

# My Plans For 2021

Post by "Cassius" of January 5, 2021 at 2:18 PM

Here is a quick note that my thoughts are beginning to clarify as to what I'd like to target for my own activity in 2021 in addition to the ongoing projects.

Most of my thoughts revolve around continuity and stability, and I continue to see two things that I really want to accomplish:

(1) I want to get back to developing a completely free and open set of core texts that will always be easily findable and downloadable. What I mean here is I want to take the work I've already done in compiling digital text versions of the core documents and get those better organized for further editing and organization. Being the computer geek that I am, I continue to play with the idea that Epicurean philosophy is closely akin to a computer's "operating system," and I know the way that people collaborate to refine operating systems and computer software is to use facilities like "github" to publish into the public domain core material that others can "fork" and use however they see fit. I think a good clean copy of the Diogenes Laertius biography, plus Lucretius and the collection we have through Bailey's "Extant Remains" would be a good core set of material that everyone who has any interest in Epicurus at all should have a copy of from the very beginning. It's going to be a decade or more (I forget) before DeWitt's book can be added to that, but setting up some sort of standard reference would be a big help to a lot of people and would make sure that the material never gets "lost" again. So my specific goal here is to set up some text at a location like this ( <https://guides.github.com/features/wikis/> ) and set up a structure to refine it over time on the condition that everything in it is totally public domain and totally "open source" and re-purposed-able by anyone who wants to use it for any purpose, free or for-profit or whatever. I don't completely understand how the "professionals" do this, but here is a page of explanation of how people work together on something like this: <https://guides.github.com/>

(2) Item one is more my area of expertise, and this item is not at all, but just like we need a set of standard reference texts for the knowledge / abstraction side, people really need a standard method of thinking about how to organize their Epicurean friendships in real life. We've never been able to develop a workable structure for a real-life Society of Epicurus or even a pattern for a Meetup Group, but there's got to be a way to make progress on that. I suppose EpicureanFriends.com is itself a prototype for how people can get together online, but there's got to be a way to develop a structure for people to get together at least a small group in their local communities (at least if those communities are large enough). This probably means a short but clear "organizational plan" that would be something like what one would expect to be used by the Kiwanis Club or Lions Club or whatever - a pattern for getting together locally and live at least once a month, and a set agenda for what is to be done at that meeting. Getting

much more detailed than that has proved unworkable so far, but I would at least like us to devote a thread to the topic so we can brainstorm to see what is possible. So my specific goal here is to at least make a start at an organizational document that can provide a structure for local teamwork, probably also basing it totally openly and public domain as with the github link above.

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### **Post by “Titus” of March 15, 2021 at 4:16 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I want to get back to developing a completely free and open set of core texts that will always be easily findable and downloadable.

Reminds me of the mentioning of "maps" by DeWitt, progressing from the little epitome to the big epitome. Is it this that comes to your mind or rather a general digital library project without organized suggestions for reading?

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

So my specific goal here is to at least make a start at an organizational document that can provide a structure for local teamwork, probably also basing it totally openly and public domain as with the github link above.

Do you rather think of the approach how to start any kind of group generally or do you also refer to which could be the content and focus of such an group?

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 15, 2021 at 4:48 PM**

Titus:

Yes I am definitely thinking of "maps" and other curated materials, rather than just a huge database of documents. That's an issue that has been at top of my mind recently -- a huge database is as useless as a book on a shelf if it is not being used, and the accessibility tools to actually use it make all the difference.

As to question two I think the real hurdle, and thus what has to be tackled mostly, is the content and focus. There's a real tension involved here because real-world group activity requires a consensus and a goal, and it's hard to get around the problem that when you get real people together in a real local and targeted group, then that group will likely have specific goals and targets that other groups won't agree with. I see this as directly related to the "politics" question --- by marking political issues off limits we allow a consensus to grow and people to work on very high-level goals, but as soon as we start talking the kind of real local activity that we traditionally associate with local groups, you end up with divergent immediate interests and the possibility for "conflict" within and among the local groups. In order to make it work there will have to be a balance where we find a way to agree to focus on high-level goals while at the same time agreeing that we won't agree on the immediate "local" goals. We can all agree, for example, that life is short and for an eternity we exist no more, but when the question turns to how we use our limited time, we'll find much divergence of opinion, and we can't let that divergence prevent us from working together when working together is not only possible, but necessary for the survival of the philosophy.

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### **Post by “Titus” of March 15, 2021 at 6:19 PM**

Due to my Lucretius Today podcast listening marathon (next episode is the opening session of book two) I've come to recognize, that for some reasons there is not necessarily a need for physical interaction. The conversations I've listened to sounded very natural and I suggest they had been very satisfying for the participants. The only thing probably missing might be the atmosphere of sitting together in a restaurant, also enjoying some good drinks and food together. So there's the question, for what reasons there is a need of meeting locally. In my experience, this is exactly the point many people are questioning themselves. Do I just want to expand my knowledge about philosophy? Or do I want to find new friends/contacts? Do I want to deepen my connection between philosophical ideas and the real life? I agree that we need a concrete outline of how to approach to this issue and how to define a possible common destiny a group could agree to work for.

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### **Post by “Don” of March 15, 2021 at 8:21 PM**

Quote from Titus

Do I just want to expand my knowledge about philosophy? Or do I want to find new friends/contacts?

I think hear what you're saying, [Titus](#)

Speaking personally, I have found this forum (and by extension, the podcast) to have been absolutely critical to my endeavor to consider Epicureanism as a viable path of philosophical exploration. I've only been involved here for a little over a year, but I've come to value the contacts I've made and to look forward to "talking" with them... Albeit asynchronously the vast majority of the time.

So, to respond to your specific questions: I think you can do both. Ideally, one increases the other. The more friends/contacts you make, the deeper one's knowledge of philosophy becomes.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 15, 2021 at 9:18 PM**

#### [Quote from Don](#)

So, to respond to your specific questions: I think you can do both. Ideally, one increases the other. The more friends/contacts you make, the deeper one's knowledge of philosophy becomes.

Yes that's totally the way I see it, plus also the angle that you do what is possible. So far, it's really only been "possible" to get together by internet. I would like for much more, but at least internet is the start.

And you are quite right Titus to observe that (at least speaking for myself) participating in the weekly recording of the call has been extremely satisfying, and essentially a new weekly "ritual" for me that has been extremely motivational.

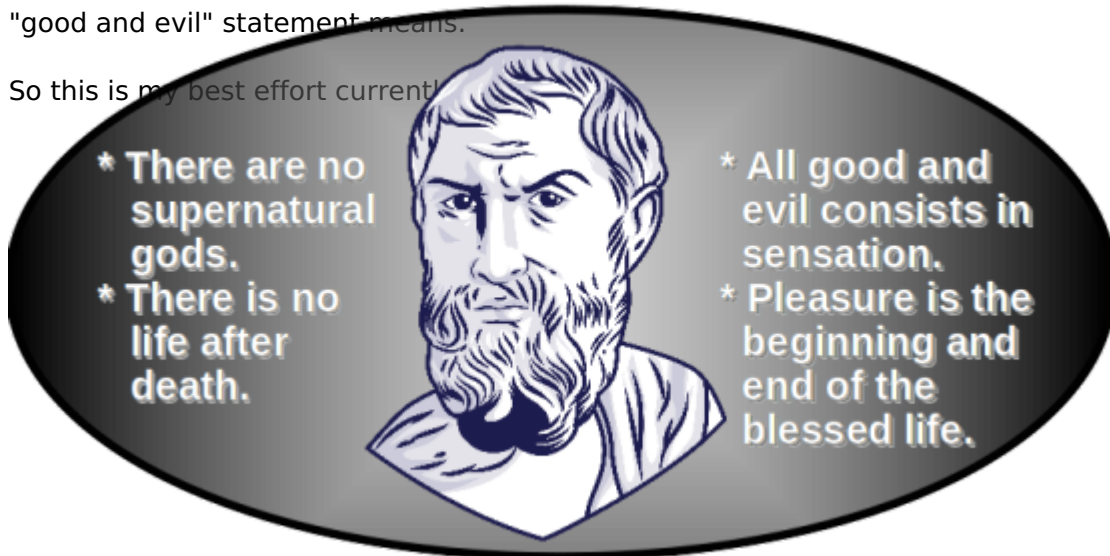
We have been doing monthly skype calls on the twentieth (to which anyone who would like to join should message me) but i strongly think that extending our efforts to more online get-togethers would be very helpful.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 16, 2021 at 8:55 AM**

Titus -- In further response to your question, the need to focus on a few core ideas is why I added the graphic that appears at the top of the right sidebar on the home page now. I am sure the list could be tweaked and wording improved, but at the moment these four are my best effort at selecting the most important distinguishing issues about which there ought to be unity. In my view the "tetrapharmakon" does not cut it for this purpose, because (1) the focus on pleasure as the goal needs to be more clear and explicit, and (2) the separate of Epicurus from "virtue-based" reasoning is probably so important as to be in the main list. The "all good and evil consists in sensation" doesn't include the word virtue but it does provide a direct quote which seems a good starting point (as with the "blessed life" quote). I would be tempted to substitute Diogenes of Oinoanda's "shout" quote, to clearly set out that virtue is a means to pleasure and not the end in itself, but that's probably too long for a pithy summary. However if there were one I would be tempted to change if the space allowed it, it would probably be to try to incorporate a short version of the "shout" quote or something from Torquatus on virtue. As it is, I would just use the Diogenes "shout" or explanation from Torquatus in explaining what the "good and evil" statement means.

So this is my best effort current



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**Post by “Cassius” of March 16, 2021 at 12:02 PM**

This is an excerpt, with my quick comments, from Tim Okeefe's entry on Epicurus in the internet encyclopedia of philosophy. It's my view that any set of core principles of Epicurus needs to at least lay the foundation, if not make totally clear, that these conclusions are wrong:

## b. Types of Pleasure

For Epicurus, pleasure is tied closely to satisfying one's desires. <sup>1</sup> He distinguishes between two different types of pleasure: 'moving' pleasures and 'static' pleasures. 'Moving' pleasures occur when one is in the process of satisfying a desire, e.g., eating a hamburger when one is hungry. These pleasures involve an active titillation of the senses, and these feelings are what most people call 'pleasure.' However, Epicurus says that after one's desires have been satisfied, (e.g., when <sup>2</sup> one is full after eating), the state of satiety, of no longer being in need or want, is itself pleasurable. Epicurus calls this a 'static' pleasure, and says that these static pleasures are the best pleasures.

<sup>3</sup> Because of this, Epicurus denies that there is any intermediate state between pleasure and pain. When one has unfulfilled desires, this is painful, and when one no longer has unfulfilled desires, this steady state is the most pleasurable of all, not merely some intermediate state between pleasure and pain.

Epicurus also distinguishes between physical and mental pleasures and pains. Physical pleasures and pains concern only the present, whereas mental pleasures and pains also encompass the past (fond memories of past pleasure or regret over past pain or mistakes) and the future (confidence or fear about what will occur). The greatest destroyer of happiness, thinks Epicurus, is anxiety about the future, especially fear of the gods and fear of death. If one can banish fear about the future, and face the future with confidence that one's desires will be satisfied, then one will attain tranquility (*ataraxia*), the most exalted state. In fact, given <sup>4</sup> Epicurus' conception of pleasure, it might be less misleading to call him a 'tranquillist' instead of a 'hedonist.'

1 and 2. No, Epicurus does not make this distinction, Diogenes Laertius does. See Nikolsky's "Epicurus on Pleasure" and Gosling & Taylor's "The Greeks on Pleasure."

3. Only true to the extent of measuring quantity, not quality, as explained by Gosling & Taylor. Error here comes from reversing cause and effect and saying "because of this...." - Okeefe has it reversed. Epicurus started with the observation that in general there are only two states, and because of THAT the presence of one equals exactly the absence of the other. He does not start by asserting that static pleasure is the most pleasurable of all.

4. Epicurus is a "tranquillist" only in the minds of people who redefine pleasure, like Okeefe

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### Post by "Titus" of March 16, 2021 at 1:18 PM

(a) I agree, we probably have to do refine the tetrapharmacos and cannot only copy concepts from the past. On the other hand, I believe the tetrapharmacos still to be a good fundament, but it needs additional explanations. For modern readers it might sound too inconcrete and it has a strong "healing" attitude (which I personally like while others may not). This might be also the advantage and disadvantage in comparison to the four principal statements formulated by you. They emphasize on presenting facts but include no further solutions.

(b) Have you ever contacted the Hellenic Gardens or the Sydney Group for further materials or interviewed on their experiences?

(c) I'm generally interested in philosophies/religions/movements, for this reason I read the "Big Book" of the Alcoholics Anonymous some years ago. The introductory words sound quite inspirational. By exchanging some words it could use as an inspiration for our own writing 😊 - though with an immense emphasis on healing.

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[https://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/en\\_bigbook\\_chapt2.pdf](https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bigbook_chapt2.pdf)

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### **Post by "Cassius" of March 16, 2021 at 3:13 PM**

(a) I am pretty much ok with using concepts from the past, but it depends on how clear they are in the modern context. It appears that already in the past and even in his own time Epicurus was accusing others of misrepresenting him, so the essential issue is clarity. And I don't mind the healing attitude, so long as the remedy is clear. And possibly the issue is not so much "formulating solutions" as it is, in the first place, providing solid fundamentals that aren't just a response to problems but positive assertions in themselves.

(b) Only a little. I think i understand the Sydney group to be largely social in orientation, which is fine. The Greek organizations are much more philosophically aggressive, but I don't have a good fix on exactly where they are and where they are going. I am aware that there are divisions of viewpoints over there, and the place to start would be to get a better understanding of what those divisions are, which I have some hints of but am not sure I understand at this point. It appears from a distance that they probably wrestle with some of the same issues we are wrestling with, and I don't understand them to be as "rebellious" of other Greek schools as I perceive the need to be. But I frankly am not sure.

(c) I have heard people make comparisons to the AA approach, and I sense that that would be a productive approach, but I have not had time to pursue it myself.

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### **Post by "Titus" of March 16, 2021 at 4:44 PM**

(b) Isn't here a member from Hellas (Elli)? I've always thought she is participating to some extent in one of the local groups there. My research this evening reveals, that there is a virtual meeting every week which is launched by the Garden of Athens. The Garden of Thessaloniki seems to be currently inactive but on their website is a wide range of materials (ironically, the website looks technically much more modern than the Athens equivalent). Unfortunately it's hard to come to any conclusion on their concrete understanding of Epicurean philosophy.

(c) I will try to make some change in the text I have linked and look forward to present first results during the next days.

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### Post by “Cassius” of March 16, 2021 at 6:06 PM

Titus: While some of the Greeks speak English, most of them are not bilingual so that has been a significant barrier. I hope to get closer interaction from them over time, but so far only Elli posts regularly with us.

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### Post by “Titus” of March 17, 2021 at 10:07 AM

Let me say, I translated the document last night and it was quite funny to do so, but it seems not to be very fruitful. The method was exchanging every given specific reference e.g. "drinker", "alcohol" etc. through an equivalent, e.g. "stoic", "supernaturalist", "ideas" etc. and it ended up quite amusing. In contrast, the original topic was written to an real obstacle for some people, so it had some aftertaste for myself. Additionally, I think their approach (and they also relate to people with other problems, there are also Anonymous groups corresponding to mental, drugs etc. issues) belongs to people with really hard problems. Nevertheless, at least a variety of page one from chapter two sounds inspiring (the other pages sound quite repetitive):

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THERE IS A SOLUTION

We, of **Eternal Epicureans**, know thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as **Memmius**. Nearly all have recovered. They have solved the problem **of false opinions**. We are average **Humans**. All sections of this **world** and many of its occupations are

represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined. The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from **false philosophies**.

It would be quite interesting hearing a lecture from Elli on the contents discussed within the Gardens in Hellas and the behaving between the participants there.

With this final comment I end spamming in this thread. 😎

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### **Post by "Cassius" of March 17, 2021 at 10:13 AM**

1 - I haven't had a chance to review the AA material in detail, but I suspect there is some useful material there. On the other hand, I suspect it also tends a little more toward "how to control your mind and live with your weaknesses" rather than "here is a proper understanding of the world which, when you see it, you will be able to use to overcome your problems."

2 - As for the comments on Elli and hearing about Greece, I share them completely -- I just haven't been successful yet in uncovering the details.