

Has the meaning of friendship changed since the times of Epicurus

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 1, 2023 at 3:36 PM

[Quote from waterholic](#)

I had the fortune to live in a more traditional society with under-developed institutions. Friendship there was necessary, all-consuming and omnipotent. You want to find a good dentist, parking spot, decent job, a cemetery plot, resolution to a business conflict, even a legal dispute - you simply need friends. And your friends know this. This means your daily routine is to collect and dish out favours.

That situation is very interesting (and I would wonder perhaps people were not very close friends). And doesn't sound very fun.

Here in the US when I lived in Oregon, I was part of a Buddhist Zen group. It was through knowing people there that I found a studio apartment (converted garage in a house). And a few other things with which I got help, just by mentioning my problem, people gave good suggestions. So being part of a religious community has a benefit, founded on mutual support arising from common religious beliefs, and others become a kind of second family. So I think it could have been somewhat like this for Epicureans back in the past.

[Quote from waterholic](#)

Even if we find the accurate description of what social dynamic Epicurus implied in his definition of friendship to conclude that it is an essential element of a pleasant life, chances are, that social dynamic is no longer replicable in modern times. There is still academic benefit in researching the meaning of friendship in antiquity.

I actually envision it to be very similar to what I experienced in the Buddhist community that I was a part of. The problem was that I came to realize that Buddhist philosophy didn't work anymore for me, so it didn't make sense for me to continue with the community.

The community had a core group who did much of the work of making things run efficiently (a board of directors, teachers, and Zen priests/trainees). And then two other levels of involvement which I would call intermediate/dedicated students. And then the newer students or occasional attendees. And there were times to study together and times to celebrate with community meals and movie nights.