

Supernatural and the Senses

Post by “Matt” of January 13, 2022 at 3:05 PM

I am having a fascinating discussion with someone who is deep into believing in supernatural things. Kind of beyond the usual “religious” view into the realm of occultism etc. I honestly didn’t realize this person believed what they apparently do, and it was brought up as if it’s a common casual thing to doso I pressed her on it.

This whole discussion relates to the Epicurean idea that the senses are the standard for truth. This particular person believes she sees “things” like angels, spirits, demons etc. I truly don’t believe this person is mentally ill, but I must now evaluate this situation based in my knowledge of Epicurean Philosophy. Because we need to draw a distinct demarcation line in the sand between casual superstition, harmful beliefs and prudent reasoning.

Again, I truly don’t believe this person is clinically ill, but now I’m forced to analyze their behavior and their conclusions.

As Epicureans, we do not believe in supernatural anything. Full stop.

So any explanation must preclude supernaturalism to be the conclusion. So that leaves two options either the person is in fact ill (with some sort of physio-chemical aberration in the brain) or this phenomena is a sort of social immaturity or imaginative delusion of superstitious idealism that has been allowed to prosper because society allows it to persist and eventually the person believes their imaginative false experiences are somehow relevant or true. Like believing a brief daydream of dragons flying through clouds has reality other than in your own mind. We know it’s just an imaginative daydream, but to others who hold these particular beliefs about spiritual realms etc. they may believe they have “insight” into these realms.

A delusion for a mentally ill person is “real” for them. As real as they cognitively can process that the experience is real and true, such as seeing things or hearing voices. That is a real phenomena in the chemical and physiological makeup of a person’s brain who has a diagnosis. But for someone who doesn’t have something affecting their neural processes “seeing” and “hearing” things is pure imagination.

And I will take the position that people who maintain these “beliefs” are socially immature or at worse fraudsters. I believe the person I’m speaking to now is in the socially immature camp, though they are well into their 50’s. They are claiming to see things that children might claim are invisible friends.

Where this is relevant is that we can see that the Epicurean standard of truth, a strong basis in reality and sensory data is critical for a person’s social and mental well being. Believing in

supernaturalism, even casually, will lead to very different conclusions about reality and as with the person I'm speaking with, it separates us from each other by testifying that one of us is speaking truth while the other is lying.

At this point a person must use prudent judgement for the best to "correct" this person. Either by using frank speech to shock them out of their imaginings by letting them know they are in jeopardy of having their friends lose faith in their ability to perceive reality or simply to leave the person to their imaginings neither reinforcing them but also never speaking of them again. I guess it depends on the relationship a person has with the other.

Post by "Matt" of January 13, 2022 at 3:20 PM

As Torquatus relates in "On Ends"...

"Moreover, unless the constitution of the world is thoroughly understood, we shall by no means be able to justify the verdicts of our senses. Further, our mental perceptions all arise from our sensations; and if these are all to be true, as the system of Epicurus proves to us, *then only* will cognition and perception become possible."

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 13, 2022 at 3:38 PM

You know, I think that in the end, it comes down to what you **define** as ill.

Also, I think that, as Epicurus said, **what our senses tell us is real, but how we interpret them isn't.**

So, let's jump into the first question: what do you define as ill? When someone sees something you don't see, I wouldn't necessarily call it mentally ill. For example, my mother can't see colours. She can only see black, white and grey. Is she physically ill? From her perspective, no; that's the world how she perceives it. But from the perspective of a „normal“ person, she's most certainly ill. Just the same thing applies here. Illness is very relative, it's not an objective label.

now let's get into the second part. I've made the discovery that as soon as you allow supernatural things to slide into your own life, even when it's something as minor as Platos forms, that means that you'll get very strange results. I think that a separation here is needed:

there's a difference between believing that **only what you see is true**, as in that case my mom should dismiss every thought of colour, and believing that **there are things out there which you can't possibly perceive**. Like God.

As a conclusion: it may well be that this person see demons and angels. But then, these things aren't supernatural- they're simply a part of our world, because they consist of atoms and void. Maybe our eyes simply aren't adapt at seeing them, just as I can't smell like my dog can- and this person simply has incredible biological luck. **There's no way in judging if this person is right or wrong**. Still, either a) there truly are angels- but then they are normal creatures, and you shouldn't fear them. Or b) there're no material angels- in that case, it's pure superstition and thus worthless.

So basically, the best thing to do is to follow Pyrrhonist advice here and dismiss judgement on this subject. That doesn't mean that her viewpoint is valid- it simply means that you can't prove nor disprove it, and thus you should suspend judgement on that. Easy as that 😊

Hope that helped!

Post by "Matt" of January 13, 2022 at 3:45 PM

Seeing visual data or the lack of seeing such things as colors and claiming to see angels are very different. Colorblindness is a natural physiological condition that is evidentially effecting a percentage of the population. It's not the same as "mental" illness like schizophrenia.

Post by "Matt" of January 13, 2022 at 3:49 PM

If a person dismisses judgement on this, it is in many ways denying there is a standard for truth. If I concede this person may ACTUALLY be seeing angels and they just don't effect me...that opens up a massive world of confusion.

Post by "Cassius" of January 13, 2022 at 3:53 PM

[Quote from Matt](#)

At this point a person must use prudent judgement for the best to “correct” this person. Either by using frank speech to shock them out of their imaginings by letting them know they are in jeopardy of having their friends lose faith in their ability to perceive reality or simply to leave the person to their imaginings neither reinforcing them but also never speaking of them again. I guess it depends on the relationship a person has with the other.

So i gather that this person is in a circle of relationship where it is appropriate to try to correct them, as opposed to simply separating from them?

[Quote from Matt](#)

This particular person believes she sees “things” like angels, spirits, demons etc.

That's a pretty specific list. So you do mean this literally, that this person says she actually sees these things in front of her, or is it still at all possible that she is talking figuratively?

I would almost be tempted to think it is possible that this person thinks that they are "ministering" to you by insisting on something that she really doesn't believe herself, out of a desire to try to bring you back into the fold.

Post by “Matt” of January 13, 2022 at 3:59 PM

This is not my first go around with people like this, I’ve met people have claimed that they see ghosts, angels, spiritual guides etc. I just didn’t know this particular person believed it.

My question to them is very, very simple and the answer I get is one of a duality...that they simultaneously believe that there is a supernatural realm and they have access to it AND the natural world as we experience it is real and true. So a “normal” person may be living their life in this reality like the rest of us and also simultaneously hold absolutely shockingly bizarre beliefs that they “see” supernatural things.

This type of thing doesn’t come up much, but I can tell you I’ve met a handful of people that share these similar beliefs.

Post by “Matt” of January 13, 2022 at 4:02 PM

And if they don't truly believe it and if they are attempting to minister to someone...that should make for a significant cognitive dilemma.

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 13, 2022 at 4:05 PM

Quote

If a person dismisses judgement on this, it is in many ways denying there is a standard for truth. If I concede this person may ACTUALLY be seeing angels and they just don't effect me...that opens up a massive world of confusion.

Wait, which confusion? First, I don't really get why one is thus denying the standard of truth. I may be mistaken, but my goal was to apply this standard of truth, although I may have done it incorrectly. And secondly, in my eyes, the bigger problem is that if you accept that your viewpoint is the truth, then you'll come to the conclusion that she is wrong and thus ill. And how do you plan to communicate further with this knowledge? 😊

Post by "Matt" of January 13, 2022 at 4:07 PM

I'm of the mind I can just depart company with this person...it's not worth my time to deep dive into their delusions. But because this isn't the first time I've dealt with this type of thing it has caused me to really want to draw the line in the sand between what is casual belief in something supernatural and what is on the complete verge of madness. But again if the person doesn't truly believe what they say they see...then we have an untrustworthy person.

Post by "Matt" of January 13, 2022 at 4:09 PM

My position is that there are two options...either the person is ill or that there is some sort of social and mental immaturity. Since a supernatural third position is impossible.

If the person is attempting to minister...and simultaneously doesn't actually see or believe what they are saying, we have a whole other discussion about ethics in religion. And believe me...I believe that people do this exact thing all the time, fabricate things to maintain cohesion of belief.

Post by "SimonC" of January 13, 2022 at 4:34 PM

I was a christian during much of my teens. At one point a woman told me that she had seen angels, and I believed her. I pressed her on what it was like and in the end she admitted it was not a "seeing" seeing as an experience on the sensory cortex but rather a feeling of someone being present, and, in one case, a sensation like someone putting a hand on her shoulder.

If you have a dualist worldview it might make sense that you can think of things like that as a kind of evidence, like seeing with the soul.

Also: after being told this, I wanted very badly to experience angels too. I can empathize with wanting this, perhaps to the extent that you tell others that you have done so in order to feel it by proxy if that makes sense. Like a teenager telling their peers that they have totally had sex/smoked weed/whatever.

A lot of words to say that I agree with your "immaturity" assessment.

Mental illnesses *generally* don't create visual hallucinations, mostly auditory ones.

It does not make sense to believe in miracles reported by others unless them lying or being deluded would be more miraculous than the miracle they are describing, to paraphrase Hume.

Post by "Matt" of January 13, 2022 at 4:40 PM

[SimonC](#) absolutely...and your experience goes to show that this isn't an isolated thing. Many, many people say they see and hear things that otherwise appear to be fabrications. For us it is simple to dismiss as fantasy, but for those who say these types of things and testify to their reality we have a problem...especially if it's deeply cherished belief that is a part of their identity.

Post by “Cassius” of January 13, 2022 at 5:26 PM

[Quote from Matt](#)

But because this isn't the first time I've dealt with this type of thing it has caused me to really want to draw the line in the sand between what is casual belief in something supernatural and what is on the complete verge of madness.

My only caution is that most of the time when I have gotten too deeply involved with a person who is so clearly out of touch with reality nothing good has come of it. The chances of your changing their mind are next to none. Of course on the other hand we all have many casual relationships with people of all types and it doesn't really matter what they believe as long as their general relationship with us is beneficial.

No doubt there are lots of people in the world like that and always will be, and many of us will even have relatives that way. Possibly the real issue before the house that ought to be discussed is something like [PD39](#) on what general methodology can be used to accurately decide whether someone (1) can be made our friend, or (2) can at least not be treated like an alien (stranger?) or (3) ought to be someone we actively separate ourselves from to the extent possible.

I don't necessarily think that Epicurus was suggesting that we ought to have only Epicurean friends, but those are interesting questions to consider -- such as "what really is a friend?" -- in realistic rather than poetic terms.

Post by “Matt” of January 13, 2022 at 5:49 PM

Agreed, my issue is that there are a good number of people just like the person I'm talking with. For example I know of another person who in a similar way is so deeply involved with psychics that she has altered actions in her life to follow what the psychics foretell...

Even further this can go into people getting detached from reality while perusing the internet and social media, believing unfounded things and altering their lives to fit what might as well be the same as religious fiction. And the line blurs even more.

I don't suggest we have only Epicurean or secular minded friends...but there really needs to be a line drawn where people who perceive reality in vastly different ways must reconcile reality either by disassociation or direct ideological confrontation.

Post by “Matt” of January 13, 2022 at 5:52 PM

If I add the “internet” crowd to this number of detached people that believe in lizard people, deep underground bases and other “fringe” ideas and those people are those that are not using the canon as the standard of truth, the number of detached people would exponentially multiply.

In recent times in light of certain ideologies that seem to have taken hold among people, I’m way less inclined these days to let certain things pass by without notice. The supernaturalists are in reality a minor problem, but someone who believes certain apocalyptic eschatological narratives in a casual way may be much more inclined to believe fabrications they read online to “act” upon them in reality. So what I see is a bigger problem in society in general...casual unfounded beliefs in fantastic things can quickly turn into serious real life issues.

Post by “Cassius” of January 13, 2022 at 7:22 PM

[Quote from Matt](#)

so deeply involved with psychics

My experience with people who are into psychics is that they are probably easier to deal with than hard-core religion.

[Quote from Matt](#)

I’m way less inclined these days to let certain things pass by without notice.

I agree - the question is more what to do about it after you notice it. I am all in favor of gently steering people in the right direction, maybe by dropping some ideas of reading that they might find interesting. Depending on whether they are left or right or some kind of weird religion, you can often find people they identify with who have in the past had some good things to say about Epicurus. But as far as hard-charging efforts to change peoples' minds, I am not sure there is a really good method.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 1:34 AM

Some years ago, I briefly studied Carl Jung's ideas of "archetypes" and the "collective unconscious". People who believe in the supernatural are at a place in their lives where they are "needing" to engage with this primitive part of the psyche. The majority of people only interact with this through their dreams. And modern people often cannot even remember their dreams.

It is important to be clear that any "messages" that come through should not be taken on a literal level. These messages are for making sense of the "inner landscape" of the individual psyche. These are the elements, motifs, and archetypes of art and the creative forces of the psyche interacting with the realm of emotions, passions, and unconscious repressed desires. The psyche strives for coherence and "wholeness".

We can dance with these "archetypal symbols" to enhance creativity in life. But some people might take it all too literally, somehow believing that what is "mythic" in the inner worlds, is also true in the out physical/material world...as in the above stories shared by [Matt](#) . (And then people with mental disorders of schizophrenia cannot manage any of this properly unless they can get modern medical treatment...it is as if they are dreaming while awake).

[Quote from Matt](#)

This is not my first go around with people like this, I've met people have claimed that they see ghosts, angels, spiritual guides etc. I just didn't know this particular person believed it.

I would either decide to "enjoy" their stories...listen and say: "hmmm, that's interesting"...or decide to move on...because you won't be able to talk anyone out of these beliefs, they have to do it on their own. And I would simply say: "I have a different belief. I believe in a materialist, scientific understanding of things."

[Quote from Matt](#)

If I add the "internet" crowd to this number of detached people that believe in lizard people, deep underground bases and other "fringe" ideas and those people are those that are not using the canon as the standard of truth, the number of detached people would exponentially multiply.

I wonder what Carl Jung would have to say about this, if he were alive. As these are the mythological elements that could haunt peoples dreams.

As for approaching it from science: this book might be relevant: ***The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*** by Carl Sagan.

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 6:05 AM

[Kalosyni](#) you have a very good way with people.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 11:04 AM

[Quote from Matt](#)

Kalosyni you have a very good way with people.

Well, thank you...I don't know...

Just remember that pleasure and pain is the teacher here...with a focus on moving toward both short-term AND long-term pleasure (and the consideration of not just your own pleasure but also the other person's pleasure...because this has a built in feed-back loop).

I studied "Nonviolent Communication" by Marshall Rosenberg, and took classes and workshops. He said: "Don't do anything unless you are as happy as a child feeding a duck."

And this also points the need to be clear (inside yourself) about why you are doing something. So you trust your inner feelings about what feels good inside, for your own situation, and for your own needs. At some point I'd like to share more about it on the forum, as I see it as being in sync with Epicureanism, and has some helpful ideas.

(Unfortunately "Nonviolent Communication" didn't help me fix my marriage, and I am now divorced).

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 11:42 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

He said: "Don't do anything unless you are as happy as a child feeding a duck."

I had a judge tell me one time that his best advice in life was "When in doubt, don't."

Of course he was widely considered in the community to be neither a great judge nor having a lot of personal insight 😊

The problem is that we sometimes have to take risks knowing that our decisions may backfire on us. Figuring out how to do that prudently in itself would be a great topic -- "how to evaluate risk" -- because I don't think Epicurus would or did recommend avoiding all risk. That's another way of framing the question that is often asked as "Should we pursue ONLY the natural and necessary desires?"

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 11:48 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The problem is that we sometimes have to take risks knowing that our decisions may backfire on us.

I shouldn't have said it that way because this phrasing begs the question. We don't "have" to take risks in many cases. We choose whether to do so or not. We could simply choose to live in our caves on bread and water and forgo the possibility of many activities that may bring significant pleasure but at the cost of significant pain. If "all pain is to be avoided at all cost" is the formula, then the cave-dwelling life would be a logical option. But that doesn't appear to me to be the formula Epicurus taught, nor does it make sense to me that he would have taught it.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 11:53 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The problem is that we sometimes have to take risks knowing that our decisions may backfire on us.

Yes.

I realise that I need to more clearly explain: "Don't do anything unless you are as happy as a child feeding a duck"...I need to add...

This is in reference to interactions with people, for example if someone asks you to do something, that you don't say "yes" out of a feeling of duty or obligation, but instead get clear about what you are wanting...and so you may then decide to say "no" to their request. And when you say "yes" you know clearly why and see that it is because of mutual needs being fulfilled, or because you trust in the reciprocity of the relationship and see how saying "yes" will lead to giving pleasure to the other person (and anticipating their pleasure also gives you pleasure).

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 11:56 AM

I think the main impetus for me starting this thread is my building impatience for for certain ideologies and attitudes, especially in the last few years. In general, I've been one to “let things go” in the past and what that taught me was that I allowed the other person's behavior to flourish, usually without correction. With the numbers of people in society who are otherwise detached from reality increasing steadily, the “casual” remarks about unfounded things are becoming much more irritating. I'm not one to say “lathe biosas” and go live in a mountain cave shutoff from society...so the only option is to steer the ship away from rocks and put the crazies in the brig by correcting them.

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 12:06 PM

What I've learned about people is that they rarely have an internal “come to Jesus” revelation that dramatically alters their behavior. It's usually a paradigm shifting external experience, often negative or painful, that does it...and even then there are people who will still touch the hot stove after being burned....multiple times.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 12:25 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We don't "have" to take risks in many cases. We choose whether to do so or not. We could simply choose to live in our caves on bread and water and forgo the possibility of many activities that may bring significant pleasure but at the cost of significant pain. If "all pain is to be avoided at all cost" is the formula, then the cave-dwelling life would be a logical option.

Okay, so in some situations the hedonic calculus comes out even...equal levels of pain and pleasure...and thinking about it further I begin to see that that is why there actually might be an emphasis on activities that reduce pain. Because if you have two options: Option A - the end result will be an equal amount of pleasure and pain...and Option B - more pleasure and less pain...then you choose option B.

I think an instance of this is marriage...people go into it thinking that there will be more pleasure than pain, but only if you are lucky will this be the case...if you can find a very compatible partner with a similar world-view, similar life goals, similar likes and dislikes, and similar disposition, who is an emotionally grounded and rationally thinking person, who is healthy and strong, who knows how to problem-solve, who has good social skills and emotional intelligence, and who is kind, patient, generous, and loving.

So let's say two people with all these characteristics find each other and marry...it is possible that there will be more pleasure than pain. If any of these qualities are deficient then some problems will come up...and when they do, the pleasure and pain "hedonic calculus" will come out even...or could come out with more pain.

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 14, 2022 at 12:29 PM

I've seen somewhere a scientific experiment which determined that pain is worth four times the amount of pleasure. Means that when you experience pain, you'll need four times the amount of pleasure to feel as happy as before.

I'm not sure that one should take that at face value; such numbers are very approximate and not really a help to decisions. But if there's an equal amount of pain and pleasure connected with an act, I'd choose not to have it- because, in my subjective experience, pleasure doesn't "negate" pain at a 1:1 ratio.

Post by "Kalosyni" of January 14, 2022 at 12:36 PM

[Quote from Matt](#)

With the numbers of people in society who are otherwise detached from reality increasing steadily, the “casual” remarks about unfounded things are becoming much more irritating.

We need to join together to further the understanding of science and the scientific method, as well as uphold the materialist understanding of life. We need to talk about it and share about it with others, not as a "defense" (or out of anger) but rather out of enjoyment. So not forcing it on others, but being a witness to it and its benefits. There more people that "think clearly" the better the world will become.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 12:52 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

if there's an equal amount of pain and pleasure connected with an act, I'd choose not to have it- because, in my subjective experience, pleasure doesn't "negate" pain at a 1:1 ratio.

This jostled my memory regarding marriage:

Quote

That “magic ratio” is 5 to 1. This means that for every negative interaction during conflict, a stable and happy marriage has five (or more) positive interactions.

“When the masters of marriage are talking about something important,” Dr. Gottman says, “they may be arguing, but they are also laughing and teasing and there are signs of affection because they have made emotional connections.”

On the other hand, unhappy couples tend to engage in fewer positive interactions to compensate for their escalating negativity. If the positive-to-negative ratio during conflict is 1-to-1 or less, that’s unhealthy, and indicates a couple teetering on the edge of divorce.

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-magic...ording-science/>

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 1:00 PM

I have “faith” that this community can make changes.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 1:02 PM

"I've seen somewhere a scientific experiment which determined that pain is worth four times the amount of pleasure. Means that when you experience pain, you'll need four times the amount of pleasure to feel as happy as before."

I would say that rules of thumb can be helpful but most frequently the ratings are so subjective that it's essential that the limits of thumbnails always be part of the conversation

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 1:32 PM

There are some very smart, wise, well spoken, well read and articulate people in this global community. Scholars and average people. All promoting a historically popular and relevant philosophy for modern times.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 2:42 PM

I am not sure if this needs a new thread but I sense the topic is morphing to a variation of [Joshua](#) s "only the beginning theme."

The question is almost:." What do those of us who begin to get comfortable with the Epicurean worldview do with that knowledge? "

First and foremost that means using it to live happily ourselves, but then we should probably remember that the most important tool to live happily is friends.

We here are online friends but we need local friends at least as much.

So the topic always come back to how we can identify and/or cultivate our own local Epicurean friends.

We can't just always talk among ourselves and increase our knowledge of the texts. Once we have the outline and a basic understanding, we move from "General Officers" to the front lines.

And I think that points back to our needing to figure out our own variation of "Meetup groups" as Kalosyni and others have been discussing.

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 2:52 PM

Individuals here who feel comfortable would need to branch off and start local geographical groups...like an “Epicurean Fellowship” of New Hampshire, Georgia, Florida, Washington...and of course globally. The local affiliated geographical groups flow back into the home school website (this one...or in other cases the Athens Garden, the SoFE etc.) but individuals have to choose to go out of their way to lead groups in the philosophy. Make their own websites and create their own material (or use what we have here) a teaching curriculum of sorts.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 2:52 PM

I think that part of the answer to these questions has to involve admitting that the world has changed a lot in the last few years.

Even until recently I gather people found out about each other through posting flyers at the library, or at the local college campus, or maybe posting an advertisement in the local newspapers.

None of that really is operational anymore. Even if we want to have a meeting of people in our subdivision or apartment complex, I gather that the first option nowadays is Zoom (or skype or whatever).

I can't think of any alternatives but to combine the two processes by working to identify people in a particular locality but expect that even then their primary communication means will be online.

So maybe the practical brainstorming needs to be figuring out how people are communicating and finding each other locally (maybe "Neighborhood" apps?) and figuring out a format where people in a particular locality can be invited to participate in zoom meetings that are fairly general in terms of Epicurean doctrine but also "local" in that everyone has a connection in generally living in a similar locality(?)

If that's the way forward, then that's going to take significant planning on how to preserve privacy and security and at the same time do something worthwhile.

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2022 at 2:53 PM

Matt and I crossposted but are on the same wavelength. We'll need to work on and provide a "model" for people to go by. Even the gods couldn't create anything without a model!

Post by "Matt" of January 14, 2022 at 2:54 PM

A somewhat unified teaching curriculum could be used. Just like the College of Stoics does by Chris Fisher.

Post by "Matt" of January 14, 2022 at 2:55 PM

Already have two millennia worth of information stored on this website alone... We have podcasts, we have individuals willing to do all sorts of things. Everyone needs to start branching off.

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2022 at 2:55 PM

Yes I have been talking with Kalosyni lately about the aborted (to date) efforts at epicuruscollege.com

I told her that I stopped pushing that forward in favor of the podcast, as I thought we needed more "content" before we could do course material.

I think that issue is now resolved, and it's now time to figure out how to develop courses for an online presentation that can be combined with local activity.

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 2:57 PM

It could start slowly or there could be a rapid interest based on internet exposure to the philosophy...especially as a rival to Stoicism. But regardless a unified teaching curriculum would be needed to be the source for all the branches of the Garden.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 2:58 PM

[Quote from Matt](#)

Everyone needs to start branching off.

That appears to be where things have fallen through in the past. Yes this is true, but in the end it takes "leadership" of a kind that I personally am not well equipped to provide! Or else we would be a lot further along already! 😊

I think it is true that nothing really productive ever gets done by a committee alone, and that anything has to have a direction and a couple of leaders who help coordinate things. There are always a thousand reasons "not" to do things, and it takes some dedicated people to power past the obstacles.

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 2:58 PM

People like “apostolic” type lineages and authority when it comes to authenticity. ☐☐

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 2:59 PM

[Quote from Matt](#)

But regardless a unified teaching curriculum would be needed to be the source for all the branches of the Garden.

Yes I agree. We can't wait until all 38 (or is it 37) books are reconstructed, we have to start with the outline basics and get things going, then fill in the details over time. I don't see any evidence that Epicurus waited until all or most of his books were written before he started organizing.

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 3:01 PM

If there is a place that is a “hub” for Epicurean philosophy in the English language in the 21st century. This website is it.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 4:06 PM

It is a start anyway. Maybe the question is "what does a group of Epicureans getting together with each other do?"

Some kind of pattern of activities combining a "lesson" or lecture with some kind of enjoyable activity (food)? Plus something that invites participation so people can get to know one another better.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 4:17 PM

And maybe a key element in the picture is that the structure has to give the local leader some motivation to be the local leader. In other words, not necessarily financial motivation, but some kind of reward or compensation for all of the effort that it takes to spearhead local activity.

We have half-joked before about the issue of "certifying" local people for things such as performing wedding ceremonies, but these issues have to be figured out without getting anywhere close to the "cult" status that we discussed in the last podcast.

Post by “SimonC” of January 14, 2022 at 4:40 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It is a start anyway. Maybe the question is "what does a group of Epicureans getting together with each other do?"

Some kind of pattern of activities combining a "lesson" or lecture with some kind of enjoyable activity (food)? Plus something that invites participation so people can get to know one another better.

Perhaps a similar structure as the podcast can be part of it, with reading and discussion? Sometimes from non-Epicurean writers in order to generate discussion.

Food is clearly traditional. Also a garden if weather permits.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 4:53 PM

Yes I agree. What we are starting to see in the way we structure the podcast and some of the Twentieth skype sessions is going to lead in the right direction.

Some kind of

- Open with welcome to everyone and state the agenda.
- Some kind of brief presentation of a point of philosophy.
- Some kind of question/answer "roundtable" about the point of philosophy that was raised.

- Some kind of introduction of everyone by first name of who is there and a sentence or two or three (no more) about their background in Epicurus

- Then maybe a "thank you for coming and our next meeting will be _____ and in the meantime we invite you to join us in our ongoing discussions at http://www.Hometown_Epicureans.com. " And then say "We invite everyone to hang around and introduce themselves further and enjoy our cookies and punch (or whatever).

We can do the same thing pretty much by zoom or at the local library.

Post by "smoothiekiwi" of January 14, 2022 at 5:12 PM

You know, that sounds really great to me! At least I personally would be really intrigued by something like this.

Still, I think that it's necessary to keep a balance between "openness" and being focused only on philosophy. I think that a big part of Epicureanism is simply enjoying the community and gaining pleasure from having contact with people, while also maintaining a healthy boundary from other philosophies (looking at you, Stoicism!) I think that many communities have a certain "push-away" factor by being focused on a certain subject, like board games. Although there may be really nice people, it's nevertheless a community dedicated to a certain goal- and when I don't really align with this goal, the community becomes worthless to me.

In that sense, I think that we should take an example from the Christians, who in turn took an example from the Epicureans- have a linking element, but being open to everyone. Who doesn't align with these goals, won't participate for long.

And also a thought- where would be a good place to organize such meetings? I wasn't able to find a good solution for that.

Post by "SimonC" of January 14, 2022 at 5:28 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

And also a thought- where would be a good place to organize such meetings? I wasn't able to find a good solution for that.

Someone's backyard is the canonical location. But lots of cities also have public meeting buildings for groups as these.

I think finding a critical mass of people in a given location is a much larger issue than the logistics.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 9:01 PM

Yes I am thinking like Simon in terms of public meeting places -- probably libraries in most communities. There's probably too much danger in inviting people to one's homes until we get to know them fairly well. Just like here on the forum where we need to "get to know" people for a while before giving them higher posting rights, there will need to be a vetting process that takes place at public locations first.

But I agree -- open to everyone and be more generic and diplomatic at the open meetings than we would in private conversations. It won't take long for people to get the message that an Epicurean group isn't a cooking or boating club.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 9:13 PM

[Quote from SimonC](#)

I think finding a critical mass of people in a given location is a much larger issue than the logistics.

I have wondered what kind of people would come to an in-person meeting on "Epicurean Philosophy"?

But before I can even answer that question I have to consider that in-person meeting aren't isn't going to happen for a while until Omicron cases come down.

"The 7-day rolling average of new coronavirus cases as they were reported by the Oregon Health Authority: 8,660"...Further here is what is happening for kids in schools: "If a school cannot confirm that 6 feet of distancing was consistently maintained or 3 foot distancing with consistent mask use was maintained during the school day, then each person the confirmed case was in contact with would be considered a close contact. Exposed close contacts without symptoms would either need to quarantine for seven days or be part of a "test-to-stay"

program." ...Indoor masking requirements for all indoor public places remain (for all people over age 2)

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 14, 2022 at 9:20 PM

My reason for the giving the above statistics, is that here in Oregon, people will probably be more likely to join a Zoom meeting than to attend something in-person. But then who will join a Zoom meeting? It comes down to very few people...so for now this must be both on national and global level, not local level. That's just my opinion for now. Come summertime things might be different, and in addition outdoor meeting at parks or outdoor areas of breweries might make for a good meeting location.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2022 at 9:24 PM

Yes this has to happen in stages. But I do think we all need to be clear about the eventual goal , which is real-life local friendships, real-life marriages, real life Epicurean children and childhood education, etc.! 😊 The whole nine yards that they had in the ancient world.

Post by “Don” of January 14, 2022 at 10:09 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Yes this has to happen in stages. But I do think we all need to be clear about the eventual goal , which is real-life local friendships, real-life marriages, real life Epicurean children and childhood education, etc.! 😊 The whole nine yards that they had in the ancient world.

Aim high, ο φίλος μου! Aim high, my friend! 😊

Post by “Matt” of January 14, 2022 at 10:25 PM

It's the only way to get more Epicurean friends....we have to grow more Epicureans. I have more in common with many online individuals that I've never met, but corresponded with for almost 7 years than I do with many of my in person friends. Branching out will be an edifying thing.

Post by “Don” of January 14, 2022 at 10:41 PM

I sometimes wonder if contacting some Unitarian Universalist churches wouldn't be fruitful to set up Epicurean "study groups" or events.

We went to a UU church a number of years ago when the kids were little, and they were very (almost too) open to all beliefs and non-beliefs.

Side note: My favorite anecdote from that time happened during the Q&A after the sermon one Sunday. It was a sermon on spirituality, etc., and one of the attendees (a long-time member!) raised his hand and started his comment with "I have to say that I'm not comfortable with all this God talk." Yeah, it was that kind of congregation 😊

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2022 at 6:24 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Aim high, ο φίλος μου! Aim high, my friend!

Nothing but the best for us! 😊

[Quote from Matt](#)

have more in common with many online individuals that I've never met, but corresponded with for almost 7 years than I do with many of my in person friends.

I feel exactly the same way and this is a source of much amazement and disbelief to some of my local friends to whom I mention it.

[Quote from Don](#)

hey were very (almost too) open to all beliefs and non-beliefs.

Yes that is part of the issue (they may tend to be radical skeptics) and then there is the "humanism" issue which is probably too much of a tangent to tackle here. This is one of the areas where some of Elayne's past commentary was most helpful. She had impeccable - sterling - credentials in dealing with the people who are attracted to the UU approach (because she had been down that path and understood and agreed with many of their policy views) but she understood how selecting particular views of the "good" would be contradictory to the basics of the philosophy of an atomistic universe.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 15, 2022 at 11:25 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

selecting particular views of the "good" would be contradictory to the basics of the philosophy of an atomistic universe.

Everyone has a formulation in their mind about what is "good" and what is "true". And unless they have a materialist view and pragmatic pleasure goal, then their mental conceptions and words will all be based on something very different than the "Epicurean worldview".

And in addition, here on the forum our definition of "good" and "true" is anything that is synonymous to the original teachings of Epicurus. Until everyone is completely clear about what the original teachings of Epicurus are, then we can't move forward as easily. So we almost need an "Epicurean Bible".

And now, I am not so sure that having meetings at a UU church would work...as there can be a "religious" undercurrent (a loving/benevolent Universe) based on a worldview that is different than Epicurean worldview. Epicureans would say the "Universe" is indifferent. And what exactly is this "Universe"...Epicureans would cognate it differently than UU's.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 15, 2022 at 3:58 PM

What do you mean by "Bible"? I immediately think about the Christian "holy word" doctrine, where the word of the holy scripture shall not be doubted by thou, but probably you meant something else 😊

Post by “Don” of January 15, 2022 at 4:52 PM

I just saw [Kalosyni](#) 's "Bible" reference to be metaphorical, as in a collection of authoritative texts providing what Epicurus and the early Epicureans wrote [up to 529 CE](#). Unfortunately, I doubt we'll ever get such a reference work. The closest we currently have is Book X of Diogenes Laertius although I've been reading Philodemus's *On Property Management* and *On Death* today and may have some posts at some point. The scrolls from Herculaneum are always tantalizingly out of reach. I also recently requested *Les Epicuriens* through interlibrary loan, but, as I barely read French at all, we'll see how helpful it is.

Also [Kalosyni](#) , I agree about the UU church (although just as history for anyone interested, the Universalist comes from the Christian concept of universal salvation for everyone and not a benevolent universe) not necessarily being the *best *spot to form a Garden. 😊 . Here are some of the reasons I thought they *might* be amenable:

<https://www.uucantonny.org/good-without-god/> (mentions Epicurus)

[The Swerve: How the World Became Modern | Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton](#)

<https://austinuu.org/wp2013/spiritual-ambivalence/> "Epicurus modified the whole dualistic view of humans and took the stance that flesh AND soul were physical and both ended with death – and both body and soul dissolved back into nothingness upon death. Life was for living; it wasn't just a preamble to eternity."

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/ameri...er-church-state> (mentions Epicurus)

"Epicurean group's circle dinners" <https://www.phoenixuu.org/wp-content/upl...018/08/1996.pdf>

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2022 at 5:50 PM

No doubt she's talking figuratively, as that's a common figure of speech in the USA.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 16, 2022 at 3:30 AM

Ah, thanks for clarifying! That’s why English is really beautiful, but sometimes very confusing



Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2022 at 9:11 AM

This issue of "idioms" and "expressions" is a big one and obviously is something that we face in our translations of the ancient texts too. It always pays to be cautious in thinking we read something that would not make sense from what we know about the larger context of a person. That is probably a major theme of our work in interpreting Epicurus.