

Thomas Carnes - Keeping the Friend in Epicurean Friendship

Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2023 at 12:21 PM

Thanks for the post Warjuning.

I didn't have time to read the full thing yet but I see this from the conclusion.

Quote

Considering SV 66 and SV 39 each within the context of Epicurus' other writings on friendship in particular, and his ethics more generally, strengthens the case that Epicureanism is both directly egoistic and committed to other-concern. Additionally, the most plausible understanding of friendship is one according to which the other-concern required by it is compatible with avowing our own good as our only final good. We are, if I am correct, left with no reason to think that committed Epicureans cannot have genuine friends.

Seems like lost of people (including some shaky Epicureans) think that the anti-Epicureans have point in arguing that if you follow Epicurus you can't truly have friendship, but this has always been a very poor argument and it looks like the article hits the right points.

Probably good here to include the way [Torquatus](#) dealt with this:

[65] XX. One topic remains, which is of prime importance for this discussion, that relating to friendship, which you declare will cease to exist, if pleasure be the supreme good, yet Epicurus makes this declaration concerning it, that of all the aids to happiness procured for us by wisdom, none is greater than friendship, none more fruitful, none more delightful. Nor in fact did he sanction this view by his language alone, but much more by his life and actions and character. And the greatness of friendship is made evident by the imaginary stories of the ancients, in which, numerous and diversified as they are, and reaching back to extreme antiquity, scarce three pairs of friends are mentioned, so that beginning with Theseus you end with Orestes. But in truth within the limits of a single school, and that restricted in numbers, what great flocks of friends did Epicurus secure, and how great was that harmony of affection wherein they all agreed! And his example is followed by the Epicureans in our day also. But let us return to our theme; there is no need to speak of persons.

[66] I see then that friendship has been discussed by our school in three ways. Some, denying that the pleasures which affect our friends are in themselves as desirable to us as those we desire for ourselves, a view which certain persons think shakes the foundation of friendship, still defend their position, and in my opinion easily escape from their difficulties. For they affirm that

friendship, like the virtues of which we spoke already, cannot be dissociated from pleasure. Now since isolation and a life without friends abound in treacheries and alarms, reason herself advises us to procure friendships, by the acquisition of which the spirit is strengthened, and cannot then be severed from the hope of achieving pleasures.

[67] And as enmity, spitefulness, scorn, are opposed to pleasures, so friendships are not only the truest promoters, but are actually efficient causes of pleasures, as well to a man's friends as to himself; and friends not only have the immediate enjoyment of these pleasures but are elate with hope as regards future and later times. Now because we can by no means apart from friendship preserve the agreeableness of life strong and unbroken, nor further can we maintain friendship itself unless we esteem our friends in the same degree as ourselves; on that account this principle is acted on in friendship, and so friendship is linked with pleasure. Truly we both rejoice at the joy of our friends as much as at our own joy, and we are equally pained by their vexations.

[68] Therefore the wise man will entertain the same feeling for his friend as for himself, and the very same efforts which he would undergo to procure his own pleasure, these he will undergo to procure that of his friend. And all that we said of the virtues to shew how they always have their root in pleasures, must be said over about friendship. For it was nobly declared by Epicurus, almost in these words: "It is one and the same feeling which strengthens the mind against the fear of eternal or lasting evil, and which clearly sees that in this actual span of life the protection afforded by friendship is the most powerful of all."

[69] There are however certain Epicureans who are somewhat more nervous in facing the reproaches of your school, but are still shrewd enough ; these are afraid that if we suppose friendship to be desirable with a view to our own pleasure, friendship may appear to be altogether maimed, as it were. So they say that while the earliest meetings and associations and tendencies towards the establishment of familiarity do arise on account of pleasure, yet when experience has gradually produced intimacy, then affection ripens to such a degree that though no interest be served by the friendship, yet friends are loved in themselves and for their own sake. Again, if by familiarity we get to love localities, shrines, cities, the exercise ground, the park, dogs, horses, and exhibitions either of gymnastics or of combats with beasts, how much more easily and properly may this come about when our familiarity is with human beings?

[70] Men are found to say that there is a certain treaty of alliance which binds wise men not to esteem their friends less than they do themselves. Such alliance we not only understand to be possible, but often see it realized, and it is plain that nothing can be found more conducive to pleasantness of life than union of this kind. From all these different views we may conclude that not only are the principles of friendship left unconstrained, if the supreme good be made to reside in pleasure, but that without this view it is entirely impossible to discover a basis for friendship.