

What is the future of friendship? (Some random thoughts prompted by ChatGPT)

Post by “Little Rocker” of February 20, 2023 at 2:18 PM

This thread is great! I'll convince myself that this thread is so important that I won't do the unpleasant thing that needs doing (forget long-term advantage!).

On friendship, I agree with Waterholic that there is a sense (I think false) that we can now outsource the practical dimensions of friendship through internet resources. But I think even our natural and necessary desires are too vast to be satisfied by a curated yellow pages. But even if they could be, I think there are good reasons not to entirely outsource everything. Friendships are reciprocal and equal, and most relationships with people I pay are not. Also, there are still many places even in America where you 'need a guy,' and other places where there is not even reliable internet. My brother lives in such a place (he calls it 'the mountain') and he has a guy who welds and a guy who cuts trees and a guy who.... my brother does computers, and they all swap resources gratis+beers through highly informal arrangements. He thinks other people's way of approaching these practical things is sad, and I tend to admire this part of his somewhat unorthodox life. In places where people cannot afford or travel for services or they have friends who provide services, they have much different practical relationships. I got a bid to fix the plumbing in my house for 1500, and my partner did it for 200 in supplies because he's handy and I'm wordy.

But even if things are entirely outsourced on a practical level, intimacy is something that doesn't work that way, and intimacy matters a lot in laughter and misfortune. In the periods of my life when I have not had close friends, I have struggled. I currently have a group of friends I would not leave for any other reason than to care for my parents. I consider myself immensely fortunate to have them. One friend went through a serious mental health crisis, and another had a premature infant at 25 weeks, and we are closer now than we have ever been in the decade we have known each other. So yeah, I would be anxious without those friends and they contribute more to my life than pretty much anything else.

Which brings me to the question about anxiety in the Epicurean life. That's not an issue we can settle, though we benefit from continuing to discuss it, but I tend to split the difference between Don and Cassius. Unlike Don, I would be anxious if I saw a tornado on the horizon, but I am not currently anxious that I will be abandoned if I get sick. I have a great deal of confidence that friends will be there for me. If I do get sick, I hope I'll be as chill as I can, but I'm pretty sure I'll be anxious. Epicureanism can help me cope, but it won't tell me it doesn't suck. Perhaps the thing I like most about Epicureanism is its 'let's cross that bridge if we come to it' mentality. I'm not going to catastrophize or imagine all the bad things that can happen--I'm just going to live and enjoy my life with friends as long as it lasts. And read about how to take shelter in the

event of a tornado (though I already know that one because I grew up in Tornado Alley).

On Cassius' point about Platonism and the desire to control others, a hearty Amen.