

Episode Eighty - The Development of Metallurgy And the Art of War

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Welcome to Episode Eighty of Lucretius Today.

I am your host Cassius, and together with my panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book, "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

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In this Episode 80 we will read approximately Latin lines 1226-1341 of Book Five. We will talk in this episode about the development of the art of war.

Now let's join Don reading today's text.

(Martin was scheduled but due to technical difficulties Don stepped in.)

Munro Notes- 1226 - 1341

1226-1240: Nay who does not dread the thunder, lest it be a presage of divine vengeance I think too of generals and armies whelmed in the sea; of all men's glories dashed down to the dust by some hidden power: no wonder that men abase themselves before the gods.

1241-1280: the metals were discovered through the burning of woods which baked the earth and caused the ore to run ; with these they made arms and tools: copper at first was rated more highly than useless gold and silver; now it is the contrary; thus things in turn flourish and decay.

1281-1307: for arms men used at first hands nails teeth clubs, then fire, then copper or brass, at last iron; horses next, then chariots, then elephants were employed in war, strife begetting one horror after another.

1308-1349: bulls boars and lions too were tried in war; but they often turned upon their owners, as elephants are sometimes seen to do now: probably they were employed by the weaker side only in despair.

Browne 1743

[1226] And when the raging force of a violent storm upon the sea tosses the admiral of a fleet over the waves, with all his elephants and his stout legions about him, does not he fall to praying to the gods for pity? And, trembling upon his knees, begs a peace of the winds, and a prosperous gale? In vain! For he is often snatched up by the violence of the hurricane, and carried with all his devotion to the Stygian ferry. With such contempt does some hidden power continually trample upon human greatness, it treads with scorn upon the gaudy rods and the cruel axes, those ensigns of empire, and makes a sport with them.

[1236] And then, when the whole Earth reels under our feet, and the cities are shaken, and tumble about us, or at least threaten to fall, what wonder if men at such a time despise their own weak selves, and ascribe infinite power and irresistible force to the gods, by which they direct and govern the world?

[1241] And last of all brass, and gold, and iron were discovered, and the value of silver, and the weight of lead. For when the whole forests upon the high hills were consumed by fire, whether it came by lightning from the heavens or men carried on a war among themselves in the woods, and set them in a blaze to terrify their enemies; or whether, induced by the goodness of the soil, they resolved to enlarge their fruitful fields and make pastures for their cattle; or whether it was to destroy the wild beasts and enrich themselves with their spoils (for the first way of taking the game was by pitfalls, and fire before they surrounded the brakes with nets, or hunted with dogs); however it was, or whatever was the cause of this raging fire, that burnt up the woods to the very roots with frightful noise, and set the Earth a boiling with its heat - Then streams of silver and gold, of brass and lead, flowed out of the burning veins into hollow places of the Earth that were proper for them. And when the metal grew hard, and men observed it looking beautifully and shining bright upon the ground, they were charmed with its gay and sparkling luster, and dug it up. And finding that it received the exact shape of the hollow molds in which it lay, they concluded, when it was melted by the heat, it would run into any form and figure they pleased, and they might draw it into a sharp point or a fine edge, and make themselves tools to cut down the woods, to smooth, to square, and to plane timber, to pierce, to hollow, and to bore. These instruments they attempted to make of silver and gold, no less, than by powerful blows to form the stronger brass; but in vain! For the soft quality of those metals gave way, and could not bear the force and violence of the stroke; and so brass was in most value, and gold was neglected, as a blunt useless metal that would not hold an edge. But now brass is in no esteem, and gold succeeds to all its honors. And thus a course of flowing time changes the dignity of things. What was highly prized is now treated with contempt, and what was despised comes into its place, and is every day more eagerly pursued, is cried up with the greatest applause, and receives the respect and admiration of mankind.

[1281] And now, my Memmius, you may easily, of yourself, perceive by what means the force of iron was discovered. The first weapons were hands, and nails, and teeth, and stones, and the broken boughs of trees; and then they learned to fight with fire and flame, and afterwards was the strength of iron and brass found out. But the use of brass was known before the benefit of iron was understood, for it was a metal more easy to work, and in greater plenty. With brazen shares they ploughed the ground, with arms of brass they carried on the rage of war, and dealt

deep wounds about, and seized upon their neighbors cattle and their fields, for everything naked and unarmed was easily forced to give way. But the iron sword came gradually into use, and instruments of brass were laid aside with contempt. And now they began to plough with iron, and with weapons of iron to engage in the doubtful events of war.

[1297] And men first learned to mount the horse, with their left hand to manage the reins, and they fought with their right, before they tried the dangers of war in a chariot drawn by two. They first used a chariot with a pair, and then they harnessed four, before they knew how to engage in chariots armed with scythes. The Carthaginians taught the Libyan elephants, with their serpentine proboscis and towers upon their backs, to bear the smart of wounds, and to disorder the embattled ranks of the enemy. And thus the rage of discord found out one art of slaughter after another, as the dreadful scourges of mankind, and increased the terrors of war every day.

[1308] They tried the fury of bulls in their battles, and drove boars against their cruel enemies. The Parthians placed roaring lions before their ranks, with their armed keepers, and fierce leaders, to govern their rage and hold them in chains. In vain! For growing hot with the mixed blood they had tasted, they broke in their fury through the troops of friends and enemies without distinction, shaking their dreadful manes on every side. Nor could the horsemen cool their frightened horses, distracted with the roaring of the beasts, or turn them with reins against the foe. The lions with rage sprung out, and threw their bodies every way, and flew upon the faces that they met. Others they suddenly fell on behind, and clasped with their paws, and with sore wounds overcome, they flung them to the ground, and held them down with their strong teeth and with their crooked claws. The bulls would toss the boars and crush them with their feet, and with their horns would gore the sides and bellies of the horses, and in their rage bear them to the earth. The bears with their strong teeth destroyed their friends (and cruelly stained the darts unbroken, with their master's blood, the darts that broke upon themselves were stained with their own) and brought confused ruin upon man and horse; for though the horse, by leaping aside, would strive to fly the cruel biting of their teeth, or, rearing up, pawed with their feet the yielding air; yet all in vain! You would see them, hamstrung by the beasts, fall down and with their heavy weight would shake the ground. These creatures therefore that men saw were tame at home, now brought into the war grew mad with wounds, with noise, with flying, with terror, and the tumult of the battle; nor could they by any means be brought back or cooled again, but every kind flew wildly over the plains; as when a bull, not rightly struck by the priest's sacrificing axe, breaks loose, after much mischief done to all about him.

[1341] These were the first arts of war; yet I cannot believe but the first inventors must consider and foresee the common evils and sad calamities they must occasion. This, it is safer to say, was the case in general in some of all the worlds that were created in various manners, than to be particular and fix it upon one only. But they made use of beasts in their wars not so much from a hope of victory as to annoy and torment their enemies; being themselves sure to die because they distrusted their numbers and were unskilled in the use of arms.

Munro 1886

[1226] When too the utmost fury of the headstrong wind passes over the sea and sweeps over its waters the commander of a fleet together with his mighty legions and elephants, does he not draw near with vows to seek the mercy of the gods and ask in prayer with fear and trembling a lull in the winds and propitious gales; but all in vain, since often caught up in the furious hurricane he is borne nonetheless to the shoals of death? So constantly does some hidden power trample on human grandeur and is seen to tread under its heel and make sport for itself of the renowned rods and cruel axes.

[1236] Again, when the whole earth rocks under their feet and towns tumble with the shock or doubtfully threaten to fall, what wonder that mortal men abase themselves and make over to the gods in things hereon earth high prerogatives and marvelous powers, sufficient to govern all things?

[1241] To proceed, copper and gold and iron were discovered and at the same time weighty silver and the substance of lead, when fire with its heat had burnt up vast forests on the great hills, either by a discharge of heaven's lightning, or else because men waging with one another a forest-war had carried fire among the enemy in order to strike terror, or because drawn on by the goodness of the soil they would wish to clear rich fields and bring the country into pasture, or else to destroy wild beasts and enrich themselves with the booty; for hunting with the pitfall and with fire came into use before the practice of enclosing the lawn with toils and stirring it with dogs. Whatever the fact is, from whatever cause the heat of flame had swallowed up the forests with a frightful crackling from their very roots and had thoroughly baked the earth with fire, there would run from the boiling veins and collect into the hollows of the ground a stream of silver and gold, as well as of copper and lead. And when they saw these afterwards cool into lumps and glitter on the earth with a brilliant gleam, they would lift them up attracted by the bright and polished luster, and they would see them to be molded in a shape the same as the outline of the cavities in which each lay. Then it would strike them that these might be melted by heat and cast in any form or shape soever, and might by hammering out be brought to tapering points of any degree of sharpness and fineness, so as to furnish them with tools and enable them to cut the forests and hew timber and plane smooth the planks, and also to drill and pierce and bore. And they would set about these works just as much with silver and gold at first as with the overpowering strength of stout copper, but in vain, since their force would fail and give way and not be able like copper to stand the severe strain. At that time copper was in higher esteem and gold would lie neglected on account of its uselessness, with its dull blunted edge: now copper lies neglected, gold has mounted up to the highest place of honor. Thus time as it goes round changes the seasons of things. That which was in esteem falls at length into utter disrepute; and then another thing mounts up and issues out of its degraded state and every day is more and more coveted and blossoms forth high in honor when discovered and is in marvelous repute with men.

[1281] And now, Memmius, it is easy for you to find out by yourself in what way the nature of iron was discovered. Arms of old were hands nails and teeth and stones and boughs broken off

from the forests, and flame and fire, as soon as they had become known. Afterwards the force of iron and copper was discovered; and the use of copper was known before that of iron, as its nature is easier to work and it is found in greater quantity. With copper they would labor the soil of the earth, with copper stir up the billows of war and deal about wide-gaping wounds and seize cattle and lands; for every thing defenseless and unarmed would readily yield to them with arms in hand. Then by slow steps the sword of iron gained ground and the make of the copper sickle became a byword; and with iron they began to plow through the earth's soil, and the struggles of wavering war were rendered equal.

[1297] And the custom of mounting in arms on the back of a horse and guiding him with reins and showing prowess with the right hand is older than that of tempting the risks of war in a two-horsed chariot; and yoking a pair of horses is older than yoking four or mounting in arms scythed chariots. Next the Poeni taught the lucan kine with towered body, hideous of aspect, with snake-like hand, to endure the wounds of war and to disorder the mighty ranks of Mars. Thus sad discord begat one thing after another, to affright nations of men under arms, and every day made some addition to the terrors of war.

[1308] They made trial of bulls too in the service of war and essayed to send savage boars against the enemy. And some sent before them valorous lions with armed trainers and courageous keepers to guide them and to hold them in chains; but in vain, since heated with promiscuous slaughter they would disorder in their rage the troops without distinction, shaking all about the frightful crests upon their heads; and the horsemen were not able to calm the breasts of the horses scared by the roaring and turn them with the bridle upon the enemy. The lionesses with a spring would throw their enraged bodies on all sides and would attack in the face those who met them, and others off their guard they would tear down from behind and twining round them would bring them to the ground overpowered by the wound, fastening on them with firm bite and with hooked claws. The bulls would toss their own friends and trample them under foot, and gore with their horns the flanks and bellies of the horses underneath and turn up the earth with threatening front. The boars too would rend their friends with powerful tusks, in their rage dying with their blood the weapons broken in them, ay dying with their blood the weapons broken in their own bodies; and would put to promiscuous rout horse and foot; for the tame beasts would try to avoid by shying to the side the cruel push of the tusk, or would rear up and paw the winds, all in vain, since you might see them tumble down with their tendons severed and straw the in their heavy fall. Those whom they believed before to have been sufficiently broken in at home, they would see lash themselves into fury in the heat of action from wounds and shouting, flight panic and uproar; and they could not rally any portion of them; for all the different kinds of wild beasts would fly all abroad; just as now the lucan kine when cruelly mangled by the steel fly often all abroad, after inflicting on their friends many cruel sufferings.

[1341] But men chose thus to act not so much in any hope of victory, as from a wish to give the enemy something to rue at the cost of their own lives, when they mistrusted their numbers and were in want of arms.

Bailey 1921

[1226] Or again, when the fiercest force of furious wind at sea sweeps the commander of a fleet over the waters with his strong legions and his elephants, all in like case, does he not seek with vows the peace of the gods, and fearfully crave in prayer a calm from wind and favouring breezes; all in vain, since often when caught in the headstrong hurricane he is borne for all his prayers to the shallow waters of death? So greatly does some secret force grind beneath its heel the greatness of men, and it is seen to tread down and make sport for itself of the glorious rods and relentless axes.

[1236] Again, when the whole earth rocks beneath men's feet, and cities are shaken to their fall or threaten doubtful of their doom, what wonder if the races of mortal men despise themselves and leave room in the world for the mighty power and marvellous strength of the gods, to guide all things?

[1241] For the rest, copper and gold and iron were discovered, and with them the weight of silver and the usefulness of lead, when a fire had burnt down vast forests with its heat on mighty mountains, either when heaven's lightning was hurled upon it, or because waging a forest-war with one another men had carried fire among the foe to rouse panic, or else because allured by the richness of the land they desired to clear the fat fields, and make the countryside into pasture, or else to put the wild beasts to death, and enrich themselves with prey. For hunting with pit and fire arose first before fencing the grove with nets and scaring the beasts with dogs. However that may be, for whatever cause the flaming heat had eaten up the forests from their deep roots with terrible crackling, and had baked the earth with fire, the streams of silver and gold, and likewise of copper and lead, gathered together and trickled from the boiling veins into hollow places in the ground. And when they saw them afterwards hardened and shining on the ground with brilliant hue, they picked them up, charmed by their smooth bright beauty, and saw that they were shaped with outline like that of the several prints of the hollows. Then it came home to them that these metals might be melted by heat, and would run into the form and figure of anything, and indeed might be hammered out and shaped into points and tips, however sharp and fine, so that they might fashion weapons for themselves, and be able to cut down forests and hew timber and plane beams smooth, yea, and to bore and punch and drill holes. And, first of all, they set forth to do this no less with silver and gold than with the resistless strength of stout copper; all in vain, since their power was vanquished and yielded, nor could they like the others endure the cruel strain. For copper was of more value, and gold was despised for its uselessness, so soon blunted with its dull edge. Now copper is despised, gold has risen to the height of honour. So rolling time changes the seasons of things. What was of value, becomes in turn of no worth; and then another thing rises up and leaves its place of scorn, and is sought more and more each day, and when found blossoms into fame, and is of wondrous honour among men.

[1281] Now, in what manner the nature of iron was found, it is easy for you to learn of yourself, Memmius. Their arms of old were hands, nails, and teeth, and stones, and likewise branches torn from the forests, and flame and fires, when once they were known. Thereafter the strength

of iron and bronze was discovered. And the use of bronze was learnt before that of iron, inasmuch as its nature is more tractable, and it is found in greater stores. With bronze they would work the soil of the earth, and with bronze mingle in billowy warfare, and deal wasting wounds and seize upon flocks and fields. For all things naked and unarmed would readily give in to them equipped with arms. Then, little by little, the iron sword made its way, and the form of the bronze sickle was made a thing of scorn, and with iron they began to plough up the soil of earth; and the contests of war, now hovering in doubt, were made equal.

[1297] It was their way to climb armed on to the flanks of a horse, to guide it with reins, and do doughty deeds with the right hand, before they learnt to essay the dangers of war in a two-horsed chariot. And the yoking of two horses came before yoking four, and climbing up armed into chariots set with scythes. Then it was the Poeni who taught the Lucanian kine, with towered body, grim beasts with snaky hands, to bear the wounds of warfare, and work havoc among the hosts of Mars. So did gloomy discord beget one thing after another, to bring panic into the races of men in warfare, and day by day gave increase to the terrors of war.

[1308] They tried bulls, too, in the service of war, and essayed to send savage boars against the foe. And some sent on before them mighty lions with armed trainers and cruel masters, who might be able to control them, and hold them in chains; all in vain, since in the heat of the mellay of slaughter they grew savage, and made havoc of the hosts, both sides alike, tossing everywhere the fearful manes upon their heads, nor could the horsemen soothe the hearts of their horses, alarmed at the roaring, and turn them with their bridles against the foe. The lionesses launched their furious bodies in a leap on every side, and made for the faces of those that came against them, or tore them down in the rear when off their guard, and twining round them hurled them to the ground foredone with the wound, fastening on them with their strong bite and crooked claws. The bulls tossed their own friends and trampled them with their feet, and with their horns gashed the flanks and bellies of the horses underneath, and ploughed up the ground with threatening purpose. And the boars gored their masters with their strong tusks, savagely splashing with their own blood the weapons broken in them, and threw to the ground horsemen and footmen in one heap. For the horses would swerve aside to avoid the fierce onset of a tusk, or rear and beat the air with their feet; all in vain, since you would see them tumble with tendons severed, and strew the ground in their heavy fall. If ever they thought they had been tamed enough at home before the fight, they saw them burst into fury, when it came to conflict, maddened by the wounds, shouting, flying, panic, and confusion, nor could they rally any part of them; for all the diverse kinds of wild beasts would scatter hither and thither; even as now often the Lucanian kine cruelly mangled by the steel, scatter abroad, when they have dealt many deadly deeds to their own friends.

[1341] If indeed they ever acted thus. But scarce can I be brought to believe that, before this dire disaster befell both sides alike, they could not foresee and perceive in mind what would come to pass. And you could more readily maintain that this was done somewhere in the universe, in the diverse worlds fashioned in diverse fashion, than on any one determined earth. But indeed they wished to do it not so much in the hope of victory, as to give the foemen cause to moan, resolved to perish themselves, since they mistrusted their numbers and lacked arms.