

# Is There A "Paradox of Hedonism"?

Post by "DaveT" of April 4, 2026 at 10:17 AM

[Quote from LAMAR 44](#)

I think it makes sense to evaluate before starting a friendship or romantic relationship whether there will be net pleasure or pain, but doing this inside of relationships seems to make them feel shallow and transactional, at least for me.

For me, this process does not feel shallow or transactional in a negative sense. First as to the transactional, the positive view is apparent in the old saying: you have to be a friend to have a friend. Is it transactional? In my view, yes it is transactional, but so is every interaction with others.

As for shallowness: Some would call romantic relationships a subset of friendships, others--not. I find the study of Epicurus can sometimes divert the student from the realities of intimate relationships. It is not fully explored to my understanding in the writings of Epicurus and his followers. I can only speak to heterosexual romantic relationships. The two women I've lived with over a period of more than 50 years were selected by my (or vice versa! ) through complex mental and physical motivations that are basically undecipherable by me. However, the anticipation of physical and mental pleasure in every way certainly was justly involved. I find nothing wrong with it, indeed I think it is important to use the calculus of pleasure/pain.

Perhaps I've dug too deep into your question, but even for anticipating other friends, no less than long term partners, the process is a gradual one that only comes with engagement over time. Who has not tried to make a friendship and then over time moved away from it for lack of some element of sympathy, as it were? Life is trial and error, and that, I suggest is in the spirit of Epicurus.