

Episode Four - Recap of Opening Sections of Book One

Post by "Cassius" of February 8, 2020 at 6:23 PM

Another aspect of this priority of Nature over reason is manifest in the beginnings of human institutions. Since the sole cause of growth and change in the universe is the ceaseless motion of the atoms and this activity is nonpurposive, it follows that actions invariably precede thought. On this point the judgment of Epicurus is explicit: "Moreover, it must be assumed also that **human nature** by sheer force of circumstances was taught a multitude of lessons of all sorts and compelled to put them into practice, though reason subsequently contributed refinements and additions to these recommendations of hers, in some fields more rapidly, in others more slowly."²⁶ Lucretius in his fifth book enlarged liberally upon this theme: human beings wore skins before they manufactured garments; they lived in caves before they built huts; they employed clubs before they made weapons; they lived dispersed before they organized governments and built cities.²⁷

ire
/er

How the new terrestrial order of nature and the older celestial order operate as points of departure for inferential truth may be illustrated simply in the case of **justice**. For Epicurus the Feelings are the criterion. Injustice hurts and justice promotes happiness. Therefore human beings make a covenant with one another “not to injure or be injured.” Justice is this covenant. It is of Nature. No dialectic is necessary to discover the fact; it is a matter of observation. The sense of justice is innate; it is an Anticipation or Prolepsis existing in advance of experience and anticipating experience. Even certain animals possess it; elephants, for example, the bulls excepted, do not injure one another and they marshal the herd to protect one another against injury from outside.
