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EPICURUS ON FRIENDSHIP

JOHN M. RIST

FRIENDSHIP was an important topic among philosophers down to the end of the nineteenth century, but few valued it so highly as Epicurus, or analyzed it so uncompromisingly. This paper is designed to put Epicurus' view in a better perspective and to remove a number of errors of fact and of emphasis which I made elsewhere.¹

For Epicurus, the good is pleasure, that is, absence of pain, whether mental or corporeal. Pleasure is our first good, that is, the first we become aware of when we are born.² We are born as creatures who recognize pleasure because of its attractive nature;³ this recognition results from an innate power.⁴ Epicurus seems to mean simply that we recognize *as good* what is attractive, and as bad what is not, and that we should maintain that attitude throughout our lives. If we do, we are like the gods and, like them, deserve the title "blessed." "What is blessed and immortal knows no trouble."⁵ But normally mankind is troubled, by fear of other men, fear of the gods, and by fear of death. If such troubles can be removed, then happiness equal to that of the gods can be obtained. Fear of death can be removed by right doctrine, and also fear of the gods,⁶ for we can learn that they live at peace in the spaces between the various world systems, unworried by us or about us. But fear of other men may be more difficult to remove; and in particular the class from which most members of a philosopher's audience are drawn, that is, the governing class, is involved in the additional risks of public life with its inevitable hatreds and anxieties. As far as possible, therefore, public life must be avoided, and a man should live quietly, unnoticed by his neighbours.⁷ That way safety can be attained; and anything that promotes such safety can be labelled a natural good.⁸ In *Basic Doctrine* 7 Epicurus comes near equating safety with the good itself, for, of course, safety contributes very substantially to that absence of pain which is our primary goal.

1. J. M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 127-39.

2. D. L. 10. 129 (Menoecus). For this use of "first" compare the Stoic view as expounded by G. B. Kerferd, "The Search for Personal Identity," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester* 55 (1972): 190-91.

3. D. L. 10. 130 (Menoecus): *διὰ τὸ φύσιν ἔχειν οἰκείαν*. *Οἰκείος* means "attractive" as well as "akin". See below.

4. *συγγενικόν, σύμφυτον* D. L. 10. 129.

5. *Basic Doctrine* (BD) 1. For "blessedness" of god, see D. L. 10. 123 (Menoecus); 10. 97 (Pythocles); 10. 77 (Herodotus); Phld. *De piet.* 114, 6 Gomperz (Usener 84).

6. BD 13.

7. BD 14.

8. BD 6.

We desire the peace and blessedness of the gods; and, for Epicurus, the most efficacious means of attaining that goal is available through friendship.⁹ Right thinking people know that the evils we face in life are bounded by the limits of that life itself, and our best defence against them, the best source of safety, is a friendship that lasts throughout this limited period.¹⁰ Friendship, he says, dances round the world, calling on us all to awake to blessedness; to the blessedness, that is, of the gods.¹¹ Those of us who are noble concern ourselves with wisdom and friendship. Friendship, though, is superior; Epicurus calls it an "immortal good," that is, a good which never varies and is shared with the gods. For the gods, as Philodemus tells us, enjoy friendships among themselves.¹² Wisdom, like prudence, is merely valuable in dealing with the problems of *human* life.¹³

Friendship helps to make us like the gods, and helps to alleviate the problem of the hostility of other men. To realize that is to get some idea what friendship is. Clearly the friendships of the gods cannot be identical with those of men, for they must at least serve different purposes. The gods do not need one another for protection, nor to provide confidence for the future, and these, as we shall see, are among the benefits of friendship to mankind. But at least according to Philodemus (and he is probably an honest reporter) the happiness of the gods would be less complete without their friendships.¹⁴ Not that the gods would be "incomplete" without friendships, or devoid of any perfection of well-being, but probably because, like men who reflect on the gods, they derive pleasure (presumably kinetic) from the contemplation of one another and from their conversations.¹⁵

It seems certain that the mere existence of a happy and right thinking being is a source of pleasure; and a fortiori having such a being as a friend is desirable. We shall return to this point. It is important in human friendships as well as those of the gods. But in human friendships there is also the element of protection, of need of help and of confidence of being supported. And it is from *needs* that friendships arise. Just as Epicurus seems to have believed that, although we wish for self-preservation, yet our first natural impulse is not to self-preservation, but simply to clutch at a painless state (that is, from his point of view, at pleasure), so he seems to have thought of human friendships as having arisen not because man is naturally social—that he appears specifically to have denied to all "rational beings"¹⁶—but because he came to realize, by experience or by reasoning, that friendships are necessary if pleasure is to be maximized.

Epicurus goes out of his way to deny any natural instinct towards one's fellow men even to the extent of claiming that such an instinct cannot be invoked to account for the feelings of affection between parents and chil-

9. *BD* 27.

10. *BD* 28.

11. *Vatican Sayings* (VS) 52.

12. *De dis* 3, frag. 84, col. 1, 3-9, pp. 15-16 Diels.

13. D. L. 10. 132 (Menoceus).

14. *De dis* 3, frag. 84, col. 1, 2-4.

15. *De dis* 3, frag. 84, col. 13, 36-39, p. 36 Diels. Cf. Rist, *Epicurus*, pp. 153-56.

16. *Epict. Disc.* 2. 20. 7.

dren.¹⁷ Such feelings, he claims, are not natural, for what is “natural” is to be defined only as what is originally attractive to all of us, namely, absence of pain. Now it is possible that for some people being a parent might be attractive in that it happens to bring pleasure, but Epicurus seems to think that such people are few and far between. He follows Democritus in advising the wise man against marrying and having children, who are a nuisance¹⁸—sexual pleasures being available elsewhere¹⁹—though he admits that on rare occasions the wise man should marry.²⁰ Again he advises that if children are born, they should be exposed;²¹ but his own affection for the children of his friends²² seems to indicate that he would again say that on rare occasions the wise man should have children. That would normally follow, of course, from the rare event of his marrying.

In the *De amicitia*, Cicero maintains that friendships spring not from need but from nature,²³ and observes that those who view things “like cattle” (*pecudum ritu*), namely Epicureans, dissent.²⁴ Epicurus’ view is in fact precisely the opposite of Cicero’s: for Epicurus friendships *arise* in order that very tangible and specific benefits can be obtained. All friendship, says one of the *Vatican Sayings*, is choiceworthy for its own sake,²⁵ but it takes its origin from benefits (*ἀπὸ τῆς ὠφελείας*)²⁶ that it makes available. In Epicurus’ will he speaks of Nicanor as one of those who have met their “needs” from their own resources, linking this with the remark that Nicanor has shown him every “mark of friendship” (*τὴν πᾶσαν οἰκειότητα*).

Friendship for Epicurus is, in fact, a kind of contract (*foedus*) by which we love our friends no less than ourselves, as Cicero’s Torquatus puts it in the *De finibus*.²⁷ But Cicero also reports that “according to the more modern Epicureans” it arises for the sake of concrete advantages (*utilitatis causa*).²⁸ At this point we have to convict Cicero of misreading Epicurean theory:²⁹ according to Torquatus in Book 1 of the *De finibus*, some Epicureans (he

17. Epict. *Disc.* 1. 23. 3. In 1. 21. 1 Epictetus suggests that Epicurus ἐπινοεῖ (forms an idea) that we are social beings, but that he insists that we ought to admire nothing else than the good, i.e., pleasure. This may indicate that what Epicurus actually said was that from the notion of pleasure as the good we can understandably form the (false) idea (ἐπινοία) that men are naturally social. For “sociability” can bring pleasure in certain circumstances, even though it is not strictly natural. Ἐπινοία can be right or wrong (cf. Rist, *Epicurus*, p. 35 and C. Diano, “La psicologia d’Epicuro e la teoria della passione,” *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 20 (1939): 134.

18. D. L. 10. 119 (cf. Us. 94). For the text see C. W. Chilton, “Did Epicurus Approve of Marriage? A Study of Diogenes Laertius X, 119,” *Phronesis* 5 (1960): 71–73; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 2. 23 (Us. 526).

19. Wives should not indulge in *mobiles motus* during intercourse; they decrease the chance of pregnancy and should be left for whores (Lucr. 4. 1268–74).

20. D. L. 10. 119 κατὰ περίστασιν δὲ ποτε βίον γαμήσειν. Cf. Seneca frag. 45 (Haase); *raro* (Us. 19).

21. Epict. *Disc.* 1. 23. 7–10.

22. Cf. D. L. 10. 19–21.

23. *De amic.* 8. 27.

24. *Ibid.* 9. 32.

25. I would still read αἰπερή (Usener) despite Bollack’s plea to retain ἀπερή (“Les maximes de l’amitié,” *Actes du VIIIe Congrès. Association Guillaume Budé* [Paris, 1969], pp. 223–26).

26. *VS* 23; cf. D. L. 10. 120B.

27. *De fin.* 1. 70; cf. Lucr. 5. 1019.

28. *De fin.* 2. 82.

29. I failed to see this in *Epicurus*, pp. 130–31.

does not include Epicurus himself) say, correctly, that a friendship arises because of the desire for pleasure, but as it progresses our love for our friends grows so that we love them for their own sake, even though no advantage (*utilitas*) arises from that friendship. Notice that these Epicureans do not say that no *pleasure* arises from that friendship, but no *utilitas*, that is, no specific benefit. In other words these Epicureans are thinking in the spirit of Epicurus' own doctrine which we have noted above, that friendship is valuable per se, but that it arises for the sake of particular advantages. Torquatus' Epicureans are making a distinction between the pleasure of having needs satisfied by one's friends, and the attractiveness of friendship and the possession of friends quite apart from the tangible benefits which flow from them. Either way, of course, friendship brings pleasure. But when Cicero, speaking in his own name as a critic of Epicureanism in Book 2 of the *De finibus*, alludes to the "more modern Epicureans," but specifically not to the master himself, he suggests that we love our friends for their own sake "when hope of pleasure is laid aside." Thus Torquatus makes some Epicureans say that we love our friends apart from tangible and material gains, Cicero that we do so without hope of pleasure. Cicero's own statement must be dismissed as a misreading (or a misrepresentation designed to play off Epicurus against his more "humane" followers); genuine Epicureanism, represented both by Epicurus himself and by his followers, distinguishes the tangible from the intangible rewards of friendship.

Epicurus himself draws attention to the intangible rewards when he emphasizes that a feeling of confidence (*πίστις*) about help in need to come is more important than the help itself.³⁰ The only thing that might possibly be said for Cicero's version in *De finibus* Book 2 is that Epicurus (at least in the fragments we have) put more emphasis, in dealing with the intangibles, on *expectation* of future services, that he explained "confidence" (*πίστις*) in this sense, whereas some others were more aware of the simple attractiveness of present friendships. But although Epicurus is certainly prepared to associate a reason for confidence (*πίστωμα*) with confidence among one's neighbours and "the most completely good relations" (*οικειότης*), we should probably not let Cicero off the hook in this way. For just as the mere existence of the gods is attractive (*οικείον*) and pleasurable to the other gods and to right thinking human beings,³¹ so the mere existence of a friend should bring pleasure, particularly if he is wise.

As one of the *Vatican Sayings* puts it, the veneration (*σεβασμός*) of the wise man is a great good for those who venerate him.³² When particles, emitted from certain physical objects, affect and "stir up" the organs of smell, they do so either in a confused or in an orderly fashion. If in a disorderly fashion, the smell is unpleasant; if orderly, it is pleasant.³³ The

30. *VS* 34; cf. Bollack, "Les maximes de l'amitié," pp. 228-29.

31. Cf. Phld. (on Epicurus' *De nat.* 13) *De piet.* 2, col. 106, p. 124 Gomperz, and D. L. 10. 13-24 (Menoeceus), with Rist, *Epicurus*, p. 161.

32. *VS* 32.

33. D. L. 10. 53 (Herodotus).

orderly motion is *οικεῖον*—here, attractive—³⁴ the disorderly unattractive (*ἀλλότριον*). The mere existence of the phenomenon smelled is therefore attractive or repulsive; similarly the mere existence of the gods is attractive to the good, repulsive to the bad. The mere existence of friends is one of the attractive things in life; that is, of course, if they are real friends, persons with whom one enjoys the right kind of quasicontractual relationship.

But contracts have terms, and we need to know what the terms are, and whether the contract can or should be broken off unilaterally. Naturally the terms are unwritten and cannot be specified precisely. We know something about them already, however, for friends are supposed to guarantee one another security as far as possible. Friends also provide material help to one another's needs, for that, as we have seen, is how friendships originate. But there are limits to such assistance; friends are not merely parasites on one another, and since sometimes it is not easy to identify a parasite, friendships should only be undertaken with caution and after due consideration. The man who constantly wants to receive benefits is merely offering to exchange pleasantness for material goods; he is a trader, not a friend.³⁵ Just as the wise man's needs are simple and limited, so his requests of his friends will be moderate and reasonable. Nevertheless, he will make requests; that is certainly part of the contract, and it helps to provide confidence for the future.³⁶ So we have material benefits, confidence of their continuing flow—Epicurus himself requested money from Idomeneus for the support of his "holy body"³⁷—and the pleasures of association and conversation. Epicurus' letter to Idomeneus, written as he was dying, refers to the pleasures in his soul at the memory of previous philosophical discussions.³⁸ But the contracts of friendship should not specify that friends should possess their goods in common, for that would suggest that the parties do not trust one another.³⁹ Such lack of trust is the opposite of friendship.

More difficult in terms of the contract are the necessary emotional relationships between the contracting parties. And this raises a related question: from how wide a circle of humanity can one's friends be drawn. The answer seems to be "Any right thinking person, man, woman, free, slave, is acceptable." If that seems striking in an ancient city, we should recall that Epicurean society is overtly nonpolitical, that is, indifferent to the *polis*; hence, women, and slaves are not barred. They can be treated as of equal merit if they live in the right spirit.⁴⁰

34. Pleasure is attractive (*οικεῖον*), pain *ἀλλότριον* (D. L. 10. 34). Are these merely tautologies? In one sense, yes; Epicurus means that we are *always* naturally drawn to pleasure and repelled by pain, though we may not always follow our inclination (D. L. 10. 129 [Menoecus]). Sometimes a refusal to do so is right—in view of long term considerations.

35. *VS* 39.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Plut. Adv. Col.* 1117D–E.

38. D. L. 10. 22. For memory, see n. 57 below.

39. D. L. 10. 11.

40. Cf. the sensitive discussion of A. J. Festugière, *Epicurus and his Gods* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 29–30. Epicurus was generally favourable to good treatment of slaves (D. L. 10. 10).

Certainly friendship has nothing to do with passion (*eros*). Plutarch seems to refer to the Epicureans as passionless (*ἀνέραστοι*),⁴¹ and according to Diogenes Laertius the wise man will not feel passion.⁴² If he did, he would be, in the language of Lucretius, *miser*.⁴³ Passion, according to Epicurus himself, is an intense desire for sex accompanied by intense longing and anguish.⁴⁴ It is a kind of madness.⁴⁵ Obviously, therefore, it is painful,⁴⁶ and no such feeling should enter into the peaceable relationships between good Epicurean friends. However, sexual desires are, if not necessary, entirely natural, and friendships provide a satisfactory outlet for them, with no risks attached,⁴⁷ thus removing the need to resort to promiscuity and prostitutes.⁴⁸ Sexual pleasure is available for the *sanus amator*, and it is a pleasure more unmixed with pain.⁴⁹ It can be enjoyed at times calculated to disturb the bodily processes least—Epicurus debated in his *Symposium* whether before or after dinner was the more appropriate time⁵⁰—and the Epicureans seem much more conscious of its heterosexual than of its homosexual varieties.⁵¹ That is probably because it is part of the contract for *mutual* pleasure, for in a homosexual relationship, as Xenophon points out,⁵² the “passive” partner does not normally get much pleasure out of the act of intercourse, quite apart from the condemnation such people normally were faced with in ancient society. Epicurus lists heterosexual activity along with tastes, sounds and the sight of sweet movements as factors which help him form the concept of the good,⁵³ and suggests occasions when it can be enjoyed, but he only alludes to homosexual acts when condemning the pleasures of “profligates,” people who have no idea of the good life.⁵⁴ In such a context, of course, he condemns womanizing as well. Obviously,

41. *Amat.* 767C. Cf. R. Flacelière, “Les Épicuriens et l’amour,” *REG* 67 (1954): 70. Flacelière, however, goes too far when he suggests that *eros* was earlier almost exclusively homosexual. He is overimpressed by “Platonic” traditions. Even in the *Amatorius* (752C) *eros* is readily associated by one of the speakers with “immodest” females.

42. D. L. 10. 118.

43. *Lucr.* 4. 1076.

44. Hermias, in *Phaedr.* p. 76 Couvreur (Us. 483). τὰ ἀφροδίσια may occasionally be homosexual, though K. Dover exaggerates the frequency of this usage in “Classical Greek Attitudes to Sexual Behaviour,” *Arethusa* 6 (1973): 66. He cites *Xen. Oec.* 12. 14 and *Symp.* 8. 21.

45. *Lucr.* 4. 1069 (*furor*), 1083 (*rabies*); cf. *Phld. De dis* 3, frag. 76, 8, p. 67 Diels.

46. *Lucr.* 4. 1067.

47. Natural and “physical” desires (such as sexual desire) should be fulfilled if they do no harm (*VS* 21). Sexual intercourse is satisfactory “though it never did anyone any good” (i.e., it, probably, is not necessary; cf. D. L. 10. 118), if (1) you do not offend law or respectable convention, (2) you do not distress your neighbour, (3) you do not harm your body, or (4) you do not waste money you need (*VS* 51). Normally it would be hard to avoid all of these disadvantages, but it is possible in an Epicurean community.

48. *Lucr.* 4. 1070 and K. Kleve, “Lucrèce, l’épicurisme et l’amour,” *Actes du VIIIe Congrès. Association Guillaume Budé* (Paris, 1969), pp. 378–79. Prostitutes were normally slaves, or at best freedwomen.

49. *Lucr.* 4. 1074–75.

50. *Plut. Quaest. conv.* 653F–654B (Us. 61).

51. Lucretius pays mere lip service to boys’ *membris muliebribus* at 4. 1053.

52. *Xen. Symp.* 8. 21. Dover, “Classical Greek Attitudes,” p. 66, thinks that lovers found homosexual love objects attractive because they were both “available” and because they could choose a lover freely, whereas much heterosexual intercourse would be a cash deal, with little chance of refusal.

53. D. L. 10. 6.

54. D. L. 10. 132.

Epicurus would not draw a hard and fast line against homosexual acts (the renegade Timocrates apparently suggested, for what it is worth, that he had difficulty in avoiding homosexuality during the nightly "philosophical sessions"⁵⁵), but it is remarkable, given ancient methods of polemic, that whereas Epicurus was said to have intercourse with his female friends and fellow philosophers, Leontion, Themista and Hedeia, charges of homosexuality are almost nonexistent.⁵⁶ Perhaps Epicurus' claims about the relation between friendship and sex may contribute to this. Be that as it may, we conclude that Epicurus would certainly include the provision of heterosexual favours, and sometimes of homosexual favours, among the pleasures that friendship can provide. Even the old, blind and impotent can enjoy sex in retrospect, and Epicurus apparently discussed whether the old can still enjoy using their hands when they can no longer use their genitals.⁵⁷

The contract of friendship offers a further and quite different opportunity. For Epicurus held that it is more pleasant to confer a benefit than to receive one.⁵⁸ Here at least he is not far from general Greek sentiment, for the opportunity for liberality was always regarded as a blessing, and in an Epicurean society a giver could always be sure of a grateful response among his friends. Only the wise man is truly grateful,⁵⁹ and in so far as a man is genuinely grateful, he may be said to be wise. Epicurus himself, of course, had bestowed the greatest of all gifts, freedom from the fear of the gods, of fate and of death;⁶⁰ hence he is hailed as a god by his grateful friends and supporters. Plutarch writes with indignation describing the mutual reverence of Epicurus and Colotes: we can pardon those, he says, who say that they would pay any price to see the scene painted.

So much then for the terms of the contract, the advantages to be gained by participating. But can the contract be broken? Here we approach the most paradoxical aspect of Epicurus' notions about friendship. The key to Epicurus' position is that the most important of the advantages to be gained by friends from their relationship is a feeling of confidence when confronting the future. Such feelings clearly demand a very high regard be paid to loyalty, to the willingness to stand by a friend come what may. If the contract of friendship can be broken unilaterally, what confidence can I have for the future? We must not approve of those too quick to rush into friendship, nor those who shrink back. Friendship does involve taking risks.⁶¹ What kind of risks are involved? We have already observed that the danger in marriage and bringing up children is, for Epicurus, that we leave ourselves open to troubles and inconveniences which may arise from our

55. D. L. 10. 6.

56. Plut. *De occulte viv.* 1129B (Leontion, Hedeia); *Non posse* 1098B; D. L. 10. 5-7 (cf. Rist, *Epicurus*, p. 11, n. 2).

57. *Non posse* 1094E-1095B. For the importance of memory, note especially *VS* 19: if you forget goods, you become old.

58. *Non posse* 1097A; cf. *Philosophandum* 778C (Us. 544) with *VS* 44.

59. D. L. 10. 118. For gratitude, see N. W. de Witt, "The Epicurean Doctrine of Gratitude," *AJP* 58 (1937): 320-28.

60. Cf. *Lucr.* 5. 81, Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1117A-B.

61. *VS* 28.

wives and children and which we could otherwise avoid. So the wise man normally does not marry and have children. But occasionally he does—Metrodorus apparently did—and in those cases a calculated risk is taken, presumably in the expectation of securing a greater degree of pleasure in the long run. Similarly with friendship. Clearly loyalty to a friend—the price which has to be paid for confidence in that friend, and that which each man in turn expects of his friends—may entail personal suffering, not merely in the form of sadness if that friend is in trouble, but even, so Epicurus holds, to the extent that it is as painful to have one's friend tortured as to be tortured oneself.⁶² On a friend's behalf the wise man will endure very great pains,⁶³ presumably in his own person; sometimes the wise man will give up his life for his friend.⁶⁴ In brief, as Diogenes puts it,⁶⁵ he will stand up to chance and abandon none of his friends, in word or in deed.⁶⁶ So we see that Epicurean friends are committed to loyalty. Such commitment is the only way the right kind of friendship can be achieved, and one cannot but admire Epicurus' willingness to push the principle of commitment to these extreme consequences once he has grasped that only such friendships can hope to provide the kind of security which is their greatest potential benefit, a benefit extending far beyond the mutual exchange of concrete services, but, of course, subsuming all advantages of that kind.

It is one thing to stand by one's friends in trouble, another to stand by them in crime. Hence the question must be raised—it occurs in a number of different contexts, both historical and philosophical in antiquity—of how far one can go in supporting one's friends. Fortunately one of the *Vatican Sayings* enables us at least to form a fair opinion of Epicurus' view, though there are substantial textual difficulties.⁶⁷ Epicurus seems to say that we value our own characters whether they are good or not, or whether they win general approval or not. Similarly, if people are "decent" to us (*ἐπιεικέις*),⁶⁸ we ought to value their characters. Admittedly this does not specifically deal with friends; but the criteria available are clear and predictable. If people are decent to us, regardless of their general character, we should respect them. So it would seem to follow that friendship is not affected by consideration of moral "idiosyncracies," only by consideration of how we ourselves (and our interests) are treated. So we can assume at the very least that what would normally be regarded as criminal behaviour would be condoned among friends. Here of course we should recall those sayings dealing with injustice.⁶⁹ It is not an evil in itself, but it is usually unwise in that it leads to pain and trouble for those who pursue it. Justice is the result of a contract not to harm one another, so that we ourselves are

62. *VS* 56.

63. *Adv. Col.* 1111B.

64. *D. L.* 10. 121.

65. *D. L.* 10. 120.

66. "In word"; cf. *D. L.* 10. 118.

67. *VS* 15. I follow Bailey's text.

68. For this use Bailey compares *Thuc.* 3. 40. 3.

69. *BD* 31–38.

not harmed. Will the wise man act unjustly? No, because it does not pay. Therefore, since he will not act unjustly for himself, he presumably will not do so for his friends, for his friends are to be treated in the same way he treats himself. Nevertheless, in the admittedly hypothetical case of being able to act unjustly without detection or fear of detection, Epicurus seems prepared to admit that he would act unjustly,⁷⁰ and therefore we can assume that he would correspondingly support the unjust actions of his friends. There are no indisputably clear Epicurean statements to that effect, but when Cicero alludes to the matter in the *De amicitia*,⁷¹ it seems likely that Epicurean friendship was at least one of the varieties he denounces when he wishes to have it laid down as a first law of friendship that friends should ask one another to do only what is honourable.

Friendships, as we have seen, involve the commitment of loyalty, based on a realistic appraisal of what is necessary to secure the advantages of security and material gain which friendship contributes in addition to its intrinsic attractiveness. But when a friend dies, he can contribute nothing and receive nothing, neither material advantage, pleasant association, nor confidence in regard to future security. Hence he owes us nothing and we owe him nothing. He dies, but his passing is not regretted, any more than is one's own. We do not lament his death, says the last of the *Basic Doctrines*, as though he were to be pitied.⁷² We have fellow feeling for our friends; that feeling is best expressed not by lamentation but by reflection.⁷³ The kind of reflection Epicurus seems to have had in mind is partly philosophical—according to Diogenes Laertius his last words included an exhortation to “remember my teachings”⁷⁴—and partly “contemplative”—in his will he requests that sacrificial offerings (*ἐναγίσματα*) to his memory should be made and his birthday celebrated. Of course this in no way suggests a belief in his personal survival.⁷⁵ It invites the disciples to engage in the kind of quiet reflection on the memory of a friend which resembles our reflection on the gods in so far as it helps to soothe our souls and give us peace. Sweet, he says somewhere, is the memory of a dead friend.⁷⁶

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70. Plut. *Adv. Col.* 11127D (Us. 18); cf. Cic. *De fin.* 2. 9. 28.

71. Cic. *De amic.* 12. 40, 13. 44.

72. *BD* 40.

73. *VS* 66.

74. D. L. 10. 16.

75. Cicero alleges (unreasonably) that Epicurus' concern in his will for his surviving friends is alien to Epicureanism (*De fin.* 2. 99–103).

76. *Non posse* 1105E (Us. 213).