

# Thoughts and Discussion on Organizing Epicurean Community

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 15, 2022 at 7:31 PM

This is a thread to explore ideas about organizing and developing Epicurean community. Any one can add any thoughts or ideas about this.

Who are we?

What do we need or want?

What are we hoping for?

Here is an interesting article excerpt:

Quote

## What defines a community?

As long as there have been people, there have been communities. People are social animals. In every human civilization groups of people have organised themselves into tribes or societies. A large part of our self-image is derived from the social groups that we are part of. This is where we want to fit in and what gives us self-confidence, comfort, motivation, inspiration and purpose. We all belong to various different communities: Your neighbourhood, sports club, hobby club, student group, work colleagues.

So, what defines a community?

[Bind](#) defines community like this:

Quote

“A community is a group of people with common characteristics, such as background, ambitions or interests, who gather in a physical or virtual location to talk to each other or do things together.”

Social psychologists [David McMillan and David Chavis](#) describe a sense of community as:

Quote

*“A feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.”*

They argue that without clearly defined *membership*, an exchange of *influence*, *fulfillment of needs*, and a *shared emotional connection*, it’s fair to assume that the strength of community amongst a group is pretty weak.

Here is what we at Open Social think are characteristics of a true community:

- Members have common characteristics, such as background, ambitions or interests
- Working towards a common interest or goal
- “Mutualistic symbioses”: Members enter in to a social contract of give & take which is beneficial for everyone
- Members have longer-term connections
- Members join voluntarily
- Community is all about enabling connections and many-to-many communication
- It can exist in a physical or virtual location

Unfortunately, social media has contributed to an inflation of the term ‘community’ being used to describe any scenario in which people congregate online. Facebook for instance uses the term community to position its platform as a valuable instrument for a better society, even though it often leads to [polarizing its members instead of bringing them together](#). There are lots of companies that throw around the term community, using it to describe their customers and audience regardless of whether or not there’s an actual deep sense of community amongst the people they’re referring to. Marketers love titles like Community Manager, while in practice their job usually entails broadcasting branded messages from a social media channel to an audience. The word community is thrown around without much thought for its actual meaning.

## The Six Types of Communities

To understand communities better, we can categorize them into 6 community types, each with a different common denominator among participants.

What we at Open Social like about using these types is that it forces us to take the community member point of view and think about the **purpose** of the community, which helps when defining your community strategy and objectives. Working with community types helps us and our clients better understand the unique needs and drivers of members and the common goal towards which they are contributing.

We can identify these six types of communities, each with a different common denominator among participants:

A **Community of Action** is all about mobilizing volunteers as a movement to jointly make a change in the world

A **Community of Practice** consists of professionals sharing knowledge and skills, and learning together.

A **Community of Circumstance** consists of people in the same life stage or circumstance sharing tips & support.

A **Community of Place** consists of people living or working in the same geographical area, like residential areas, the local bar or a public space, like a park or library.

A **Community of Interest** consists of people sharing the same interest or passion, always comprising a passion, hobby or interest shared by participants.

A **Support Community** consists of people helping each other, usually non-professional and non-material, with a particular shared question or problem.

It is good to note that this classification provides theoretical handles for understanding different communities. In daily practice, the different types often bleed into each other or are combined.

Also, groups within a community can be of different types. You might have a Community of Interest to discuss hobbies or a Community of Place with members from one city, country or region within a scientific Community of Practice in which professionals are sharing knowledge.

<https://www.getopensocial.com/blog/community...munity-are-you/>

Display More

In the future we could become a registered non-profit, but we need to clarify what it is we are doing and what we want to see happen within our Epicurean community.

Also perhaps we have differing viewpoints or ideas about what we want?

Who are we?

What do we need or want?

What are we hoping for?

Need to start the ball rolling about talking about these questions, so that we can move beyond our virtual community.

So if anyone has any thoughts or ideas in response to this please post them 😊

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of September 15, 2022 at 10:04 PM**

To start the ball rolling...just throwing out some of my ideas.

Who we are?

We share a common world-view based on Epicurean philosophy, and see the world through materialism (a non-supernatural world). We take personal responsibility as the basis of our choices and avoidances. In life we prudently seek to increase pleasure, and choose ethical and practical actions which lead to a pleasant and happy life.

What might we hope for in Epicurean community?

We hope for a community of friends to join in the study of Epicurean philosophy, and engage in discussion and contemplation of Epicurean principles. We hope to create a place where supportive friendships of like-minded people can develop and be enjoyed.

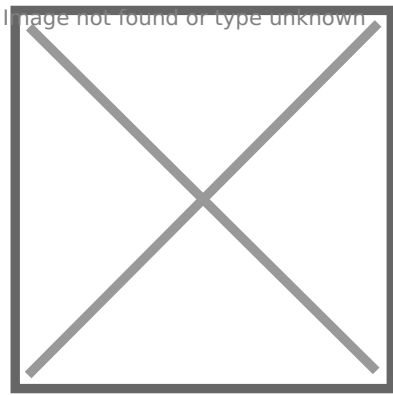
I am using the word "we" instead of "I" because I want to see a big picture of what community might look like, and also what it is that we all might agree on.

If you think of different phrasing, more to add, or different ideas, please post.

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### **Post by “Don” of September 15, 2022 at 10:46 PM**

An official 501(c)3 organization would be an interesting (but serious) avenue to take:



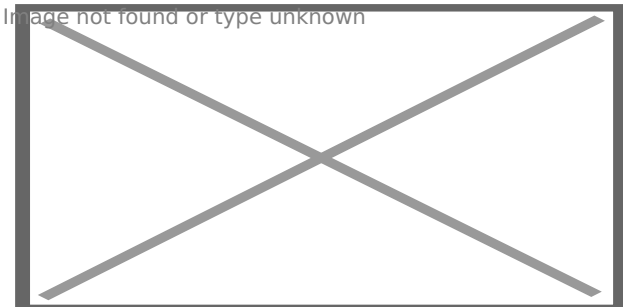
[Charities and Nonprofits | Internal Revenue Service](#)

[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

Strict by-law, filing, board, and reporting requirements. If there was a philosophical Epicurean 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, I wonder if we'd be able to provide certification for people to perform weddings. That'd be interesting.

Out of curiosity, I did a [quick search of non-profit organizations](#) at the IRS website looking for 'epicur' and found:

National Epicureans Incorporated



[National Epicureans Inc](#)

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry!

[nationalepicureansinc.org](http://nationalepicureansinc.org)

North Galveston Epicurean Education Center Inc. <https://northgalveston.org/>

Epicurean Charitable Foundation (ECF)

[About ECF - Epicurean Charitable Foundation](#)

The Epicurean Club of Boston

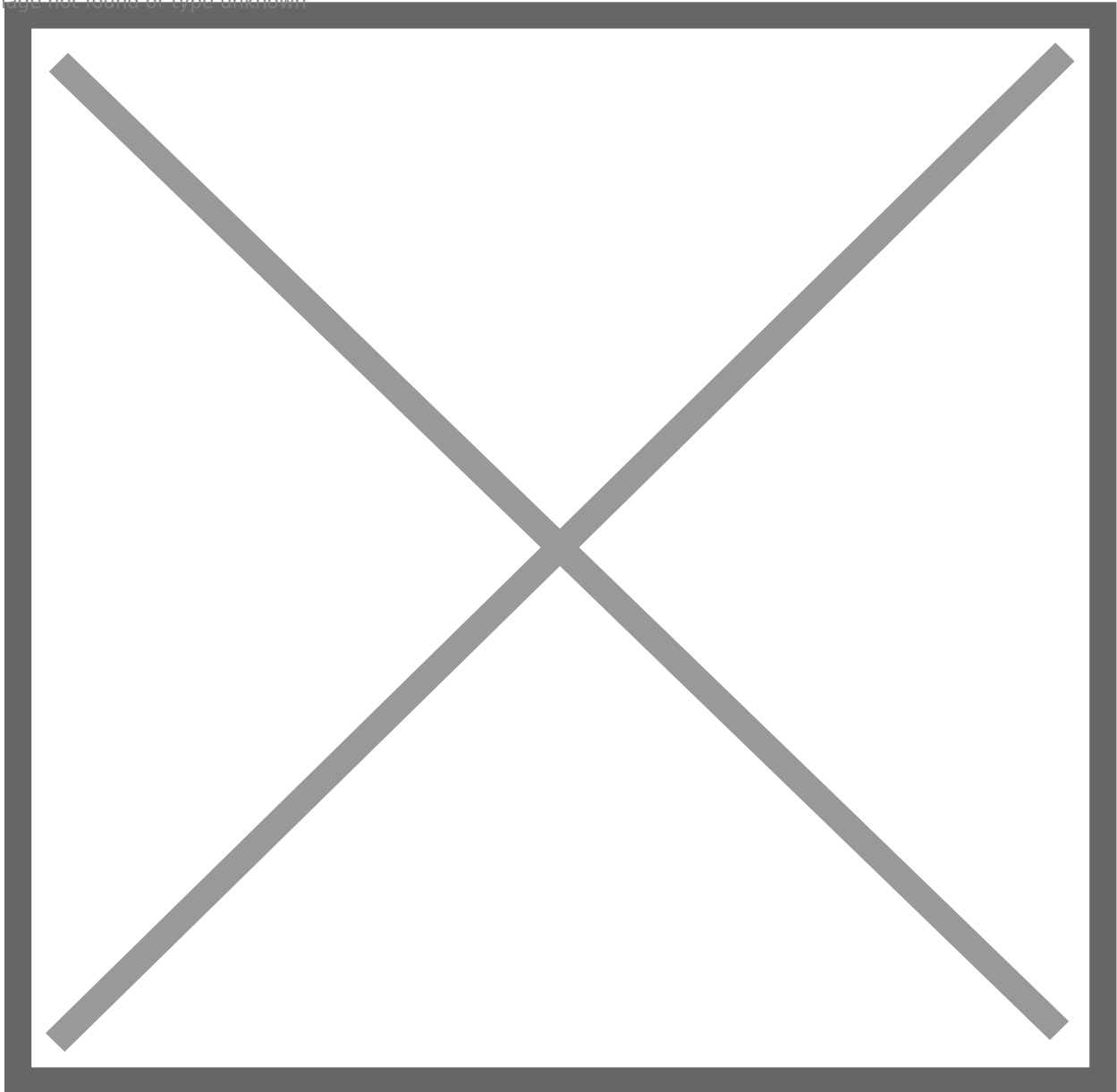
[Professional Chef's Association | The Epicurean Club of Boston | Saugus, MA](#)

The Epicurean Club of Boston is America's oldest professional chefs association established in 1894. We are a local chapter of the American Culinary Federation...

www.acfecb.com

Baton Rouge Epicurean Society

Image not found or type unknown



[Baton Rouge Epicurean Society - Restaurant in Baton Rouge, LA](#)

Baton Rouge Epicurean Society in Baton Rouge, LA. Call us at (225) 572-0802. Check out our location and hours, and latest menu with photos and reviews.

[www.bresbr.org](http://www.bresbr.org)

Quite the eclectic group of organizations!!

## Post by “Kalosyni” of September 16, 2022 at 11:01 AM

Thank you [Don](#) for sharing those links, which brings up an important point: the word "Epicurean" is associated with food, and culinary arts/culinary professionals.

So what do you think that means for us moving forward? Does it seem that the word "Epicurean" in some sense is already taken to mean something different. Even if we say "Epicurean Philosophy" the common person will think "Food Philosophy"?

Do we need to use a name that is vastly different?

-- The Society of Volitional Philosophy

or

-- The Society of Volitional Enjoyment

It's not that we are trying to convert the whole world, but rather just add a few new friends that most likely already think the way that we do.

And do we want to continue with the "Epicurean" word and be seen as simply food related?

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## Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2022 at 12:08 PM

First thanks to Don for those research links.

And thanks to Kalosyni for starting the topic.

Also:

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Thank you Don for sharing those links, which brings up an important point: the word "Epicurean" is associated with food, and culinary arts/culinary professionals.

So what do you think that means for us moving forward? Does it seem that the word "Epicurean" in some sense is already taken to mean something different. Even if we say "Epicurean Philosophy" the common person will think "Food Philosophy"?

I think that word issues are part of life for any Epicurean in the modern world. From gods to pleasure to tranquility to absence of pain and many more examples, the modern world thinks in different ways than they did 2000 years ago and we have to deal with that. While simply using new words is one alternative (and we already do that to some extent by speaking English rather than Greek and Latin) I don't think that at least for me personally giving up the words that are most closely equivalent to the ancient versions is the right path. The whole issue of explaining the philosophy involves education as to subtleties and meaning of concepts, so I think we just have to get used to explaining the differences in viewpoints from the very beginning, and try to be as clear about them as we can. And a large part of that involves explaining philosophic issues that aren't current or widely known anymore. But the MAIN/BIG issues are not really that complex.

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

It's not that we are trying to convert the whole world, but rather just add a few new friends that most likely already think the way that we do.

You're definitely right that we (even me) are not trying to convert the whole world. That's an unreasonable expectation and probably a good example for discussion of "vain" and "empty" desires.

But I definitely don't think we can or should limit ourselves to people who already think the way that we do. I suspect each and every one of us here (I know that applies to me) used to think very differently than we do today. I think the main thrust isn't really that different from the situation 2000 years ago. We're surrounded by people who don't even know what Epicurus taught, much less understand the subtleties, so like Lucretius we need to come up with new and persuasive ways to reach out to other people. Yes they need to be "well constituted" or "well disposed" toward the ideas as Diogenes of Oinoanda and Diogenes Laertius reference, but we can't let the work involved in "educating" people constitute a "pain" that we decide is enough to stop us from making the effort.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2022 at 12:12 PM**

To add to the last post, one lesson that seems to me to be obvious is this:

There will always be subtleties and difficult issues that we don't have enough texts to be sure about. But I firmly believe that those issues aren't central to the "big picture." Once you're clear that there is no life after death and no supernatural gods and no absolute basis for ethics - that

everything ultimately rests on the feelings of pleasure and pain -- that is a very clearly-denominated world view in itself that is more than sufficient to be a basis for "organization" in a world that is very hostile to those ideas.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of September 16, 2022 at 12:53 PM**

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

Once you're clear that there is no life after death and no supernatural gods and no absolute basis for ethics - that everything ultimately rests on the feelings of pleasure and pain -- that is a very clearly-denominated world view in itself that is more than sufficient to be a basis for "organization" in a world that is very hostile to those ideas.

Belief in these tenets (as listed above) would determine entry into the fellowship (no life after death; no supernatural gods; no absolute basis for ethics (everything ultimately rests on the feelings of pleasure and pain).

Yet, I think there will need to be additional substance to organize around -- the importance of friendship and community within the organization. And this could be expressed through specific "rituals" -- we could celebrate everyone's birthday, we could celebrate holidays together (and need to think about what holidays we might hold as important?). And we could find ways to bring together people within the organization who have common interests, focusing on shared enjoyments such as enjoyment of nature, enjoyment of cooking, enjoyment of study/teaching of philosophy, etc, etc -- so we could create friendship peer groups or affinity groups within the organization which might have monthly meetings to share fun events focused on that particular interest. While of course the 20th would always be reserved for the larger organization meeting.

Thinking further about organization names:

Koinonia of Epicurus

or

Fellowship of Epicurus

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of September 16, 2022 at 3:25 PM**

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

So what do you think that means for us moving forward? Does it seem that the word "Epicurean" in some sense is already taken to mean something different. Even if we say "Epicurean Philosophy" the common person will think "Food Philosophy"?

One option that comes to mind is to use "Lucretian" rather than "Epicurean". As far as I know, that hasn't been co-opted yet. But I agree with Cassius that a new term shouldn't be introduced. Probably best is to use "Epicurus" rather than "Epicurean" as in the previous post.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 16, 2022 at 4:12 PM**

I do agree that "Lucretian" is useful and that is one reason I did not rush to change the name of the podcast even when we finished the poem and went on to other texts. Lucretius personally is the prime example of what probably needs to be the next phase of the "movement" - people who adapt and restate Epicurean philosophy to their own contexts to bring the story to new people and explain it in new ways. The name also has that sort of "Luciferian" or "light-bringing" ring to it that spurs the imagination.

And it is interesting how Lucretius himself in his poem kept the focus on the philosophy without even naming Epicurus very often. So no need to run from Epicurus' name, but Lucetius' name does have its own benefits.

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### **Post by "Pacatus" of September 16, 2022 at 5:04 PM**

I re-read what is here, and I'm not sure what the point is. Why is some further organization/organizing needed? Or wanted? How organized is the Garden supposed to be (e.g., to meet modern needs)?

Some random first thoughts, and perhaps hard questions that might influence, in part, what kind of further organizing/outreach you want to do - and for what purpose (recognizing my admitted ignorance):

~ ~ ~

Do you just want to attract more people? How “catholic” are you willing to be to attract people who might not find their way here now? Versus keeping (and insisting on) a more pure understanding of Epicureanism?

Is part of your aim to compete with Crespo’s group, or others? Or to help people who may not end up actually becoming “members” – or may just hang out to absorb whatever teaching they can and that feeds them? Are you looking to expand the Garden only to potential “true believers” (True Epicureans™). Or to broaden the appeal to those who might never go there? (I hasten to add that neither is, from my view, invalid.)

How will you reach busy people in a hyper-texting world, who may not want to delve further into the original texts or scholarly discussion? Do you want to? (I remind myself that doing philosophy in Epicurus’ sense was living a way of life based on certain therapeutic tenets, not necessarily continuing intellectual exploration.)

~ ~ ~

A possible analogy: When Arrian wanted to expand the reach of Epictetus’ Stoic teachings, he did not call upon everyone to read the extensive Discourses (even in chewable chunks); he compiled the Enchiridion as an epitome. The Enchiridion is a very popular book. I’m sure many people allow it to inform their lives, and read maybe a little more about Stoicism or neo-Stoicism – but not much else. Bite-size daily meditation books are also popular (there are even AA meditation books for agnostics and atheists to practice “one day at a time”).

Epicurus produced his epitome, and we have some good translations (and Cassius’ “Elemental Epicureanism”), but even that may not be sufficiently accessible to the busy modern reader. There are the PD and Vatican Sayings, bite-size enough for sure: but I note how much discussion takes place on here on questions of translation and interpretation. So anything like the Enchiridion (combining various sources) would need to be put into easy modern English that the reader can interpret (and re-interpret) as needed according to their own life needs. [A foundational assumption here is that Epicureanism is a sound – if not the soundest – way to meet such needs. I agree.]

At bottom, this is a good place that people find their way to now – and that may really be sufficient. Further outreach involves advertising. My suggestion would be to publish something like the Enchiridion or a daily meditation book that is a) non-argumentative (vis-à-vis other philosophies or religions), b) easy to absorb in small bites, c) is inviting but not insistent on any further study/participation, and d) presents the Garden as a safe place, not a strict creedal “church” (you guys already do a good job on that score here ☐ – or I wouldn’t be here at all).

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I want to note that even allowing a broadly “catholic” membership does not mean, cannot mean, allowing disruptive argument from, say, neo-Epicureans who want to insist on their own way. Some disagreement is fine, but not disruption – that destroys the Garden itself.

Also, unlike Kalosyni, I notice that I have used the second-person plural here; in retrospect there are two reasons: 1) based on my personal history, I always avoid declaring “membership” and 2) I’m not convinced that what is here, as it is (and how people get here), is not good enough.

My bias is: I wish I had an Epicurean Enchiridion. I basically use the Vatican Sayings (selected randomly) and a Taoist daily meditation book. But it would take, I think, at least a year of diligent writing/editing to produce.

I may have misunderstood this whole thing. If so, sincere apologies ...

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### **Post by “Pacatus” of September 16, 2022 at 5:54 PM**

As a tiny contribution to outreach, I published my poem "A Small Ode to Epicurus" on allpoetry.com -- with reference to this site. (A very small gesture.)

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2022 at 6:38 PM**

1. Can you post a link to where you posted it?
2. All of the points you raise are very valid questions and I do not believe there is a single right answer to any of them. Just like the goal here is relatively well defined, any "organization" also need well defined goals, and we are far from seeing such a set of goals come together.
3. I agree that more summaries are needed. I tend to think that rather than someone having the credibility to write new summaries, the starting part is probably more of an organization "table of contents" by topic to the existing sources, letting them speak for themselves. Whether that is good enough is debatable, but I do think efforts like that make the most sense as a starting point. Even at this point we don't really have a good reference outline like that.

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### **Post by “Pacatus” of September 16, 2022 at 6:53 PM**

Re # 3: That makes perfect sense. (Makes it harder, of course 😊 ! )

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of September 16, 2022 at 7:21 PM**

#### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

Why is some further organization/organizing needed? Or wanted? How organized is the Garden supposed to be (e.g., to meet modern needs)?

[Pacatus](#) it sounds like your focus is on presentation of the Epicurean philosophy, and so this forum is a good way to do that. Would it be correct to say that your desire could be for learning (or sharing); maintaining reference material or literature of some kind; and mainly for sharing the philosophy through written word? And currently this most often occurs in an anonymous format, as we have readers who visit this site who are not members of the forum.

As for myself, I would like to see more social engagement -- both online and potentially in-person, because I have a desire for more social connection and conversation. I don't know if there are any others who feel this way?

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2022 at 9:16 PM**

Social engagement and personal friendships in "real life" are the first and most desirable goals, because all of us need that in real life.

Secondarily, it is in my case something I get great enjoyment out of to hope to be making a small contribution to the continuance of Epicurean philosophy as a real world presence. And as part of that it is my firm conviction that Epicureanism's continuance as more than a shell of its former self will never happen until and unless there is such real world engagement. As long as Epicureanism is perceived mainly as a self-help treatment for anxiety issues, no one will ever consider it worthy of being opposed or suppressed as it was in the past. But what that means in reality is "as long as it seems to apologize for pleasure and remain a shell of its former self...". The intensity of a Lucretius or a Diogenes of Oinoanda or even a Lucian will never be "allowed" to break through as a mainstream position on religion, life after death, or even epistemology, and will always be considered to be the ravings of cantankerous cranks, in polite society in our

major nations of the world.

Most of us are old enough that we have lived in a time and in a country (the USA) where "free speech" has been considered the norm, but as I see it that period is fast drawing to a close. Even if we maintain our current ability to talk about Epicurus in terms of "happiness" for a while longer, the kind of rebelliousness seen in Lucian and the others is likely going to get harder to secure. Hopefully we won't have another "fall of Rome" where religion (or its humanist variants) makes it impossible to promote the core Epicurean worldview positions, but it doesn't make sense to take that chance. Because if something like that does begin to happen, technology will allow suppression of dissenting minority views in ways never thought possible. And it would be unrealistic to expect that Epicurean views will ever be more than a small minority in our lifetimes.

I doubt there can or should be a "centralized" Epicurean organization, but setting up ways for people "locally" to find and support each other would be highly desirable.

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## **Post by “Pacatus” of September 17, 2022 at 12:26 AM**

[Kalosyni](#)

Kalosyni, I think I understand.

My focus here has been to learn from others in a safe environment how to apply Epicurus to my daily life – not to become as fluent in Epicurean philosophy as others on here.

I have tried to keep my social views to myself, even as I once asked for help on here in how to deal with them – and the stress I often feel. I cannot escape from the social issues and conditions by running away to the Garden (here, elsewhere or in my mind – and no one here suggested that I should).

But there is no way to engage in more social engagement without being open about where one is coming from. And I see where that could require a place (format) different and separate from this one. I don't know how Epicureanism fosters that kind of engagement/activism – or limits it (I just don't know).

So, I will be open: I am somewhat left of center economically (which is my academic background long ago, and parlayed into work for years, before our big life-simplification experiment – driven, in part, by political repercussions that became untenable); I am way left of center on social issues; and I see the radical right-wing (MAGA) movement in this country as viciously evil and dangerous (and a real, not a philosophical, danger). I am not as active as I

once was (no more protests/picket lines or across-the-table confrontations), but I still make small contributions, mostly quasi-anonymously. [What I find in my poetry (I have never been very good at political/social-engagement poetry, except once maybe) is respite from the tempestuous world.]

So, now I will take a break for awhile. I don't know if I've violated anything here. But, in the meantime, be well all.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2022 at 2:05 AM**

No concerns Pacatus so far. The real issue is not so much identifying oneself as it is advocacy over time on contemporary issues. The ultimate questions of whether we have eternal souls or whether there are supernatural gods and whether there are ideal forms of right and wrong are where Epicurus spent his time. So far as I can tell, his allegiance to political parties was minimal, and any that was there was likely as much a matter of instrumentalism as his views on virtue or any other day to day issue.

The relevance here to our discussion of organization is that (at least in my view of setting up the forum) it is counterproductive to allow day to day issues to disrupt the larger goal of allowing people interested in the ultimate issues to talk to each other. That gets complicated sometimes here, and it would be complicated on real life local organizations too. But it just makes sense to put first things first and insist that lesser concerns be dealt with outside and after and not at the expense of the core concerns. I think that is doable here and in real life meetings too, but it means vigorous focus on a limited number of issues and a devotion to not getting distracted.

And that devotion to not getting distracted has a deep history for "the Epicurean movement" because "distraction" was the tool that Cicero and 2000 years of subsequent attackers have used to pin Epicurean philosophy into irrelevance. "Distraction" causes us to ignore the major accomplishments that Epicurus made in freeing the world from false philosophy and false religion and keeps us focused on debating nuances in types of pleasure. "Politics" would do the same if we allowed it. Remember how Cicero alleged that Epicurus was not suitable for discussion "in the Senate or the camp" - that's just another version of allowing politics to get in the way of ultimate truths, and distraction that keeps Epicurus marginalized.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of September 18, 2022 at 3:54 AM**

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

no absolute basis for ethics - that everything ultimately rests on the feelings of pleasure and pain

I feel the need to say something in response to this (and we must have a thread on this already) -- no absolute basis for ethics means that we don't do things to please God or to attempt to prove that we are perfectly behaving according to some ideal standard, but instead we act ethically because it brings pleasure and a happy life. And we make ethical choices based on pleasure and pain -- not just my own pleasure or avoidance of pain, but that if I cause pain in someone else it will usually (but yet not always in every case) result in more pain for myself. Now we can go a step further and apply a kind of heuristic which is that we will more quickly guess (or sense) whether or not we are causing pain to someone, and then be sure to avoid any behavior that might cause pain. The usual impulse is when a human feels pain then a reaction results, as we naturally seek to find a way to end the pain, whether or not the method found to end the pain actually works or not. So if I hurt you in some way, even if it is by accident, then you look around to see who or what hurt you (and then you react in myriad ways in response).

I just think that this ethical understanding needs to be clear. Any thoughts [Cassius](#)?

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## **Post by "Cassius" of September 18, 2022 at 7:21 AM**

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Now we can go a step further and apply a kind of heuristic which is that we will more quickly guess (or sense) whether or not we are causing pain to someone, and then be sure to avoid any behavior that might cause pain.

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I just think that this ethical understanding needs to be clear. Any thoughts Cassius?

Yes I do have a thought. In general I think your formulation goes in the right direction, but "be sure to avoid any behavior which might cause pain" can probably be more accurately worded. That's because:

Quote from Letter to Menoecus

and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided.

It's a constant temptation to reduce the theory down to "pursue pleasure and avoid pain" but that's too simplistic. Yes it is true but mainly in the "ultimate outcome" rather than the immediate moment, and sometimes we will choose pain (for ourselves or for others) if prudence tells us that is the course most likely to maximize pleasure and minimize pain in the end.

And as a second point, I think we have to remember that we aren't just talking about maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain in the abstract, like there is some kind of flow of pleasure units and pain units in the universe as a whole. The pain and pleasure we are talking about is what we feel ourselves, which includes what we feel through our friends or anyone else we choose to empathize with, not the whole universe of living beings at large.

Quote from Torquatus from Cicero's On Ends Book One

Yet nevertheless some men indulge without limit their avarice, ambition and love of power, lust, gluttony and those other desires, which ill-gotten gains can never diminish but rather must inflame the more; inasmuch that they appear proper subjects for restraint rather than for reformation.

Of course when we do inflict pain on someone to restrain them, we can expect them to react back against us, so we have to always consider whether we are prepared for that before we act.

So I think the larger point is that just like we have to be on guard and not pursue every choice that we think will lead to pleasure, we have to be on guard and not avoid every choice that we think will lead to pain. It's the ultimate outcomes that we are looking to steer by, and even when we say it like that, it is still a very subjective thing - there's no absolute way to measure feelings that applies to all situations.

That's the way it seems to me.

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**Post by "Don" of September 18, 2022 at 8:02 AM**

When it comes to this topic of discussion of "ethical" behavior, it's more about justice than pleasure/pain. Of course, that pleasure/pain guides choices and rejections, but I'd also point to [PD31](#):

Natural justice is an agreement for mutual benefit, to not harm one another or to be harmed.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 18, 2022 at 9:00 AM**

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

When it comes to this topic of discussion of "ethical" behavior, it's more about justice than pleasure/pain.

Yes I agree. What Kalosyni is raising is at least about justice as described in the last ten PDs as anything else

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### **Post by "Pacatus" of September 19, 2022 at 4:36 PM**

I am reminded of a quote that I came across years ago: "When it comes to shaping one's personal behavior, all the rules of morality, as precise as they may be, remain abstract in the face of the infinite complexity of the concrete."

[Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa" (from the Foreword).]

If one takes PD 31, say, as a starting point for engagement on social (justice) issues, concrete applications - vis-à-vis the complexities of specific context - still are likely to be subject to disagreement even among people who are of like mind on the underlying principle(s); especially, perhaps, with regard to means. And I can see the value of creating a safe place for that kind of discussion (with mutual support and affirmation, even among differences) from a foundation grounded in Epicurus.

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I want to apologize if anything I've said has offended anyone - especially Kalosyni. Mea culpa, entirely.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of September 19, 2022 at 6:18 PM

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

I want to apologize if anything I’ve said has offended anyone – especially Kalosyni. Mea culpa, entirely.

Oh no, you didn't offend me. I maybe haven't kept up with this thread as much as I ought to -- I probably should be saying something more in response, so I apologize for my lack of additional comments. Sometimes there is so much going on in the number of responses that I then feel like I am not sure if I can say anything new or brilliant, and so then I go "silent" for a time.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of November 17, 2022 at 1:07 PM

Here is a kind of "vision board" for creative ideas about shaping the future of Epicurean philosophy. What might we want to share with others as being beneficial for people to study on a larger scale beyond this forum? --not with the goal to popularize it, but as a "study Epicurean philosophy to gain more happiness" movement for building a community of like-minded people.

I created the images for this collage using "text to image" in the Canva app (which why there is distortion on the faces, so best not to zoom in too closely).

So then looking at these pictures, what exactly are people studying and what is being taught? I think this could be a springboard to gaining clarity about what are the best aspects of Epicurean philosophy and how to go about teaching it.



## **Post by “Martin” of November 17, 2022 at 3:54 PM**

We need olive trees!

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## **Post by “Cassius” of November 17, 2022 at 5:39 PM**

[Quote from Martin](#)

We need olive trees!

and FIG trees!

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## **Post by “Pacatus” of February 4, 2024 at 2:43 PM**

Thoughts on Organization

The following are loosely adapted (and stripped down) from the “twelve traditions” perspective of AA and other 12-step groups:

1. The Epicurean Community (the “Garden”) exists for the common well-being and happiness of its members, as founded in Epicurean philosophy and based in friendship.
2. There is only one authority for the Community, and that is the Canon,\* as it has evolved and is actively interpreted by the Community members themselves.
3. The only requirement for membership is the sincere desire to learn and apply Epicurean philosophy personally in one’s life, according to one’s own circumstances and understanding.

There are no “loyalty oaths” or “pledges of allegiance” required.

4. The Epicurean Community is a community, not an institution. Hierarchical structure should be minimized – while recognizing leadership roles such as “administrator” or “monitor” or “secretary” and the like (for in-person as well as online groups and meetings) as necessary for the functioning of the Community.
5. Although professionals in various disciplines (such as philosophy, sociology, physics, neuro-science and the like) may have much value to add to the understanding of Epicurean philosophy – especially its application in modern times – the Garden is not a professional association, but a community of like-minded people, all of whom have a voice.

With that said, individual members have varied areas of expertise (such as translation) and levels of knowledge pertaining to the philosophy itself, which ought to be acknowledged and respected.

6. No dues or membership fees should be required (as this might effectively deter from membership some who sincerely desire to learn and apply Epicurean philosophy). But voluntary contributions may be openly welcomed as needed to support the practical functioning of the Community – so long as they are not used to create a “ranked hierarchy” of membership status on that basis.

This is not to preclude membership designations based on such things as participation in the Community.

7. Both the Community (as a group) and individual members may pursue outreach activities for the purpose of bringing Epicurean philosophy to as wide an audience as possible. But members who prefer to remain anonymous as such, outside the Community, should have that anonymity honored and protected by all in the Community.
8. No member of the Community should ever, in such a way as to implicate the Community (or pretend to speak on its behalf), express any opinion outside on such controversial issues as those of partisan politics or sectarian religion.

(Anyone may, of course, express their personal understanding of how Epicurean philosophy informs their opinions on such matters – while taking care not to implicate the Community or its other members.)

9. All discourse among members should be characterized by civility, respect and friendliness – even (and especially) where strong opinions differ.

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\* "Canon" here could include all of the "classical" Epicurean corpus - such as Lucretius; or only the extant works attributed to Epicurus himself, with others included as "classical" interpreters.

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These are my thoughts - but I would not argue them, or make an issue out of any of them. I'm just, personally, not that strongly wedded to the question. 😊

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### **Post by "Cassius" of February 5, 2024 at 6:20 AM**

For someone who is not strongly wedded to the question you've come up with a very useful list of considerations!

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### **Post by "Don" of February 5, 2024 at 11:02 PM**

One big problem with *any* Epicurean endeavor in our times is that, in many senses, we're all making it up as we go along. There is no "apostolic succession," no unbroken lineage, no "authority" to say if we're getting it "right"... especially in light of the potential windfall of Epicurean texts now that reading the Herculaneum scrolls is possibly becoming a reality. We're trying to pick our way through an Epicurean labyrinth using a flashlight in the pitch dark. Maybe there's a couple candles lit in a couple locations, but by and large, we don't really have a guide... okay, we have a guide (pleasure) but our instructions on how we should/could/would apply it - in relation to what Epicurus taught - are only in summary with gaps in the paper and pages torn out of the manual.

Here at this forum we have a group of individuals who want to retain their autonomy, independence, individual interpretations (granted, within certain guidelines) with just enough moderation to keep things civil but with no one/way to "interpret" what direction is more "correct" (orthodox?) than another. Note, I don't think there is anyone who can interpret with absolute authority! However, in some ways and at some times, I find the lack of structure, lack of suggested ritual, and lack of a hierarchy frustrating. BUT I realize this is a *discussion forum*, and it has served - and continues to serve - a vital, unique purpose online. I wouldn't continue to think of myself as "Epicurean" (whatever that means! See below) without it, by Zeus!

The Athenian group seems to be headed in another direction, sponsoring in-person events - to which Cassius has provided content! But they don't have any more claim to "authenticity" than

anyone else. The embers of the Epicurean school were kept barely hot enough to give off the faintest glow for centuries. Just because they're in Greece doesn't imbue them with any claim to preserving some lineage. (Fourth leg of the Canon anyone?)

Additionally, it seems (to an outside observer) over at the Society of Friends of Epicurus, they want more structure, more "religiosity," more ritual, more hierarchy. But the insistence of using Latinized Greek words like hegemon, Kyria Doxa, "One way to *me/eta* on..." and using v in Latin like Liber Qvintvs instead of just leader, Principle Doctrine, "One way to meditate on..." and Book Five seems very pretentious and almost cute to me. I freely admit that I like some of the work coming out of SoFE very much, but the insistence to use these unnecessary Hellenisms and idiosyncratic Latin spellings is an impediment to taking it seriously sometimes. There's no need or reason to be exotic, arcane, or mysterious. From all accounts, Epicurus spoke and wrote plainly. Using those exotic-looking Greek and Latin words isn't necessary if you're targeting an English-speaking audience....well, unless you're talking about ataraxia or eudaimonia LOL 😄 but I digress.

So, what does any of this have to do with the topic of this thread? Maybe this should have been posted over on the "religion" thread. To bring this back to community building, there doesn't seem one way to do this in the modern world. We do not live in the ancient world. To try and reconstruct the structure of Epicurean communities is a failed endeavor. We simply don't know enough on how they were constructed it seems to me. [Pacatus](#) has offered a list of suggestions, some I agree with, others less so. I'm also not sure whether he's offering these as guidelines for \*this\* specific community or if he feels they should apply to any community calling itself "Epicurean." (I sincerely hope he replies to this rambling post.) There's also no "authority" that could make ANY list of guidelines apply to a group that wants to call itself "THE genuine, authentic Epicurean School." And then there's the issue of marketing. If one "Epicurean" group becomes more well known - a la Massimo Pigliucci's "Stoicism" - do they get to dictate "real" Epicureanism?? *Will the real Epicureans, please stand up!* Who gets to define who is and who isn't an Epicurean? Who should?

As individuals, we can call ourselves anything we want...but does that make it so? What constitutes an Epicurean community? What constitutes an Epicurean? Would Epicurus recognize the "brand" of "Epicureanism" being "practiced" on this forum, over at SoFE, over in Greece? Before we start laying out who's in and who's out, I think we have to wrestle with: Are any of us actually "in" in the first place...or are we playing a part of our own composition? Have any of us really "earned" the privilege of calling ourselves members of an "Epicurean" community in the first place? Are we really just "hedonists" seeing pleasure as the guide with a thin veneer of Epicurean terminology and the vaguest understanding of what it really meant to be an Epicurean in the ancient world? Granted, in some ways I'm being consciously provocative to encourage discussion - but only in some ways. I find it both frustrating that there's not more structure to this set of practices/beliefs/life philosophy, but I also find comfort in being able to apply a label to a philosophy I \*think\* I'm trying to structure my life around...even if that label

maybe doesn't fit.

In the words of Epicurus, I've "prattled suffice for the present." I certainly don't know if I've added anything to the discussion, but hopefully I've prattled enough to engender further discussion.

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### **Post by "Godfrey" of February 6, 2024 at 12:46 AM**

A couple of quick thoughts....

To my knowledge, any religion that has been around for 2000 years has divided into numerous (innumerable?) branches. I sometimes lament that EP doesn't have a continuous history, but if it did, it would most likely have many branches as well. In fact they might not all call themselves "Epicurean". Maybe they'd go by "hedonist", "utilitarian", "atomists" or who knows what else.

As for a lack of structure or a lack of exercises: I go back and forth on this, but at the moment I'm thinking that a philosophy is a way of learning how to think about the world and one's place in it. Epicurus lived in a world which laid the groundwork for the world we're living in. What we have from him is a worldview and a way of approaching philosophical problems, and this forum is a great place to study, discuss, and sharpen our thinking. To me that's the main meal, any additional structure or exercises are condiments.

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### **Post by "Pacatus" of February 6, 2024 at 11:56 AM**

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

Here at this forum we have a group of individuals who want to retain their autonomy, independence, individual interpretations (granted, within certain guidelines) with just enough moderation to keep things civil but with no one way to "interpret" what direction is more "correct" (orthodox?) than another. Note, I don't think there is anyone who can interpret with absolute authority!

I wholeheartedly agree. (Also with your comments on SoFE; I certainly could not squeeze myself into that kind of formal hierarchy.)

My suggestions were aimed at making mostly any developing, more formal, especially in-person, groups safe places for people who want to explore Epicureanism for their own lives, since that seems to be a direction some would like to move in – and I drew on how this forum community operates as well, while using the 12 language as a way to try to express it, since their guidelines made a safe place when I needed it. (I have no suggestions for any changes for here!).

I would never dream of claiming any authority to set out criteria defining what an Epicurean must be – let alone a “True Epicurean™.” Hell, you know that I even feel uncomfortable calling myself “**an** Epicurean”! 😬

So, if there’s anything helpful in what I posted, I’m glad. If not, that’s okay. Take whatever might be helpful and leave the rest. 😊

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of February 6, 2024 at 12:41 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

they

I am a formal member of the Society of Friends of Epicurus, so I am happy to elaborate on any points of interest that you, or any other member of this forum have. Furthermore, [Hiram](#) the Found of the Society of Friends of Epicurus is also a member, so we are available to be addressed in the first person. Though, I find it cute that you did not feel the need to do so. 😊 but I digress.

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### Post by “Don” of February 6, 2024 at 12:54 PM

😊 Just to be clear, I certainly meant no disrespect! "They" was just to delineate this forum from the other platform.

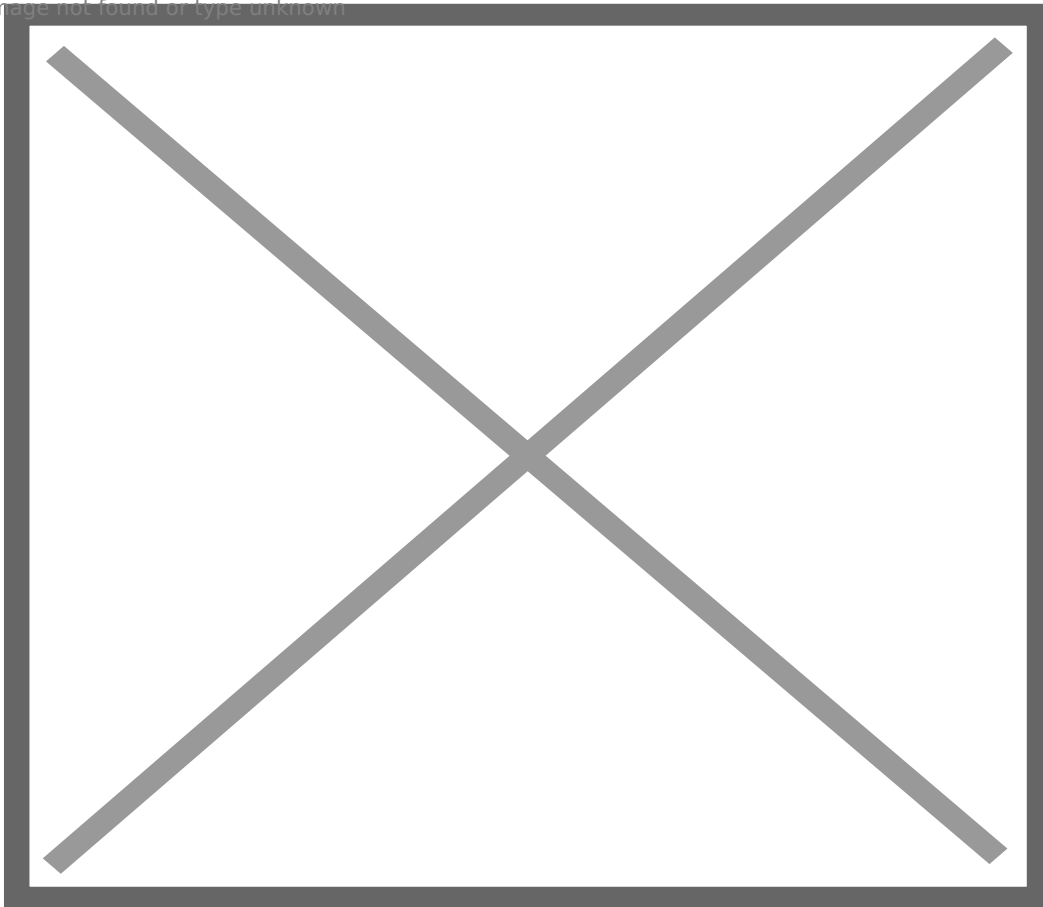
Having more participants on both platforms would be a good thing from my perspective.

And, to repeat, I very much appreciate some of the resources posted by and coming from SoFE members. Heck, I subscribe to the newsletter myself.

**Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2024 at 1:35 PM**

As per what Nate said, both he and Hiram and others of the SofE are reachable directly to discuss any points of interest there. As Don said, I too receive Hiram's newsletter and find it useful. Beyond that I think it still makes sense to refer to the FAQ entry I set up on this issue, and suggest that everyone with questions about this refer first to that and then explore the Society of Epicurus to see whether what they find works for them individually. Going through those details here at Epicureanfriends without first reading through the background would not likely lead to anything productive:

Image not found or type unknown



[What Is The Society Of Friends of Epicurus and What is its Relationship to EpicureanFriends.com? - Epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com/what-is-the-society-of-friends-of-epicurus-and-what-is-its-relationship-to-epicureanfriends-com/)

[www.epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com)

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**Post by “Pacatus” of February 6, 2024 at 3:28 PM**

I went back to this old thread, which Cassius had recommended to me way back (well, “way back” for me 😊 ). [Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19](#)

The discussion is wide-ranging, but I think there is a lot of food-for-thought on what criteria one “must” accept to be called “**an** Epicurean” – and by whom? I want to disassociate my suggestions from anything like that. I especially appreciated Elayne’s and Elli’s and Cassius’ comments in that thread. (I’ve always been particularly attracted by Elayne’s takes. What happened to her?)

EDIT: Oh! I see that Cassius has already linked that thread. 😊

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2024 at 3:38 PM**

Pacatus it would not be appropriate for me to speak for her or about Elayne's reasons for leaving other than to say that [she posted about pursuing her own initiatives](#), and to say that she would always be welcome back. You are right to point out that her positions in that thread to which you pointed (which is linked in our FAQ on the Society of Epicurus) were very well made.

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### **Post by “Pacatus” of February 6, 2024 at 3:40 PM**

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

Pacatus it would not be appropriate for me to speak for or about Elayne's reasons for leaving other than to say that she posted about pursuing her own initiatives, and to say that she would always be welcome back.

Understood! 👍

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2024 at 4:51 PM**

Pacatus and others -

Let me talk to the other moderators about this and until then please conduct the investigative part of this discussion in private conversations or email or the SofE website or Facebook page. If we get too far into comparing the details of the organizations then we are bound to end up with some negativity one way or the other that won't advance the goals of our discussion forum. Perhaps at some point the moderators can get together and talk about how to present this, but til then let's hold off the public comparisons.

It has seemed to me for a long time - and still does - that the differences between the two approaches are very obvious. All one really has to do is review that 2019 thread as we linked above, and read our FAQ entry, or glance through Hiram's "Tending the Epicurean Garden." Some people will find themselves more comfortable with the eclectic and Humanist/Buddhist-friendly approach they find at Society of Epicurus, and some will reject that and be more comfortable with the approach we spell out very clearly here. Perhaps at some point the FAQ will bear a little more expansion to make the differences easier to find, but negativity from either side is unlikely to be helpful to anyone.

One thing that might change my mind is if I heard someone say "Gee I wasted a lot of time that you could have saved me." But that hasn't been raised as an issue yet, and in fact being confronted with the differences oneself is a very educational experience in sifting through the nuances of what Epicurus really taught.

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## Post by "DavidN" of February 7, 2024 at 10:38 PM

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

Thoughts on Organization

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These are my thoughts - but I would not argue them, or make an issue out of any of them. I'm just, personally, not that strongly wedded to the question. 😊

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I think this applies more to a discussion group like what we already have, an actually community requires ownership, skin in the game on the part of the community members. As this is an area of interest of mine I have a section in my notes for development of a community in general not necessarily focused on epicureanism that should be applicable if the time every came. Firstly I would point to the historical hierarchy of epicurean communities, having founders and scholars. whatever that role may entail I do not currently suppose. Beyond this I have quite a few sections of notes from studying modern intentional community organizational structures, and membership. As much as our strong independence streak may lead us all to desire a situation devoid of hierarchy or that is completely egalitarian, my studies on the subject would suggest that in reality this simply isn't sustainable. But compatible distributive hierarchical systems do exist that give greater stability and utility, without imposing on members self-sufficiency more than is necessary to form, organize, coordinate and maintain community. I think one of these or some adaptation thereof would eventually serve well in the formation of an epicurean community. I would go into deeper detail on the subject but I am not currently in that mindset to dig into those notes.

That being said section 8. is a given, I would say any Epicurean community should refrain from playing politics, except in general conceptual terms.

## Post by "Adrastus" of January 2, 2026 at 6:08 AM

Taking another swing at starting an Epicurean group, this time steering well clear of the philosophical and religious angle I was pursuing before and instead focusing on developing a unique form of working men's organization. Personally I am building off the question. "What do I personally want?" and "What kind of person do I want in this group?"

I knew I didn't want 'philosophy' people to come and debate or talk about other philosophers or for me to have to give presentations on philosophy. I know I don't get on well with 'professionals' in middle class milieus, as a rather eccentric bumpkin. Nor do I want people like me that reeeeeeally needed Epicurean philosophy to get their minds sorted out as that is such an enormously risky prospect.

What I want is working people, defined as people like me who like to do physical work but are also interested in community and have at least a bit of intellectual pull. I like going to taverns, bring some cards or a light board game, meals, conversation, laughing and joking in crass as well as more high brow ways. I like the sort of guys I am currently working with honestly; lots of African Americans, Latinos and White guys without some inflated sense of "entitlement".

So why even start a group instead of cultivating friendships with my work buds? Why should Epicureans generally organize much at all beyond Friendships? To answer this I am leaning on the organizing "principal" or rather distinct feeling of "philoxenia", or love of strangers. I feel love for strangers and people working hard. I am not aiming for "solutions to society's problems", "solving the mens loneliness problem", or overturning the social order, or taking part in labor disputes or whatever Unions do; nor is this aimed squarely at teaching Epicurean Philosophy; but rather living Epicurean attitudes. I want to solve *that* guy's problem, particularly of finding dignified or even pleasant work; or sussing out ways to make work and lesiure more pleasurable. I love the feeling of comraderie I sometimes get in workplaces that make the cultivation of work pleasant, even fun like my current job even if I might go home with a few bruises and a sore muscle or two. I want to set people up, if possible for the Epicurean idea of autarkia where we can bask in the feeling of self-sufficiency and security of friendship without having to rely on it unless we must.

Anyway, so it will be a "mutual aid organization" that is a group of friends cultivating within themselves the love of the stranger and of friendship that they already feel, aimed at networking with other folks in the community-like business owners to set people up with work and meeting to socialize. Perhaps it can elevate to answering "spiritual", communal or other philosophical needs at some point through their friendly interest in my passion for Epicrean Philosophy, but it needn't be the end in itself. I am imagining some hand-made sign at a hang-out at community or otherwise large table at a restaurant that says, "Take a seat Friend or Stranger".

I am likely going to take a non-democratic, non-autocratic approach to organizing and found it on the relationships and hospitality I am giving to the group until we are on a similar page that others can pursue their intentions more specifically... in the absence of money exchanged, monetizing any part of the organizing, never institutionalizing with legal form.... then Hospitality and Friendship will be how things are maintained and there will be nothing worth taking over plundering or destroying as there is no gain in participation beyond feeling like we ought to be there, others feeling like we ought to as well and feeling like we are pursuing the shared telos of friendship and hospitality.

I also want to make the aesthetic choice to have it be a "Men's" group explicitly in the title in the same way the Boy Scouts allows girls if they really want to be there and fit in. Mainly to turn off people that would likely be too ideologically indoctrinated to accept the distinctly Epicurean way I am designing the organizing "principals." But I am not opposed to changing this depending on who shows up and what works well. Anyway, I'll stop there.

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 2, 2026 at 6:38 AM**

Is what you are talking about not basically a "Rotary" or "Lions" or "Kiwanis" or other "men's club?" And if so they have existing infrastructure that would help you get started?

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**Post by “Adrastus” of January 2, 2026 at 6:54 AM**

Thanks for your reply.

Might be some parallels, I suppose, to older fraternal societies; but then it wouldn't be anything that is about my feelings or initiative and joy in starting, or my friendships and goals I have with friends and intentions. I also have very little trust or faith in my community, men in particular, or its institutions to take the time to explore them.

Also many older fraternal vet people for belief in a transcendental God or vet people for their values which would likely be opposed to mine and Epicurean values; and at the end of the day are they friends in any real sense or friends based on obligation and form rather than feeling; if even that? I am skeptical such things can happen given my experience in trying Church communities.

## Post by “Cassius” of January 2, 2026 at 10:42 AM

Which I presume takes you back to needing to identify a list of core commonalities between you and the other prospective participants in a local society. unfortunately "we all just want to be happy" as a goal doesn't produce enough specificity when the meaning of "happy" and the path to get there have so many variations.

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## Post by “Don” of January 2, 2026 at 11:59 AM

### [Quote from Adrastus](#)

I also want to make the aesthetic choice to have it be a "Men's" group explicitly in the title in the same way the Boy Scouts allows girls if they really want to be there and fit in.

I would find it hard to square that circle. The Garden was famously open to everyone: friends, strangers; men, women; enslaved, free. That was one of the criticisms against it back in the day. Saying you want to explicitly create a "men's" group but would "allow" women "if they really want to be there and fit in" seems to go against the egalitarian nature of the Garden. I would find it hard to think of women who would want to join an explicitly "men's" group with that aim in its title. That said, if you want to create an Epicurean Men's Study Group, by all means, that's up to you and it could have its place. But I find the idea that women would be allowed if they fit in to be a little problematic.

The Boy Scouts example is actually a good example of why not to do this. In [an article from 2024](#): "starting in February of 2025, the entire organization will become *Scouting America* to reflect its commitment to serving all genders in all programs." So the entire organization is now Scouting America to be more inclusive.

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## Post by “Adrastus” of January 2, 2026 at 7:59 PM

Hmm... Duly noted with the critiques though I think [Cassius](#) 's comment I will take as a mischaracterization which is totally fair as I am not ordered or disciplined in the way I express myself, especially when it comes to exploratory thoughts and my meaning is anything but clear; and [Don](#) 's being the nature of the culture I live in and the sort of folks I am wanting to bring to Epicurean philosophy that makes me want to make that choice. I don't think it's

welcome to explain my history with this community in radically egalitarian contexts like communal housing, worker collectives and so forth, and the problems that arose around gender and my lack of desire to have those sorts of conversations with people in real life while trying to defend a way of life that I love. The men I am interested in "organizing" are not ideologically egalitarian and probably have a more or less degree of sexism. I would love to have a big party and everyone's invited, but the pursuit of philosophy in the workplaces I am in... where a month ago a man stabbed another and the police had to shoot him... to speak frankly; are the sort of places I am going to try to gently pluck the goodly men from. Cultivating pleasure in loving and wanting to support the working life of a stranger could be a good starting point to build off those men that may lean into mentor and training roles in the work place; or are just good natured but hardened from the workplace or from unpleasant men.

Maybe we take the Boy Scouts course... gather men under the banner and 'philosophize them', and then move from there once a promising "male" culture is established.

Thank you both for your comments and allowing me to refine my thoughts around this.