

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

Post by “waterholic” of February 19, 2023 at 1:31 AM

Most of our attention in this forum is directed towards the past, the texts from antiquity. This poses a challenge: do the social constructs present back in Epicurean times still exist? The recipes provided by philosophy have to be useful in daily life. But if the necessary social constructs are not there any more, the body of knowledge existing back then needs to be augmented to work in today's or tomorrow's environment.

Case in point is friendship, which plays a central role in the Epicurean philosophy as one of the main ways of achieving tranquility through safety. Cooperation has been credited as the key success factor for our species (see for example <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S096982219303343> or "Sapiens, a Brief History of Humankind" by Yuval Noah Harari) if success is measured by numbers and dominance, of course.

But friendship (a form of cooperation) has evolved since the 4th century BC Greece. Cities dominated back then and the states combined only a few cities. Cooperation was on a smaller scale and friendship was essential for survival - there was no formalized social net. In fact, the formalized social net began to emerge only in the twentieth century, when the modern state emerged with its social programs for health, unemployment, retirement and education. These are all welcome developments of course, and they provide for more efficient **"institutionalised" friendship**.

Today in most advanced societies this "institutionalised" friendship becomes the dominant form of friendship, as along with fundamental things such as health care, unemployment etc., we begin to source "cooperation" for less fundamental aspects of our lives from technology platforms. In the pre-internet era you still had health and unemployment insurance, so there was no need for friends in this regard. But if you had a problem with plumbing, or you needed good tickets for a concert, or you had to find a decent dentist, you needed "a guy" - a personal reference, usually from friends or family. These days, all of this is replaced by technology platforms, which crowdsource reviews, opinions, arrange food delivery if you are sick, give medical advice and even psychological care "completely anonymously", as if that's a benefit.

We are now in the post-friendship era, when one is simultaneously friends with everyone and no one. The regular form of friendship is relegated to the meaningless and shallow chitchat (not meaning to generalize, but just to observe a trend) without expectation of life-long affection and support. After all, relying on "institutionalised" and monetised friendship is far more

efficient and reliable. Except it isn't.

The next stage in our technological development is that of excessive productivity. As an economist I have observed this trend in the past 20 years. Most of the products and services we need can now be produced in greater volumes with fewer people (the reason why productivity growth numbers are low in the US has to do with the way we measure it, and it's a separate discussion). But since as a society we bestow resources and our "friendship" in exchange for work, it becomes more and more difficult to sustain that friendship. What happens when that work is no longer needed?

This brings me to Chat GPT - a tool that scared many because it's imperfect. But it scares me because it is perfect enough. No it cannot replace a senior partner in a law or consulting firm or a headmaster in a school. But it can definitely replace ALL the juniors and teachers with frightening efficiency (it has already done so in some companies I know). Under normal circumstances, these people would find their work elsewhere. But the onslaught of technological change now is across the board: restaurants, supermarkets, elderly care, pizza delivery, teaching, health care - you name it, it is being "disrupted".

And here our "institutionalised friendship" will likely prove woefully inadequate. It has no empathy and feelings. We will (and are currently) have a large number of people in need of friends who have grown unaccustomed to the notion of friendship. They don't know how and why to do it and each generation is worse at it. This may be just an observation, but everyone I know with young adult children appear to agree.

In this sense I feel quite conflicted. On the one hand, the Epicurean philosophy provides the building blocks of pleasurable life that do not fit the society that has moved on and is now facing a serious challenge. On the other hand, the same philosophy can provide the recipe for solving the major challenge we face: our rising productivity ensures that there are more goods and services than we (all of us) could possibly need to satisfy our natural and necessary desires. That means with a minimum amount of work per person, we could dedicate our lives to friendship in Epicurean sense and knowledge.

I will end with this passage from Bertrand Russell (In Praise of Idleness): "Let us take an illustration. Suppose that, at a given moment, a certain number of people are engaged in the manufacture of pins. They make as many pins as the world needs, working (say) eight hours a day. Someone makes an invention by which the same number of men can make twice as many pins as before. But the world does not need twice as many pins: pins are already so cheap that hardly any more will be bought at a lower price. In a sensible world, everybody concerned in the manufacture of pins would take to working four hours instead of eight, and everything else would go on as before. But in the actual world this would be thought demoralizing. The men still work eight hours, there are too many pins, some employers go bankrupt, and half the men previously concerned in making pins are thrown out of work. There is, in the end, just as much leisure as on the other plan, but half the men are totally idle while half are still overworked. In this way, it is insured that the unavoidable leisure shall cause misery all round instead of being

a universal source of happiness. Can anything more insane be imagined?"

Post by “Cassius” of February 19, 2023 at 2:25 AM

Waterholic thanks for the very interesting post. (Just FYI I edited it only to remove the color attribute from the Russell quote so it would be readable on a dark theme.)

It's 2am for me as I type this so I will respond further later when I think more!

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 19, 2023 at 2:39 PM

[Quote from waterholic](#)

Case in point is friendship, which plays a central role in the Epicurean philosophy as one of the main ways of achieving tranquility through safety.

@waterholic, it sounds like perhaps you see tranquility as an important goal within Epicureanism? Here on the forum some of us find that to be a good goal, where as others of us insist on seeing a broader understanding of pleasure -- or as I personally like to think of it -- "a sweet life" is the goal. (So we are often having to clarify and redefine things, and perhaps things can get confusing).

There are several places within Epicurean philosophy in which it appears that tranquility is the goal (such as in the Letter to Meneoceus). However, in this forum we attempt to examine the big picture and when we do so then we are able to interpret the Epicurean goal as simply "pleasure" -- and this pleasure also includes some tranquility. So instead of tranquility being an end, it is a tool for pleasure. ([Cassius](#) maybe we need to set up a chart to explain this better?).

I could say more about whether or not "tranquility" was possible in Epicurus' time (since there was often the looming threat of brutal war and political strife). And now in our own time there are many things which can get keep us up at night worrying about the future. And I believe there are ways to deal with all of this.

For our current times, I would say also that friendship provides a kind of sweetness in life (and perhaps less security) -- so friendship is a tool for pleasure, which begins in mutual benefit, but over time evolves into mutual appreciation and enjoyment of getting to see, know, and

experience another human being. It is true that in our times friendships can be somewhat transitory. When I moved from the West Coast to the Southeast of the US, the friendships that I had there are now altered forever (though I still keep in touch with a few, it is a very distant feeling of connection).

I believe that one needs to "keep the faith" so to speak -- keep the faith in friendships, and that friendship is possible.

I envision Epicurean philosophy becoming a helpful tool for building community and friendship. We still have lots to do to prepare the teaching materials before we can create a program in which to introduce people to the philosophy. The materials also need to include how to create and build communities. These communities would be more like "churches" or a club/society.

In the meantime you might like to check out this thread here which has some practical tips on friendship:

Thread

[Cultivation of Friendship within Epicureanism](#)

Principle Doctrine 27:

27. Of all the things that wisdom provides for the complete happiness of one's entire life, by far the greatest is friendship.

Principle Doctrine 27 is very important for a happy life. Modern life is busy with work and family, and yet we all still need friends. So it is very important to take the time and put the effort into making friends and maintaining friendships. Some people might be satisfied with the number and kind of friendships in their lives, but others...



Kalosyni

January 16, 2022 at 8:54 PM

Post by "Cassius" of February 19, 2023 at 6:23 PM

I wasn't able to reply earlier but here is another angle on the question that goes along with what Kalosyni wrote:

As I see it, the core of Epicurean philosophy that gives life to all the rest of it is the "worldview" of how the world operates without supernatural forces, how there is no life after death, and so

on. Those are things that don't change no matter what circumstances you may be in.

The ethics, while it is what we use to make day to day decisions, is much more -- totally in fact -- contextual, and how to apply it is based on the circumstances you are in.

What I think Waterholic is correctly noting is that social relationships have changed dramatically in 2000 years. The people we live right next door, even in the same building, are often not our closest friends or even known to us in many cases.

So when we talk about "the importance of friendship" it is natural that how we interact with the people who we consider to be our closest friends is going to be a lot different than the way people related in the past. The benefits we get from friendship may be the same, but the way we interact has changed dramatically.

My point in this short post is that this should not be seen as a limitation of Epicurean philosophy as it is part of its flexibility -- the goal is PLEASURE - of which tranquility is hopefully a large part, but which we may have to dispense with for long periods if our circumstances require change.

So to echo Waterholic, how I choose and interact with my friends may be entirely different than the way it was done 20 years or 200 years or 2000 years ago. But the insight is Epicurus is that the goal is pleasure in a life that is all too short, and in which there are no divine gods or fate or ideal absolute virtues. If we start with that - which is the heart - then we can adapt Epicurus' suggestions as to how to live prudently to fit our own circumstances.

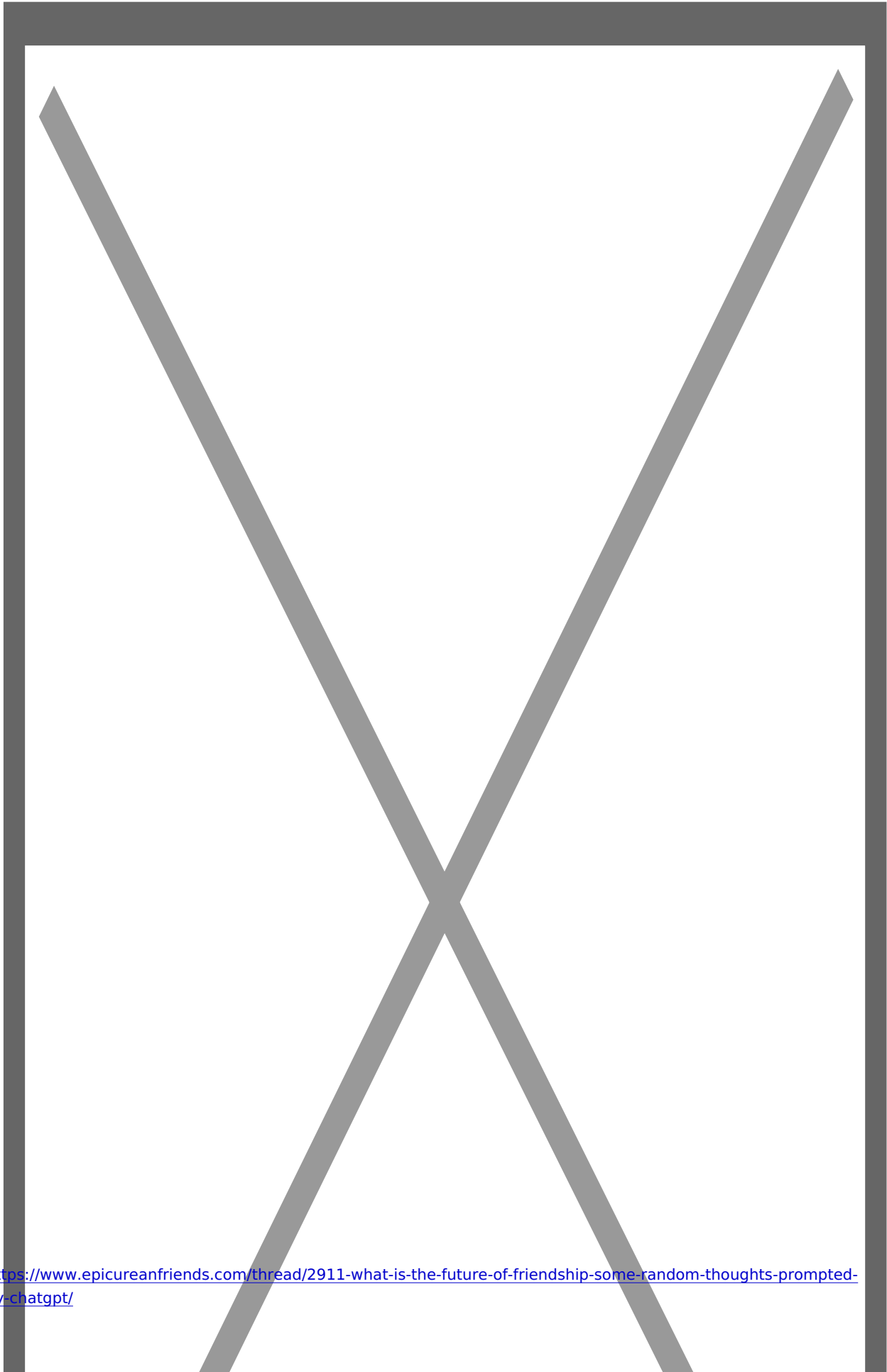
Post by “Don” of February 19, 2023 at 9:21 PM

Friendship was, is, and will be one of the most important factors for one's well-being.

That's from the long-running [Harvard Study of Adult Development](#):

“People who are more connected to family, to friends, and to community, are happier and physically healthier than people who are less well connected.”

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2911-what-is-the-future-of-friendship-some-random-thoughts-prompted-by-chatgpt/>

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While the expectations and responsibilities of friendship were different in ancient Greece (one's literal life could be at risk without friends), the benefits of friendship overall would still be similar over time. I find the wording of that quote from the Harvard study interesting: "People who are more connected to family, to friends, and to community, are happier and physically healthier than people who are less well connected." In ancient Greece, one could be physically healthier because your friends and family literally had to take care of all your needs if you got sick or injured. Now, we have some social safety net programs and hospitals and other institutions... but MANY things still have to be relied on through the kindness of friends and family: dropping off food if sick or recovering from surgery, a kind ear or should to cry one, etc.

In some ways, the adage "the more things change, the more they stay the same" seems apropos here.

Post by "waterholic" of February 20, 2023 at 7:58 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

it sounds like perhaps you see tranquility as an important goal within Epicureanism?

Thank you [Kalosyni](#) , I would place myself firmly in the "camp" of pleasure as the goal. But my logic in this post is based on my understanding of pleasure (always open for being corrected):

1. Fulfilling natural and necessary desires is the basic way to get pleasure from life.
2. In most societies (e.g. Athens, when Epicurus arrived there), social structures are in place to make sure that satisfying those natural and necessary desires is easy. Friendship (or community) is a way/tool to achieve the sense of security that no matter what, those basic desires will be met.
3. If we remove friendship from the equation AND insist that work is a necessary precondition for access to food/shelter, the chances of pleasure in life diminish.

Anxiety/tranquility dimension could be secondary here.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I believe that one needs to "keep the faith" so to speak -- keep the faith in friendships, and that friendship is possible.

Absolutely! My post might have come across as very pessimistic, but that was not the intention. My high school maths teacher used to say: "If you want to see how a function performs, check the performance in extreme cases, plug in 0 or infinity." That's my way of assuming the extreme to illustrate the inherent problem. The problem is not with Epicurean philosophy though, but with the way the community today is put together, or rather, the way it's progressing.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I envision Epicurean philosophy becoming a helpful tool for building community and friendship. We still have lots to do to prepare the teaching materials before we can create a program in which to introduce people to the philosophy.

A colleague of mine - a fellow economist, remarked once how economics lacks the goal, or the objective function (it is somehow assumed that economic growth is the goal, but absolutely no effort to explain why). Funnily enough, the whole theory collapses once the goal is unclear. I believe, philosophy (and of course, in my view - Epicurean philosophy, should fill that gap. So I completely agree, a lot of teaching is required.

Post by "waterholic" of February 20, 2023 at 8:11 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

My point in this short post is that this should not be seen as a limitation of Epicurean philosophy as it is part of its flexibility -- the goal is PLEASURE - of which tranquility is hopefully a large part, but which we may have to dispense with for long periods if our circumstances require change.

Any model has a limitation and I am sure Epicurean philosophy as a model of life has too. But I don't think this specific subject is a limitation of the philosophy - I agree with you, [Cassius](#). And indeed, sometimes periods of anxiety are unavoidable and even desirable for the likelihood of future pleasure.

Post by “Don” of February 20, 2023 at 8:26 AM

[Quote from waterholic](#)

indeed, sometimes periods of anxiety are unavoidable and even desirable for the likelihood of future pleasure.

I'm still not convinced by this sentiment even though I respect all three people making it: [Kalosyni](#) , [Cassius](#) , and @waterholic .

Anxiety need not be a given in our lives. We can plan without being anxious. We can endure pain - even deliberately choose pain - without the addition of anxiety if we consider the circumstances or know it will lead to more pleasure. We can choose to remain calm even "under fire" (literally, in the case of the video of David Hogg during a school shooting.) Freedom from anxiety and its associated mental disturbances is what Epicurus is calling us to experience so that we can better experience all the other pleasures available to us, free from the underlying mental disturbances that would mar that pleasurable experience.

Just having compiled in another thread all the references to ataraxia and related terms from the texts, I remain convinced this is the case.

Post by “waterholic” of February 20, 2023 at 8:40 AM

[Don](#), I believe the difficulty with "remaining calm under fire" that I have (possibly the others too) is the proximity of this position to stoicism and it is important that I "come clean" about it. As [Cassius](#) mentioned ones, just because something is supported by the "other side", doesn't mean it has to be wrong. We tend to emphasize a lot the differences between the schools, but there are also similarities (plenty to be found in Cicero and Seneca texts).

In the end, certain knowledge/understanding helps train our minds and vanquish the anxiety. Whether it is the knowledge that "your virtue is not compromised, so there is nothing to fear" or that "everything natural and necessary is easy to attain and [death is nothing to us](#)" depends on the belief structure of the person. The second set (including most importantly physics in Epicurean sense) does wonders for me and my friends whom I try to help 😊

Post by “Don” of February 20, 2023 at 8:47 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2911-what-is-the-future-of-friendship-some-random-thoughts-prompted-by-chatgpt/>

[Quote from waterholic](#)

In the end, certain knowledge/understanding helps train our minds and vanquish the anxiety.

Well stated. My take is that the "virtue" the Stoics use to build their freedom from anxiety foundation is rickety and unstable, whereas the Epicurean foundation of rooting out beliefs, suspicions, and superstitions is much sounder.

Post by “waterholic” of February 20, 2023 at 9:41 AM

I am still having second thoughts here though. Consider two ways of addressing the anxiety: external and internal.

External: you avoid anxiety by doing or not doing certain things (e.g. avoid politics, since power and fame are unnatural and unnecessary, while the likelihood of being stabbed in the back is very real).

Internal: if you are for whatever reason in politics (e.g. to help a friend), don't panic: you cannot lose anything worth living for (basic pleasures of life, friends & family).

I think that the main difference is that stoicism disregards the first (external) approach: if it is virtuous to do something, you do it and you won't feel anxiety because you are doing the right thing.

When it comes to Epicurus, accepting pain and anxiety may be acceptable for pleasure in the future, so long as that pleasure is correctly defined (fame & fortune don't count). There can be an overlap between the schools in terms of situations in which acting is better than not acting.

But to get back to my first post: a stoic take on it would be that there should be no anxiety, since by remaining true to virtue, one has nothing to fear irrespective of the environment (loss of job, shelter etc. - so all is good in the community). However, when it comes to Epicurus, a community can fail to take care of its members and these members may justly feel anxiety: lack of food and shelter can be real!

Post by “Cassius” of February 20, 2023 at 9:55 AM

[Quote from waterholic](#)

But to get back to my first post: a stoic take on it would be that there should be no anxiety, since by remaining true to virtue, one has nothing to fear irrespective of the environment (loss of job, shelter etc. - so all is good in the community).

Yes I think this is an important point, and we keep circling around the same issue: If we are going to indulge in the game of attempting to articulate clearly intermediate and ultimate goals, and if we are going to reduce that goal to one word, then the word is "Pleasure" and the reason that is the one word is that that is the single faculty that Nature has given us to decide what to choose.

We are essentially taking the position that we are good with Nature's choice, and we are going to follow Nature's choice, and individual speculations about other choices be damned -- damn the torpedos, we are on Nature's side, and we're not going to stray off onto another course.

"Tranquility" or any other specific type of pleasure is an individual matter of choice. Nature hasn't written "Tranquility" or "Fame" or "Riches" or "sex" or anything else as a single absolute goal for every person at every time.

This is where I think we have to parse Epicurean texts and look for the big picture, because there are specific texts that when read separately point in separate directions, and at times focus on certain aspects like tranquility, and at some times focus on concepts like "happiness" and all sorts of tools that are or can be pleasures themselves (friendship, philosophy, to name just two.)

As I see it the answer to most of the confusion is to realize that individuals like atoms have changing contexts and at times some types of pleasures are more important than others. The only thing that connects the pleasure of tranquility with the pleasure of skydiving is that our faculty of pleasure identifies both of them as pleasurable in some circumstances. Sometimes it's appropriate to seek safety with a few friends in a cave, and sometimes it's appropriate to jump out of an airplane and hope anxiously that the parachute is going to open.

The only rational way I can see to explain all this is to always go back to (1) "Pleasure" --the faculty given us by nature and then (2) the Epicurean worldview (no supernatural, no life after death, no eternal except the properties of atoms, etc). That's the tribunal to face in every situation, and then from those each individual has to evaluate their situation and follow the guide of nature, which cannot be more abstractly defined than to "pursue pleasure."

Post by "Don" of February 20, 2023 at 10:32 AM

[Quote from waterholic](#)

When it comes to Epicurus, accepting pain and anxiety may be acceptable for pleasure in the future,

Pain, yes. Anxiety, no.

I think we can be concerned about the future or plan for the future or foresee the future without including anxiety in the mix. Anxiety - defined here by me as the opposite of ataraxia - is adding suffering on top of waiting for evidence or planning for the future.

If I see a tornado in the distance, having anxiety about it doesn't help me or anyone around me. Of course, I'm going to take it seriously, I'm going to try and remember what I know about the behavior of tornadoes, I'm going to get my family and I moving, I'm going to keep an eye on its progress. But adding anxiety on top of that - "Oh, man! Oh, man! Oh, man!! It's coming. It's coming! - doesn't help me make prudent choices and serves no positive purpose.

Post by “Cassius” of February 20, 2023 at 10:42 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Pain, yes. Anxiety, no.

Is not anxiety just a subset of pain?

Post by “waterholic” of February 20, 2023 at 11:03 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Is not anxiety just a subset of pain?

That would be my understanding too.

Post by “Don” of February 20, 2023 at 11:27 AM

I would say it's a pain we do not have to undergo. It's turbulence and trouble that isn't necessary.

Post by “Cassius” of February 20, 2023 at 11:41 AM

[Don](#), for an Epicurean god, perhaps, but for a human being?

I can see why you would be tempted to take that position due to the passages which focus on how particular fears can be reduced or eliminated through particular means, but I see "anxiety" as a subset of the overall pleasure-pain doctrine and not as something unique in itself.

And in fact I would see the temptation to consider it to be unique is one of the most dangerous aspects of the way some people elevate tranquility to be the goal rather than pleasure.

It seems to me that this is one of the ways in which we should see Epicurus as building on the Cyreniacs rather than refuting them. If the Cyreniacs really wanted to deprecate the wide variety of mental pleasures that exist, then they were wrong, but I have a very difficult time thinking that they were so narrow in focus. Epicurus, as Diogenes Laertius says, recognized *both* active and non-active pleasures, and in so doing he tightened up the logic of the prior advocates of pleasure and made the theory stronger as against the Platonists and the others who advocated other versions of "the good." If the good is pleasure, then that includes all kinds, and Nature doesn't tell us "pursue pleasure, but of all the pleasures, pursue tranquility the most" -- At least I don't personally understand Nature as doing so, nor do I observe that in the young of all species, which I gather is the ultimate observational test.

Post by “Cassius” of February 20, 2023 at 1:21 PM

I had time to come back and make another comment:

When I refer to the conflation of tranquility and pleasure as "one of the most dangerous" ideas I don't mean "dangerous" in the sense of evil or something malicious in and of itself. I mean dangerous in the hands of those who aren't thinking through the implications.

What I think I observe is that there is a great tendency in the non-Epicurean intellectual world to do everything possible to take the focus off of "pleasure." I don't think that is because such people dislike the experience of pleasure themselves, because of course they do. What they see - and what I think Epicurus saw - is that this question is a subtext for the deeper and more volatile question of "their" (again referring to non-Epicurean intellectuals) desire to maintain control of the narrative over others. If "they" can keep the focus on ideal forms, or essences, or virtue, or tranquility, or frankly *anything* other than pleasure itself, then "they" can define the narrative of how to live, and "they" can keep control over others who disagree with them.

I think Epicurus saw that, but I think it's always been a problem that people of good will are often slow to recognize that this tension exists. Some of them want to maintain the same power to define "the good" that Plato and similar wanted to keep for themselves, but some of them (especially in relatively good times) just don't find it in themselves to understand how important these questions are, and how "others" can use this issue to manipulate them. If someone doesn't have a manipulative personality then the desire to manipulate can be hard to understand. "I just want to be left alone to live my own life - doesn't everyone?" Unfortunately the answer to that is "No, everyone doesn't just want to be left alone."

We've noticed before that many of "us" tend to be introverts, and it's just not in our nature to want to spend our time scheming about ways to manipulate other people. That's very consistent with Epicurus' advise not to make a career in politics / control over others. But that is pretty much what "organized religion" is, whether it's in the form of the most super-primitive Christianity of the "west" or the most ultra-"enlightened" eastern viewpoints. I think that's one reason why those of us who only want to live our own lives find it appealing to pick and choose elements in other viewpoints that we think are desirable, while charitably glossing over or ignoring the negative elements in those viewpoints.

So of course that is not what I am thinking you are doing at all, but I do think that the overall massive tendency of the great majority of intellectuals in the last 2000 years has pushed in that direction. They think that if they can define the goal for other people as something other than the sense of pleasure and pain that Nature implanted in everyone then they have a leg up on controlling the narrative and controlling society. And I think that technique does work, and it has been very successful for them, which is why they identify pleasure in general and Epicurus in particular as such an enemy.

Post by "Cassius" of February 20, 2023 at 1:53 PM

Ha - another question: If anxiety must be avoided and never accepted at all costs, would anyone ever choose to have a boyfriend or girlfriend, or get married, or have children? 😊

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.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 20, 2023 at 2:50 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

If I see a tornado in the distance, having anxiety about it doesn't help me or anyone around me.

Here is an actual problem: I have a type of mole that I should go in to a dermatologist to make sure it isn't cancer. But I wonder why I keep procrastinating. I ought be more worried. So here is an example of how there can be healthy anxiety/worry. This discussion makes me realize that I need to stop telling myself there is nothing to worry about. I am going make an appointment this week.

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

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.

Yes, I was thinking that "split the difference between Don and Cassius" also. And then we will need to ask ourselves "Is this a healthy worry or an unhealthy worry?" and also "should I be worrying more than I am?"

Post by “Cassius” of February 20, 2023 at 3:09 PM

A very good observation on the "mole." The [Epicurean gods](#) are invulnerable (apparently) but we are not. And as long as we have vulnerabilities then the ability to sense something to worry about is extremely valuable. I suppose we have discussed that too but while it seems appropriate to reduce our experience of pain to as close to zero as possible, we would not want to "eliminate" the sense of pain itself, as it serves effectively as a requirement of human life.

Stoics and those who are willing to hypothecize the superiority of some "other world" are probably naturally drawn to eliminate all feeling of all kind, but in THIS world, feeling both good and bad is a necessity.

Post by “Godfrey” of February 20, 2023 at 3:26 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2911-what-is-the-future-of-friendship-some-random-thoughts-prompted-by-chatgpt/>

The quotation that comes to mind is:

"Additionally, once the sage has become wise, they will no longer fall back into ignorance but can be exceedingly affected by the emotions (and will feel grief (119)) although this will not be a hindrance in their progress toward wisdom." (117) from Diogenes Laertius

Post by "Joshua" of February 20, 2023 at 7:08 PM

Friendship has changed, and one of the symptoms of this is that modern readers can't quite come to terms with the language used between male friends in the preceding centuries. People nowadays will infer romance where there (probably) was none--as in the cases of Lincoln and Speed, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Alexander and Hephaestion, and so on.

You'll also enjoy this, from the Jesuit Review: *"For us as readers, it helps to remember that friendship is, ultimately, a Christian concept. "A sweet friendship refreshes the soul," says the Book of Proverbs (27:9)"*

Post by "Don" of February 20, 2023 at 7:09 PM

Insightful comments from everyone. Thanks for engaging!!

Let me say that I'm willing to concede that we probably should - to use a Philodemus phrase - feel the bite of anxiety when it is appropriate. Maybe such as at a particular unexpected event like the tornado. I could see feeling "anxious" about that. But we shouldn't let the bite linger unnecessarily or overwhelm us! My position (to offer some concessions and compromises in light of this discussion) is due to my interpreting "anxiety" as "chronic worry or dread with no action resulting from the mental disturbance." So, what some of you are putting under the heading of anxiety, I'd probably - rightly or wrongly - pick another word to describe that emotion.

Additionally, I do think Epicurus calls us to rid ourselves of anxiety in certain things: punishment after death, wrath of the gods, etc., etc. We should eradicate those beliefs and feel no anxiety about those.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

we will need to ask ourselves "Is this a healthy worry or an unhealthy worry?"

Well put.