

Lucretius On The Development of Language

Post by "Cassius" of October 23, 2019 at 5:35 PM

[Godfrey](#) in my own analysis, I presume it is pretty clear that conceptual reasoning is what occurs when we identify concepts such as "economics" and "socialism" and "capitalism" and talk about socialism and capitalism as involving different perspectives on economics. The key point being that we are clearly manipulating "ideas" that don't really have independent physical existence, but are terms that we have defined. Actually "conceptual reasoning" is probably much broader than that, and probably should be considered to include all kinds of reasoning and logic about anything, even concrete things, because what does reasoning and logic ever work with besides concepts? At any rate, "conceptual reasoning" using "concepts" or "abstractions" is certainly a highly useful tool of human affairs and I would think it is clear that everyone, including Epicurus, agrees that properly used, conceptual reasoning is a wonderful tool for human pleasure and happiness.

As for this discussion of language, someone / anyone points at a flying feathered animal and calls it a "bird" and then afterward in that territory among people who speak the same language flying feathered animals are called birds. Maybe the very disposition to point and make a sound at the same time is anticipated in our nature. But would anyone say that the precise sound made, and word chosen, was anticipated in our nature, or is every word / precise sound totally arbitrary based on local circumstances? Even considering words of emotion, does the word "joy" sound pleasing in some way and the word "hurt" sound painful?

Because ultimate the question is as Nietzsche raises in the excerpt. Is any part of conceptual reasoning, or the assignment and manipulation of words, a result of there being an "essence-like quality of a leaf" or an essence of "honesty" that our nature puts us into contact with. Or is the entire naming and conceptual reasoning process totally a function of our own "arbitrary" choices as to how to name things and manipulate those names? Stated that way it seems pretty clear that the only way that could be correct would be some kind of Platonic theory of ideal forms existing somewhere else, or Aristotelian theory of "essences" residing within the thing being observed, neither of which I gather Epicurus believed to exist. And so is the process described by Lucretius essentially consistent with Nietzsche's excerpt?