

# **Episode 319 - EATAQ 01 - Epicurean Answers To Academic Questions - Is the Key To Happiness Found In Supernatural Causes and Geometry?**

**Post by "Cassius" of January 25, 2026 at 4:19 PM**

Welcome to Episode 319 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at [EpicureanFriends.com](http://EpicureanFriends.com), where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.

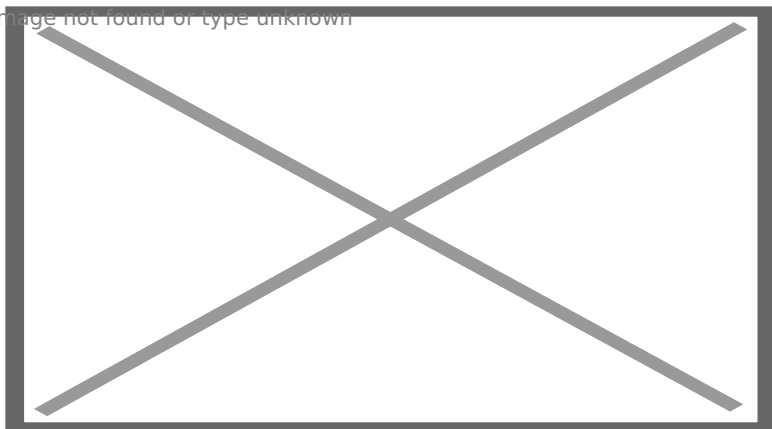
Last week we completed our series on Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations," and this week we start a new series that will help us with canonic / epistemology. We will eventually move to Philodemus' "On Signs" / "On Methods of Inference," and when we do we will refer to David Sedley's article on "On Signs," and the appendix in the translation prepared by Philip Lacey, both of which are very good but difficult.

To get us acclimated to the issues, we need a little more Cicero from his work "Academic Questions." This is much shorter than On Ends and Tusculan Disputations but gives us an overview of the issues that split Plato's Academy and shows how Aristotle and the Stoics (and Epicurus) responded to those controversies.

Once we get that overview we'll be prepared to tackle Philodemus and get a deeper explanation of the Epicurean view. This week will start with a general introduction and get into [Section 1](#).

Out text will come from [Cicero - Academic Questions - Yonge](#) We'll likely stick with Yonge primarily, but we'll also refer to the Rackam translation here:

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[Cicero On Nature Of Gods Academica Loeb Rackham : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/69830730/media>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2026 at 11:57 AM**

I have prepared an outline for our use in keeping track of where we are and where we are going as we go through Academic Questions. I am crossposting the [current version into the Academic Questions thread here](#), but that version will fall out of date fairly soon.

I'll continue to make revisions as we go through the episodes and update [the final version here at EpicurusToday](#).

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### **Post by “Bryan” of January 28, 2026 at 3:24 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Eventually move to Philodemus' "On Signs" / "On Methods of Inference

I'm not sure if it will be much help, but a few years ago I took the existing translation and tried to organize it, and also put all the opposing arguments in red. ([link here](#)).

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4922-episode-319-eataq-01-epicurean-answers-to-academic-questions-is-the-key-to-happi/>

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2026 at 3:44 PM

That will be of GREAT help! Even just the table of contents indicates what we are up against, as it shows how the book starts in the middle with discussion of opposing schools. Someone who doesn't know that and doesn't already know the Epicurean position is going to be pretty hopelessly confused.

[Philodemus - Signs \(P. Herc. 1065\) - Harris.pdf](#)

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## Post by “Joshua” of January 28, 2026 at 8:00 PM

I'm going to have a lot to say about causes in the coming episode, and I'll start gathering citations here with this passage from William Paley's [Natural Theology](#) published in 1809;

### Quote

Another system [that proposed by Erasmus Darwin], which has lately been brought forward, and with much ingenuity, is that of appetencies. The principle, and the short account, of the theory, is this: Pieces of soft, ductile matter, being endued with propensities or appetencies for particular actions, would, by continual endeavours, carried on through a long series of generations, work themselves gradually into suitable forms: and, at length, acquire, though perhaps by obscure and almost imperceptible improvements, an organization fitted to the action which their respective propensities led them to exert. A piece of animated matter, for example, that was endued with a propensity to fly, though ever so shapeless, though no other we will suppose than a round ball, to begin with, would, in a course of ages, if not in a million of years, perhaps in a hundred millions of

[page] 432

years (for our theorists, having eternity to dispose of, are never sparing in time), acquire wings. The same tendency to loco-motion in an aquatic animal, or rather in an animated lump which might happen to be surrounded by water, would end in the production of fins: in a living substance, confined to the solid earth, would put out legs and feet; or, if it took a different turn, would break the body into ringlets, and conclude

by crawling upon the ground.

Although I have introduced the mention of this theory into this place, I am unwilling to give to it the name of an *atheistic* scheme, for two reasons; first, because, so far as I am able to understand it, the original propensities and the numberless varieties of them (so different, in this respect, from the laws of mechanical nature, which are few and simple), are, in the plan itself, attributed to the ordination and appointment of an intelligent and designing Creator: secondly, because, likewise, that large postulatam, which is all along assumed and presupposed, the faculty in living bodies of producing other bodies organized like themselves, seems to be referred to the same cause; at least is not attempted to be accounted for by any other. In one important respect, however, the theory

[page] 433

before us coincides with atheistic systems, viz. in that, **in the formation of plants and animals, in the structure and use of their parts, it does away final causes.** Instead of the parts of a plant or animal, or the particular structure of the parts, having been intended for the action or the use to which we see them applied, according to this theory, they have themselves grown out of that action, sprung from that use. **The theory therefore dispenses with that which we [Creationists] insist upon,** the necessity, in each particular case, of an intelligent, designing mind, for the contriving and determining of the forms which organized bodies bear. Give our philosopher these appetencies; give him a portion of living irritable matter (a nerve, or the clipping of a nerve), to work upon; give also to his incipient or progressive forms, the power, in every stage of their alteration, of propagating their like; and, if he is to be believed, he could replenish the world with all the vegetable and animal productions which we at present see in it.

We will, I think, begin to better understand the ancient Academic objections to Epicureanism if we first understand why Charles Darwin's theory of evolution constituted such a body blow to the theological and philosophical synthesis of Platonism and Christianity.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of January 30, 2026 at 1:56 PM**

I am going to be trying to review the text from a couple of different perspectives, and to assist in that I've prepared a text-to-speech edition which I can listen to while traveling or at other opportunities.

At this stage I have done only minimal review of the output and I am sure there are transcription and processing errors. I will update this as I have the opportunity but if anyone

else decides to watch / listen and wants to submit notes as to errors with time stamps where they occur, that will be much appreciated. I will incorporate any suggestions into [the text which is going to remain online here](#).

This was generated using a "Pseudo-Joshua" text to speech engine, so if you think you recognize the voice that's why! Unfortunately due to limitations in my technical ability while it's listenable it's far from "good." The engine has particular difficulty with long complex sentences, and "long complex sentences" is Cicero's middle name. However for the time being it's better than nothing!

[https://youtu.be/\\_zP-JBC900M](https://youtu.be/_zP-JBC900M)

Edit: This video in now version 2 with a number of corrections. 02/02/26 - now version 3.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 2, 2026 at 11:43 AM**

This video is now in version 3. At this point the Greek words have been transliterated to Latin text and many of the worst errors with prior versions have been corrected. Please continue to report errors for future correction.

[https://youtu.be/\\_zP-JBC900M](https://youtu.be/_zP-JBC900M)

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 5, 2026 at 11:14 AM**

As we introduce Academic Questions in this episode, of particular note is Joshua's extended discussion of a "house of mirrors" analogy in characterizing the meaning of Plato's cave and associated non-Epicurean philosophies. The episode will be out by tomorrow at the latest.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 5, 2026 at 9:15 PM**

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4922-episode-319-eataq-01-epicurean-answers-to-academic-questions-is-the-key-to-happi/>

Episode 319 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled:  
"Is the Key To Happiness Found In Supernatural Causes and Geometry?"

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/69830730/media>