

Episode 327 - EATAQ 09 - Intelligent Design vs Emergence

Post by "Cassius" of March 28, 2026 at 10:29 AM

Welcome to Episode 327 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 focus on the ending of [Section 7](#).

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](#)

Quote

And they say that the parts of the world are all the things which exist in it, and which are maintained by sentient nature; in which perfect reason is placed, which is also everlasting: for that there is nothing more powerful which can be the cause of its dissolution. And this power they call the soul of the world, and also its intellect and perfect wisdom. And they call it God, a providence watching over everything subject to its dominion, and, above all, over the heavenly bodies; and, next to them, over those things on earth which concern men: which also they sometimes call necessity, because nothing can be done in a manner different from that in which it has been arranged by it in a destined (if I may so say) and inevitable continuation of eternal order. Sometimes, too, they call it fortune, because it brings about many unforeseen things, which have never been expected by us, on account of the obscurity of their causes, and our

ignorance of them.

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/71088166/media>

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2026 at 8:00 AM

As i am editing this podcast I want to insert this note, that at about the 22 minute mark Joshua quotes Plato as taking the position that there is only ONE created world - not "many worlds." This too is something Epicurus directly contradicts.

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2026 at 4:54 PM

Episode 327 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled: "Intelligent Design vs Emergence"

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/71088166/media>

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2026 at 4:56 PM

This episode is now up. As I reflect post-editing I regret that we didn't give more examples from Sedley's article about emergence (downward or otherwise) but that's a deep subject on its own and one we'll return to in the future. There's a lot more research and reading to be done on discussion in recent years on this topic, including illustrations that are probably much more dramatic than my "water vs H2O" example.

Post by “Patrikios” of April 4, 2026 at 3:35 PM

[Joshua](#) ,

Thanks to you and [Cassius](#) for this excellent episode (327).

This is a very timely episode for helping people make some sense of a world in turmoil, with much re-framing of reality.

This first section appears to describe a worldview not too far from Epicurus, but then needs an Epicurean interpretation.

Quote

*And they say that the parts of the world are all the things which exist in it, and which are maintained by **sentient nature**; in which perfect reason is placed, which is also everlasting: for that there is nothing more powerful which can be the cause of its dissolution. And this power they call the soul of the world, and also its intellect and perfect wisdom.*

My understanding of **sentient nature**, would start by seeing how a seed contains within itself the atomic structure that guides its growth. An animal's body contains the atomic arrangements that produce its instincts. This is intelligence, yes—but we can clarify that it is the intelligence of matter itself, not of some external cosmic mind.

This is where I see the split Epicurus took from the philosophers who wanted to make “Nature” into an active force of an external cosmic mind specifically targeting humans.

I am also wondering how the root Latin around **watching over everything**.

Quote

*And they call it God, a providence **watching over everything** subject to its dominion*

This appears to my understanding as a key differential from our [Epicurean gods](#), whose **sentient nature** has no concern for “watching over everything”. The gods of which Epicurus speaks exist as guides to the best, optimal life a human can live. That guidance is to study and learn how nature operates; learn its rules; and then use nature’s examples to live our best life.

So, is there some root Latin that makes this “watching over everything” such an active tense, vs the simple, passive knowing that everything in the universe operates according to its own **sentient nature**?

Post by “Joshua” of April 4, 2026 at 3:48 PM

Quote

So, is there some root Latin that makes this “watching over everything” such an active tense, vs the simple, passive knowing that everything in the universe operates according to its own sentient nature?

That is a good question! I will try to remember to look into this later today.