the bodily limbs. It is, in a sense, a neuronal signal that follows volition; it proceeds, and is the imminent cause of, one’s action.

The last interpretation I will discuss is that of David Sedley’s. His unorthodox interpretation of the swerve is this: we control the swerves. Our volitions, once they emerge, are sufficient to direct the atoms in whatever way we want. They obey us, and we have the mental powers to swerve the atoms as we wish: “swerves are *caused by volitions from the top down*. (Volitions are “emergent properties” which are able to “obtain leverage” on atoms so as to make them swerve)” (Purinton 256). This view is possibly based upon the following passage from Cicero: “[F]or voluntary motions of the mind there is no need to seek an external cause. For a voluntary motion itself has it as its own intrinsic nature that it should be in our power to obey us”

LS 20 E (Cicero 21-5). Once we have emergent properties, we can act as we wish, and thus we swerve / control the atoms to perform the action in accordance with our volition.

Which interpretation is most accurate? I would argue that Englert's and Sedley's views are untenable, because they presuppose that one has volition before mind atoms swerve. But, the atomic swerve is supposed to allow volition. How can volition arise if the swerves have yet to occur? Epicurus posits the swerve to allow volition, but not to be an effect of volition. Like Annas, who argues that Sedley's interpretation is only valid in exceptional cases (such as psychological anomalies), Purinton expresses the problems with this interpretation: "Since, to be a libertarian, one must say that volitions are fresh starts of motion, and since, to be an atomist, one must say that all mental events are caused from the bottom up by the motions of the mind's constituent atoms, a would-be libertarian atomist is obliged to say that volitions are caused from the bottom up by fresh starts of atomic motion" (Purinton 258).

Thus, Furley's and Fowler's interpretations appear more adequate, since atomic swerves precede volition. However, the best interpretation is put forth by Jeffrey Purinton, himself. He argues that there are not swerves for all volitions. In fact, he argues that volition and the swerve should be analyzed in the singular. Consequently, at least one atomic swerve necessarily precedes volition. In other words, an atomic swerve is necessary for one's volition in general, but not for every individual situation, as Fowler holds. Furthermore, the atomic swerve which causes volition must occur before volition itself, since atomism is a bottom-up philosophy; it starts with simple atomic particles, and gives rise to more complex conglomerates and emergent properties. More importantly, however, is the fact that one atom is sufficient to bring about physical indeterminacy into the world. There does not have to be multiple atomic swerves. Purinton emphasizes that one swerve could be enough to allow physical indeterminacy and thus, could be

sufficient to satisfy Epicurus' philosophy of effective volition. Therefore, I believe any interpretation of the swerve must assume that the swerve precedes volition, since atoms are the foundation of everything, including human beings and effective volition: "Epicurus held that an agent's volition (in the singular) is caused from the bottom up by that agent's mind's atoms' motions, *at least one* of which is a swerve" (Purinton 259). This interpretation is the interpretation that will be assumed in the rest of my thesis, since it posits that the atomic swerve precedes volition *and* it accurately describes Epicurus' bottom-up atomism.

EPICUREAN EPISTEMOLOGY:

The foundation of all knowledge is sense impressions. For how can one comprehend the world if not through the senses? Through our knowledge of the world, we come to understand the concept of cause and effect, for instance, and our rationality and knowledge of the world often increase in correlation with our experiences and preconceptions: "You will find that the preconception of true has its origin in the senses, and that the senses cannot be refuted. For something of greater reliability must be found, something possessing the intrinsic power to convict falsehoods with truths. Well, what should be considered to have greater reliability than the senses?...For reason is in its entirety the *product* of the senses, so that if the senses are not true all reason becomes false as well" LS 16 A (Lucretius 4.469-521). In other words, all knowledge, including reason and logic, must first have its origin in sense perception. And, the fact that whatever one perceives is true to the perceiver, this is the strongest foundation for knowledge. Epicurus held to this position because he believed it was the strongest epistemological base.

There are three possibilities in regard to sense impressions: 1. All sense impressions are false. 2. Some sense-impressions are false and some are true. 3. All sense-impressions are true. If Epicurus accepts 1, then there would be no standard on which to base knowledge; in other words, this is a skeptical type of epistemology: “If you fight against all sensations, you will not have a standard against which to judge even those of them you say are mistaken” LS 16 D (Epicurus 23). If Epicurus accepts 2, then this is at odds with his empiricism. For, if there is no innate rationality, what other standard is there to judge which sense impressions are true (or false) except the senses? Therefore, the only option is to admit that all sense impressions are true. Long and Sedley elucidate these possibilities well when they write: “Epicurus seems to envisage three possibilities: (a) all sensations are false; (b) some sensations are true and some are false; (c) all sensations are true. His dual task is to establish (c) by eliminating (a) and (b)” (LS 83).

However, this does not necessarily mean that everything one perceives is objectively true, since effluences can be distorted. In other words, objects from a distance may be distorted, but the atomic composition of the effluences (which is a conjunction of the object, and the space between the object and the perceiver) is true. For example, if I perceive a stick in water, it appears that the stick is bent. Although the stick is not objectively bent, the appearance of the bent stick is a true sense impression; the way this distorted image appears is an accurate perception of the effluence. Sense impressions accurately represent the effluence, regardless if the perceived object(s) involved is distorted or not: “Provided that these ‘effluences’, as we may call them, enter the sense organ without experiencing any change of structure the impression they produce on us will be an accurate image of the object. If on the other hand their structure is disrupted in transit, the effluences will cause us to sense something which corresponds not to some actual characteristic of the object itself but to their own modified structure” (Long 22).

However, a problem arises: if all sense impressions are true, then how can there be mistaken beliefs? Epicurus argues that all sense impressions are true, but that preconceptions based upon our empirical experiences can be false; one can make false connections in one's mind, and therefore make false judgments. For example, I can perceive a horse, and later perceive a zebra, and make the false preconception that horses and zebras are the same species. Although my perception of these animals is true, my preconceptions of them are false: "Hence whatever impressions the senses get at any time is true. Even if reason fails to explain why things which proved square when close up seem round at a distance, it is nevertheless better, when one's reason proves inadequate, to give wrong explanations of the respective shapes, than to let the self-evident slip from one's grasp and thus to violate the primary guarantee and shake the entire foundations on which life and survival rest" LS 16 A (Lucretius 4.469-521). In summary, false beliefs arise from false preconceptions, not sense-impressions.

Furthermore, we learn (or acquire) reason, originating firstly with sense-perception, and then forming preconceptions based on previous perceptions. Once we comprehend this epistemological foundation, Epicurus believes, we can act according to what is right (i.e. what brings *ataraxia*).

Therefore, sense perceptions and preconceptions are the foundations of knowledge. Once we utilize our senses in such a way that we acquire sense data from the external world, we then internalize such inputs in our minds. As we experience more of the world, we acquire more data input. Eventually, we begin to see patterns in the world, and make connections. These connections give rise to preconceptions which are concepts that our mind makes. For example, if one perceives a bowl one day, and then perceive a cup another day, he can make the preconception that these shapes are usually used to contain fluids. Thus, the next time he sees a

different shaped cup, he can infer, from his preconception, that this cup is most likely used to hold fluids.

When we continue to form our preconceptions, and have more experiences in the world, we will arrive at a point where emergent properties, such as rational deliberation (and thus character formation) can occur. However, these emergent properties are no longer reducible to indeterminate atoms: “Thus when a development occurs which takes on some distinction from the atoms in a differential way – not in the way which is like viewing from a different distance – he acquires responsibility which proceeds from himself” (Epicurus 20B). Now, I will clarify Epicurean psychology, and what I mean by emergent properties.

EPICUREAN PSYCHOLOGY:

Epicurus argues that void and atoms are the only things that exist. But, when atoms collide with one another, conglomerates form – such as rocks, stars, and water. Everything in the universe is composed of atoms and void. However, there are properties and “things” that cannot be explained in fully materialist terms, such as consciousness and color. Since atoms have no innate color, for example, the combination of atoms that form colorful compounds (such as green leaves), seem enigmatic. Therefore, even though all things are physical, there are properties, such as color, that appear inexplicable in physical terms. Furthermore, mental states such as beliefs and thoughts seem to be separate and irreducible to the physical atoms that make them up. Although the atomic foundation of any object or property is always physical, Epicurus holds, there can still be emergent properties that are over and above their corresponding physical constituents: “Now as for the shapes, colours, sizes, weights, and other things predicated of a

body as *permanent* attributes – belonging either to all bodies or to those which are visible, and knowable in themselves through sensation – we must not hold that they are *per se* substances: that is inconceivable. Nor, at all, are they non-existent. Nor that they are some distinct incorporeal things accruing to the body. Nor that they are *parts of it*; but that the whole body *cannot* have its own *permanent* nature consisting *entirely* of the sum total of them, in an amalgamation like that when a larger aggregate is composed directly of particles, either primary ones or magnitudes smaller than such- and- such a whole, but that it is only in the way I am describing that it has its own *permanent nature* consisting of the sum total of them” (Epicurus 7B). These emergent properties arise when a certain combination of atomic conglomerates accidentally arrange themselves in a way that bring about secondary properties. In essence, they only exist on the phenomenal level. They are something novel, and are above the combination of their parts. They are something unique and novel, and not reducible to their physical components: “[A]n excerpt in Epicurean textual exegesis, makes it quite clear that ‘attributes’ are the genus of which ‘accidents’ and ‘permanent attributes’, or ‘permanent concomitants,’ are the species...Accidents, non-essential attributes, exist only at the phenomenal level, not at the atomic level, and are intrinsically observer-dependent. Democritus had for these reasons denied their reality, and part of Epicurus’ purpose in B5 is no doubt to resist that conclusion...Indeed such a degree of reality does Epicurus assign to one class of accidents, mental states, that he even seems to grant them their own independent causal efficacy...All the more reason to stress, as he does in B5, that they are not separable *per se* entities” (LS 37). Emergent properties such as mental states and color are dependent upon, yet irreducible to their components; these emergent properties supervene upon their physical bases. When I talk of supervenience I mean something like this: “According to some philosophers, mind-body supervenience gives us the right kind of

physicalism: It respects the primacy of the physical by giving a clear sense to the idea that the physical determines the mental. Without the instantiations of appropriate physical properties, no mental property can be instantiated, and what particular mental properties are instantiated depends wholly on what physical properties happen to be instantiated. And yet...mental properties remain distinct from their physical base properties” (Kim 332). Emergent properties are secondary attributes which arise from a specific, yet accidental, amalgamation of atoms. However, since they are secondary properties, they do not follow the same “rules” as their physical bases. In other words, emergent mental states are psycho-physical properties in which they have causal efficacy, but which do not follow the same type of “laws” as the physical atomic bases on which they supervene. When I say that emergent mental properties cannot follow the same rules as their physical components, I mean the following: mental properties, by the very nature of their attributes, cannot be indeterminate. This is evident in the following example: red, blue, and yellow colors are the necessary foundations for a painting, for instance. They represent the atomic particles. When they form an “accidental” combination, a painting arises. However, the painting is something unique and novel, and cannot be reduced to blue, red, and yellow. Furthermore, although the colors can form in many different combinations, the picture itself cannot be reduced to these colors; it is a novel “state” that is dependent and supervenient upon the colors, but which is not explicable or reducible to its color-makeup. Even though its colors can hypothetically form different compounds, the painting itself is permanent as the supervening entity.

However, colors are not physically indeterminate, so my mountain example will clarify this issue. Imagine three tectonic plates that are randomly moving beneath the Earth’s crust. They are unpredictable and, for our present purposes, indeterminate. At a certain point, these

tectonic plates will collide with one another and form a mountain. At this point, the tectonic plates conglomerate with each other and form a novel, yet physical, entity: a mountain. Once this occurs, the mountain is stable and mostly permanent. Like the atomic conglomerates of our psychology, the tectonic plates are indeterminate. However, once they amalgamate with one another, they form an entity that is over and above its physical constituents. It is an emergent property that supervenes upon its physical base. Moreover, like emergent mental properties – such as rational deliberation – the mountain is stable and permanent. Also, it is possible that once the mountain emerges, it has new causal powers – such as a mountainous volcano that spews lava. As this example shows, it is not inconceivable that emergent properties and states can emerge from physical conglomerates and, at the same time, not be reducible to these physical conglomerates: “The emergentist is portrayed as saying that consciousness properties are emergent in this sense: they are properties of a whole that cannot be reduced to the properties of its parts and the relations between them but they “emerge” on the basis of (because of) the properties of the parts and the relations obtaining between them. The intuitive idea is that the instantiation of emergent properties of a whole *consists in more than* in the instantiation of the property of being composed of parts that satisfy certain conditions” (Nida-Rumelin 274). Once a certain, accidental combination of atoms form with one another in a person’s brain (or chest, according to Epicurus), emergent properties supervene upon them. Furthermore, just because Epicurus is a physicalist, it does not mean he is a reductionist. Epicurus can still be a physicalist without being an eliminativist. In other words, physical events in the brain are not equated with their corresponding emergent properties: “So far we have seen that Epicurus’ physicalism, often cast as the crude villain of the piece, does not prevent him from developing an interesting, non-reductionist philosophy of mind, which answers to our experience of ourselves as living and

developing agents” (Annas 97). Moreover, when one’s novel mental properties or states emerge, like the mountain, they are no longer indeterminate but are determined in their composition.

Chapter 3

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF ARGUMENT 1

Epicurus argues that self-formation of character is necessary for sovereign freedom. However, this argument is insufficient because self-formation of character (from rational deliberation) is a determined, emergent property.

In modern philosophy, the “luck principle” is often considered a problem for libertarian free will: “Some twentieth-century scientists and philosophers have suggested that free will might be rescued by supposing that undetermined quantum events in the brain could be amplified to have large-scale effects on choice or action. Unfortunately, this modern version of the ancient Epicurean “swerve” of the atoms seems to be subject to the same criticisms as its ancient counterpart. It seems that undetermined events in the brain or body, whether amplified or not, would occur spontaneously and would be more of a nuisance – or perhaps a curse, like epilepsy – than an enhancement of freedom and responsibility” (Kane 302). Take the following example for instance: if the wind blew my hand in such a way that I accidentally punched someone, this would be a random and involuntary action in which I am not the origin of my action. Some philosophers hold that, if physical indeterminism is true, then all actions are a result of luck or chance, such as my accidental punching action. However, Epicurus attempts to escape this problem by positing that emergent mental states have causal efficacy in such a way in which responsibility will proceed from the agent, himself (from rational deliberation in forming one’s

character). This is supposedly accomplished by positing secondary properties that are not entities, *per se*, but which have casual efficacy nonetheless, and causal efficacy in such a way that responsibility proceeds from oneself. Yet, Epicurus still argues that all physical things, including emergent properties, are subject to indeterminism. If this were case, then mental properties would adhere to the same laws as their physical constituents, and one would be moved whatever which way by the motion of atoms. Thus, emergent properties must be determined without “luck” involved, or there would be no responsibility.

In other words, Epicurus attempts to argue for sovereign freedom (based upon emergent properties), without falling prey to the luck objection; he wants to be a libertarian *with* internal responsibility, but *without* luck involved. Unfortunately, he does not succeed. As has already been shown, one’s emergent properties must be determined in order to avoid the luck objection.

In order for the emergent mental states to have causal efficacy in such a way that responsibility proceeds from oneself, it cannot be up to luck. Moreover, since one’s sovereign freedom is dependent upon these mental properties, and since these emergent properties are permanent attributes that act in a differential way, they must be determined in order for responsibility to proceed from one’s internal mental states (in order to form one’s character). Determinism is necessary for responsibility. Epicurus attempts to argue the following, but fails:

1. Physical things are indeterminate
2. One’s emergent mental states are physical
3. One’s emergent mental states are indeterminate.

Although the conclusion (3) follows from 1 and 2, the argument is not sound. Premise 1 is problematic for the following reason: just because SOME atoms are indeterminate, and just become SOME conglomerates are indeterminate, it does not necessitate that all emergent mental

states are indeterminate. Although indeterminacy occurs, it cannot occur for every physical event or property, or else there would be no physical laws. My computer, my feet, my head, and my university would be constantly changing in such a way that there would be no stability in the world. And obviously, there is SOME stability and natural laws, such as the law that atoms of different sizes and weights fall at the same speed in a vacuum: “[T]he atoms must be of equal velocity whenever they travel through the void and nothing collides with them. For neither will the heavy ones move faster than the small light ones, provided nothing runs into them...” LS 11 E (Epicurus 61-2). There are some laws that are not indeterminate. Thus, since premise 1 is inaccurate, the conclusion (3) is not sound.

Furthermore, if emergent properties are permanent in such a way that they are secondary properties that supervene upon psychological atomic conglomerates, then they are not indeterminate, either, because they do not follow the same laws as their physical constituents. Consequently, Epicurus would be justified in making an argument like the following:

1. Some physical things are determinate
2. One’s emergent mental states are physical things
3. One’s emergent mental states are possibly determinate.

Since not every physical thing (including emergent properties) is indeterminate, it follows that some things are determinate (1). Therefore, the conclusion (3) is that some emergent properties and states are possibly determinate.

Now, the question arises: just because one’s emergent properties CAN be determinate, does it necessitate that they are? Not necessarily, unless this fact is added: that if one’s mental states are indeterminate, then one’s choices and actions will be dependent on whatever way the atoms move. It will be up to luck. Yet, to have responsibility that proceeds from oneself (and

thus to form one's character by means of rational deliberation), one's choices and actions cannot be up to luck. Therefore, to have responsibility which proceeds from oneself, emergent mental states cannot be indeterminate:

1. If one's mental states are indeterminate, there will be no responsibility
2. There is responsibility
3. Thus, one's mental states are not indeterminate
4. Therefore, one's mental states are determinate.

Since emergent mental states are not equated with their supervenient base, emergent mental states are something "novel" with unique causal powers. These emergent mental states are secondary, permanent attributes. Thus, to escape the luck objection, as well as to necessitate responsibility that proceeds from oneself, Epicurus would have to accept that one's emergent states are determined by their permanent nature. And, if emergent properties are determined, one can form his character from rational deliberation in such a way that responsibility proceeds from oneself. However, if emergent properties, and the corresponding choices and actions, are determined, *there can be no sovereign freedom*. There can still be effective volition AND responsibility for one's choices and actions, since choices and actions are effects of one's emergent properties. One can still act according to his desires. However, although there is effective volition and responsibility that proceeds from oneself, there cannot be sovereign freedom.

Epicurus' conception of the soul also supports my argument that emergent properties are a determined and permanent accident (at least until old age or death). Epicurus divided the soul into two main parts, the rational and the irrational (*animus* and *anima* in Lucretius). The rational part is the mind (in the chest), and the irrational part is the nervous system, so to speak. This

irrational “spirit” spreads throughout the body and causes movement. The important point here, however, is the fact that “no single element [of the soul] can be separated, nor can their capacities be divided spatially; they are like the multiple powers of a single body” Long 51 (Lucretius 262-6). In other words, the mind (and mental properties) is a coherent and permanent “entity.” And because these properties cannot be “separated”, there cannot be psychological indeterminacy. The mind, and its corresponding mental properties cannot be separated until death, just like a mountain cannot collapse until it is weakened; one’s mental properties are permanent until death: “The first thing Epicurus strove to establish in his psychological theory was the complete and permanent loss of consciousness at death...For Epicurus birth and death are limits which contain the existence of a person. *I* have not existed in another body prior to this life, nor am *I* liable to experience a further incarnation following this life” (Long 49-50). In other words, one’s consciousness is permanent throughout one’s life, like a mountain. But once one dies, for instance, these mental properties, as well as other physical atomic conglomerates of a human being, will disperse. For example, when an earthquake shatters a mountain, the permanent mountain will disperse back into less complex atomic compounds, like rocks and tectonic plates. But, until this point, one’s consciousness and emergent properties are permanent and unified, and not subject to indeterminacy.

THE INSUFFICIENCY of ARGUMENT 2:

Epicurus argues that rationality and character formation are learned through experiences and preconceptions, implying that rationality and character development occur before sovereign freedom arises. But, this is begging the question.

In regard to emergent properties – Epicurus begs the question: if rationality (and character formation) is learned through experience (and through preconceptions) in such a way that they give rise to sovereign freedom, then how can we have rational deliberation and the ability to form our character in the first place? In other words, in order to have sovereign freedom, we must have the ability to rationally deliberate and form our characters. Yet, how can we rationally deliberate and form our characters if sovereign freedom has yet to emerge?

Thus, this part of my argument will reveal how preconceptions are necessary for rational deliberation and character development, since this is how we learn the concepts of cause and effect. Consequently, I will argue this is problematic because rational deliberation and character development are emergent properties that are both causes and effects of sovereign freedom. And, this is untenable.

Preconceptions allow one to understand logic, to be self-aware, and thus to form one's character in a way that is consistent with Epicurus' hedonism. So, preconceptions give rise to rational deliberation and self-formation of character, for example. And, rational deliberation and self-formation of character give rise to sovereign freedom. However, if preconceptions give rise to rational deliberation and self-formation of character and, if these in turn, give rise to sovereign freedom, then what happens to the causal efficacy of sovereign freedom? It becomes epiphenomenal and pointless. Thus, either Epicurus unintentionally puts forth an epiphenomenal philosophy (which is ridiculous), or this is the consequence: rational deliberation and self-formation of character give rise to sovereign freedom, and sovereign freedom gives rise to rational deliberation and self-formation of character. And, this is blatantly begging the question. Thus, this circular argument is untenable, and renders sovereign freedom problematic, if not plain false.

These quotes will clarify this fallacy: “Consequently that which we develop – characteristics of this or that kind – is at first absolutely up to us; and the things which of necessity flow in through our passages from that which surrounds us are at one stage up to us and dependent on beliefs of our own making...” LS 20 C (Epicurus 34.26-30). This quote by Epicurus seems to be at odds with the following quote: “Thus when a development occurs which takes on some distinctness from the atoms in a differential way...he acquires responsibility which proceeds from himself; then he straightaway transmits this to his primary substances and makes the whole of it into a yardstick” LS 20 B (Epicurus 34.21-2). In the first passage, Epicurus implies that our character development is at “first” up to us, and thus we have responsibility for our character development, since our character development is partly due to beliefs of our own making. However, Epicurus implies in the second passage that the “differential distinctness” is sovereign freedom. Once this distinctness occurs, then one has causal efficacy in regard to “primary substances.” In other words, the second passage implies that sovereign freedom is necessary in order to form one’s character development, because the choices and consequent character development of a person must be instantiated in the primary substances of a human being (the *anima*), or else physical action cannot occur. Thus, a differential occurrence (sovereign freedom), must occur BEFORE one can utilize its causal efficacy in order to perform “physical” actions that can form and reshape one’s character development. However, in the first quote, character development is at first up to us; it is within our power to form our character by means of our effective volition. One is responsible for the formation of his character. Yet, in that quote, there is no implication of sovereign freedom. In other words, Epicurus implies that, on the one hand, our beliefs and our character developments are “first” within our power. Yet, on the

other hand, he implies there must be sovereign freedom before one can affect primary substances (such as actions to form one's character).

Therefore, Epicurus is begging the question in regard to sovereign freedom and emergent mental states (such as character development from rational deliberation), which makes sovereign freedom untenable. Consequently, sovereign freedom does not appear to be feasible. Although Epicurus still succeeds in arguing for effective volition, he fails in putting forth a cogent argument for sovereign freedom.

Thus, Epicurus unintentionally puts forth a compatibilist type of philosophy where there is physical indeterminism but psychological determinism. This philosophy is "inverse compatibilism." However, even if Epicurus can somehow escape the fallacy of begging the question, another problem will arise: the problem of human essence. In the next section, I will elucidate how Epicurus argues that rationality is a result of preconceptions. Yet, if rationality is dependent upon preconceptions, there can be no freedom, since one's level of rationality, or lack thereof, is dependent upon one's environment, which is outside his control. As a result of this problem, Epicurus implies there is some type of innate human rationality. But, this contradicts his staunch empiricism. Thus, this problem, once again, undermines Epicurus' philosophy of sovereign freedom.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF ARGUMENT 3:

Epicurus argues that everything, including rationality and logic, is learned through experience and preconceptions. However, if this is the case, then everything is determined upon one's wide or limited empirical experience. OR, humans have an innate, rational potential. But,

the latter is at odds with Epicurus' empiricism. Thus, the former outcome emphasizes that one's psychological composition is determined.

According to Epicurus, are emergent properties an actualization of a specific type of innate human essence? I believe if the answer is yes, then it is at odds with Epicurus' empiricism. For example, our legs are not made for walking; instead, we learn to walk by using our legs: "For nothing has been engendered in our body in order that we might be able to use it. It is the fact of its being engendered that creates its use. Seeing did not exist before the lights of the eyes were engendered, nor was there pleading with words before the tongue was created. Rather, the origin of the tongue came along before speech, ears were created long before sound was heard, and all our limbs, in my view, existed in advance of their use. Therefore they cannot have grown for the sake of their use" LS 13 E (Lucretius 4.823-57). In other words, there do not exist physical (or mental) functions that are innate or teleological; these functions, instead, are learned or acquired through empirical experience; Long and Sedley concisely elucidate this concept: "The function of natural organs themselves cannot have been similarly preconceived in advance of the organs' existence" (LS 64). As these quotes reveal, innate human essence, or teleological functions, seem at odds with Epicurus' empiricism. Thus, in regard to emergent mental properties, "they cannot have grown for the sake of their use." They are not innate; they are learned.

This is the next question that arises: Are sense-impressions active or passive? In other words, do our senses receive external data from the environment without our explicit consent? Or do we actively engage in a manner in which we are consenting to the perception of external stimuli? Is it passive or dynamic? Although there are various interpretations, Julia Annas' description is the most accurate in terms of the extant texts: "All our knowledge comes through

the senses, and the mind is totally passive, at least in so far as it merely collects and maintains the true reports of the senses, and does not contribute error. Thus life and mind have to be accounted for in terms that can be traced to our encounters with experience” (Annas 84). I believe this interpretation is accurate since it mirrors the extant texts: “All sensation, he [Epicurus] says, is irrational and does not accommodate memory” LS 16 B (Diogenes Laertius 10.31-2). If sensation is irrational, it appears that one’s mind is not actively or rationally involved in receiving external data. Furthermore, if the senses do not accommodate memory, sense-impressions appear to be passive. Furthermore, since all reason depends upon the senses (and corresponding preconceptions), one can not actively and rationally engage in acquiring sense impression, since active rationally is an effect, and thus cannot be equated with the cause.

Subsequently, are people responsible for their false preconceptions, or are these preconceptions, and their consequent effects – such as rational deliberation, and self-formation of character – determined upon one’s empirical experiences? Epicurus attempts to argue that false beliefs arise from false preconceptions. Our preconceptions are either inaccurate formations based on sense impressions, or accurate formations based on our sense impression: “Of opinions, then, according to Epicurus, some are true, some false” LS 18 A (Sextus Empiricus 7.211-16). Furthermore, Epicurus argues that true and false preconceptions are based upon our rational analyses (connections in our mind), and therefore, implies that we are responsible for the true or false beliefs we form in our mind. For, if preconceptions give rise to rational deliberation, then we must be responsible for our beliefs and corresponding actions. However, a problem arises: Our rational deliberation (an emergent mental state) only emerges through preconceptions, themselves. In other words, how can one be responsible for their accurate or inaccurate preconceptions, if rationality itself is a result of preconceptions? Meaning, if there is no innate

human essence, then humans learn rationality. But, rationality cannot be learned until someone has the preconception of cause and effect, for example. Since, one's rationality is dependent upon preconceptions, and since preconceptions can ONLY be formed on one's limited or wide experience of the world, then one's preconceptions, and thus one's rational deliberation, is dependent on the amount of cause and effect, for example, that someone has experienced in the world. Take the example of someone locked in a closet his whole life. He will most likely be unable to form preconceptions (such as advanced logic), since he does not have enough empirical experience of cause and effect to form such a concept: "Further, one must suppose that [human] nature was taught a large number of different lessons just by the facts themselves, and compelled [by them]; and that reasoning later made precise what was handed over to it [by nature] and made additional discoveries- more quickly among some peoples, and more slowly among others and in some periods of time <making greater advances> and in others smaller ones" Inwood & Gerson 16 (Epicurus 10.75). Epicurus realized that "reasoning later made precise what was handed over to it [by nature] and made additional discoveries". In other words, rational deliberation is an emergent property that happens at a certain time; and this time comes "later". It emerges after one has received external stimuli "by nature"; "reasoning later" emerges after one has enough empirical experiences in the world to understand cause and effect.

However, as is evident, some people can be more or less rational than others. In other words, if there is no innate rational essence, at what point in a person's empirical experience does he become rational? Does he become rational when he perceives one instance of cause and effect? Does he become rational when he perceives a million instances of logic? These questions emphasize the point that one's rational capacity is determined upon the environment. I'm sure Epicurus would agree that most or all humans will have emergent rationality at a certain point

(whatever that point may be). Yet, if he holds to his staunch empiricism, and thus holds to the consequence that there is no innate human rationality, he is forced to admit that one's emergent rationality is completely dependent on the environment, since one's rational capacity is completely dependent upon one's limited or wide experiences in the world.

In other words, one's preconceptions, and thus one's emergent properties (such as rational deliberation), are determined by the amount of empirical sense-data one has in his lifetime. In rare cases, for instances, one may have exceptionally limited experience in the world, and thus he cannot acquire adequate rationality; consequently he cannot be responsible for forming false preconceptions, since he does not understand how to form accurate preconceptions. His preconceptions, regardless of whether they are true or false, are determined by his experiences in the world. Thus, the effects of preconceptions (such as rational deliberation and character formation, or the lack thereof), are determined by preconceptions that are determined upon sense-impressions. And, thus one's psychological composition, and his consequent choices and actions, are determined and not ultimately up to him. Thus, sovereign freedom appears to be untenable. The following outline emphasizes this point:

1. Sovereign freedom requires emergent properties (such as rational deliberation)
2. Rational deliberation is determined from preconceptions
3. Preconceptions are determined from one's experiences in the world.
4. Sovereign freedom is determined.
5. There is no sovereign freedom.

Therefore, in summary, even if Epicurus can escape argument 1. (that emergent properties must be determined), he will inevitably be stuck with argument 2. (begging the question). And if, for the sake of argument, Epicurus can escape this fallacy (such as denying that rationality is

based upon preconceptions), he will have to admit 3. (that humans have an innate rational essence). But, this argument would undermine his epistemological method, and therefore, Epicurus would not accept this. And, since begging the question is unacceptable to most philosophers, he is left with the conclusion that emergent properties, and thus one's sovereign freedom, is determined. And, this proves that there cannot be sovereign freedom. However, Epicurus still succeeds in arguing for effective volition, and I believe this is compatible with his concept of moral responsibility. Thus, I will show how this is the case and, consequently, show that Epicurus puts forth the philosophy of inverse compatibilism. However, before I do this, I will see if any objections to my arguments can salvage Epicurus' arguments for sovereign freedom.

Chapter 4

OBJECTION 1: THE SEED OBJECTION:

Is it fair to say that Epicurus does not allow ANY type of innate human rationality? In other words, does Epicurus allow for some type of human essence, like the Stoics, in which one must actualize or mature their rational potential? Aetius states: "When a man is born, the Stoics say, he has the commanding part of his soul like a sheet of paper ready for writing upon. On this he inscribes each one of his conceptions. The first method of inscription is through the senses. For by perceiving something, e.g. white, they have a memory of it when it has departed. And when many memories of a similar kind have occurred, we then say we have experience. For the plurality of similar impressions is experience. Some conceptions arise naturally in the aforesaid

ways and undesignedly, others through our own instruction and attention. The latter are called ‘conceptions’ only, the former are called ‘preconceptions’ as well. Reason, for which we are called rational, is said to be completed from our preconceptions during our first seven years” LS 39 E (Aetius 4.11.1-4). There are two main differences between the Stoic conception of rationality and Epicurus’ conception of rationality. Firstly, Aetius states that we are born with innate rationality; we have a sheet of paper ready to be written upon. Epicurus, on the other hand, denies that humans have an innate rationality. Secondly, the Stoics differentiate between conceptions and preconceptions. Conceptions are an active and rational engagement with the world, with our “own instructions and attentions.” Although there are passive impressions (preconceptions), we have an innate rational capacity to engage with external impressions in a dynamical manner. The Stoic philosophy that we actively engage with the environment in a dynamical manner is in contrast with Epicurus’ stance that the reception of external stimuli is passive.

Therefore, this difference between Stoics and Epicureans is the fact that there is an innate rational essence in the case of Stoicism, and apparently none in the case of Epicureanism. However, is it possible that Epicurus argues for an innate rational essence as well, albeit less explicitly? It does seem possible that Epicurus argues for this: “From the very outset we always have seeds directing us some towards these, some towards those, some towards these *and* those, actions and thoughts and characters, in greater and smaller numbers” LS 20 C (Epicurus 34.26-30). This evidence seems to support a concept similar to the Stoics: humans have innate dispositions. In other words, we are not born without dispositions, but have seeds directing us in a specific way. Therefore, does this objection work? Does Epicurus succeed in defending himself

against my third argument (that preconceptions and rationality are determined upon the environment)? No, he does not.

REPLY:

The reason this objection does not succeed is that Epicurus' 'seeds' are not an innate type of rationality. They are a disposition towards 'something.' In this passage, humans' dispositions are most likely not a rational potential; the wording is too vague to warrant this interpretation. Furthermore, if these seeds were truly a potential for actualizing rationality, like the Stoics hold, then how can some people have rational seeds towards one thing, while other people have rational seeds towards other things? It is not a potential slate that must be actualized; it is an individual and varying disposition one is born with "from the very outset." A person could be born with a disposition towards anger (by having more fiery atoms), for instance. One's seeds are not an open-ended type of potential rationality that can be actualized, but are determinate, character dispositions one is born with. Therefore, even if we grant Epicurus the fact that one has innate dispositions, one's emergent properties (such as rational deliberation) are still determined upon the environment. It just would have another partial (yet determined) cause: innate dispositions. Either way, though, one's preconceptions that give rise to one's emergent properties, and eventually sovereign freedom, is still determined upon the environment (or the environment AND one's seeds). Therefore, this objection does not change anything.

OBJECTION 2 –THE SIMULTANEOUS OBJECTION:

I previously argued that Epicurus begs the question in regard to emergent properties and sovereign freedom. It seems that Epicurus wants to argue for the existence of sovereign freedom before and after mental properties emerge; rationality and character development appear to be both a cause and effect of sovereign freedom. However, is it possible that Epicurus imagines some type of simultaneous emergence? In other words, could character development (based upon one's rationality), be an emergent property that is simultaneous with the emergence of sovereign freedom? Instead of a transitive type of causation, perhaps the emergence of rational deliberation and self-formation of character could be simultaneous with the emergence of sovereign freedom. In order to argue for this, Epicurus would have to admit that the simultaneous emergence of emergent properties and sovereign freedom depend upon "effective volition." For example, if one can act according to his desires to form his own character, his rational deliberation and his sovereign freedom would emerge at the same time. For example: "We all share a preconception of our own agency as that which is responsible for our behaviour..." (LS 108). In this quote, preconceptions of agency, in conjunction with our understanding of character formation, appear to be simultaneous (or linked) mental properties. For example, I can have the emergent mental property of awareness on the one hand. And, I can have the emergent mental property of character formation (or rational deliberation) on the other hand. So, perhaps sovereign freedom and emergent properties could go hand in hand, as well. One emergent property could necessitate sovereign freedom, or vice versa. Perhaps simultaneous emergence is like linked genes that go together. If this is the case, then perhaps sovereign freedom is linked with rational deliberation and self-formation of character. This appears to be a good objection, but does it suffice for salvaging sovereign freedom?

REPLY:

This is a very good objection against my assertion that Epicurus begs the question in regard to emergent properties and sovereign freedom. However, there is still one main problem: if emergent properties do not directly cause sovereign freedom, but emerge simultaneously with it, then they are dependent upon effective volition. And, if they are dependent upon effective volition, then one's emergent properties and sovereign freedom will be determined upon the conditions of effective volition: one's seeds and one's environmental influences. In other words, if the simultaneous objection holds, then there doesn't seem to be another condition that separates animals from humans. One's supposed simultaneous emergence would be determined by one's seeds and environment. And, therefore, it seems that one's mental states and sovereign freedom are determined; and this would be evidence against sovereign freedom.

Thus, inverse compatibilism seems to be the only adequate answer. However, Annas states that SOME animals have the ability to act in a way that is more rational than effective agency, for example; the following quote confirms this possibility: "But, many naturally capable of achieving these and those results [right choices and actions without necessity] fail to achieve them, because of themselves, not because of one and the same responsibility of the atoms and themselves. And with these we especially do battle, and rebuke them, hating them for a disposition which follows their disordered congenital nature as we do with the whole range of animals" LS 20 B (Epicurus 34.21-2). It appears that Epicurus holds some animals morally responsible for their lack of correct behavior, while still implying that the atomic swerve is the only necessary condition for these animals. Perhaps the atomic swerve is sufficient to explain humans and intelligent animals' "sovereign freedom." However I would still argue that if the

atomic swerve is sufficient, then we are no different from rational animals, since without the ability to form our characters and establish responsibility that proceeds from ourselves, humans would still be dependent upon effective volition, and not sovereign freedom. And, I do not think Epicurus would accept the fact that we have the same type of freedom as rational animals, like elephants. Furthermore, our effective volition implies that our actions would still be determined solely upon our empirical experiences (or our empirical experiences in conjunction with our “innate” seeds). If this is the case, then my argument still stands because, like animals, we would only have effective volition, and thus our sovereign freedom would still be determined. And, thus we cannot have sovereign freedom. Therefore, Epicurus’ arguments for sovereign freedom are still untenable and, consequently, Epicurus unintentionally puts forth the philosophy of inverse compatibilism, in which he combines physical indeterminism with psychological determinism.

OBJECTION 3: A FRANKFURT-STYLE OBJECTION:

Another objection is this: just because one cannot do otherwise than what he does, it does not mean he is not free; even if there is only one possible action, he can still be free in his choice to perform that action. However, before Harry Frankfurt came along, this objection appeared problematic, since the ability to do otherwise seemed to be a necessary condition for free will. In other words, how can one be responsible for his action if he does not have alternate possibilities to choose from? This principle – the principle of alternate possibilities (PAP) – was often a standard by which to judge whether or not an action was free. This principle states that one’s action is free only if it was possible that the agent could have acted differently than he did: “A

person is morally responsible for performing a given act A only if he could have acted otherwise” (Widerker 177). However, Frankfurt’s essays challenged PAP by revealing situations in which one does not have alternate possibilities, but is still free and morally responsible for his actions. One of these situations is this: it is Election Day, and Jones has put off his decision of whether to vote for Gore or Bush. After due deliberation, he decides to vote for Gore, and does so by checking the ballot. During deliberation, however, and unbeknownst to Jones, there is a Democratic neurosurgeon named Black who is monitoring Jones’ brain activities. Before Election Day, Black had implanted a mind-control device into Jones brain; furthermore, Black wants Jones to vote for Gore. If Jones chooses to vote for Gore, the device will remain dormant. But, if Jones is about to choose Bush as his candidate, Black activates the device in Jones’ brain, and thereby forces Jones to vote for Gore. The device works by detecting neurological signs in Jones’ brain. For example, Jones’ brain will show a certain neuronal sign at T1 which indicates what candidate Jones will choose at T2 to vote for at T3. If at T1, the neural sign indicates that Jones will vote for Gore, the device remains dormant. But, if Jones shows a neural sign at T1 to choose at T2 to check the ballot for Bush at T3, Black will activate the device so that Jones will choose at T2 to check the ballot for Gore at T3. If Jones is ready to vote for Bush, the device activates and forces him to vote for Gore instead. In other words, Jones does not have alternate possibilities. Yet, if he votes for Gore (when Black does not intervene), it appears that Jones is free and morally responsible for his action: “Given that the device plays no role in Jones’s deliberations and act of voting, it seems to me that Jones acts freely and is morally responsible for voting for Gore” (Fischer 192). The argument goes as follows:

- 1) If psychological determinism is true, one does not have alternate possibilities
- 2) Jones does not have alternate possibilities

- 3) Jones desires to vote for Gore
- 4) Jones chooses to vote for Gore (and does so)
- 5) Jones' action aligns with his desires
- 6) If Jones' action aligns with his desires, he is free and morally responsible for his actions
- 7) Therefore, if psychological determinism is true, Jones is still free and morally responsible for his actions

If a human being acts according to his desires, he has effective volition - like Jones.

However, as this example shows, even if one is psychologically determined to perform the action he desires, and does not have alternate possibilities, he can still, nonetheless, be "free" (in the sense of effective volition) and still be held morally responsible. I completely agree with Frankfurt's example. Yet, this does not change anything.

REPLY:

The reason why this objection does not salvage Epicurus' problems of sovereign freedom is because even if one is free to do as he wishes, he is still determined in his psychological composition and his corresponding action(s). In other words, this argument accurately depicts the necessary outcome of Epicurus' insufficient arguments for sovereign freedom: that one only has effective volition. Jones is determined in his psychological disposition at the time of action, yet he is still "free" (in the sense of effective volition) to perform his action. Just like if one is determined by his environment (and thus his emergent properties), there is only one outcome; yet that outcome is nonetheless what the agent chooses because of his immediate desire. And he acts

accordingly. But, sovereign freedom requires self-formation of character, and this cannot happen until emergent properties occur; yet, emergent properties are determined as well. Therefore, this objection does not help Epicurus' argument for sovereign freedom. Interestingly though, this is a somewhat accurate parallel of what Epicurus' argument espouses: there is effective volition; there is moral responsibility; but there is no sovereign freedom.

Chapter 5

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY:

However, if one's psychological composition, and corresponding choices and actions are determined, how can one be held morally responsible? It depends upon the definition of moral responsibility. According to Epicurus, morality is not a Kantian concept, where an action is right or wrong in and of itself. According to Kant, for instance, lying is wrong in all cases and in all situations. It is an absolutist concept with no exceptions; even if a murderer asks you where his intended victim resides, you have a duty not to lie: "Everyone must grant that a law, if it is to hold morally, that is, as a ground of an obligation, must carry with it absolute necessity; that, for example, the command 'thou shalt not lie' does not hold only for human beings, as if other rational beings did not have to heed it, and so with all other moral laws properly so called..." Cahn & Markie (Kant 271). In other words, a moral law is an objective law that applies to every creature; it is not human dependent, but *a priori*. An action is moral or immoral in and of itself, without consideration of the consequences. On the contrary, Epicurus holds that the morality of an action is not determined by the act in and of itself, but by the effects that ensue. In other

words, an act is right in accordance with the amount of happiness it brings, and wrong in accordance with the amount of pain it brings. However, Epicurus' calculus of pleasure and pain is not a Bentham-type of utilitarianism where an "immoral" action (from a Kantian perspective) MUST be done in order to bring about the greater good: such as torturing a person to gain information that will save lives. Epicurus' type of hedonism is based upon the absence of pain, not in the perpetuation of kinetic pleasures; an action is good if it eliminates pain, and an action is bad if it increases pain. And, since one cannot usually predict the outcome of the future, one must act in way that brings about *ataraxia* (freedom from mental disturbance) to oneself.

Epicurus holds that the greatest good is pleasure, and the greatest evil is pain: "For we recognize the good which is primary and congenital; from it we begin every choice and avoidance, and we come back to it, using the feeling as a yardstick for judging every good thing...So when we say that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of the dissipated and those that consist in having a good time, as some out of ignorance and disagreement or refusal to understand suppose we do, but freedom from pain in the body and from disturbance in the soul" LS 21 B (Epicurus 127-32). Thus, in Epicurus' hedonism, the good is defined as the absence of pain, and which all things are means to this end. Kinetic pleasures (such as those as eating steak instead of bread) may or may not add to one's happiness, but it is not necessary or desirable in and of itself. A bodily and mental contentment is the type of happiness that Epicurus espouses. One should encourage this type of hedonistic philosophy towards his fellow man; or, at the very least, not infringe upon one's ability to achieve pleasure: "So long as you do not break the laws or disturb proper and established conventions or distress any of your neighbours or ravage your body or squander the necessities of life, act upon your inclinations in any way you like" LS 21 G (Epicurus 51). Thus, as long as one does not cause instability to society, or cause uncertainty and

anxiety towards oneself and others, one should pursue pleasure. This negative type of hedonism is the end in which everything else are means. Therefore, an action that leads to this goal is morally right, and an action which does not lead to this goal is morally wrong. This is Epicurus' standard of morality. But, how does this relate to inverse compatibilism?

If a wrong action is defined not by the action itself, but by the consequence of an action, then regardless of whether one has sovereign freedom or only effective volition, the consequence of an action will remain the same, and thus moral responsibility can remain. Although praising and blaming one for his actions appear slightly at odds with effective volition, Epicurus nonetheless holds that we should hold humans, and some animals, morally responsible, nonetheless. In other words, human beings are the imminent cause of pleasure or pain, and thus one's effective volition gives rise to the action that causes pleasure or pain. And, this action is a wrong action, and thus there must be responsibility in such a way as to eliminate these types of painful actions. Even if one is determined in killing someone, for example, this action causes physical pain to someone else. Thus, he should be held responsible for his action (such as being locked up), because this "retribution" is a means towards greater pleasure for others – since he will not kill others anymore. Although Epicurus calls this moral responsibility, I believe it is more accurate to call it practical responsibility, since the agent is determined to do what he does by his psychological composition. For example, if a murderer kills someone, he is determined to do so; nonetheless the *action* brings about more pain and, because he is the immediate cause of this action, he must be held responsible.

Therefore, inverse compatibilism is compatible with moral (or practical) responsibility. Although Epicurus attempts to establish sovereign freedom, he succeeds only in establishing effective volition, and thus his arguments are reduced to inverse compatibilism. However, I do

not believe this would change many, or any, of Epicurus' ethical points. His ethical standard still remains intact, and I believe that Epicurus may even have accepted inverse compatibilism if he realized that his arguments for sovereign freedom were untenable.

Chapter 6

ARISTOTLE:

Aristotle can aid in elucidating these issues. He declares that involuntary actions are those actions that 1. Are forced by external things in which the agent contributes nothing, and 2. Actions cause by ignorance of particulars: "It is sometimes hard, however, to judge what <goods> should be chosen at the price of what <evils>, and what <evils> should be endured at the price of what <goods>. And, it is even harder to abide by our judgment, since the results we expect <when we endure> are usually painful, and the actions we are compelled <to endure, when we choose> are usually shameful. That is why those who have been compelled or not compelled receive praise or blame" Irwin & Fine 229 (Aristotle III. 1110a. 30-35). Thus, regardless of whether one receives praise or blame, his action is still involuntary; because of one's ignorance of the particulars involved, one does not act voluntarily: "Everything caused by ignorance is nonvoluntary, but what is involuntary also causes pain and regret" IF 230 (Aristotle III. 1110b 1-5). This mirrors Epicurus' practical responsibility to some extent. Since many human beings have limited empirical experiences, they often are ignorant of particular circumstances. But, like Aristotle accurately points out, actions caused by ignorance can still cause pleasure or pain and, consequently, one still receives praise or blame. Epicurus' conception

of practical responsibility is similar in that one's action can still cause pains regardless of one's intentions or expectations of a given action. Even if one is psychologically determined to perform a given action, he will still receive blame if that action causes pain. Therefore, by Epicurus' standard of moral responsibility, one must still be held responsible for his actions, since his effective volition is the imminent cause of his actions.

DAVID HUME:

Before I conclude, I would like to elucidate the similarities between Epicurus' dilemmas (in regard to sovereign freedom), and David Hume's conception of compatibilism. It is important to see how the free will debate has evolved, and to comprehend the similarities between ancient and modern theories of free will. Firstly, Hume argues that libertarianism is untenable. If one's actions are not causally determined, then one's actions appear to be up to luck; one's actions would be spontaneous: "[A] libertarian view holds that it is a necessary condition of moral responsibility that the act was *not* necessitated or caused. But such a freedom, claims Hume, is nothing on which moral responsibility could rest. If one removes necessity from actions, then one thereby removes causes as well, and this 'is the very same thing with chance' ..." Russel I (Hume, EU, 8.25/96). Furthermore, "It seems clear that we cannot hold someone responsible for an action which just happened, an action he contributed nothing to. Where actions 'proceed not from some cause in the character and disposition of the person who performed them', says Hume, 'they can neither redound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil'" Russel III (Hume, EU, 8.29/98). In other words, if one's actions are not determined by antecedent causes, then one's actions will be up to chance; there would be no causal connection between one's character

and his actions. There would be no reason for a person to perform one action as opposed to another, since there would be no causal influence upon one's actions. This is similar to Epicurus' dilemma of sovereign freedom. If there is physical indeterminacy in the world, then one's actions could arise spontaneously without any influence from one's character or desires. One could be moved whatever which way by the random motion of atoms. Robert Kane elucidates this point well: "If an action is *undetermined* at a time t , then its happening rather than not happening at t would be a matter of chance or luck, and so it could not be a *free* and *responsible* action" (Kane 299). So, if Epicurus denies that one's sovereign freedom is causally (in this case, psychologically) determined, then it appears that one's supposedly free actions are up to chance, and thus moral responsibility cannot be attributed to him.

Secondly, if one's actions are casually determined, then it would appear that one is not the original source of his actions. His actions would be determined upon antecedent causes. Is this a second dilemma for moral responsibility? Not necessarily. According to Hume, this is a problem if determinism is understood as *external* necessity; if one is determined by antecedent external causes, such as an evil genius forcing an agent to perform a certain action against the agent's desire, the agent is not free in any sense. Hume writes: "For as actions are objects of our moral sentiment, so far only as they are indications of the internal character, passions, and affections; it is impossible that they can give rise either to praise or blame, where they proceed not from these principles, but are derived altogether from external violence" Russel III (Hume, EU, 8.31/99). However, as long as there is no external necessity, Hume argues, then one's choices and actions are immanently caused by the agent, and thus are according to the agent's desires. Although one is psychologically determined in his actions, there is nonetheless a causal connection between one's character and his consequent actions. And, since the agent is the cause

of his own choices and actions, causal determinism is actually NECESSARY for responsibility: “Therefore, it is an (empirical) *psychological* fact that without necessity, morality would be *impossible*” (Russel III). Internal necessity is necessary for moral responsibility. If an agent’s actions are causally connected to his character, then he will perform the action that is in accordance with his immediate desire. This can be viewed as a type of effective volition. One can act according to his desires, but he is, nonetheless, determined to perform that action. Cicero elucidates this important distinction between external and internal causes: “[W]hen we say that the mind moves ‘without a cause’ we mean without an external antecedent cause, not entirely without a cause” LS 20 E (Cicero 21-5). The cause is one’s mental composition. And, in the case of Epicurus’ inverse compatibilism, one’s mental composition, and his corresponding choices and actions, must be determinate.

Thus, this is Epicurus’ fork: on the one hand, if one’s actions do not have antecedent causes, then they are random. On the other hand, if one’s choices and actions are psychologically determined, then one does not have sovereign freedom. To escape this double dilemma, Epicurus like Hume, espouses a compatibilist philosophy in which effective volition is compatible with moral responsibility. Epicurus, however, puts forth the unique philosophy of inverse compatibilism, which combines physical indeterminacy with psychological determinism. Consequently, Epicurus can still defend moral responsibility without sovereign freedom.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION:

Epicurus' account of sovereign freedom fails on three levels: 1. Emergent properties must be determinate, 2. Epicurus begs the question if he denies 1, 3. Epicurus must admit human beings have an innate rational essence if he wishes to adhere to sovereign freedom; but this is opposed to his staunch empiricism. Moreover, no philosopher will accept the fallacy of begging the question. Therefore, the only way to save sovereign freedom is to admit it is determined; but this, it turn, necessitates that only effective volition, and not sovereign freedom, is tenable. Thus Epicurus puts forth the philosophical theory of inverse compatibilism.

Consequently, however, psychological determinism provides Epicurus with a stronger foundation for moral responsibility, since one's choices and actions are not up to chance; they are immanently caused by the agent, and are in accordance with the agent's desires.

Lastly, although Schopenhauer does not assume physical indeterminism, a passage from his award-winning essay nonetheless captures the theme of my dissertation: "I am free, if I can *do what I will*," and the freedom is already decided by this 'what I will.' But now since we are asking about the freedom of *willing* itself, this question should accordingly be expressed as follows: 'Can you also *will* what you will?'" (Schopenhauer 7). In regard to Epicurus' "sovereign freedom," the answer is a resounding no.

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