

Episode 323 - EATAQ 05 - The Pre-Epicurean View: Three Divisions of Philosophy And Three Divisions of Goods

Post by "Cassius" of February 28, 2026 at 1:02 PM

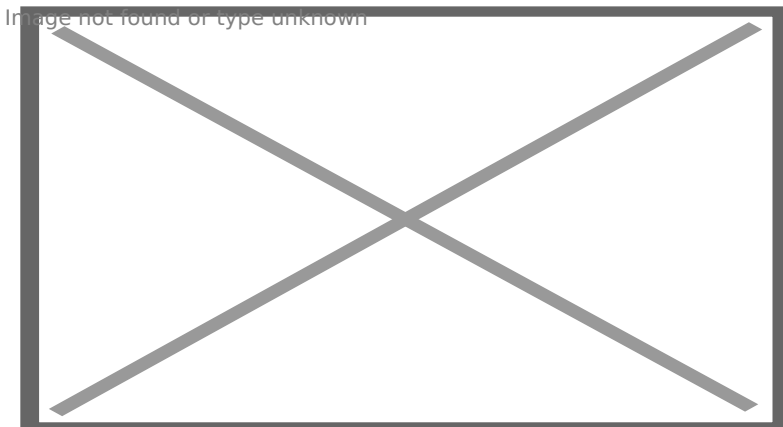
Welcome to Episode 323 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean 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 5](#)

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:

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

V.

I entreat you however, said Atticus, I entreat you to go on, Varro. For I am greatly attached to my own countrymen and to their works; and those subjects delight me beyond measure when they are treated in Latin, and in such a manner as you treat them. And what, said I, do you think that I must feel, who have already engaged to display philosophy to our nation? Let us then, said he, continue the subject, since it is agreeable to you.

A threefold system of philosophising, then, was already received from Plato. One, on the subject of life and morals. A second, on nature and abstruse matters. The third, on discussion, and on what is true or false; what is right or wrong in a discourse; what is consistent or inconsistent in forming a decision.

And that first division of the subject, that namely of living well, they sought in nature herself, and said that it was necessary to obey her; and that that chief good to which everything was referred was not to be sought in anything whatever except in nature. And they laid it down that the crowning point of all desirable things, and the chief good, was to have received from nature everything which is requisite for the mind, or the body, or for life. But of the goods of the body, they placed some in the whole, and others in the parts. Health, strength, and beauty in the whole. In the parts, soundness of the senses, and a certain excellence of the individual parts. As in the feet, swiftness; in the hands, strength; in the voice, clearness; in the tongue, a distinct articulation of words. The excellences of the mind they considered those which were suitable to the comprehension of virtue by the disposition. And those they divided under the separate heads of nature and morals. Quickness in learning and memory they attributed to nature; each of which was described as a property of the mind and genius. Under the head of "morals" they classed our studies, and, I may say, our habits, which they formed, partly by a continuity of practice, partly by reason. And in these two things was contained philosophy itself, in which that which is begun and not brought to its completion, is called a sort of advance towards virtue; but that which is brought to completion is virtue, being a sort of perfection of nature and of all things which they place in the mind; the one most excellent thing. These things then are qualities of the mind.

The third division was that of life. And they said that those things which had influence in facilitating the practice of virtue were connected with this division. For virtue is discerned in some good qualities of the mind and body, which are added not so much to nature as to a happy life. They thought that a man was as it were a certain part of the state, and of the whole human race, and that he was connected with other men by a sort of human society. And this is the way in which they deal with the chief and natural good. But they think that everything else is connected with it, either in the way of increasing or of maintaining it; as riches, power, glory, and influence. And thus a threefold division of goods is inferred by them.

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Post by “Cassius” of March 5, 2026 at 4:53 PM

Episode 323 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled: "The Pre-Epicurean View: Three Divisions of Philosophy And Three Divisions of Goods"

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In this episode we spend most of our time describing the three divisions of philosophy and the three divisions of "good" that were the dominant ways of looking at these topics prior to Epicurus. Next week we will take this analysis much further and emphasize more of the differences in Epicurus' approach.