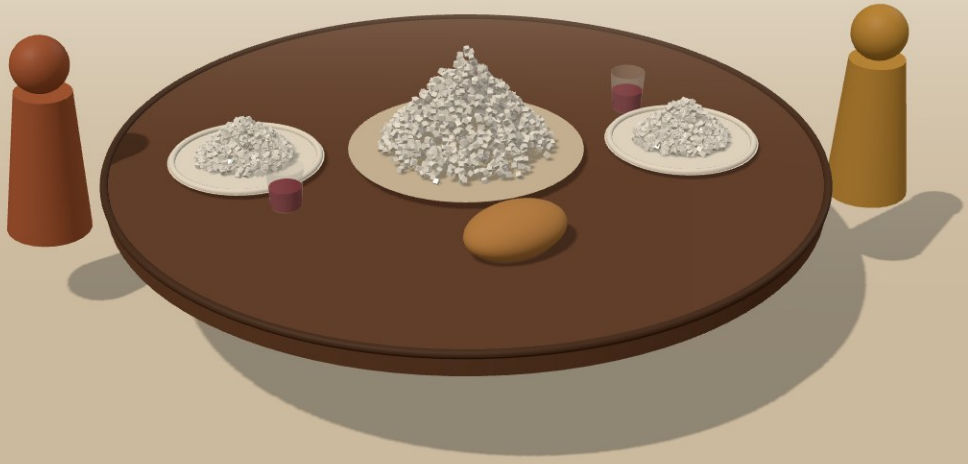
A BOOK

Salt

Aristotle, friendship, and the one thing your delegate cannot eat for you



JOHN RECTOR

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JOHN RECTOR

johnrector.me · November 15, 2026

Your delegate can keep every friendship of use you have. It cannot eat the salt that makes a friend.

PROLOGUE

Happy Birthday, Dan

SATURDAY, 7:02 A.M.

Your phone has a summary waiting. Forty-one birthday wishes went out overnight, each one personal, and your oldest friend was one of them.

Everything went out on time. Forty-one people heard from you this morning, and every message was good. Your delegate remembered that your old manager's daughter started college this fall and asked how she was settling in. It remembered the client who just ran his first marathon. It wished your cousin a happy birthday in the same joking tone the two of you have used since you were kids. Nobody who got a message would guess you were asleep.

Dan got one too. You met Dan the first week of your first job, and for years you ate lunch together almost every day. Your delegate wrote him something warm about those lunches. By eight o'clock he had replied with a heart and a line about getting together soon.

Then you notice the small tag on his reply. His delegate wrote it.

So here is what happened this morning. Two delegates wished each other a happy birthday on behalf of two men who were both asleep. It was polite, accurate and kind. And nothing happened between you and Dan at all.

This book is about that nothing. It is not a complaint about delegates. I run my life through one, and I teach my students to run theirs through one. Mine keeps my calendar, answers what can be answered and remembers what I would forget. Most of what it does in my name for other people is good, and the people it does it for are better off.

But this morning raises a question that is about to face everyone. If a delegate can keep up every relationship you have, warmly and on time, what is a friendship made of? What is the part it cannot do?

The best answer I know is twenty-three centuries old. It comes from a man who thought harder about friendship than almost anyone, and who also, strangely, imagined machines that would do our work for us. His answer fits inside an old proverb about salt.

THE SCENE

Two delegates said happy birthday to each other.

THE QUESTION

What is a friendship made of, if not the messages?

PART I

Three Kinds

Most of what we call friendship was always for something.

CHAPTER 1

Without Friends No One Would Choose to Live

Aristotle taught in Athens in the fourth century before Christ. His lectures on how to live well survive as a book called the *Nicomachean Ethics*, probably named for his son Nicomachus. It is a book about happiness, about what a good human life is. It has ten parts, and he gives two of them to friendship. No other subject in the book gets that much room.

That proportion is the first thing worth noticing. Aristotle was not sentimental. He wrote about courage, justice, money, pleasure and the life of the mind with the same dry patience. When he reached friendship he did not shorten his stride. He lengthened it.

He opens with a sentence that is hard to argue with. In the old English translation by W. D. Ross: “without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods.” Give a person health, money, power and every comfort, take away every friend, and almost no one would want the life.

The Greek word he uses is *philia*, and it is wider than our word friend. It covers parents and children, husbands and wives, business partners, fellow citizens, members of a club, even people who sail on the same ship. Aristotle wants to know what holds people together in all of these, and he notices that it comes in kinds. Some of what we call friendship is strong and some is weak. Some lasts a lifetime and some ends with the job.

Why start a book about AI delegates here? Because a delegate is about to stand between you and nearly everyone you know. It will write to

them, answer them, schedule them, remember them and remind you of them. It will do this for every kind of tie Aristotle described. If we want to know which ties survive that, and which ones it can keep for us, we need his map.

His map has three countries on it.

THE IDEA

Aristotle gave friendship more room than any other subject in his book on happiness.

THE QUESTION

Which of your ties can a delegate keep?

CHAPTER 2

Use, Pleasure and the Good

Aristotle says we love a thing for one of three reasons: because it is useful, because it is pleasant, or because it is good. So there are three kinds of friendship.

In the first kind, two people are friends because each is useful to the other. Your accountant. The supplier who always picks up. The colleague who sends you referrals and expects some back. The neighbor who watches the dog. These ties are real and they matter. But Aristotle points out what they are attached to. You do not love the person. You love what comes to you from the person. When the use ends, the friendship ends with it, and nobody is surprised. The useful, he says, is not permanent but always changing, so when the motive is gone the friendship dissolves.

In the second kind, two people are friends because each finds the other pleasant. The funny one at the bar. The tennis partner. The group you go to concerts with. These friendships form fast and end fast, he says, because what pleases us changes. Young people are especially good at them. They fall into them and out of them, sometimes within a single day.

Aristotle calls both kinds friendships “incidentally.” That is not an insult. It describes where the love is pointed. It is pointed at the use or the pleasure, and only through those at the person. Swap in someone else who is just as useful or just as funny, and the friendship would carry on.

The third kind is different. Here two people wish each other well for the other’s own sake, because of who the other is. Aristotle calls it the perfect friendship, the friendship of good people, meaning people of

good character. You love your friend, not what your friend does for you. You could not swap in anyone else, because the friendship is not attached to a function. It is attached to the person.

He adds two things about this third kind that matter for everything that follows. It is rare, because it needs people of a certain kind and a long time. And it contains the other two. A real friend is also useful and also pleasant. The good friendship lacks nothing the lesser ones have. It just isn't for them.

Look at your own contacts with this map in hand. Most of the names belong to the first two kinds. A few belong to the third. Those few are the subject of this book.

THE IDEA

Two kinds of friendship love what comes from a person. One loves the person.

THE QUESTION

Which kind is each name in your phone?

CHAPTER 3

A Bushel of Salt

How do you get the third kind? Aristotle's answer is the most practical sentence in his whole account. Such friendship, he says, "requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says, men cannot know each other till they have 'eaten salt together.'"

The proverb was old even then. In another version of his ethics he names the amount: a *medimnos* of salt, the Greek measure for a big sack of grain, about a bushel and a half. Cicero repeats it in Latin three centuries later. Plutarch repeats it after him. Versions of it are still said today.

Think about what the proverb is really measuring. A person eats a pinch of salt at a meal. To finish a sack between two of you would take more meals than anyone could count. It means years at the same table. Not one long dinner, but a great many ordinary ones, in good seasons and bad, until each of you has seen the other hungry, tired, generous, short-tempered, lucky and grieving.

Aristotle says what the meals do. They let each person be "found lovable" and "trusted" by the other. You cannot know someone's character from a description, or from one good evening. Character shows itself only over time and in different weather. The salt is the time.

Then he adds the sentence I think about more than any other in the book: "a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not."

> *A wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not.*

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.3, trans. W. D. Ross

That is the whole problem in eleven words. The wish is instant. You meet someone at a conference and you like each other at once. You trade numbers. You both mean it when you say let’s stay in touch. The wish is real. But it is not yet friendship, and no amount of wanting turns it into friendship faster. Only the salt does.

Notice one more thing about the proverb. It does not say until each of you has eaten a sack of salt. It says until you have eaten salt together. The salt is not an amount each person consumes alone. It is an amount consumed in each other’s company. Neither of you can eat your half at home and bring the receipt.

THE IDEA

Friendship is made of time spent together. The wish for it is not the thing.

THE QUESTION

Who can eat the salt for you?

PART II

The Living Tool

Aristotle imagined the delegate, and he knew what it could not be.

CHAPTER 4

Shuttles That Weave by Themselves

There is a passage in Aristotle's *Politics* that reads as if it were written last year. He is discussing the household and the things a household needs to run. Then he stops and imagines a different world.

"If every instrument could accomplish its own work, obeying or anticipating the will of others," he writes, like the moving statues the legends said Daedalus built, or the golden tripods of Hephaestus that rolled themselves into the assembly of the gods, "if, in like manner, the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre without a hand to guide them, chief workmen would not want servants, nor masters slaves."

Read it again with your delegate in mind. Obeying or anticipating the will of others. A loom that weaves with no hand on it. Aristotle saw, more than two thousand years ago, that the whole order of his society rested on one fact: work needed hands. If the work could do itself, that order would lose its reason to exist.

I need to be direct about the context, because the passage is about slavery, and Aristotle defended slavery. He thought some people were slaves by nature. He was wrong, and the wrongness is not a footnote. I am not borrowing his politics. I am borrowing one distinction he drew more sharply than anyone, because it turns out to matter for the thing we are building.

The distinction is between a relation of use and a relation of friendship.

In the *Ethics* he asks whether a master can be a friend to his slave. His answer: “there is nothing common to the two parties; the slave is a living tool and the tool a lifeless slave. Qua slave then, one cannot be friends with him.” Then the next sentence: “But qua man one can.”

Qua means in the role of. In the role of a tool, he says, there is no friendship, because a tool is defined by its use, and friendship is not about use. In the role of a human being, there can be. He did not notice that his second sentence demolishes his first. A person cannot be split into a tool and a human, and later readers, including his own translator Ross, said so plainly.

But the distinction survives the man who misused it. A relation that is defined by use is not friendship, however warm it gets.

THE IDEA

Aristotle foresaw self-running instruments, and said a relation of use is not friendship.

THE QUESTION

What kind of relation do you have with your delegate?

CHAPTER 5

Delegation Runs Down

I do not think of my delegate as a tool. I say it is an entity, and a subordinate. You do not use it. You delegate to it, and delegation runs one way: down. You hand it the small matters so that you can keep what is worthy of your own attention.

That word down is where Aristotle's distinction lands. Whatever a delegate is on the inside, and that is a question for another book, the relation you have with it is defined by what you hand it. In your life, it is there for the work. It may be pleasant too. Many people already find theirs good company. But those are exactly Aristotle's first two kinds: the friendship of use and the friendship of pleasure. The relation never turns around so that you serve it, or wish it well for its own sake the way you wish a friend well. It is not built that way, and you are not asking it to be.

Here is the consequence, and it is the hinge of this book. When you send your delegate to deal with a person, you put that person where your delegate is. Below you. Among the small matters.

For most people in your life, that is fine, even kind. The supplier would rather have a fast, accurate answer from your delegate than a slow one from you. The dentist's office would rather confirm with your delegate than chase you. These are friendships of use, and a delegate serves a friendship of use beautifully, because the use is the point.

But I give my students one rule above the others. Never have your delegate deal with a person who is worthy of your own attention. Not a customer you value, not family, not a friend. Delegating such a person down dishonors them. It is worse than using them. Being used at least

means someone wanted something from you. Being delegated means you were handed to the help.

> *Being used at least means someone wanted something from you. Being delegated means you were handed to the help.*

Aristotle quotes an old saying: what friends have is common. A friendship is a place where two people stand on the same level and share what they have. Your delegate cannot stand there for you, because the moment it stands anywhere on your behalf, the place becomes a place of delegation, and the other person is now dealing with your staff.

THE IDEA

Sending your delegate to a person moves that person down, among the small matters.

THE QUESTION

Who in your life must never be delegated?

CHAPTER 6

The Friendships a Delegate Can Keep

Now the good news, and it is very good.

Most of the work of keeping up relationships has always been work done for friendships of use. Remembering the birthdays of people you see twice a year. Sending the note after the meeting. Following up with the person you met at the conference. Keeping a hundred professional ties warm so that one of them pays off. Checking in so the connection does not go cold. We call it networking, and most people hate it. They hate it because it is the chore of performing the third kind of friendship for the sake of the first.

A delegate does this better than any person ever has. It never forgets. It writes well. It knows what everyone is up to. It can keep a thousand ties warm at once without getting tired, and without getting insincere, because it was never sincere or insincere in the first place. It is doing the work.

Aristotle would not object. He thought friendships of use were honest about what they are. The supplier and the client both know why they talk. When a delegate keeps that tie, nothing is lost, because nothing in it was ever about the characters of the people. The delegate maintains exactly what was there.

So here is my first claim. Within a few years, nearly all the upkeep of friendships of use will be done by delegates, and people will be relieved. Networking will stop being something people do. It will be something their delegates do, constantly and well, in the background.

And then something else happens, which is the point of this book. When the delegate takes over everything that friendships of use require, the third kind is left standing by itself, and you can see it clearly for the first time. Everything a delegate can keep for you was the lesser kind. The kind it cannot keep was always the point.

THE IDEA

A delegate keeps friendships of use better than you can, and that clears the view.

THE QUESTION

What is left when the upkeep is gone?

PART III

Counterfeit Salt

When the message is free, the message proves nothing.

CHAPTER 7

Forty-One Birthdays

Go back to Dan.

For most of history, a birthday message from a friend meant something because it cost something. Someone had to remember. Someone had to stop what they were doing, find the words and send them. The message was evidence. It said: you were in my mind today, and I gave you a few minutes of my life.

A delegate makes the message free. Once it is free, it is evidence of nothing except that the sender has a delegate. And once everyone knows that everyone has one, the warmest message in the world tells you only that a system did its job.

I find the Reality Equation useful here, and this part is my argument, not Aristotle's. What your friend expects of you is not something you can set. It sits below awareness, and it is built from what actually happened between you. The only road to it runs through the Actual: the things you did, which became history, which slowly retrained what your friend expects. No one can reach in and adjust that expectation directly. Not you, not your delegate, not the best-written message in the world.

That is why the counterfeit fails. A delegated message does arrive. It is an Actual. But the history it writes is the history of your delegate, not of you. Your friend learns, slowly and without ever deciding to, that messages from you are messages from your system. Your system is reliable. You are absent.

This is what Aristotle's proverb says in older words. The salt cannot be counterfeited because the salt is history. What friends expect of

each other is built from meals that happened, with both of them in the room. You cannot fake a history any more than you can wish one into being.

> *You cannot fake a history any more than you can wish one into being. You can only make one, one ordinary evening at a time.*

THE IDEA

A friend’s expectation of you is built only from what actually happened between you.

THE QUESTION

What history is your delegate writing in your name?

CHAPTER 8

Another Self

Aristotle has a famous phrase for a friend. He calls the friend "another self."

He means something precise. A good person, he says, relates to a friend the way he relates to himself. He wants his friend's good the way he wants his own. Then he makes a surprising observation. We are better at seeing our neighbors than ourselves. We judge another person's actions more clearly than our own. So a friend gives us something nothing else can: a self we can actually see.

A later book from his school, the *Magna Moralia*, turns this into an image. When we want to see our own face, we look in a mirror. When we want to know ourselves, we look at a friend, because a friend is another self.

Your delegate is also a kind of mirror. It knows you very well, often better than your friends do. It can describe your habits, your moods, your patterns. But it is a mirror with no face of its own. Its whole orientation is toward you: your goals, your instructions, your side. I wrote about this in Impartial, through Adam Smith. A voice built to be on your side cannot judge you, because it stands where you stand.

A friend is a mirror with a face. That is why the reflection is worth having. When Dan looks at you, he looks with twenty years of his own life behind his eyes, his own disappointments, his own standards, his own ways of being wrong. What you see in him is you, as seen by someone who is not you and who chose, over a sack of salt, to keep looking. A delegate can show you yourself. Only a friend can show you yourself from outside.

THE IDEA

A friend is another self: a mirror with a face of its own.

THE QUESTION

Who sees you from outside?

CHAPTER 9

Living Together Is Not Grazing

Friends, Aristotle says, want above all to spend their days together. Then he says what that means for human beings, and the definition is pointed.

Their life together, he writes, “will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought; for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of man, and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place.”

Cattle feed in the same place. They are near each other and each one eats. People who live together talk, think together and share what they notice. The salt in the proverb is eaten at a table, but it is not the eating that does the work. It is the talk.

This matters because delegates are about to make it very easy to graze together. Two friends can sit across a table while their delegates handle a dozen small things for each of them, surfacing summaries, answering messages, nudging. They are in the same place. They are eating. They may even be talking, in the gaps. But the attention is somewhere else. Simone Weil called attention the rarest and purest form of generosity, and I took that up in Undivided. A meal with a half-present friend is grazing with better lighting.

So the thing a delegate cannot do for you is not only showing up. It is being there in the sense Aristotle meant: thinking with someone, where they can watch you think. That is the only way the salt gets eaten.

I tell my students that the test for “order dinner” is not that the order was placed. It is that the food is in your stomach. A delegate can get the dinner to the table. It cannot eat it for you. Friendship is the same,

one step further. A delegate can book the table, pick the place, move your calendar and remind you to leave. It cannot sit down. The salt has to go into you.

THE IDEA

Friends share discussion and thought, not only a place.

THE QUESTION

When you sit down with a friend, where is your attention?

PART IV

The Table

The delegate clears the week. You keep the evening.

CHAPTER 10

Because It Was He, Because It Was I

Around 1559, a young French magistrate named Michel de Montaigne met Étienne de La Boétie, a colleague in the Bordeaux parlement. They were friends for about four years. Then La Boétie fell ill and died at thirty-two. Montaigne spent much of the rest of his life writing essays, and one of them, “Of Friendship,” is about him.

In it Montaigne tries to say why he loved his friend, and finds he cannot give a reason. The famous line, in Charles Cotton’s old translation: “If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved him, I find it could no otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: because it was he, because it was I.”

Scholars who studied Montaigne’s own copy of the *Essays* found that he wrote the two halves of that answer at different times, in different ink. He kept working on the sentence for years, and he never found a better reason. There isn’t one.

Look at what the answer refuses to do. It refuses to name a function. Not because he was useful, not because he was fun, not even because he was wise. Every one of those reasons would make La Boétie replaceable, since someone else might be just as useful, fun or wise. The only reason Montaigne could give was the person himself, and his own person on the other side.

That is the third kind of friendship in a single line. And it is the exact opposite of a stand-in. In Ownmost I wrote that a stand-in is anyone. That is what makes it a stand-in. A friend is not anyone. The reason for the friendship is who each person is, so a substitute is, by definition,

not the friend, and neither is anything the substitute does.

Notice the second half too. Because it was I. Dan's friendship is not with someone who sends good messages. It is with you. If your delegate stands in, Dan is no longer in a friendship with the person he chose. He is being looked after by that person's staff, very well.

THE IDEA

The reason for a friendship is the two people, so nothing can stand in for either one.

THE QUESTION

Could you give a reason for your best friend that wasn't them?

CHAPTER 11

Few

Aristotle asks how many friends a person should have. Should we make as many as possible? For friendships of use and pleasure, he says, a few are plenty. For the good kind there is a limit, and he names it: as many as you can live with. You cannot live with many people and divide yourself among them. He reports the common view that "those who have many friends and mix intimately with them all are thought to be no one's friend."

The limit is not a limit of affection. It is a limit of hours. The salt is eaten in your evenings, and you have a fixed number of evenings. A delegate can multiply your contacts without end, because it does not need your evenings. It cannot multiply your friends, because they do.

That gives a simple prediction. The number of people each of us is in touch with will rise steeply. The number of friends each of us has will not move. The gap between the two numbers will become one of the most visible facts of social life.

And because evenings are the limit, evenings become the thing worth protecting. I argued in Cease that a delegate can work every hour and cannot rest for you. The same delegate that fills the day with handled tasks can be told to keep certain evenings empty. That is the best use of a delegate in a friendship. Not to stand in, but to clear the way. To book the table and then get out of it.

THE IDEA

Friendship is limited by hours, not affection, so it does not scale.

THE QUESTION

How many evenings a month go to the third kind?

CHAPTER 12

What I Expect

Here is what I think happens next. Each prediction is stated so that it can fail, and the ledger that follows says how.

01 The delegated greeting stops counting.

Within a few years, a birthday or holiday message from someone's delegate will carry about as much weight as a printed signature on a company holiday card. People will start saying when a message is personally written, the way people once added a handwritten line under the printed text.

02 Networking stops being something people do.

Keeping professional ties warm will be fully delegated and continuous, and people will be relieved. The phrase "I should reach out" will start to sound old, because the reaching out already happened.

03 The meal becomes the proof.

As every message gets cheap, an invitation to sit down and eat together becomes the clearest sign that someone counts you among the few. "Let's get dinner" stops being a polite brush-off and becomes the real thing, because it is the one offer a delegate cannot make good on alone.

04 The best delegates are judged by time together.

The personal AIs people trust most will not brag about messages handled. They will show how many evenings you spent with the people you named as yours, and they will defend those evenings against everything else. In friendship, a delegate's job will be to arrange the salt it cannot eat.

05 Loneliness splits.

People whose delegates only keep ties warm will feel more connected and lonelier at the same time. People whose delegates clear time for a few friends will get closer than people could before, because the chores that used to eat their evenings are gone.

THE IDEA

A delegate can arrange every meal and eat none of them.

THE QUESTION

Which of these is already happening to you?

CHAPTER 13

The Table I Keep

I have a delegate, and I hand it everything I can. I wrote about the day I told it you do it, you decide, because I had become the bottleneck in my own life. It keeps my calendar, my follow-ups and much of the correspondence of a person who runs a business. I do not miss doing those things myself, and I doubt the people on the other end miss it either.

Long before any of this, Paul Stern and I were the first two employees of the company that became E2open. On paper the founders were about ten large companies and the venture money behind them. In practice it was two people in an office in someone else's building, and later in space we leased in Belmont. Whatever else those years were, they were a long stretch at the same table. You learn what a person is like when nothing works yet. Aristotle would call it being found trustworthy. I would call it salt.

I also teach. My students are in their twenties, and I tell them two things about this. First, let your delegate keep your network. Do not spend your evenings on friendships of use. Your delegate will do that better than you can. Second, never let it near the few. Your friends are worthy of your own attention. If you hand one of them down to your delegate, you have told them where they rank.

When we opened our space in Charleston in January, I thought of it as a place to help people understand and use AI. It is that. It is also a room you have to walk into in person, and I have come to think the room matters as much as the AI. Every useful thing about a delegate pulls you toward a screen. The one thing it cannot do pulls you back to a table.

So my practice is simple. My delegate keeps the many. I keep the few. It books the dinners. I go to them.

THE IDEA

Let the delegate keep the many. Keep the few yourself.

THE QUESTION

Whose table are you keeping?

CHAPTER 14

The Ledger

Each claim, what is already true, what has to happen, and the plain condition that would show I was wrong.

The delegated greeting stops counting.

ALREADY TRUE

Printed signatures, form letters and automatic birthday posts already read as nothing. People already notice when a card carries a handwritten line.

WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN

Delegated messages have to become common enough, and recognizable enough, that people assume a greeting was delegated unless told otherwise.

WHERE I AM PROBABLY WRONG

If delegated messages stay so personal that people cannot tell or do not care, the signal never collapses. I am wrong if, five years from now, a warm automatic birthday note still lands as proof that someone thought of you.

Networking stops being something people do.

ALREADY TRUE

Follow-up tools already automate much of it for salespeople, and most people already dislike doing it.

WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN

Personal delegates need access to your contacts and permission to write in your name, and people have to trust them with both.

WHERE I AM PROBABLY WRONG

If people insist on their own outreach because automated outreach gets ignored, networking stays a human chore. I am wrong if keeping in touch is still a task most professionals do by hand.

The meal becomes the proof.

ALREADY TRUE

Sharing a meal is already one of the oldest signs of closeness there is.

WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN

Cheap messages have to devalue the alternatives enough that an invitation to sit down stands out.

WHERE I AM PROBABLY WRONG

If calls or shared virtual spaces become as convincing as a table, the meal loses its place. I am wrong if, in five years, people treat an invitation to dinner as no stronger than a long call.

The best delegates are judged by time together.

ALREADY TRUE

Screen-time and focus tools already exist, and people already ask their software to protect certain hours.

WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN

The companies building personal delegates have to treat time with chosen people as the measure of a good life, not time spent with the delegate.

WHERE I AM PROBABLY WRONG

If delegates are built to keep you talking to them, they will compete with your friends instead of clearing the way. I am wrong if no leading personal AI ever measures or protects your time with the people you name.

Loneliness splits.

ALREADY TRUE

People already report feeling lonely while being in touch with many people.

WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN

Delegates have to be common enough for both groups to be visible: the busy and alone, and the freed up and close.

WHERE I AM PROBABLY WRONG

If delegated contact simply satisfies people, there is no split, only contentment. I am wrong if people with heavily delegated social lives feel as close to their friends as people who keep the few for themselves.

THE IDEA

Each claim comes with the condition that would prove it wrong.

THE QUESTION

Check back in five years.

EPILOGUE

Happy Birthday, Dan, Again

SATURDAY, 8:14 A.M.

You look at Dan’s heart for a while. Then you call him.

It rings four times. He picks up sounding half awake and a little suspicious, because nobody calls anymore.

“Happy birthday,” you say. “It’s actually me.”

He laughs. You talk for eleven minutes about nothing much. His knee. Your kid. The guy from that first job who runs the place now. Near the end you say what your delegate said for you this morning, that you should get together. This time you name a night.

When you hang up, your delegate has already found a table at the place near his office, moved the thing you had that evening and put the dinner on both calendars. It did everything it could.

It cannot eat the salt.

Thursday, you will.

BACKGROUND

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books VIII and IX, translated by W. D. Ross: VIII.1 on the need for friends; VIII.3 on the three kinds, the salt proverb and the quick wish; VIII.9 on “what friends have is common”; VIII.11 on the living tool; IX.4 and IX.9 on the friend as another self and on living together; IX.10 on the number of friends.

Aristotle, Eudemian Ethics, Book VII, on the bushel (medimnos) of salt.

Aristotle, Politics, Book I, chapter 4, on instruments that work by themselves, translated by Benjamin Jowett.

Magna Moralia, Book II, on the friend as a mirror. Traditionally attributed to Aristotle; probably by a later member of his school.

Cicero, On Friendship (De Amicitia), chapter 19, on the pecks of salt.

Michel de Montaigne, “Of Friendship,” Essays, Book I, translated by Charles Cotton.

John Rector, The Reality Equation.

John Rector, You Do It. You Decide.

John Rector, The Hour We Have in Common.

John Rector, Ownmost, Cease, Impartial, Come In, Stay and Undivided, the other books in this series.