

Cultivation of Friendship within Epicureanism

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 28, 2022 at 12:38 PM

Here is a texting conversation that I had with an Epicurean friend recently (edited for clarity):

Me:

I've been thinking about the complexity of friendship...

- 1) First you have to meet people and have a conversation (or text conversation).
- 2) Then you have to discover commonality/common interests.
- 3) Then you have to discover overlapping needs/goals (a need for a certain goal in friendship).
- 4) Then a common motivation to mutually engage with each other must arise, which also depends on both people having a certain amount of free time to devote to one another. People who are married in long-term relationships have much less need for friends and also much less time.

Friend's Reply:

I think what we are finding is that a friendship just doesn't happen spontaneously but is frequently the result of a shared "project" on which you are working with another person. There probably has to be a joint goal to keep it all together or else even friendship can be "pointless."

So I think that joint projects are probably the key to at least let a friendship get started at the beginning. Of course in male/female relationships there is the attraction part which can start things, but unless there is a joint project even that will fall apart.

Me:

I think the joint project idea is good...and it also depends on the needs of the people involved...and also the ways that they find pleasure within friendship.

Because if the conversation is -ONLY- about the project then it doesn't really lead to a deeper friendship.

Friend's Reply:

I agree, but it is difficult to assess what friendship really is. You obviously have enjoyment in dealing with a friend, but it isn't just contemplation [conversation?]

- there is action involved "doing things together" is probably the key.

And enjoyment and pleasure are not static. Not everyone can or will be our friend.

Friendship itself is not a goal. Epicurus is right, it is pleasure alone that is intrinsically good. And what can appear to be friendship can die if it does not remain enjoyable.

Me:

More about finding commonalities...it is about what we find enjoyable in friendships. And there is what we can give, but also what we want to get.

And I very much enjoy conversation, the kind that is mutually fulfilling...a back and forth conversation...about anything and everything...no-holds-barred.

But of course some topics I might not know enough about, so then you would have to seek out someone else on those topics (obviously)...and same for you, you might not know enough on certain topics so then I would have to seek out someone else on those other topics.

Friend's Reply:

I think this is where your sister and I would agree that there are personality types among people and that there are good matches and bad matches 😊

Me:

Okay, so are you saying that a certain kind of disposition and attitude toward life makes for a better conversational partner?

Friend's Reply:

Sort of. I think I am saying that conversational styles may exist where some people may understand some people much better than others. And it's not just a matter of being considerate or inconsiderate.

Me:

Yes I do agree. I think it is both conversational style and also each individual has drives and goals which shape how they view the world.

Here is what I would add: That there is some kind of pull that we feel toward people that we find conversationally engaging and who also have a pleasant and enjoyable disposition. Over time a common history of shared experiences will build up and this will lead to a feeling of a long-term friendship bond. Yet it seems that there still needs to be a personal dedication to putting in the time and energy to maintain the friendship. In a busy world, that means people would need to prioritize friendship. Not only knowing that pleasure comes from friendship, but

actively shaping one's life so that one has time for friendships. Also, when you do find a genuine friend with shared mutual understanding and shared mutual goals, it can be somewhat of a rare situation, and so it would be a very precious pleasure indeed.