

# **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 "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 (Canonic)

- 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?

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**Post by “jbaker” of January 9, 2018 at 10:57 PM**

That's a fantastic idea! I really dig having a handout to refer to while talking and for something for new participants to take home with them and think about. They could also end up serving a therapeutic process like Hiram describes in his book.

## **Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2018 at 3:59 AM**

Yes I think so too. These are the kinds of things we can talk about in strategy sessions. We can come up with a format in some easily editable format and people can customize it to their liking, but we can provide the majority of the content to make customization easy.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2018 at 9:31 AM**

Elli's comments on Procedure:

I would like to know what are the main issues that they will be discussed there to participate. However, to be frank I did not read this english book with details yet, but I have already read with details the known book to the greek epicureans by the Late professor of philosophy Charalambos Theodoridis. Since the procedure in the Garden of Thessaloniki was going like this : to participate in the discussions that were among old and new members and to have the right for asking any of my questions, I had to read the whole of the book by Charalabos Theodoridis firstly by myself. And in the personal meetings that were and still are each week, when one of the old members wrote his work presentation, I had a general picture of the EP what were the main points that I heard and as they being discussed from the old member's work presentation.

In addition I would like to say my opinion, and please correct me if I am wrong : there is a danger of a failure in the discussion i.e a misunderstanding or a complexity on the issues concerning EP IF the book or any other book would be discussed with this procedure. The Epicurean Philosophy is a whole philosophical cosmotheory and can't be discussed without the new member had not read the whole of the book by himself yet. This goes like the methodology of the Canon : we start to have an idea for the general picture and then we examine each part. Cassius my friend what do you say about that ?

The procedure that is based on my experiences from the two greek gardens is : A text of one or two pages of a presentation work (with personal thoughts) on any epicurean issue, by an old or a new member that has the knowledge of the general picture of EP. Epicurus enriched the ability of the self- judgement on issues and things, the self innovative, and the self creativity in general, and not to read books and discussing chapters one by one. The books are the sources that have to be written below in a work presentation by someone that had already read some books concerning the epicurean philosophy. And when that someone finished his reading, then the others are making some corrections on that work presentation, adding something more or to answer to some questions. This is a kind of procedure that is based on the two way process,

as in the same time the teachers become students and the students become teachers.

Meanwhile it would be better to know something for someone who takes so quickly such kind of initiatives of what issue could be discussed in any chat room without doing any presentation work for this book by himself. This is my opinion my friends and it is based on my experiences with the purpose to prevent a mess in any discussion. Thanks.

**Cassius Amicus** All of these are excellent points Elli and I think we need to work toward implementing them all. In the context in which we are working now, I think we can implement them on a step by step basis, with trial and error, and work toward a smoother implementation over time. I suspect that only a few of us will attend the first online sessions, and that this will be all hard-core people who are friendly and understanding. Lots of time will be spent on understanding how the software works, and working out a protocol for speaking (so we don't talk over each other), etc.

And I also see the online initial meetings as very informal and not requiring too much investment in time by people who can pop in and out instantly. this is not the same as people traveling to a formal meeting who you really need to be careful about making sure the meeting is efficiently staged. In our case, in initial trial meetings, we can just work through the procedure together, but with the goals you stated in mind, and then over time we can develop a set procedure that fits the environment.

To me, what we are doing here is not a one-off deal where we are making a presentation to the world. We are still in the process of developing the best ways to do this, and as long as we are courteous and friendly then if we throw up our hands at the end of the first meeting and say "we're going to start all over next week" then that is fine. Also, once we get a routine down once, it would be preferable and ideal to do these on a continuing basis, with different sessions for people who are at different levels.

Brett wants to do a book club approach on DeWitt, and I am fine with that even if it is just me and him. I think that would be valuable for any of us too, but what I really want to see us work on is our own discussion plan which is the purpose of this thread below. All of this must come together over time and by trial and error, and then when we have worked through the kinks we can restart the series and go over and over and over again, getting better all the time. So two tracks: (1) a book club approach, and we can do more than just dewitt over time, and (2) a general "meetup style" lecture/discussion based on general outlines

And to specifically address the issue of your not having read the Dewitt book I see no problem with that - the first chapter is a very general summary of the philosophy, and you know that very well already. And even as the book proceeds we would be coming from the point of view of "DeWitt says this" but then throwing every point up to discussion to agree or disagree, and you are fully able to do that. I think you too would get a lot out of Dewitt's book, but you already know the points he is talking about. I wish I had access to an English translation of the Greek

book you are talking about, and then I would know how much to push you to read DeWitt. If your own views are reflected in the Greek book, then as I know your views, I know you are already close to DeWitt on most points. But if your Greek book is like the English "junk" that is so dominant today, then you would really get good new ideas from DeWitt. Of course DeWitt is NOT the end-all authority on anything. He just attempts to present Epicurus without demeaning him and undercutting him every other paragraph.

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### **Post by “Maciej” of January 10, 2018 at 2:04 PM**

I like the idea of workings with actual epicurean texts. This way student will have opportunity to write and present his or her commentary and reflect on commentary presented by others. So approach of existing gardens in greece sounds more interesting to me.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2018 at 2:06 PM**

Yes I agree that using the texts is far preferable. We'll just have to balance the anticipated audience and maybe produce two tracks. People who come to a Meetup group are going to be much more basic and probably need more commentary. If we can move to a higher level we definitely want to refer to the original texts.

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### **Post by “Hiram” of January 10, 2018 at 2:33 PM**

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

... 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.

What say you?

We already have study guides for A Few Days in Athens (in the back of the "Friends of Epicurus" edition of the book and here):

<http://societyofepicurus.com/detailed-revie...-days-in-Athens>

And for "On the Nature of Things" here:

Intro - <http://newepicurean.com/a-new-ebook-an...ture-of-things/>

Summary - <http://newepicurean.com/355/>

Although I don't think there's an alphabetized thematic index, which might help. (by the way there's no search button on New Epicurean)

Might be a good way to help future students (and future teachers of Epicurean philosophy) if we provide our commentary and study guide on other works that we want to direct them to study, like DeWitt's books.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 10, 2018 at 2:55 PM**

1) Yep

2) the search button is unfortunately at the very bottom of the page; I haven't been able to move it but will check on that again

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### **Post by “Elayne” of December 12, 2018 at 4:08 PM**

My first attempt at a local Meetup is scheduled for Jan 20. I have 10 people signed up so far for the group, most of whom I know, and 5 coming to the first meeting, at a local coffee shop. Two are family members whom I know will come, and based on past experience with meetup, 1-2 of the others will come.

In advance of the meeting, I am messaging with the members I haven't met personally, so they understand what we will be doing.

In the first meeting, I plan to give a basic overview and invite attendees to talk about why they joined and what they would most enjoy doing to learn about and practice EP together. How often they think they could meet, where, etc. Because there is so much misunderstanding and controversy out there, I am going to right off the bat tell them that I am taking the position described here, and why-- because I have no interest in belonging to a group of stoic types and agree personally with the principles as described here. If someone wants to start a different

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/264-i-propose-we-work-together-to-develop-a-meeting-plan-curriculum-for-local-groups/>

group for the other, they can do it. I'm going to tell them how EP is different from the other philosophies-- why it isn't stoicism, humanism, buddhism. I'm going to tell them that although I'm new at EP, I've actually been practicing my own version of it for long enough to be certain it is the best way to live-- but that because I have not read as much as experts have, we will also be learning together. I do think I have a pretty good intuitive sense of when something is veering off in the stoic/ platonic/ buddhist/ etc weeds-- it will sound wrong. But I will also come here and double check. I never mind saying "I don't know but I will see if I can find out", and I will use that phrase liberally!

The materials I would like to use for that first meeting are the summary handouts from this site, the comparison with stoics, and the full cup.

The longest running, most successful reading group I belonged to met weekly for about 3 hrs. The first 1.5 hrs were discussion about a short section of reading-- 50 pages or so. And then we went to a different location for the social part and to eat. Having those two parts be in different locations really helped us stay on track for the first segment, because we knew we would get a chance to talk about whatever subject we wanted to bring up afterwards. It helped us become more bonded as friends. We had game nights every so often as well. The main coordinator moved away, and unfortunately the rest of us did not pick up the slack. I was working 80-90 hrs a week at that time-- never again!

So my proposal to them is that we will take 45 min to 1 hr to discuss particular topics, which will involve some reading in advance but not necessarily using one book from start to finish. I obtained permission from the publisher to copy DeWitt and lend one section at a time to members who are not able to purchase their own copies. And then have time for just socializing, getting to know each other better.

I had initially thought to start with the [Principal Doctrines](#), singly or in small groups. But now I am thinking it is better to start with the Canon. So the second meeting would be 15 min or so on the basics of the Canon, for which I would like to read some of what you have written here, if that is ok. Then some discussion in the group on their reactions and if they have had life experiences which relate to the topic. The second meeting on Physics. The third on Ethics. By then I think we will have some idea how the group is going to do-- how deeply they want to go. I have looked at the topics for the Sydney meetup and that will be very helpful. It would be awesome if at some point we all read DeWitt together. Also would be great to do our own philosophy outlines and share them with each other. Or we can just circle back then and spend time on elements of the Canon in depth over several meetings, Physics, Ethics.

As we get new members, I think I will need to meet with them separately first, to give the beginning handouts and some overview.

In general, I want the group to learn together, to relate the principles to our lives in the present

and discuss how we are practicing EP/ support each other in that practice, and to have pleasure while doing so. I am doing this because it matters in my life-- it affects what and how I decide to do things. So it always needs to stay attached to what we are each doing day to day.

This site is incredibly helpful, and I hope it is ok to print the handouts/ articles and read appropriate sections out loud. Until I have educated myself more fully on the subject, I feel it is wiser to use material from people who know it better. Maybe one day I will have something to contribute! I'll encourage them to join this site too.

Thoughts?

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 12, 2018 at 6:09 PM**

Elayne all that sounds absolutely outstanding. Of course you have permission to use any materials that you desire from this website - that's what they are here for. Yes I also always planned that this site be an adjunct for any operational meetup or other local groups, so I'll certainly appreciate your forwarding them here. You can certainly also refer the ones who use Facebook to the Facebook group, but as you see we can sometimes have an uneven presentation there with people from "outside" making statements that can be very confusing. I have always thought that being able to point people to an online resource where they can participate and talk between local meetings would be a great synergy.

And your post is an example of how things here can encourage others. Your summary of what you plan to do, and any updates that you are able to give later, will remain here as resource material for others everywhere to copy. Your approach sounds outstanding.

Also specifically on the handouts, as you get practical experiences you may think of other handouts that you need, and we can certainly all try to collaborate to produce them and make them available to others. Elli has produced a lot of graphics over the years, and it's probable that some of them might lend themselves to handouts or similar uses.

Everything sounds excellent and it will be exciting to hear reports on how it works!

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### **Post by “Cassius” of December 12, 2018 at 6:21 PM**

Also Elayne I have put some significant work lately into updating the [FAQ](#). It still has a long way to go but is much better than just a few weeks ago. I can see that a FAQ would have special interest to people who are totally new to the study, so if you see questions that ought to be added or see any way to make it more helpful to the Meetup initiative let me know.

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### **Post by “Hiram” of December 12, 2018 at 7:04 PM**

[Elayne](#) I don't know what city you're in, but feel free to post info on this meeting at the EP group (you can even create an event there for it), and let people know what city you're in. It's possible there are members of the EP group who are not far from you.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/events/>

AND if I can be of any use re: sources or writings, let me know. I facilitated meetups some years back, but only got up to three people.

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### **Post by “Elayne” of December 14, 2018 at 10:17 PM**

Thanks! I will do that.