

Episode 329 - EATAQ 11 - Cracks In The Academy On Ideal Forms And Virtue Lead To The Emergence of Aristotle, The Stoics, And Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of April 11, 2026 at 6:16 PM

Welcome to Episode 329 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 9](#).

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 from Academic Questions - Yonge](#)

IX.

This was the first philosophy handed down to them by Plato. And if you like I will explain to you those discussions which have originated in it.

Indeed, said I, we shall be glad if you will; and I can answer for Atticus as well as for myself.

You are quite right, said he; for the doctrine both of the Peripatetics and of the old Academy is most admirably explained.

Aristotle, then, was the first to undermine the doctrine of species (forms), which I have just now mentioned, and which Plato had embraced in a wonderful manner; so that he even affirmed that there was something divine in it. But Theophrastus, a man of very delightful eloquence, and of such purity of morals that his probity and integrity were notorious to all men, broke down more vigorously still the authority of the old school; for he stripped virtue of its beauty, and made it powerless, by denying that to live happily depended solely on it. For Strato, his pupil, although a man of brilliant abilities, must still be excluded entirely from that school; for, having deserted that most indispensable part of philosophy which is placed in virtue and morals, and having devoted himself wholly to the investigation of nature, he by that very conduct departs as widely as possible from his companions.

But Speusippus and Xenocrates, who were the earliest supporters of the system and authority of Plato,— and, after them, Polemo and Crates, and at the same time Crantor,— being all collected together in the Academy, diligently maintained those doctrines which they had received from their predecessors. Zeno and Arcesilas had been diligent attenders on Polemo; but Zeno, who preceded Arcesilas in point of time, and argued with more subtilty, and was a man of the greatest acuteness, attempted to correct the system of that school. And, if you like, I will explain to you the way in which he set about that correction, as Antiochus used to explain it. Indeed, said I, I shall be very glad to hear you do so; and you see that Pomponius intimates the same wish.

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/71418185/media>

Post by “Cassius” of April 16, 2026 at 11:54 AM

We don't get far into this issue of "kalapsis" in this episode, but it came up in our background discussions and it's going to come up further in coming weeks. For that reason I have set up the following thread, and anyone who has time to help us move toward a layman's way of explaining the distinction between the Stoic and Epicurean approaches on "comprehension" will be appreciated. We're definitely going to need to have something of a working command over this before moving past Cicero's "Academic Questions" and proceeding to Philodemus' "On Signs."

Thread

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/5033-episode-329-eataq-11-cracks-in-the-academy-on-ideal-forms-and-virtue-lead-to-the/>

[Epicurean Prolepsis / Canonics vs Stoic Katalepsis](#)

in coming weeks on the podcast we are going to be making a decision how much further to go into Cicero's "Academic Questions" and when to turn our attention to Philodemus' "On Signs."

A key aspect of when we will be ready to do that will involve our decision as to how much effort to put into Cicero's explanation of Stoicism, especially of their theory of knowledge involving "katalepsis." This is the theory which is famously explained by analogy this way: (from wikipedia quoting from "Academic...



Cassius

April 16, 2026 at 11:52 AM

Post by “Cassius” of April 16, 2026 at 8:36 PM

This episode is turning out to be a little shorter than usual, and kind of transitional, as we discuss the divergence of Aristotle from the Academy and begin to touch on the emergence of Stoicism. This is complicated stuff and we can only touch the surface in a broad way. As we proceed toward the end of Book One of Academic Questions over the next several weeks, I think our target should be to not try to do too much more than get a general feel for the major points of divergence between the schools. Even that is going to be quite a hurdle.

To assist myself as we go forward I asked Claude to produce for us a table of the major epistemological issues dividing the schools based primarily on the work of Long and Sedley in their "Hellenistic Philosophers." I think this is going to be of help to me and anyone who would like to refer to it can do so here:

[Epistemological Approaches: Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism](#)

A comparative chart of epistemological approaches across the four major Hellenistic schools, grounded in the scholarship of David Sedley.

epicurustoday.com

Post by “Cassius” of April 17, 2026 at 4:01 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/5033-episode-329-eataq-11-cracks-in-the-academy-on-ideal-forms-and-virtue-lead-to-the/>

Episode 329 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week our episode is entitled: "Cracks In The Academy On Ideal Forms and Virtue Lead To The Emergence of Aristotle, The Stoics,And Epicurus"

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