

Episode 320 - EATAQ 02 - Are the Good of A Sheep And The Good of A Man The Same?

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2026 at 7:45 AM

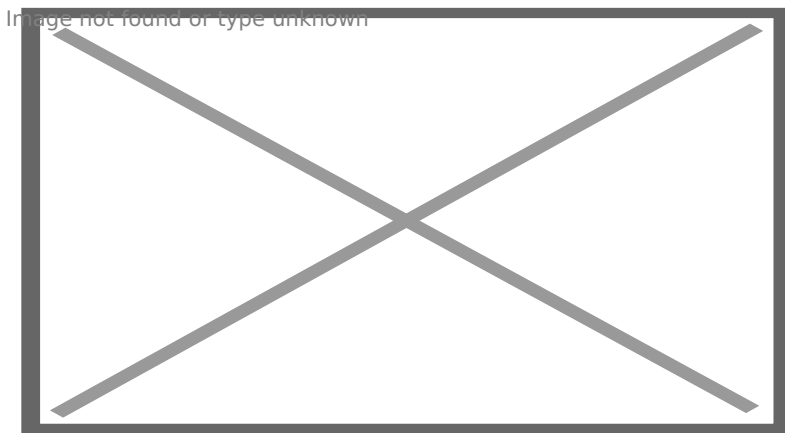
Welcome to Episode 320 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean 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, where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.

This week we start are continuing our series reviewing Cicero's "Academic Questions" from an Epicurean perspective. We are focusing first on what is referred to as Book One, which provides an overview of the issues that split Plato's Academy and gives us an overview of the philosophical issues being dealt with at the time of Epicurus.

This week will will continue in [Section 2](#).

Our 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:



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

Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2026 at 2:55 PM

In this episode one of the issues discussed was Cicero ridiculing Epicurus for taking a position that Cicero characterizes as saying that the good of a sheep and the good of a man are the same. That line of argument appears in a number of places that we did not list in the episode. Here are more occasions:

1 - Cicero, De Fin. 2.109

Quare aliud aliquod, Torquate, hominis summum bonum reperiendum est, voluptatem bestiis concedamus.

Therefore, Torquatus, some other supreme good must be found for a human being. Let us leave pleasure to the nonhuman animals.

2 - Cicero, De Fin. 2.111

Nec tamen ullo modo summum pecudis bonum et hominis idem mihi videri potest.

I cannot in any way think that humans and livestock have the same supreme good.

3 - Aristotle, EN I .5 I 095b19-20 (Cf. Heraclitus fr. 4 and 29, and Plato, flej?_. 586a-b)

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Most entirely slavish people clearly choose the life of cattle...

4 - Cicero, De Fin. 2.33

Bestiarum vero nullum iudicium puto. Quamvis enim depravatae non sint, pravae tamen esse possunt Ut bacillum aliud est inflexum et incurvatum de industria, dud ito natum, sic ferarum natura non est No quidem depravata mak disciplina, sed natura sua.

In truth, I think nothing of the judgment of nonhuman animals. For although they may not have been corrupted, still they can be corrupt. Just as one stick is bent and distorted intentionally and another has grown that way, so the nature of wild animals is not that way because it is corrupted by bad training, but by its own nature.

5 - Cicero, De fin. 2.33-34

Nec vero ut voluptatem expetat natura movet infantem, sed tantum ut se ipse diligat, ut integrum se salvumque velit Omne enim animal, simul et orwm est, et se ipsum et omnes partes suas diligit duasque quae maximae sunt in primis amplectitur, animum et corpus, deinde

utriusque partes. Nam sunt et in anima praedicta quaedam et in corpore, quae cum leviter agnovit, tunc discernere incipit, ut ea quae prima data sint natura appetas aspemeturque contraria. In his primis naturalibus voluptas insit necne, magna quaestio est; nihil vero putare esse praeter voluptatem, non membra, non sensus, non ingenii motum, non integritatem corporis, non valetudinem [corporis], summae mihi videtur inscitioe.

In truth, nature moves the newborn not to seek pleasure but simply to love itself and to wish to keep itself safe and sound. For every animal, as soon as it is born, loves both itself and all its parts, and it embraces above all its two greatest things, mind and body, and then the parts of each. For both in mind and in body there are certain preferred things which the animal has slightly recognized, and then begins to distinguish, with the result that it seeks these things that are first given by nature and it spurns their contraries. Whether pleasure is among the first natural things or not is not a difficult question. But it seems to me the height of folly to think that it consists of nothing in truth except pleasure, no limbs, no senses, no mental activity, no bodily soundness, no health.

6 - Cicero, Fin. 2.109-110

(Quare aliud aliquod, Torquate, hominis summum bonum reperiendum est] voluptatem bestiis concedamus, quibus vos de summo bono testibus uti soletis. Quid si etiam bestiae multa faciunt

duce sua quaeque natura, partim indulgenter vel cum labore, ut in gignendo, in educando perfacile appareat aliud quidam his propositum, non voluptatem? Partim cursu et peragratione laetantur; congregatione a line coetum quodam modo civitatis imitantur; videmus in quodam volucrum genere nonnulla indicia pietatis, cognitionem, memoriam, in multis etiam desideria videmus. Ergo in bestiis erunt secreta a voluptate humanarum quaedam simulacra virtutum, in ipsis hominibus virtus nisi voluptatis causa nulla erit?

Let us leave pleasure to the animals, whose testimony about the supreme good you all customarily use. But what if even nonhuman animals do many things with their nature as their guide, which make it clearly apparent that they have aim other than pleasure? Some do things with kindness, even with difficulty, in giving birth to and rearing their young. Some love to run free and roam about. Some, because they are gregarious, imitate the gathering of a civil society in a way. In a certain class of birds we see signs of loyalty, and we see recognition and memory; in many we even see grief. Will there therefore be

semblances of human virtues in nonhuman animals independently of pleasure, while in humans themselves there will be no virtue that is not for the sake of pleasure?

7 - Cicero, Fin. 2.40

Hi non viderunt, ut ad cursum equum, ad arandum bovem, ad indagandum canem, sic hominem ad duos res, ut ait Aristoteles, ad intellegendum et <ad> agendum esse natum quasi mortalem

deum, controque ut tardam aliquam et languidam pecudem ad pastum et ad procreandi voluptatem hoc divinum animal ortum esse voluerunt, quo nihil mihi videtur absurdus.

They [viz., Aristippus and the Cyrenaics] did not see that just as a horse is born for running, an ox for ploughing, and a dog for hunting, so a human is born for two things, as Aristotle says, for thinking and for acting, as if a mortal god. They, by contrast, wanted this divine animal to be born for grazing and the pleasure of procreating, like a slow and lazy sheep. Nothing seems to me more absurd than this.

8 - Cicero, Fin. 2.45-47

Homines enim, etsi aliis multis, tam en hoc uno plurimum a bestiis differunt quod rationem habent a natura datam mentemque acrem et vigentem celerrimeque multa simul agitantem...

Even if humans differ from nonhuman animals in many other ways, they differ most in this one way, that they are endowed by nature with reason and with a sharp and vigorous intellect that does many things simultaneously and very swiftly...

Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2026 at 6:42 PM

Episode 320 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled: "Is The Good of A Sheep The Same As The Good of A Man?"

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