

# Episode Four - Recap of Opening Sections of Book One

Post by “Paquin” of July 20, 2021 at 4:21 AM

I am working my way through the 'Lucretius Today' podcasts and I have just finished no. 4. I am enjoying the discussion that goes with the text and translations. I would like to respond to an interesting point that Elayne made about

Quote

how they recognize what was done to Iphianassa was terrible

It struck me that Lucretius is not only inviting us the readers to share in the emotion of the tragic events, but also to recognise that this form of sacrifice is a defilement of Diana's altar i.e. to accept the existence of Diana as the virgin goddess and to see that this form of sacrifice would not be acceptable to her in any way.

I read that the animal sacrifices in Ancient Greece had water poured on their heads at the altar which produced a kind of bow that was interpreted as acceptance by the animal of its participation in the ritual. This makes Iphianassa's distress and trembling terror all the more disturbing. Also Diana the huntress was the only god where it was acceptable to sacrifice wild animals at her altar.

It seems to me that this is not an atheist position, it is not a position that rejects the gods as delined in Ancient Greek/Roman society, indeed both Venus and Diana have been referenced in the poem in ways that suggest that we all take their existence as given, but it is a position which rejects the human interpretation of the gods' behaviour and rejects the manipulation of human desire through justifications that rely on appeasing the divine.