

I Propose We Work Together To Develop a Meeting Plan / Curriculum For Local Groups

Post by "Cassius" of January 9, 2018 at 7:41 PM

Our recent discussions on overall goals have me thinking that we really need to focus on some particular goal that we can all agree on, without being more ambitious than we can handle, and I am thinking that one obvious choice would be to develop an organization / implementation plan for local groups. Obviously Meetup is an easily accessible way to get a few people together, but what I am talking about is coming up with a set of talking point / reference handouts that we could make available to everyone to hand out at each Meetup meeting to serve as discussion points to keep the meeting on point and moving forward.

One option would be to do a "book club" type of plan, and just plan to discuss a chapter a month of some basic Epicurean book (probably Dewitt's), but I tend to think that the book club model might be better after an initial series of several meetings to let the people who come get to know each other at least a little before jumping into a project to read a book. Plus, anyone coordinating a series of meetings on a book club would want some kind of basic lesson plan guide to know what to emphasize anyway.

I presume a series of handouts for a generic (Pre-book-club) meeting would contain, for example, something like:

(NOTE: I will convert these to shared Google Docs for further editing)

Meeting 1 -

Meet at restaurant, greet each other, order dinner, and then start discussing from this list:

A - Basic information about the life of Epicurus

B - Reasons why people should be interested in Epicurus

(1) Epicurus was widely regarded by some of the world's greatest thinkers, including Thomas Jefferson and Frederick Nietzsche, as one of the world's most important philosophers.

(2) The reason Epicurus has always been held in great esteem by some, and has been hated by many others, is that he taught a way of looking at Nature and our place in it much different from that taught by the religions and philosophies most of us know today.

- (3) Epicurus will teach you why your happiness, and not religious and philosophical abstractions, should be the goal of your life.
- (4) Epicurus will teach you about the true nature of the soul, and how to deal with the fear of death.
- (5) Epicurus will teach you how to deal with the fear of gods and the threats of religions
- (6) Epicurus will teach you that your emotions are not things to be feared, but important guidance on how you should live your life.
- (7) Epicurus will teach you that you need not consider your world to be unknowable, and that confidence in your place in the world is possible.
- (8) Epicurus will teach you that knowledge is based on the senses, and that calls to "logic" and "reason" must always be grounded in the evidence of the senses.
- (9) Epicurus will teach you the true role of the "virtues" and their purpose in life.
- (10) Epicurus will teach you why friendship is the most important tool in happy living.
- (11) Epicurus will teach you how the nature of "justice" varies with time, place, and circumstance, but has a unifying purpose in human life that is the same for all.
- (12) Epicurus will teach you that happiness is not generally obtained by pursuing goals of wealth, power, fame, or material possessions, and that it is necessary to understand our limitations and adjust our desires accordingly.

C - Basic list of ideas that Epicurus taught, starting first with the brief outline of Epicurean thought drawn by Thomas Jefferson: as his "Syllabus of the doctrines of Epicurus"

(A) Physical

- A1 The Universe eternal.
- A1a Its parts, great and small, interchangeable
- A2 Matter and Void alone.
- A2a Motion inherent in matter, which is weighty & declining
- A2b Eternal circulation of the elements of bodies.
- A3 Gods, an order of beings next superior to man.
- A3a enjoying in their sphere their own felicities,
- A3b but not meddling with the concerns of the scale of beings below them

(B) Moral

- B1 - Happiness the aim of life
- B1a - Virtue the foundation of happiness
- B1b - Utility the test of virtue.
- B2 - Pleasure active and in-dolent.
- B2a - In-dolence is the absence of pain, the true felicity
- B2b - Active, consists in agreeable motion
- B2c - it is not happiness, but the means to produce it.
- B2d - thus the absence of hunger is an article of felicity; eating the means to produce it.
- B3 -The summum bonum is to be not pained in body, nor troubled in mind
- B3a - i.e. In-dolence of body, tranquility of mind.
- B3b - to procure tranquility of mind we must avoid desire & fear, the two principal diseases of the mind.
- B4 - Man is a free agent.
- B5 - Virtue consists in: 1. Prudence 2. Temperance 3. Fortitude 4. Justice
- B6 -to which are opposed: 1. Folly 2. Desire 3. Fear 4. Deceit

D - What we will plan to discuss in future meetings

- Meeting 2 - Basic Principles of Nature (Physics)
- Meeting 3 - Basic Principles of Thinking (Canonics)
- Meeting 4 - Basic Principles of Living (Ethics)

And if we flesh those out with bullet points that might be enough topics for Meeting 1

Then we set up Meeting 2 -

A - Meet, Greet, Order Dinner

B - What we'll talk about tonight: The Twelve Fundamentals of Physics

- **1.** Matter is uncreatable.
- 2.** Matter is indestructible.
- 3.** The universe consists of solid bodies and void.
- 4.** Solid bodies are either compounds or simple.
- 5.** The multitude of atoms is infinite.

6. The void is infinite in extent.
7. The atoms are always in motion.
8. The speed of atomic motion is uniform.
9. Motion is linear in space, vibratory in compounds.
10. Atoms are capable of swerving slightly at any point in space or time.
11. Atoms are characterized by three qualities: weight, shape and size.
12. The number of the different shapes is not infinite, merely innumerable.

C: Implications of the Physics - Why These Are Important:

1 - Because if nothing comes from nothing and nothing goes to nothing, then the universe is eternal and was never created by any god

2 - Because if the universe is composed of atoms and void, then everything is made of atoms and void, and there is no supernatural dimension

3 - Because if the universe is infinite in extent, then there is nothing outside the universe as a whole; everything is natural

4 - Because if the atoms are always in motion then everything is constantly changing and no bodies / worlds ever stay the same eternally

5 - Because if atoms can swerve, then the whole universe is not a billiard ball computer, and free will is possible

6 - Because if atoms have limited characteristics, even though they are infinite in number they still combine in ways that are governed by the nature of the atoms, and the combinations we see are natural and understandable by science (the properties and qualities issue).

We end by discussing what will come up at Meeting 3 (Principles of thinking)

Then we set up Meeting 3 -

A - Meet, Greet, Order Dinner

B - What we'll talk about tonight: The Principles of Epicurean Canonics

- 1

- 2

- 3

-4

C, Why these are important

ETC.....

I think we could set these up on one or two page PDFS for handing out to everyone, and these can be used to keep the meetings on track and serve as something for people to take home and remember for next time, etc.

The reason I raise this as a project is that we can work together to put this lesson plan together, and we can ourselves set up weekly or monthly chats to talk about what ought to be in each lesson plan and how the elements should be presented.

Working together on a project like this would be a good way for us to get to know each other better, learn to cooperate with each others, and provide us an agenda for ourselves to talk about when we schedule our meetings.

I can continue on with setting up raw outlines, but it would be very useful for us to talk each one through together, live, just like we were in a real meetup group working with new people for the first time.

What do you think about this? Would this be feasible? If so, then I suggest that we set up our first conference call via Skype or Discord and start working on Meeting 1 (which I've already largely laid out. We can do this in addition to Brett's suggestion of talking through DeWitt's book, and just do these on separate nights.

What say you?