

A Feeling Something Like Loneliness

Post by “Joshua” of June 9, 2021 at 12:09 AM

Visiting my hometown after a few years away has got me in a reflective mood. It's been wonderful to catch up with friends, stop by and gab (gossip, more like) with my old neighbor, see the family and the sights. But the emotions are frankly more mixed than I was prepared for.

There is the restaurant where I worked once—to all appearances unchanged, and yet the faces and voices are strange to me. All those long nights etched in memory, all those people, coworkers and even friends, all of it so all-consuming once, and now all gone. Just a strange, uncanny husk of memories remaining.

A number of my friends have likewise moved away, and, of course, everyone has in some way *moved on*.

A week from now I'll be back in Florida. I'll be busy at work, happy to settle in to my routine again, and yet aware on some level that when it comes to my hometown I can never "go back".

Epicurean philosophy gives friendship a place of honor among pleasures. My trip home has me thinking that I want to be more intentional about this going forward. I just don't want to take the people in my life for granted—because life goes by quickly, and leaves very little that lasts.

It's an odd feeling; I can put it no more plainly than that. It's just an odd feeling.

Post by “Godfrey” of June 9, 2021 at 3:07 AM

It's bittersweet how we all get busy with our lives and lose track of people and places that we were once so close to. Sometimes due to moving to new places, demanding jobs, raising a family, caregiving, all of these or many more. And it's not just people and places: at some point we can look at who we, ourselves, used to be and wonder where we went.

I keep seeing articles and podcasts about this, sadly it seems to be pretty common these days. Epicurean friendship and prudence are invaluable in this regard; I wish that I'd discovered these tools long ago! Although the stability of the garden is long gone, the knowledge and understanding that remain can still help us in the sometimes difficult work of living.

Odd feelings and reflective moods, pleasures and pains: our guides, for as long as we listen.

Post by “Cassius” of June 9, 2021 at 6:08 AM

This is an experience that in my view emphasizes the importance of educating children early about the way things are in life - constantly moving - and that things never really come to rest for us until we die. Religions and idealistic philosophies teach the opposite - that there are permanent ideas and permanent pal-gods who will be with us not only for our whole lives but forever in eternity. One natural effect of that is to think that things will always be the same, and that in fact we'll all spend eternity united with our loved ones in heaven, so really who cares how we spend our time right now?

If people from a young age were taught the way things are, it would be a lot easier to keep focus on how important each day is, and how we have to expect change and learn to be comfortable with it.

I know I feel this way (about losing the past) regularly and it seems to just get more acute as we get older.

Post by “Joshua” of June 9, 2021 at 1:41 PM

Quote

And it's not just people and places: at some point we can look at who we, ourselves, used to be and wonder where we went.

In a way it does feel almost like a kind of small death, presaging the time when the world truly will move on entirely without us. It is useful and instructive to reflect on such things, but also to remember that we are "invited to the dance" for a while longer yet.

Post by “Cassius” of June 9, 2021 at 1:45 PM

Reminds me of a line we don't talk about too often:

Quote

We must then bear in mind that the future is neither ours, nor yet wholly not ours, so that we may not altogether expect it as sure to come, nor abandon hope of it, as if it will certainly not come.

Post by “Joshua” of June 9, 2021 at 1:51 PM

That is a great one!

Post by “Cassius” of June 9, 2021 at 1:54 PM

Yes that's the attitude that should be instilled in people at as young an age as possible, especially instead of filling their heads with much about their "fate" or "god's will" or "hard determinism"

Post by “Don” of June 9, 2021 at 7:24 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Reminds me of a line we don't talk about too often:

Quote

We must then bear in mind that the future is neither ours, nor yet wholly not ours, so that we may not altogether expect it as sure to come, nor abandon hope of it, as if it will certainly not come.

This almost sounds like a Stoic quote, but I'm glad of that! They don't own this concept of being aware of what's in our control and what isn't. This is a good one!

Post by “Cassius” of June 9, 2021 at 7:44 PM

But I don't think the Stoics could ever endorse it due to their insistence on fate and divine providence, correct? Or no? The ancient, consistent, Stoics, I mean, not the modern variety 😊

Post by “Don” of June 9, 2021 at 8:29 PM

I was thinking it would fall under their insights I indifferents or maybe the things you can control and the things you can't.

Post by “Cassius” of June 9, 2021 at 8:42 PM

That's possible, I guess. I was thinking about it in terms of it being focused on "the future" - which seems to be a particularly broad way of looking at things from a theoretical point of view.

Post by “Godfrey” of June 10, 2021 at 12:13 AM

My guess is that the Stoics would maybe say "fate" instead of "the future," implying something pre-determined instead of something open to chance. So in some ways the response could be the same, but the world views are completely different.

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 6, 2023 at 6:38 PM

I just found an NPR [article](#) and also a website called [Project UnLonely](#)... some excerpts:

Quote

The Three Types of Loneliness

Feeling lonely doesn't just mean you feel alone. You can be with many people but still feel like you are not really connected to them. Just like there are many types of love, there are also different types of loneliness. Knowing the different types can help us address them effectively.

To find out what kind of loneliness you're feeling, you can ask yourself a few questions:

1. Psychological - This might be the "flavor" of loneliness you're most familiar with. How we feel about our social connections and close relationships can contribute to feelings of interpersonal or psychological loneliness.

"Does someone have my back?"

"Is there someone that I can tell my troubles to?"

2. Societal - This type of loneliness is all about belonging -- experienceing acceptance and safety. Societal or organizational loneliness can impact anyone in workplaces, schools, or communities.

"Am I welcome and valued?"

"Am I safe?"

3. Existential - Having existential thoughts or spiritual questions is a part of life, but if someone has these types of thoughts very often, or is upset by them, they can result in feelings of isolation and loneliness.

"Does my life matter?"

Display More

Quote

The Five Territories of Loneliness

Trauma -

Trauma refers to a kind of harm that can be physical or emotional, happening suddenly or over a long time. It can be caused by stressful events like war, sexual assault,

terrorism, childhood abuse, natural disasters, mass shootings or even the COVID-19 pandemic.

Illness -

Getting sick can sometimes make a person feel separated from their friends and family, as if they are dealing with life's problems all by themselves. This can happen with many kinds of illnesses, including cancer, cardiovascular issues, obesity, and mental health problems.

Aging -

Older people might feel lonely due to loss of friends or family members and cognitive decline. They might also feel left out of society due to financial issues or health challenges. Additionally, they might feel a deep kind of loneliness as they think about the end of their life and what they will leave behind.

Difference -

Feeling different from others can make it hard to feel confident about who you are, leading to societal loneliness. This can be experienced by first-generation immigrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, people with disabilities, or anyone who may feel different.

Modernity -

The modern world has changed the ways people socialize. Instead of meeting in person, we now have options like social media, chat forums, and online dating apps to connect with others. Even though these platforms can help us connect, they can also make us feel lonely.

Display More

Modernity is a major issue, and makes it difficult to build and maintain friendships. The website Project UnLonely suggests making art and connecting through art (but that probably only appeals to a certain number of people who already have art as a hobby).

I do think it would be a very interesting project for us here on the forum to help facilitate the development of in-person Epicurean Philosophy meetings. We could create a guidebook for how to run the meeting as well as suggesting discussion topics, and also this forum could have a section for posting info about in-person meetings.

Part of friendship is creating the skills for making friends and being a better friend... and there is a Friendship subforum:

[Friendship](#)