

Footnote: Finding Friendship

Western society - in which just about every aspect of human endeavour is driven by the all-pervading spirit of competition for acquisition - is not an easy place to find true friendship. Finding friends therefore requires much effort and ingenuity. [PDF]

An Austere World

This is not a friendly world. I live in an endless suburbia of brick box housing with no communal centres other than the local supermarket. My neighbours have nothing in common either with me or with each other. We simply find ourselves parked next to each other for no other reason than that is where a house became available when we needed one. Our geographic origins, our values, our jobs, our interests are a random incompatible mix. Our lives focus on our places of work to which we may commute stupid distances in various directions, returning home only to sleep and eat.

It is a world of economic exploitation and political subjugation, whose hierarchies forcibly induce within us all their malevolent spirit of greed, competition and distrust. This is fed to us throughout childhood and adolescence by our State education systems and perpetuated throughout adulthood by national media. Our only defence against the madness and despair to which the ways of this world would otherwise drive us is to harden our hearts towards the hierarchies that rule us and consequently towards each other. This raises an ominous barrier to friendship.

Need For Connection

Whether we consider ourselves gregarious or loners, we all need intimate communion with other human minds. We have an in-built hunger for it, which, if unfulfilled, leaves us lonely and despairing. It is as if the mind has a bunch of incomplete components, each of which becomes complete only when coupled with a compatible counterpart within the mind of another.

This hunger can never be assuaged by commercial relationships. These are inevitably based on the capitalist principle of each attempting to gain from the other as much as possible in return for as little as possible, with the stronger party always bound to win. This is no basis for friendship. Friendship can only exist between equals who have each other's best interests at heart.

Barriers Abound

Apart from the universal barrier of distrust induced within each of us by the society in which we live, there are more *physical* barriers to friendship built into the structure and methods of a Western socio-economy.

The first tangible barrier to friendship is the ruthlessly commercial nature of our society. It denies to us any place where we can *freely* mix and talk in an ambience conducive to the making and sustaining of friendships.

You see, we have reached the time when there is no place of social gathering that doesn't have an entrance fee. And that fee is not trivial. In our free market system, an entrance price gravitates to the level that the venue owner thinks will maximise his revenue. He sets it to the maximum he thinks the Mr & Mrs Average of his venue's desired *class of clientele* will pay. And his perception invariably errs on the high side.

For instance, the only places *young* people can meet nowadays are venues like night clubs, singles bars, sports halls, exercise gyms and pubs. All *very expensive* places to enter. The prime function of

all these places is not to facilitate friendship for their young customers but to generate corporate profit for their proprietors. Practically all facilities of friendship have now been completely commandeered by the corporate elite. If we cannot pay we cannot meet.

This may be reluctantly workable for the middle-income mainstream, but it condemns the poor to the loneliness and atrophy of social isolation. The poor are denied access to friendship because allowing it to them does not contribute to corporate profit.

For adults too the choice is pay or stay lonely. But even the expensive venues where the rich can meet are not conducive crucibles to friendship. The golf club, the country club or the secretive lodge are really places for seeking business relationships, which are fired by the lust for profit rather than the love of friendship. They are all exclusive and socially divisive. So too are religious churches, which one attends not primarily for the forming of open all-inclusive friendship but to study and practice the lifestyle of a particular belief clique.

Welfare services provide *drop-ins* for the socially disadvantaged. These however are never more than centres for tea and trivial conversation, attended by another tightly tuned social clique in a desperate attempt to assuage their natural hunger for contact.

So, for those like me who are, through [circumstances beyond their control](#), forced to exist as best they can on that miserable pittance called [welfare](#), all commercially operated venues of socialisation are strictly and permanently off limits. We could not even afford the means of getting to them, let alone the cost of joining and entering them.

There is no means within present-day society that can facilitate uninhibited one-to-one encounters in which two potential friends can freely meet and converse, unfettered by financial constraints, clique psychology, party lines or religious doctrines.

Then Came The Internet

This is why, before the advent of the Internet, I was totally isolated. But the Internet provided a promise of freedom. I was eventually able to afford email and web space. I learned HTML. I coded up my pages with keyword meta tags so search engines could index them appropriately and enable like-minded people to find me.

However, it was not long before the greedy eyes of capitalism saw a new virgin territory ripe for commandeering for corporate profit. Firstly, the search engines went commercial, ranking paying commercial sites inappropriately high in their listings and relegating far more relevant non-paying sites way down the list. Fortunately the Internet community forcefully expressed its intense disapproval of that practice.

But then came the commercial dating and contact sites where people were encouraged to enter their profiles. The purpose behind these was to capture people's profiles so they could be avalanched by junk emails from commercial interests. It also meant that people who stuck to keeping their profiles on open web sites sunk way down to the bottom of search engine listings and back into social isolation.

I still cannot join these contact sites because I still cannot afford the £16 a month extra tariff required to be on-line all the time. I used to go on-line once each Sunday morning for about 3 minutes to upload and download email and to upload updated web pages. I now stretch that to once in the early morning while it is still cheap rate. Besides, all these on-line any-time options require payment by credit card, which I cannot have.

So What Should We Do?

I think the best way to facilitate the development of true friendship in this world right now is firstly to establish a plain simple *personal friendship web site*. Have a page that states clearly your own core values, interests, pleasures and aspirations so people can decide whether or not theirs are compatible enough with yours for you to become good friends.

When searching for friendship, enter keywords for your core values, interests, pleasures and aspirations into search engines and persevere to the very end of the listings. Have a links page where you put the web and email addresses of your friends so others can see their web sites too. Finally, don't be reticent in making contact with someone who fits. It could be 'the start of a beautiful friendship'.

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