

Implement A Roadmap Or 'User Ranking According To Texts Read' System?

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 24, 2021 at 9:32 AM

I would just add/ask [Cassius](#) :

Is there a roadway traced somewhere in the site for learning Epicurean Philosophy?

If so, perhaps it would be helpful to link it on this thread and to feature it prominently as such somewhere in the menus.

If there isn't, perhaps you (all of the most studied ones) could use this thread to create a consensus on what this roadmap should be.

There are many references to texts thrown around in different threads, which I guess is great for completeness of those conversations, but perhaps if we had a roadmap to refer to, we could take those reading recommendations and contrast them to their place on the roadmap and recognize that perhaps we're reading something that, according to the roadmap, is out of our depth.

If the synoptic view of Epicurus as espoused by DeWitt is something that makes sense to all, perhaps that could serve as a guideline for the creation of this roadmap.

It makes sense that you emphasize that until someone's studied enough they wont be able to have a good understanding of the philosophy, and will probably do more harm than good; if I had to bet, id bet that many here would like to talk to others about the philosophy, and it would be cool to have a milestone where we could say "from here on, I already know enough not to do more harm than good".

Having this roadmap will help also in sending that message in the most material way possible, as opposed to asking people to have faith that later on they will be able to "see things more clearly".

Post by “Cassius” of August 24, 2021 at 10:18 AM

Good points, Camotero. I try to do that in the material that is sent to each new member, and which is referenced in the signup page, here: [Welcome To All New Participants!](#)

There's also the material referenced here in that opening post:

Hello and welcome to the forum. This is the place for students of Epicurus to coordinate their studies and work together to promote the philosophy of Epicurus. Please remember that all posting here is subject to our [Community Standards / Rules of the Forum](#) our [Not Neo-Epicurean, But Epicurean](#) and our [Posting Policy statements](#) and [associated posts](#).

But you're right it's not explicitly in the form of a roadway or roadmap. As we've discussed things like this in the past I've tried to hold back from an explicit "litmus test," and I suspect it will always be appropriate here on the forum to have a more flexible standard. I referenced "good faith" in the posts above and as I think Godfrey has reminded us in a comment recently, there's the old cliché stated in a Supreme Court case about "porn" that you "know it when you see it."

The transition to a more formal litmus test probably has to come only when someone explicitly sets up a "membership" organization where there are truly formal rules of organization, formal officers, formal directors, etc.

That's where the long thread on the [20 Tenets of the Society of Epicurus](#) came from. We had a long and useful discussion about the details of that, but in the end the division of viewpoint was so great that at least as far as I was concerned personally it did not make sense to proceed in that direction at that time. Probably at some future point those issues need to be discussed again and new efforts made to have a more formal organization, but at this point I think we've made it pretty clear in the initial materials everyone sees that we're not really a formal organization with a formal "catechism."

I doubt that it's possible to do that on a worldwide basis, although that is a constant subject of discussion. One of the practical problems you run into is that the closer you get to a real-world local organization, the more it becomes necessary to address issues that either are or border on "politics" on which people just aren't going to agree. In any "meetup" or informal grouping of people who are new to the philosophy I've found personally that it's impossible to get people to check those issues at the door long enough to see if there can really be agreement on the core issues of the philosophy. We've probably come as far as we have (and I'm wanting us to go much further!) because of the no-politics rule, but the no-politics rule may well be something that local real-world groups will have a very hard, if not impossible, time implementing.

My own thoughts are by no means set in stone in this and I think that very possibly different approaches are possible and even necessary. For example right now I am seeing major social stresses in Australia over Covid-19 issues, and it would be very interesting to know if those are impacting the Australia group. I am going to see what I can find out about that.

These are great issues to discuss and I hope we get a lot more discussion.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 24, 2021 at 12:47 PM

I guess I had forgotten about that list in the initial post, thanks a lot for reminding me of it. I'll put it here so if someone else reads this they don't have to go to the other page to see it:

1. The Biography of Epicurus By Diogenes Laertius (Chapter 10). This includes all Epicurus' letters and the Authorized Doctrines. Supplement with the Vatican list of Sayings.
2. **"Epicurus And His Philosophy" - Norman DeWitt**
3. "On The Nature of Things"- Lucretius
4. Cicero's "On Ends" - Torquatus Section
5. Cicero's "On The Nature of the Gods" - Velleius Section
6. The Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda - Martin Ferguson Smith translation
7. A Few Days In Athens" - Frances Wright
8. Lucian Core Texts on Epicurus: (1) Alexander the Oracle-Monger, (2) Hermotimus
9. Plato's [Philebus](#)
10. Philodemus "On Methods of Inference" (De Lacy version, including his appendix on relationship of Epicurean canon to Aristotle and other Greeks)
11. "The Greeks on Pleasure" -Gosling & Taylor Sections on Epicurus, especially on katastematic and kinetic pleasure.

I just have one more question: Why doesn't this list have a prominent place in the "CORE TEXTS" section of the main menu? Perhaps they're not core texts, but then I'd insist that they should have a prominent place somewhere that could be more accessible, since, as you mentioned in that post, these are the "key texts and references which most all serious students of Epicurus will want to read and evaluate for themselves". Just an idea.

As an example: I didn't have any plans on reading the biography by Diogenes any time soon, and that's changed now. I was probably going to dive into the "methods of inference" next, which I won't now, because of a reference in one of the other threads I was interested in. I'm pretty sure that's not only my case that we have limited time to devote to reading, so this list gives me confidence that I'd be reading the things that this group of friends recommends.

Thanks.

Post by “Don” of August 24, 2021 at 1:18 PM

That 10th book of Diogenes Laertius's Lives of the Eminent Philosophers is the core of the core in my opinion. That's where a substantial portion of Epicurus's actual works are widely available! It has Diogenes' bio of Epicurus along with the letters and the [Principal Doctrines](#).

Post by “Cassius” of August 24, 2021 at 3:38 PM

Thanks again for the suggestion to add the reading list to the "Core Text" page Camotero. I have added it both to the top drop down menu under core texts, plus to the "index page" of core texts. If you see another place where you suggest we put it please let me know.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 24, 2021 at 5:30 PM

Thanks for taking the suggestion [Cassius](#)

I hope I'm not abusing your kindness by suggesting the following: Wouldn't a progress tracking bar or similar thing on a user's dashboard be great? A user could check what they've read to affect their progress and that would give us a standard to know where everybody's at.

As a gameish feature, I think it would help engagement and continuity. In my experience, this sort of thing brings pleasure most often than not (we must have a pre conception about it ☐☐).

Post by “Cassius” of August 24, 2021 at 8:56 PM

Great idea but I am not sure how to implement it. Let me see if the software has a plugin but I doubt it. Any idea on how to do it? We do have a "trophy" system but I don't think it provides for checkboxes or ways to customize it.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 25, 2021 at 1:10 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Great idea but I am not sure how to implement it. Let me see if the software has a plugin but I doubt it. Any idea on how to do it?

No idea, my friend, sorry to ask without knowing what this entails. I found, however, a wolflab plugin website that has something that perhaps could be of use, so I'm sending it to you as a PM.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 6:09 AM

Camotero thanks again for this suggestion. I split these posts out to a separate thread and added them to my [to-do list](#).

I am still considering whether this is best implemented by a single page which lists each user with a progress bar indicating how many of the "core texts" they have read, or some type of trophy or indicator under the avatar similar to the existing "activity point" system.

Probably the real question is where and how to gather the data. We can set up a "custom user field" in the user profile, but i am not sure that data is then usable for anything elsewhere on the site. Right now the "poll" feature might be useable. A "Poll" thread allows user input and shows a ranking after participating in the poll. So far I haven't found a wolflab plugin directly on point. Or perhaps there is some kind of "survey" website where this could be done externally and then incorporated.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 2:18 PM

Ok I have just set up a new "poll" to get started working on this project: [EpicureanFriends Participants Reading List Report](#)

It's going to take some time to decide whether the poll feature is usable in this project or not. It looks like there is a result page sorted by answer, so that will give us an indication of who has read what, but doesn't easily give us a list by user of what they have read.

The Quiz feature has a results option that integrates in the user panel, so it might be possible to set up eight separate relatively short Quizzes about each work, and then the result may show in

the user badge or user information page. That's what we need to investigate next.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 3:50 PM

From the "motivational" point of view, the answer is probably going to be to have something that shows up in the user profile (at least when viewed on the desktop, and it may prove to be the case that the only way to do that is through the trophy system, and we'll just have to manually ask people to "claim their trophy" and message an admin so that it can be assigned to them manually.

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 7:00 PM

That sounds like a lot of work.

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 9:40 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

That sounds like a lot of work.

LOL indeed it will be - but it will be fun too!

Post by “Cassius” of August 25, 2021 at 10:19 PM

The real heavy lifting / lot of work seems to be getting an series of "courses" off the ground. In the end it might be necessary to start small with Quizzes here on the forum rather than a full "moodle" package, but hopefully all these intermediate steps like the reading list will help build the momentum toward full "courses"

Post by “Joshua” of September 4, 2021 at 6:38 PM

The idea of a textual "progress bar" is interesting, but would fail to account for attrition; I was considerably more well-versed in the key texts 3 or 4 years ago than I am now. Without continual re-reading, I can feel the ground slipping away under my feet. Bill Bryson captures my feeling neatly;

Quote

“I drove in the gloomy frame of mind that overtakes me at the end of every big trip. In another day or two I would be back in New Hampshire and all these experiences would march off as in a Disney film to the dusty attic of my brain and try to find space for themselves amid all the ridiculous accumulated clutter of half a century’s disordered living. Before long, I would be thinking, ‘Now what was the name of that place where I saw the Big Lobster?’ Then: ‘Didn’t I go to Tasmania? Are you quite sure? Let me see the book.’ Then finally: ‘The prime minister of Australia? No, sorry. No idea.”

Post by “Cassius” of September 4, 2021 at 7:53 PM

I feel exactly the same way Joshua!