

Outreach Discussion: When and Under What Circumstances and How to Invite Others

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of February 9, 2020 at 12:23 PM

ADMIN EDIT FROM CASSIUS: I split this thread off from a discussion of an exchange with Donald Robertson because Mike raised the question (later in this thread) about whether we should issue a specific invitation to Catherine Wilson to consider joining our group here. While those of us here obviously participate in many places online, and all of us are encouraged (or should feel like they are encouraged) to invite promising new people, we haven't really extended specific invitations to people as a general rule. Should we?

Under what conditions and considerations should we consider doing that? Is Catherine Wilson in particular someone that one or more of our Admins (not limiting this to me) should consider profreaching out to? Let's use this thread to discuss these issues in general, and not solely in relation to Catherine Willson, because it is possible that Ms. Wilson occupies a grey area between professional academics vs popular writers.

I am very interested to hear what people think. No matter what course this discussion may take, everyone should always feel free to invite anyone they wish at any time. At this point in the growth of the forum my view and practice is that pretty much anyone is allowed to join and participate who is willing to read and accept the terms of service, and if any problems develop we can deal with those after they develop. Not everyone has access to all areas of the forum, but the great majority is open to anyone to read, because if we believe that Epicurus is correct we should be happy to have new people be able to read our public posts.

Below is Mike's first post in this thread:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I don't recommend that anyone who is not already with Facebook join it, and I am trying to minimize my use of it. But the fact is that we've made a lot of contacts there, so everyone has to make the best decision for them.

Yup. I'm surprised Donald is a member of Epicurean Philosophy FB group while he himself does not hesitate to block or remove any user from his group who he thinks does not think similarly with him. If Catherine Wilson isn't there in our FB group, why is Donald?

Post by “Cassius” of February 9, 2020 at 1:00 PM

Donald joined at a time that we weren't as strict in our membership criteria as we are now. It's a continuing subject of debate and fine-tuning as to how to set membership standards. In Donald's case he doesn't post frequently, but when he does he generally does so cordially, and his posts give us an opportunity to further clarify issues with someone who clearly represents (or maybe I should say, SHOULD represent) the opposing viewpoint.

There are many competing considerations, some of the most basic being that the FB forum is one of the very few places on facebook where authentic Epicureans won't be drowned out by Stoicism. Then there is the need to continuously educate new people to the issues involved in why Stoic and Epicurean philosophies are in fact so far apart, as opposed to closely related as so many people are led to believe.

The big negative factor is that fighting can be distracting and off-putting and just generally isn't as "fun" as interacting with like-minded people. Epicurus specifically advised that we talk about these issues with like-minded people, and he prepared lots of written material to educate students against conflicting ideas, but to my knowledge there is no evidence that he invited Stoics or Platonists into the Garden for regular debates or even social occasions. Inviting people who are open-minded and sincerely interested in reconsidering issues is one thing; inviting people who are committed to opposing ideas is something very different.

So proper membership and moderation is a moving target that's we're always recalibrating.

It's worth noting that there's nothing in Epicurean philosophy that would support the idea that "democracy" is always the preferable means of governance. So as long as the moderating panel itself remains firmly Epicurean, and we can't be "outvoted" by the masses of Stoics and/or eclectics, we can afford to let a few in at times to keep us on our toes.

These Stoic vs Epicurean issues will never go away, and each new "generation" of members will have to be educated on it.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of February 9, 2020 at 1:26 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Inviting people who are open-minded and sincerely interested in reconsidering issues is one thing; inviting people who are committed to opposing ideas is something very different.

Why don't we invite Catherine Wilson? I came across one interview where she said she is not a scholar nor an academic authority of Epicureanism and instead expressed that she is just a practicing Epicurean. I think she is as open-minded as you mentioned unlike Donald who doesn't tolerate the likes of Catherine Wilson, let alone the likes of people such as him if he were you, the owner of Epicurean Philosophy group. What is your opinion on this Cassius?

Post by “Cassius” of February 9, 2020 at 3:59 PM

Interesting thing to think about Mike. I have not been in contact with nor have I invited anyone who qualifies as an "academic" in the past, and to my understanding she IS an academic, is she not?

Not that I necessarily have a rule against inviting academics, but given my observation of the percentages that would probably be about like going to the Stoic groups and inviting them.

It's an interesting idea though to bat around.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of February 9, 2020 at 5:24 PM

The reason why I suggest is that it is just proper to unite or be united with lone Epicureans the way we promote friendship among like-minded people. For sure Catherine has her own different views as much as you and I and anyone here has unique and personal way of understanding Epicurus. If we compare ourselves now with the modern stoics, they have Donald, and we have you. They have Massimo Pigliucci, but we don't have Catherine Wilson. As far as I know, Donald and Massimo have differences in views and understanding of Stoicism, yet they have been able to co-exist.

I learned from DeWitt that Epivureans are the first missionary. Inviting and uniting like-minded people can be part of this missionary work. If we fail to communicate with other Epicureans out there, our differences among one another will grow. By having Catherine Wilson here, I can say we can be considered a force to be reckoned with especially by the stoics. 😊

Post by “Cassius” of February 9, 2020 at 5:35 PM

This discussion is probably going so far from the original topic that it needs another thread. I will split this one up and start one under and "Outreach" section.... Just a minute.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of February 9, 2020 at 5:57 PM

When I came here just a month ago, I was a very different creature of sel-declared Epicurean. But through communication with you, I feel I am getting closer to the like-mindedness of our group and further away from my original remote state. Having Catherine here will not only give us a chance to really hear from her but will also give her a chance to hear from us. This idea applies not only for Catherine but also for anyone who believes to be an Epicurean.

Post by “Cassius” of February 9, 2020 at 6:43 PM

Mike you have read her books, watched her videos, or some combination? Regardless of what anyone else says or does in this thread you should feel free to invite her yourself. I don't consider myself to be much more than a website administrator with too much time on his hands sometimes, so you should never feel you need to wait on me to take initiatives. In fact that is one thing I've always tried to do more than anything else, to encourage people to do their own blogs and pursue their own initiatives, because in the end that's the only way that an "Epicurean movement" will grow, or makes sense. Yes individual leaders are needed but in the end it's an atomistic universe and "central direction" is not in our blood 😊

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of February 9, 2020 at 7:50 PM

[Cassius](#) Thanks for being fair and understanding. Yes, to me, you are not a mere site owner or site administrator. Your wisdom and kindness are enough for me to consider you as a mentor

and even a leader. You are supportive and respectful to the rest here. Ok, I will try to reach out to Catherine Wilson one of these days. I'm excited to do that. 😊

And yes, you're right by encouraging everyone of us here to feel free to blog. Thanks again Cassius! 😊

Post by “Hiram” of February 10, 2020 at 1:28 PM

well, during the times of the Scholarchs there seems to have been a healthy degree of "central direction", but in these days with the internet, maybe we need to form horizontal networks.

Either way, I would LOVE to have the exchanges with Catherine Wilson. I've reviewed her book, which generated some discussions here on the extent to which we may as Epicureans posit public policy based on PD's 31-38.

Plus we have one degree of separation, because I was invited to write the Epicureanism chapter for "*How to live a good life*" (which has opened the door to an audiobook and upcoming podcast interview) by Massimo (mentioned above) who is Stoic, and who has invited her as a guest blogger on his own personal blog in order to have someone present Epicurean replies to his criticisms. This means that she probably read "*How to live a good life*", and will likely have feedback for me also.

By the way, she's entered the fray by joining public discussions online between MODERN Epicureans and MODERN Stoics, so there is mutual advantage in us having her as we can all learn from each other to face contemporary objections, and I would argue there is even mutual advantage between us and the Stoics in having friendly, public debate to help students of philosophy to understand the differences between us and to learn the ways in which the two are not compatible, and the ways in which they are similar but not really the same.

Post by “Cassius” of February 10, 2020 at 1:39 PM

All of what Hiram stated I agree with, while still repeating the importance of our having our own centers of study ("schools," if you like) where we maintain full control over the means of presentation and rights of participation. Those approaches aren't contradictory but mutually reinforce each other, especially at the current time when those who are devoted to a classical version of Epicurean philosophy are a small minority among those who generally represented

on the internet and in public discussion. The internet has opened up the possibility for truly like-minded people to collaborate in ways that were never possible before, so we need to make intelligent use of it as we learn and grow.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of February 10, 2020 at 3:38 PM

[Hiram](#) and [Cassius](#) Very well said. 😊

Post by “Charles” of February 12, 2020 at 3:48 PM

On the topic of Wilson, the book store I work at has a sales rep from Basic Books, the publisher of "How to be an Epicurean", so if we decide that trying to reach Wilson is a good idea, all it would take is to contact that sales rep and then talk to Wilson's publicist and then to Wilson herself.

Of course this is all just up in the air, but the possibility of contacting her is not.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of February 12, 2020 at 8:29 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

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You're right Charles. I have tried to search for her online profiles to no avail. The only contact information I got was her email address from her profile on the website of City University of New York. I emailed her two days ago, but I still didn't get any reply. Perhaps, the email no longer works. If that is the case, there is no way on my end to contact her as I reside in the Philippines. I think you're the only one among us here who has the most possibility of

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contacting her through that sales rep.

And if contacting her through that publicist is also less possible, I don't think there is still a need to bother ourselves doing so. At least we have tried our best to be as open as possible to reach out not only her but also other Epicureans out there.