

## Research Article

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# Keeping the Friend in Epicurean Friendship

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**Abstract:** There seems to be universal agreement among Epicurean scholars that friendship characterized by other-concern is conceptually incompatible with Epicureanism understood as a directly egoistic theory. I reject this view. I argue that once we properly understand the nature of friendship and the Epicurean conception of our final end, we are in a position to demonstrate friendship's compatibility with, and centrality within, Epicureanism's direct egoism.

**Keywords:** Epicureanism, Epicurus, friendship, other-concern

## 1 Introduction

Epicureanism contains an apparent tension between its egoistic hedonism on the one hand and its extolments of friendship on the other.<sup>1</sup> Various passages suggest the theory is a directly egoistic one in which our own pleasure is the ultimate end to which every choice or action ought to be referred. It might thus seem anything other than pleasure can be valuable only instrumentally, i. e., valuable only inasmuch as it conduces to our pleasure. But our most intuitive understanding of friendship involves other-concern, by which I mean valuing one's friend in some sense for the friend's sake. Epicurus' extolments of friendship might be taken to mean that Epicureanism commits its adherents to other-concern, hence the tension. The tension appears to be that the 'self-regarding attitudes prescribed by egoist hedonism are incompatible with the other-regarding attitudes required of

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<sup>1</sup> SV 52 is Epicurus' most laudatory remark about friendship: 'Friendship dances around the world announcing to all of us that we must wake up to blessedness.' This and all future references to and quotes of original Epicurean texts come from Inwood and Gerson (1997).

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genuine friends.<sup>2</sup> A question arises, then, whether friendship is compatible with Epicureanism.

I detect three approaches within the literature to this question. The first argues that Epicureanism is not committed to other-concern, and so there is no tension because the only kind of ‘friendship’ possible within the theory is that which does not involve other-concern—if this indeed counts as friendship.<sup>3</sup> The upshot is that friendship is compatible with Epicureanism only insofar as friendship does not require other-concern. The second approach argues Epicureanism is committed to other-concern, but the extent to which friendship requires other-concern nevertheless renders it incompatible with the overriding egoism of Epicureanism.<sup>4</sup> The third approach posits Epicureanism as a theory of indirect egoism according to which an agent can pursue an end separate from his own good, as long as pursuing that end separate from his own good is done out of ultimate concern for his pleasure.<sup>5</sup> This third approach would resolve the putative tension by permitting the other-concern Epicureanism appears committed to in a way that does not compromise the theory’s egoism. The only consensus in the literature seems to be that genuine friendship characterized by other-concern is not open to Epicureans if their theory is directly egoistic.

I disagree with this apparent consensus. This paper argues that friendship characterized by other-concern is compatible with Epicureanism understood as directly egoistic. I begin in section two by saying something about how I understand Epicurus’ view of pleasure as our final good to provide background for the rest of my arguments. In section three I provide what I take to be compelling reasons to accept Epicureanism as being both committed to other-concern and directly egoistic to undermine the plausibility of resolving the apparent tension by denying a commitment to other-concern or by positing Epicureanism as indirectly egoistic. I then address in section four the second approach, which insists that friendship requires more other-concern than Epicureanism can accommodate, and argue that it fails because it rests on a flawed assumption regarding the nature of friendship. A more plausible conception of friendship emerges from this analysis. Finally, I discuss in section five the precise sense in which this account of friendship requires valuing the other for the other’s sake (i. e., other-concern) and show how it can be naturally accommodated by a directly egoistic interpretation of Epicureanism, proving the alleged tension illusory.

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2 Evans (2004), 408.

3 Evans (2004), O’Connor (1989), Rossi (2017).

4 Annas (1993), Mitsis (1988).

5 Brown (2002), O’Keefe (2001).

## 2 Pleasure as Our Final Good

Epicureanism recognizes two distinct kinds of pleasure, kinetic and static pleasures. While there is not much sustained discussion of this distinction in our extant original sources, it can be summarized as follows: kinetic pleasures are those pleasures you get from removing pain or want, thereby restoring yourself to a state of healthy functioning; static pleasures are those pleasures you get from functioning healthily and without interference, or being in a state free from pain or want.<sup>6</sup> Torquatus, in *De Finibus* II 9, illustrates the distinction with an example: the pleasure a thirsty man gets from drinking is a kinetic pleasure, while the pleasure gotten from having quenched his thirst is a static pleasure, and different in kind from the kinetic one associated with the act of drinking. In the former, the thirsty man is experiencing pleasure by removing the pain of thirst, thereby helping to restore his body to a state of healthy functioning; in the latter, the man is taking ‘delight in the state of being free from’ the pain of thirst.<sup>7</sup> Having quenched his thirst, the man is now functioning healthily, without the interference caused by the pain of thirst, and being in this state of functioning is itself a distinct kind of pleasure, namely, a static pleasure.

Epicureanism considers static pleasure to be the kind of pleasure which constitutes our final good. Torquatus affirms this when he says, ‘For we do not just pursue the kind [of pleasure] which stimulates our nature itself with a kind of smoothness and is perceived by the senses with a sort of sweetness, but rather we hold that the greatest pleasure is that which is perceived when all pain is removed.’<sup>8</sup> The ultimate end of a blessed Epicurean life, then, is ‘health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance.’<sup>9</sup> These states (‘health of the body,’ i. e., *aponia*, and ‘freedom of the soul from disturbance,’ i. e., *ataraxia*), are what Epicurus means when he speaks of pleasure as the ultimate goal and not ‘the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures of consumption.’<sup>10</sup> Friendship must of course consist in or facilitate this in order to be central to a good Epicurean life. I take it that insofar as friendship succeeds in this, it will succeed in consisting in or facilitating specifically *ataraxia*. Moreover, Epicurus takes *ataraxia* to be superior to *aponia*.<sup>11</sup> So while both *aponia* and *ataraxia* make up the final good for Epicurus, I focus primarily on *ataraxia* and the role friendship plays in contributing to it.

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<sup>6</sup> Annas (1987), 8–9; O’Keefe (2014) 119–20.

<sup>7</sup> O’Keefe (2014), 120.

<sup>8</sup> *De Finibus* I 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Ep. Men.* 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ep. Men.* 131.

<sup>11</sup> O’Keefe (2014), 120.

If *ataraxia* is the primary constituent of the blessed life, then what we do should be oriented toward achieving it. Understood in this way, *ataraxia* is something to be achieved and sustained over time—there is no one act the performance of which magically produces it. Moreover, *ataraxia* does not consist in ‘a state of arrested movement but in being the pleasure of a state of functioning in which there is no interference.’<sup>12</sup> This will involve doing things that consistently ensure we remain free from regret, anxiety, fear, agitation, or any other sort of mental disturbance.<sup>13</sup> This is the kind of state of functioning I argue genuine friendship is especially capable of helping us achieve.

To be clear, Epicurus considers the pleasures constitutive of *aponia* and *ataraxia* to be, not just good in themselves, but more specifically our *final* good. A good is final ‘if, firstly, it is sought for its own sake, and, secondly, is not also sought for the sake of some further good.’<sup>14</sup> This leaves open the distinct possibility that something can be valued for its own sake and also valued for the sake of something else—that is, something can be simultaneously intrinsically and instrumentally valuable. So there are three possibilities regarding how something might be valued: something can be only intrinsically valuable, that is, valued for its own sake only (which is how we just defined the final good); something can be only instrumentally valuable, that is, valued only for the sake of something else; or it can be simultaneously instrumentally and intrinsically valued. Of course, for Epicureanism only pleasure can be of the first type since pleasure is our final good and our only final good. All other valuable things, then, must either be only instrumentally valuable or simultaneously instrumentally and intrinsically valuable. One might think that if Epicureanism demands that everything we do is done for the sake of our pleasure, then everything other than pleasure must be only instrumentally valuable. Indeed, this idea informs some of the skeptical approaches to resolving the tension between Epicureanism’s extolments of friendship and commitment to egoistic hedonism. But I think this presents a false dilemma: there are many things that can be simultaneously intrinsically valuable and instrumentally valuable insofar as they contribute to pleasure. I will argue that our friends are precisely this kind of good, and that the kind of other-concern that genuine friendship requires is compatible with this. Insofar as this is true, our friendships will be able to help us achieve our final good in a way that remains compatible both with the other-regarding demands of friendship and the self-regarding demands of Epicureanism’s egoism.

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<sup>12</sup> Annas (1987), 8.

<sup>13</sup> O’Keefe (2014), 120; Cooper (1999), 496.

<sup>14</sup> Annas (1987), 6.

To demonstrate briefly how something might be simultaneously intrinsically and instrumentally valuable within Epicureanism, consider the following examples. A hammer is only instrumentally valuable: it is valuable only insofar as it contributes to our pleasure by enabling us to build things. But this is the only way in which it is valuable: we value hammers purely for the sake of something else, namely, the pleasure we might derive from building things. If I have nothing to build, I will not value the hammer in front of me. Appreciating beauty, on the other hand, seems both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable. The beauty of what I am looking at is valued for its own sake insofar as there is nothing external to it that imbues it with value for me, as in the case of the hammer. I seek out the beautiful foliage on my campus in autumn, for example, just because of what it is: beautiful foliage. But it is also valued instrumentally insofar as taking in beautiful foliage provides me with pleasure. In this way beauty, and other things valuable both intrinsically and instrumentally, are partially constitutive of my pleasure. Hammers are not constitutive of my pleasure in this way. Perhaps building something can be, especially if I am a carpenter, but it is not the hammer itself that partially constitutes my pleasure, for the hammer is purely instrumentally valuable to me.

The literature seems not to adequately appreciate this distinction when it comes to examining friendship's place in Epicureanism: indeed, some scholars seem to think that valuing our friends at all instrumentally because of the pleasure they produce in us violates the norms of friendship, but since such instrumental valuing is a central component of Epicureanism, the theory is incompatible with friendship.<sup>15</sup> But this, as I will show, ends up being too thin a conception of friendship specifically, and value more generally.

Having this discussion in the background will help make the case that Epicurus' theory is both directly egoistic and committed to the kind of other-concern required by genuine friendship. It will also help to understand how such other-concern can play a central role in his theory without conflicting with his direct egoism. In the next section I make a case for Epicureanism being committed to other-concern, one which also defends an interpretation of Epicureanism as directly egoistic.

### 3 Epicureanism as Committed to Other-concern

My aim in this section is not to prove that Epicureanism is in fact committed to other-concern; I do not have the space for such a difficult project here. Rather, my

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<sup>15</sup> This view appears to be held by Annas (1993) and Mitsis (1988) and will be discussed in detail in section 4.

aim is merely to provide reasons for thinking so to motivate for a skeptical reader the project of showing that Epicureanism's egoistic hedonism is compatible with the other-concern required of genuine friendship. This compatibility will remain whether Epicureanism is in fact committed to other-concern or not. If it is, my arguments in the next two sections show how that commitment is consistent with the overriding egoistic hedonism of the theory; if it is not so committed, then the upshot of my argument is that Epicureanism *could be* committed to other-concern without contradicting itself, as most scholars appear to think. Although I view the theory as committed to other-concern, the texts I examine are controversial in various ways.<sup>16</sup> Being in no position to adjudicate these disputes, I try to show how plausible understandings of the texts might support a commitment to other concern to lay the foundations for my argument that Epicureanism's egoistic hedonism can be compatible with such a commitment, especially in the case of genuine friendship.

Defenders of an Epicurean commitment to other-concern rely mostly on two texts: SV 23 and *De Finibus* I 66-68. Some skeptical scholars, to the contrary, deny that these texts support a commitment to other-concern. Part of the problem I see with this skeptical work is that much of it focuses on these two texts individually, without placing them within the broader contexts of both the Epicurean view of pleasure as our final good, as well as other texts relevant to Epicureanism's views on friendship. In defending a commitment to other-concern Annas, for example, argues that placing Epicurean texts about friendship within the context of the Epicurean view of pleasure as specifically our final good underscores the theory's attempt to account for what would appear to be the most difficult case for the theory.<sup>17</sup> Epicurus seems aware that successfully accommodating other-concern in a theory that endorses our own pleasure as our final good would avoid many objections to his view of friendship by his opponents.<sup>18</sup> Examining SV 23 and *De Finibus* I 66-68 within these proper contexts strengthens the reasons we have to understand Epicureanism as committing its adherents to other-concern.

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**16** I have in mind especially SV 23, whose translation is disputed by Brown (2002) and O'Keefe (2001), and *De Finibus* I 66-68, whose meaning and authenticity have also been disputed by O'Connor (1989).

**17** Annas (1993), 240. The context she places her analysis in here is different from skeptics of Epicurean other-concern insofar as most such skeptics seem overwhelmingly concerned with placing relevant texts within just the context of Epicurean egoism broadly construed (be it understood as direct or indirect), while neglecting both the deeper analysis of the nature of Epicureanism's final end that Annas provides, and the rest of the body of thought pertaining to friendship I marshal in support of my defense of Epicurean other-concern.

**18** See also Mitsis (1988), 102-4.

SV 23 states that ‘every friendship is worth choosing for its own sake, though it takes its origin from the benefits [it confers on us].’<sup>19</sup> This seems to suggest that friendship is on a par with the virtues for Epicurus, and thus something to value for its own sake as inseparable from pleasure. If this is true, given that our most intuitive understanding of friendship involves other-regarding attitudes toward our friends, other-concern becomes a significant component of Epicureanism. But this is a contentious claim. O’Connor and O’Keefe, for example, deny that from SV 23 it follows Epicureanism is committed to other-concern. They rightly point out that valuing friendship broadly construed for its own sake is not the same as valuing a friend for *his* or *her* own sake—conflating the two is problematic. Additionally, Brown denies that SV 23 (at least the emended version of it) is properly attributable to Epicurus on the grounds that it ‘singularly contradicts the rest of the evidence concerning his view of friendship.’<sup>20</sup> Brown’s view is that since Epicurus holds that every choice should be referred to pleasure, every friendship can only be choiceworthy for the sake of pleasure, and thus not for its own sake. Both kinds of skeptical view regarding SV 23 might, if correct, tell against an Epicurean commitment to other-concern.

I concede that SV 23 seems incapable on its own to establish a commitment to other-concern. Importantly, however, I concede this in light of O’Connor’s and O’Keefe’s analyses, not Brown’s. Brown’s analysis appears to assume a thin reading of Epicureanism’s egoism, which does not take seriously the possibility of valuing something (or someone) instrumentally and for its (or his or her) own sake

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**19** This interpretation is the emended version and is of course controversial. There is controversy over whether friendship is a ‘virtue [aretē]’ in itself or is ‘choiceworthy [hairetē]’ in itself (Annas [1993], 237). While I follow Inwood and Gerson in accepting the emended version (they ‘regard the emendation as virtually certain’), due to the distinction I drew above between instrumentally valuable things, intrinsically valuable things, and things that are both simultaneously, I do not believe it makes a difference to my view which version of SV 23 is correct (Inwood and Gerson [1997], 37). Friendship being a virtue (aretē) in itself or merely choiceworthy (hairetē) in itself would not change the extent to which I view SV 23 as being compatible with its overriding egoism. Since pleasure is the final good for Epicureanism, but that is the only sort of good that is intrinsically valuable and only intrinsically valuable, then friendship can be either a specific virtue in itself or choiceworthy in itself, and both options would render friendship intrinsically valuable in a way that requires it also to be instrumentally valuable because friendship cannot be the final good. It can only be partially constitutive of it, just like every other specific kind of virtue and anything else that might be intrinsically choiceworthy. Brown (2002) provides what I take to be the strongest argument against accepting the emended version of SV 23, and does so, as I mention below, largely on the grounds that the emended version is inconsistent with Epicurean theory, specifically its egoistic hedonism. But since this paper denies precisely that, we will have little reason to accept Brown’s argument against the emended version of SV 23 if my argument is sound. As such, I adopt the emended version.

**20** Brown (2002), 69.

simultaneously.<sup>21</sup> O'Connor and O'Keefe, however, are right to admonish the temptation to conclude from SV 23's focus on friendship broadly construed that other-concern is required to satisfy its directives. But this does not mean other-concern is ruled out. What we need in light of SV 23's limitations is to show that other excerpts from Epicurean doctrine indicate a commitment to other-concern, and thus give us reason to interpret SV 23 that way on grounds of consistency.

*De Finibus* I 66-68 is also heavily invoked by scholars considering whether Epicureanism demands other-concern. Cicero's argument runs as follows:

1. Friendship cannot be separated from pleasure.
2. We 'cannot maintain friendship unless we cherish our friends just as much as we do ourselves.'
3. 'That is why a wise man will have the same feelings for his friend as for himself and will undertake the same labors for the sake of a friend's pleasure as he would undertake for the sake of his own.'<sup>22</sup>

This seems to make a more direct appeal to other-concern than does SV 23, because it mentions specifically how we ought to act toward our friends. It maintains, as I do, that friendship is constitutive of pleasure, but that for a friendship to be a genuine friendship, we must value our friends in the same way we value ourselves. Hence, according to the argument, we would do for our friends what we would do for ourselves. The best objection to taking this passage as evidence for other-concern is structurally similar to O'Connor's and O'Keefe's arguments against SV 23. Specifically, just as their arguments against SV 23 open a

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<sup>21</sup> Annas (1993), 240 and Mitsis (1988), 115 make a similar point.

<sup>22</sup> Inwood and Gerson (1997), 62. An anonymous reviewer has pointed out that there might be some controversy over whether Inwood's and Gerson's use of the term 'cherish' represents an accurate translation of Cicero's argument, raising a question about whether this text really requires other-concern. Without being able to delve into the original language, this is another case, like SV 23 above, that I think has little bearing on my argument in this paper. My view is that the term at this point in the argument is irrelevant to my purposes, because what is most important is the idea that the argument contained in this passage speaks of placing our friends on the same level of value as ourselves: the essence of the argument, as I understand it, is to equate the value of our friends, the pleasures our friendships produce, and the worthiness of our friends' labors to our own value, pleasures, and labors. And the equivalence suggested by the argument would not change, I think, with a different, even if more accurate, translation. I think the only plausible way to deny that this argument commits Epicureanism's adherents to genuine other-concern is to adopt an indirectly egoistic interpretation of the theory more broadly construed, which I critically discuss later in this section, rather than showing that a more accurate translation of the original text could refute a commitment to other-concern. I maintain this view only with respect to *De Finibus* I 66-68, however; I think it is more important to consider the original language with respect to SV 66, which I do later in this section.



gap between valuing friendship and valuing friends, the arguments against *De Finibus* I 66-68 attempt to open a gap between what an Epicurean agent values and what she is motivated to do. Brown and O'Keefe both suggest that it is perfectly plausible for an Epicurean agent to be *motivated* to promote her friend's interests as much as her own without thereby *valuing* her friend's interests, or her friend, as much as she values her own interests or herself.<sup>23</sup> What this means, if correct, is that (2) and (3) above do not necessarily imply other-concern characterized by *valuing* the other for the other's sake. And if such other-concern is not an element of Epicurus' theory, then there is no tension to worry about.

SV 66 is another text which seems to do the same work as *De Finibus* I 66-68. That is, whatever one thinks about *De Finibus* I 66-68, I suspect one will think about SV 66. This passage advises Epicureans on how to respond to friends' suffering: 'Let us share in our friends' suffering not with laments but with thoughtful concern.' This is, along with *De Finibus* I 66-68, immune to the challenge brought against SV 23. SV 66 allows no room to conflate friendship in the abstract with friends—it is indisputably concerned with how Epicureans ought to behave vis-à-vis their friends as individuals. It might, however, be viewed as open to the same challenge brought against *De Finibus* I 66-68. Sceptics of an Epicurean commitment to other-concern may well insist that one can convey thoughtful concern without valuing the individual for whom one conveys such concern for the individual's sake. Thus emerges an interpretation of Epicureanism as a form of indirect egoism according to which, as Evans puts it, one can 'adopt a friend's good as an ultimate practical end, independent of, yet equal in authority to, [one's] own' good.<sup>24</sup> The result of this interpretation is that genuine other-concern, characterized by valuing the other for the other's sake, is not required, thus avoiding the alleged tension: we can structure our motivations in a way that allows us to behave as friends would behave (i. e., demonstrate a less robust form of other-concern that does not include actually valuing the other for the other's sake), without betraying our egoistic commitments. But it is not clear that this indirect approach is the most plausible, as other scholars have pointed out.

Annas and Mitsis argue against an indirect interpretation by observing that deliberating in such a way seems to require a sort of schizophrenia.<sup>25</sup> Annas, for example, believes an indirect egoistic hedonist must compartmentalize his

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<sup>23</sup> Brown (2002), 70–1; O'Keefe (2001), 296–7. See also Evans 2004, 411–413.

<sup>24</sup> Evans (2004), 413.

<sup>25</sup> Annas (1993), 241; Mitsis (1988), 113.

thoughts in an unhealthy and possibly incoherent way.<sup>26</sup> At a minimum, such compartmentalized deliberations would conflict from time to time, sometimes generating a situation in which acting as a friend would act fails to conduce to the agent's pleasure. In these cases it would seem incumbent upon the committed Epicurean *not* to act as a friend would act.<sup>27</sup> This raises the possibility that such a view might at times demand an Epicurean agent to do something about which the agent would fear being discovered, thus violating SV 70: 'Let nothing be done in your life which will cause you to fear if it is discovered by your neighbor.' An indirect egoist might, according to this objection, have reason to fear his friend discovering his compartmentalized deliberations and considering those deliberations to be in violation of the norms of friendship.<sup>28</sup>

The plausibility of an indirect approach notwithstanding, SV 66 appears itself to offer underappreciated evidence for a directly egoistic interpretation. When Epicurus advises us to *share* in our friends' suffering with thoughtful *concern*, this seems most naturally interpreted as a claim about what we should value (as well as, of course, how we should value it), rather than merely what we should be motivated to do.<sup>29</sup> If Epicurus viewed his system as an indirectly egoistic one, he might have tempered his language to say something like 'Let us *approach* our friends' suffering....' Sharing in our friends' suffering seems to ask us to do more. And what we are supposed to share in is 'thoughtful *concern*,' suggesting that we should worry about our friends' suffering in a way that moves us to empathize with them.

Epicurus offers additional evidence for direct egoism by asserting that though 'every pleasure is a good thing, since it has a nature congenial [to us]...not every one is to be chosen,' because the goal of nature should lead us to forgo many pleasures if they result in a larger amount of pain.<sup>30</sup> He also advises us that 'if you do not, on every occasion, refer each of your actions to the goal of nature ... your actions will not be consistent with your reasoning.'<sup>31</sup> These two texts support the notion that if it is possible for one to desire something congenial to one that may nevertheless in certain circumstances result in pain, then it seems one must, to be a good Epicurean, refer every action directly to our final goal to ensure the

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<sup>26</sup> Mitsis 1988, 113 appears to agree that this would be incoherent.

<sup>27</sup> *Ep. Men.* 129–30.

<sup>28</sup> For the power of an objection like this see Stocker (1976).

<sup>29</sup> Evans 2004, 421 translates SV66 as advising us to "sympathize with" rather than to "share in", but I think what I say here would apply to either translation.

<sup>30</sup> *Ep. Men.* 129.

<sup>31</sup> KD 25.

appropriate results.<sup>32</sup> We seem to have multiple sources of plausible evidence that Epicurus means his theory to be directly egoistic, capable of preserving a commitment to genuine other-concern characterized by valuing the other for the other's sake.

But even if these texts give us strong reason to interpret Epicureanism as directly egoistic, and thus preserve our view of Epicureanism's commitment to genuine other-concern, questions about SV 66 may nevertheless arise when considered in isolation from other texts about friendship. One important question is whether SV 66 really demands other-concern, even if the theory is directly egoistic. I focused in my argument above on the 'thoughtful *concern*' SV 66 advises us to demonstrate toward our friends. But this may be a misinterpretation: it might be correct to understand 'thoughtful concern [phrontizontes]' as advising us to think carefully about our friends' suffering without any emotional resonance.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Evans translates it, not as 'thoughtful concern,' but as 'practical reflection.'<sup>34</sup> We might understand 'practical reflection' as inviting us to think carefully about our friends' suffering in a practical way—namely, presumably, in a way that can benefit us moving forward by contributing to our pleasure. This could satisfy the requirement of SV 66 without requiring any genuine other-concern.

However, while this understanding might seem not to require any emotional resonance that would indicate genuine other-concern, I think such other-concern follows naturally regardless of the connotation of the terms, at least if a committed Epicurean allows SV 66 to guide her actions in ways that remain consistent with other relevant texts (e. g., *De Finibus* I 66-68 and SV 70), the importance of which I emphasized at the beginning of this section. Similar to the issues raised with

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<sup>32</sup> Annas (1993), 240–1 and Evans (2004), 415–6 also defend KD 25 as clear evidence for direct egoism. A skeptic might suggest that Ep. Men. 129 and KD 25 both raise serious practical problems, if they are to be taken literally such that we must deliberate about the hedonic value of *every* action, which might be practically unfeasible. I think this is both true and not practically problematic. These texts need not require us to stop and explicitly consider even the most mundane actions. It could, rather, be enough to structure our deliberations in a way that we are naturally disposed to act consistent with our hedonism. This seems to be how most of us deliberate anyway. We may not do so effectively all the time, but we mostly at least appear to act reflexively in accordance with our values, at least when the stakes are lower or there is not any readily apparent dilemma in the options we face. When the stakes are higher or we face a dilemma, then we tend to deliberate more carefully, and the extent to which we fail to act in accordance with our values is the extent to which we are not (yet at least) a sage. I thus think interpreting these texts rather literally need not pose any serious practical problems.

<sup>33</sup> I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this interesting challenge.

<sup>34</sup> Evans (2004), 421.

indirect egoism, understanding SV 66 as not involving other-concern may require us at times to fail to share in our friends' suffering in the ways they might expect, especially if their suffering is particularly severe. If our friends suffer severely, they will want at least their closest friends to genuinely empathize with them and show a level of concern commensurate with the suffering they experience. The 'practical reflection' described above seems to fall short of this and may well be the sort of thing that would violate SV 70's requirement not to do anything we would fear our neighbor (or friend) discovering. So if *De Finibus* I 66-68 advises us to value our friends as we value ourselves, and SV 70 requires us not to do anything we would not want our friends to discover (e. g., failing to value them when they suffer as much as we value ourselves), then the sort of practical reflection we engage in when our friends suffer should include more than mere consideration about ourselves; it should include considerations about how to help our friend, how to *be there* for our friend, and this seems to require genuine other-concern. Insofar as this is true, however, a separate problem arises.

Another objection is that SV 66 may require Epicureans to share in all their friends' suffering all the time, no matter what. This might be the inverse of the traditional problem of Epicurean friendship. While O'Connor observes that many scholars think Epicureanism's egoism permits only a niggardly conception of friendship, taking SV 66 to demand unchecked other-concern might seem to impose too demanding a conception of friendship.<sup>35</sup> If so, this would be inconsistent with Epicureanism's egoistic hedonism. But this is not what SV 66 demands of us, at least if SV 66 is to be consistent with other relevant texts. In light, again, of the problem I identified about interpreting texts without the proper context, we should consider any given text regarding friendship within the context of all such texts. Doing so reveals a nuanced theory of friendship, one that is committed to genuine other-concern and compatible with the rest of Epicureanism without needing to resort to indirect egoism. It is with this in mind that I consider SV 39 last.

I take SV 39 to be the most compelling evidence for other-concern understood as valuing the other for the other's sake. It advises us that 'the constant friend is neither he who always searches for utility, nor he who never links [friendship to utility]. For the former makes gratitude a matter for commercial transaction, while the latter kills off good hope for the future.' This offers a pithy conception of friendship that is at once responsive to Epicureanism's hedonic demands and committed to other-concern; it sets the boundaries of genuine friendship,

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<sup>35</sup> O'Connor (1989), 165.

circumscribing the demands of SV 66. At the one extreme, we have the merely transactional ‘friend’ whose relationships with others are driven purely by the pleasure this person seeks; at the other we have the unconditional ‘friend’ who neglects the importance of the pleasure that ought to be derived from such relationships. Whatever each such relationship consists in, it is not *friendship* according to Epicurus.

In the case of the transactional ‘friend’, the ‘friend’ is merely transactional because he always seeks utility, and as Annas observes, ‘if we treated friendship purely instrumentally, we would be allowing not *friendship* into our lives, but something else.’<sup>36</sup> It seems obvious that Epicurus is refusing to admit this kind of relationship into his conception of friendship, which he takes to be key to the good life. So while it might not be objectionable for a good Epicurean to have such relationships, one could not be a good Epicurean if this were the closest one came to having genuine friends. Since SV 39 forbids friends only seeking utility, it stands to reason that other-concern characterized by valuing one’s friend for the friend’s sake has a role to play in a good Epicurean life, supporting my readings of *De Finibus* I 66-68 and SV 66. The Epicurean is enjoined not only to have genuine concern for her friends’ suffering, but also to undertake the same labors *for the sake of her friend’s pleasure* as she would undertake for the sake of her own. And if each friendship is choiceworthy in itself, as SV 23 teaches us, yet merely transactional ‘friendships’ do not constitute genuine friendships, then each friend appears also to be valuable for his or her own sake. But we must only have limited concern for our friends’ suffering, and only undertake some of the same labors for the sake of our friends as we would ourselves, because otherwise we would be the unconditional friend ‘[killing] off good hope for the future,’ which Epicurus explicitly rejects.

Bringing SV 39 to bear on other Epicurean texts about friendship gives us additional reason to accept an Epicurean commitment to other-concern, but a commitment that is meant to remain compatible with the theory’s overriding egoistic demands. It therefore provides support for a directly egoistic interpretation of the theory: Epicurus would have us value our friends and their interests, rather than merely be instrumentally motivated to promote those interests purely for the purposes of our own pleasure. Brown appears mistaken, then, to insist there is copious evidence that Epicurus values friendship only for the sake of pleasure, but only one emended sentence that suggests he values friendship for its own sake.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Annas (1993), 240 (her emphasis).

<sup>37</sup> Brown (2002), 71.

If I am right, then we have strong reason to understand Epicureanism as a directly egoistic theory committed to other-concern. In what follows I argue against the view that maintains Epicureanism is not able to square friendship, even despite the commitment to other-concern I have defended in this section, with its overriding egoism. I do this first by showing that proponents of this view assume too strict a notion of friendship; I then demonstrate that directly egoistic Epicureans can demonstrate the kind of other-concern required of my more plausible account of friendship without violating their egoism.

## 4 Keeping the Friend in Friendship

The question of whether Epicureanism is committed to other-concern is not the only source of skepticism regarding the possibility of Epicurean friendship. Even if a commitment to other-concern is accepted, the question remains whether the extent to which friendship requires it goes beyond what a directly egoistic understanding of Epicureanism can tolerate. The literature seems uniformly to agree that it does. For the likes of Evans and O'Connor, each of whom denies that Epicureans are committed to other-concern, their arguments are driven in part by the notion that the standard conception of friendship is just too demanding to be compatible with egoistic hedonism.<sup>38</sup> And Annas and Mitsu think the demandingness of friendship is what forecloses reconciliation with Epicurean egoism, even despite their defense of a commitment to other-concern.

I believe Annas and Mitsu err in reaching this conclusion because they both employ an objectionably strict conception of friendship. The most plausible explanation I can conceive for thinking Epicureanism can accommodate other-concern but not friendship is that friendship must involve some notion of unconditionality as a necessary condition, and that this condition renders friendship too demanding for Epicureanism. Call this the *unconditionality criterion*. What would it mean for a 'friendship' to satisfy it? In short, since we take genuine friendship to involve other-concern, the unconditionality criterion demands that such other-concern manifest itself irrespective of the costs to ourselves in exercising it. This is not to say that once one enters into a friendship the other-concern involved must be indissoluble. Most will agree that a view that required an agent's other-concern for someone to persist absolutely, even after, say, that person

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<sup>38</sup> Evans says, 'For an egoist hedonist cannot accept that one should value the well-being of one's friend for its own sake' (Evans [2004], 423). O'Connor asks, 'What more could altruism demand of us than this? The solidarity of our fellowship eclipses the altruism of the individual' (O'Connor [1989], 186).

repeatedly betrayed the agent, would be unreasonable.<sup>39</sup> Yet many people speak of loving friends, spouses, siblings, and children *unconditionally*. What I intend to capture by this sentiment, and to underscore as the operative notion in my unconditionality criterion, is the thought that friends' other-concern must be nearly absolute such that considering the costs of a given act of friendship with respect to the dictates of one's egoistic conception of the good life is viewed as a deviation from the norms of friendship—this deliberation amounts to 'one thought too many.'<sup>40</sup> And if the unconditionality criterion is viewed as a necessary condition of friendship, it is to apply to all friendships worthy of the title. While neither Annas nor Mitsis explicitly avow anything like the unconditionality criterion, their reasons for concluding friendship is irreconcilable with Epicurean egoism suggest it undergirds their understandings of friendship.

Annas detects a tension when she observes that Epicureanism 'starts from the thesis that my final good is pleasure ... [and] nonetheless insists that I can and do feel genuine other-concern, and that the relationships deriving from this are a most valuable part of my life.'<sup>41</sup> She is taking seriously the Epicurean claim that 'we can and do value friends intrinsically, even though our overall aim is pleasure,' which is not something all Epicurus' detractors have done.<sup>42</sup> In coming to grips with how this tension arises and whether it can be resolved, she begins to sketch her understanding of friendship when she says it 'implies a willingness to pledge oneself to activities which are unrewarding for oneself, for one's friend's sake.'<sup>43</sup> The problem, as she sees it, is obvious: 'How can I get pleasure from genuine concern for my friend, unless I can regard my friend's good as an intrinsic good, *regardless* of any pleasure that I get out of it?'<sup>44</sup> Epicurus' position becomes untenable for Annas when friendship goes beyond requiring one to pledge oneself to unrewarding activities here and there, and starts demanding that one accept long stretches of unrewarding time when one's friend is in need. This is where

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**39** This qualification on the unconditionality criterion might be more contested than I take it to be. Scheffler (1997), for example, says of the responsibilities that arise out of special relationships: 'The existence of a relationship that one has reason to value is itself the source of special responsibilities, and those responsibilities arise *whether or not the participants actually value the relationship*' (my emphasis). If the bare metaphysical fact of the existence of a certain kind of relationship, and not the uniquely substantive character of that relationship, is enough to generate special responsibilities, one might think it follows that the other-concern demanded by such responsibilities really is indissoluble. For a compelling account of why this is mistaken, see McPherson (2002).

**40** Williams (1981), 17–18.

**41** Annas (1993), 237.

**42** *Ibid.*, 240.

**43** *Ibid.*, 242–3.

**44** *Ibid.*, 241 (my emphasis).

Epicureanism runs into trouble according to Annas because she thinks the theory cannot allow for this kind of case: ‘Would an Epicurean not be committed to breaking off the relation ... when the relationship could clearly contribute neither to her security nor her enjoyment? Epicurus can generate other-concern, but not *enough* other-concern for the agent to be prepared to accept great losses for the sake of other people.’<sup>45</sup> These passages suggest that Annas thinks the Epicurean agent would be required to jettison a taxing friendship of the sort she describes because of the agent’s egoistic commitments. And since she argues that Epicurean doctrine cannot generate enough other-concern to remain consistent with friendship, it follows that on Annas’s view not remaining committed to a friendship under such taxing circumstances constitutes a violation of the norms of friendship. That is, genuine friendship imposes a narrow range of acceptable choices in such circumstances because the other-concern required for a relationship to constitute a friendship must be unconditional. This is supported especially by the first passage above when she expresses concern about showing other-concern ‘*regardless* of any pleasure that I get out of it.’ Epicurean doctrine, Annas might complain, forces us to have one selfish thought too many.

Mitsis situates his notion of friendship within the Epicurean view of flexible and eliminable desires. Mitsis notes that central to the Epicurean conception of the good is the ability of an agent to satisfy his aims and desires. But in order for the good to be reasonably attainable, it is important for the Epicurean agent to have flexible desires. Frustration is anathema to Epicureans, and flexibility of desires helps avoid the frustration caused by an obstinate agent not being able to satisfy his rigid desires. As an example of this flexibility, Mitsis describes a situation in which an agent is hungry for cheese, but there is only bread available, so the agent rightly adjusts his desire so the bread satisfies it. But Mitsis is skeptical that friendship can conform to this idea of flexible desires. The objects of desire regarding friendship are importantly different from the objects of desire regarding something like hunger insofar as the former are not as easily substituted as the latter. As Mitsis puts it: ‘Since friends are not readily substituted, nor are relations with them entirely [up to us], it is difficult to see how altruistic friendship can conform to Epicurus’ view of flexible and easily eliminable desires.’<sup>46</sup> On Mitsis’s view, the extent to which the other-concern characteristic of friendship places constraints on the flexibility of its objects of desire goes beyond what Epicureanism can tolerate. Fungibility is at the core of the Epicurean theory of desires, but friendship rejects fungibility. This leads Mitsis to question whether taking risks for

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 243 (her emphasis).

<sup>46</sup> Mitsis (1988), 122.



the sake of one's friendships, as SV 28 enjoins one to do, is something an Epicurean could really endorse, since risk taking might lead to the frustration of one's desires.<sup>47</sup> Hence the alleged incompatibility: Epicureanism seems to require flexible desires in part to head off the trappings of risk, but friendship seems to demand rigid desires not amenable to avoiding certain risks.

This is similar to Annas's view. Just as she holds that friendship requires more other-concern than Epicureanism can tolerate, Mitsis holds that friendship requires more rigidity in desires than Epicureanism can tolerate. This seems to imply that on Mitsis's view of friendship one's other-concern for a friend must manifest itself in the face of most any risk a given friendship might present.<sup>48</sup> Mitsis would apparently agree with Annas that a committed Epicurean would have to jettison a taxing friendship of the sort Annas describes, but that such a jettisoning would violate the norms of friendship with respect to the rigidity of desires it demands. Both Annas's and Mitsis's views of friendship appear to rest on something like the unconditionality criterion.

It might be objected that I am making an unlicensed attribution to both. Part of the problem, which is not unique to Annas and Mitsis, is that the cases from which we might glean their conceptions of friendship are under described. Annas, for example, vaguely describes not an unrewarding relationship, but a presumably rewarding one that has become (for unspecified reasons and in unspecified ways) unrewarding, apparently assuming it still to count as a friendship. But if this charge of being unrewarding is true, the relationship Annas describes as something the Epicurean must jettison strikes me as *not* friendship. To assume that it is suggests something like the unconditionality criterion is structuring Annas's conception of friendship. To call a relationship which is such that there is 'nothing in it' for the Epicurean agent a friendship, and then to suggest that breaking off that relationship violates the norms of friendship, implies an expectation of the Epicurean agent to sustain the other-concern that has been present up to this point in the relationship irrespective of the costs to the agent. And it is this feature of the relationship that presumably renders friendship incompatible with Epicureanism's egoistic demands. But the unconditionality criterion is problematic.

The primary problem with the unconditionality criterion is that it suffers from the same defect it means to avoid. Merely instrumental concern is problematic

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>48</sup> This worry is further suggested in the passage I quoted above when Mitsis mentions the fact that relations with our friends are not entirely up to us.

for friendship because it ‘does violence to the intuition that in [genuine] friendship the object of [other-concern] is the unique, irreplaceable individual.’<sup>49</sup> Unconditionality is meant to prevent instrumentality from overtaking other-concern in the friend’s deliberations. However, the unconditionality criterion ends up also doing violence to this intuition insofar as it forces one to abstract away from the individual features of a given friend that mark her off as unique and irreplaceable. Once a friendship is beholden to the unconditionality criterion, what matters primarily is no longer the friend’s individual qualities that make her unique and irreplaceable, but rather that friend’s generic status as someone who has become an unconditional object of other-concern. A result of the unconditionality criterion is that absolute irreplaceability supplants unique irreplaceability, thereby taking the friend out of friendship: I care about you as my friend in a relevant sense no matter what, blurring the distinction between what makes *you* the object of my other-concern and what makes anyone else the object of my other-concern. It undermines the unique irreplaceability of one’s friend by requiring continuation of the relationship no matter who the friend (or the agent in question, for that matter) becomes. The unconditionality criterion’s rendering any friend absolutely irreplaceable, instead of uniquely irreplaceable, incurs the cost of diminishing the role of the friend’s original and ongoing contributions to the friendship and the particular way the value of that friendship manifests. The unconditionality criterion thus fails to appreciate, among other things, why and how often it might be the case that some friendships deteriorate over time, and not in response to any blameworthy behavior of one or both of the friends. Since consideration of the unique circumstances of a friendship, to include the conceptions of the good life each friend holds, seems ruled out by views such as Annas’s and Mitsis’s that appear to rest on the unconditionality criterion, the abstract fact of being a friendship seems to dictate the permissible range of behaviors on their views.

Someone might challenge me here and insist that I am adopting a notion of friendship susceptible to similar problems. My talk of what makes a friend unique and irreplaceable for an agent might seem to reflect a view of friendship (and love more broadly construed) that grounds the other-concern constitutive of friends specifically in the intrinsic characteristics of the object of other-concern. That is, there is a reason the agent has other-concern for her friend, and that reason is to be found in the intrinsic characteristics that are especially attractive (for various reasons) to the agent. Eleonore Stump calls this the ‘responsiveness account’ of love and swiftly notes its fatal defects.<sup>50</sup> First, characterizing our other-concern for

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<sup>49</sup> Badhwar (1987), 5. My argument against the unconditionality criterion is heavily indebted to this article.

<sup>50</sup> Stump (2006), 25.

our best friends in terms of their intrinsic characteristics is problematic because other people, even people of whom we are not fond, share the characteristics that seem to be playing a central role in our special fondness for our genuine friends; second, grounding other-concern in certain intrinsic characteristics of our friends seems in tension with the constancy of our strongest friendships insofar as substantial changes in one or both friends' intrinsic characteristics might, on this account, be expected to weaken the friendship. The uniqueness of our other-concern for our best friends who share certain characteristics with others and the constancy of our strongest friendships despite even mutual change over time cannot be explained on this account. It is worth noting, however, that the responsiveness account does capture what seems to explain the origins or spark of even our strongest friendships. Its flaws notwithstanding, it seems correct that our relationships with our best friends often begin with a recognition in our friends of certain intrinsic features which appeal to us, often because they are a source of having things in common with them, or because discovering things in common leads us to recognize such intrinsic features that appeal to us. Epicurus seems to have noticed this in SV 23. Nevertheless, if this were the whole story the objection would be well taken: just as the unconditionality criterion cannot accommodate naturally deteriorating friendships, the responsiveness account cannot accommodate especially persistent friendships.

In their own ways, then, the unconditionality criterion and the responsiveness account force onto their proponents too thin a conception of friendship, and we therefore need something more. They both neglect two key facts about genuine friends that are relevant to Epicurean doctrine (to which neither Annas nor Mitsis seems sensitive) and which form the basis of my more plausible conception of friendship. Drawing from Stump, and by extension ultimately Aquinas, we can understand these two facts as conditions of genuine friendship.<sup>51</sup> First, there is presumably *something* in it for the agent whose genuine friend is imposing long stretches of purportedly taxing and unrewarding time on the agent. And whatever that something is connects uniquely both to the intrinsic features that render a given friend unique and irreplaceable to the agent, as well as the unique

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<sup>51</sup> Stump adopts Aquinas's conception of love, which she understands as involving two necessary and interconnected desires of the kind I sketch below, and I am adopting them for my own purposes. Her application of Aquinas's view to contemporary theories of love maps rather directly onto my conception of friendship and how it avoids the problems with the unconditionality criterion. While I cannot defend in greater detail my conception of friendship against objections that might arise from special cases or confusion about the two conditions, her excellent discussion of the conditions shows the extent to which they can deflect such potential objections. See Stump (2006), 27–30.

substantive character of the particular friendship in question. Call this the *desire for the friend's company*.<sup>52</sup> Second, both friends who value each other for each other's sake, including the one in significant need as in Annas's example, are invested in the other's ability to achieve what each views as a good life, and this investment is unique to each specific friend in the same way the desire for one's company is unique. Call this the *desire for the friend's good*. These two key facts of genuine friends constitute what Stump takes to be two necessary and interconnected conditions for love. These conditions form the basis of a more robust conception of friendship capable of avoiding the problems associated with the unconditionality criterion, and capable of filling out what the responsiveness account fails to capture. But most importantly, each condition illuminates what goes wrong in Annas's and Mitsis's accounts, respectively.<sup>53</sup>

Regarding the desire for the friend's company, Annas is too quick to assume that friendships that are as taxing as she imagines cannot still contain the sorts of things a committed Epicurean would seek to cultivate and, moreover, should accept significant losses obtain. This feature of the relationship in question is what determines the appropriateness of remaining committed to it—and if commitment to the relationship is no longer called for, then such a relationship ceases to be friendship, and this need not constitute a violation of the norms of friendship as would seem to be implied by the unconditionality criterion. Since genuine friendship involves other-concern for our friends *qua* the unique and irreplaceable individuals they are to us, that is, requires us to value our friends for their own sakes, we delight not merely in the rote performance of behaviors characteristic of friends, but rather we delight *in our friends*, because of who they are to us, and often irrespective of the contingent and possibly negative circumstances our friendships encounter—yet, these negative circumstances notwithstanding, we delight nevertheless. But we do this for reasons associated with our conception of

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52 The term 'company' may be thought objectionably vague here. I use this term because it is capable of accommodating much about the relationship with an agent's friend that might be important to the agent—e. g., love, security, or support. The company of a friend can be important to many kinds of agent (such as an Epicurean) for many kinds of reason. The notion of one's desire for the friend's company is flexible enough to capture this. I'd like to thank Christiana Olfert for pressing me to clarify this.

53 It is worth noting that these features that constitute the basis of my conception of friendship are consistent with another intuitive understanding of non-instrumental friendship sketched by Badhwar (1987). She says that 'in such friendships, the friends value each other's separateness—the fact that each has, and gives importance to, her own life and perspective ... and take pleasure in being together primarily because of the persons they are.' Her remark about giving importance to each friend's own life and perspective speaks to each friend's desire for the other's good; her remark about taking pleasure in being together primarily because of who the friends are speaks to each friend's desire for the other's company. See Badhwar (1987), 1–2.

the good, and not just because some condition on friendship mandates it. There is, then, no reason to think that pledging ourselves to the kinds of long-term situations that seem to result in significant losses to us (presumably via stress and anxiety regarding the well-being of our friend) could not be outweighed by a deep and fulfilling form of pleasure consistent with Epicureanism: being there in a time of need for our best friends is itself a genuine pleasure—and a powerful one.

Regarding the desire for the friend's good, an investment in one's friend implies that one will adjust at least certain objects of one's individual desires to strike the kind of balance that allows each friend to achieve her own conception of the good while making room for the other's. Mitsis is too quick to assume that friendship demands an objectionable degree of rigidity. Consider Annas's example of the friend in serious need. This person surely needs the kind of concern from friends that would mark them off as genuine friends. This general desire for help is in this instance rigid. But what is constantly flexible is the object of the individual's desire for help. The *source* of this help can be fungible in the way that cheese and bread are fungible for a hungry Epicurean. The friend in need requires only a certain kind of help, not help from only a certain person. Friends and family take turns being with a loved one in the hospital, for example, because they each need to maintain room for their own self-regard. This is the sense in which a plausible understanding of friendship can account for the risks to an Epicurean agent that might be associated with desires pertinent to friendship: we are to take some risks for our friends, but not all risks. The genuine friend in need, moreover, would refuse to allow herself to become such a nuisance to those for whom she has other-concern that those individuals' ability to pursue and achieve their conception of the good is critically disabled. She would refuse because she rightly appreciates the importance of her friend's self-regarding attitudes with respect both to her friend's conception of the good and her friend's investment in her own. So not only is it not the case that one thought too many is involved in incorporating self-regarding considerations into deliberations about acts of friendship, but genuine friends play a fundamental role in assuring that each other deliberates in such a manner—and this is another powerful source of pleasure.

If what I have argued in this section is correct, we have reason to doubt the conclusion Annas and Mitsis reach about the incompatibility of friendship with Epicureanism. I contend that Epicurus can indeed generate enough other-concern for genuine friendship; I contend, further, that there is little trouble in seeing how a plausible conception of friendship can conform to Epicurus' view of flexible and eliminable desires. One important reason for this is that genuine friendship is not as demanding and rigid as Annas and Mitsis argue. The task now becomes to show that the conception of friendship sketched here involves robust

other-concern, i. e., valuing the friend for the friend's sake, in a way that is compatible with a directly egoistic theory.

## 5 Squaring the Circle

The account of friendship sketched in the previous section is consistent with what Epicurus says about friendship, especially SV 39. Understanding that my desires for my friend's company and good are *my desires* underscores the extent to which I link friendship to utility in the way Epicurus advises; understanding that my desires for my friend's company and good are my desires for *her* company and *her* good underscores the extent to which I refrain from always searching for utility. These two desires characteristic of friendship constitute my other-concern, which I take to be valuing my friend as intrinsically good, i. e., for her own sake, in a particular way. When I value a friend for her own sake, I am specifically valuing her for the features she has which make our relationship uniquely valuable to me. Valuing my friend in this way is consistent with avowing my own pleasure as, not the only good in itself, but my only *final* good. There is an important distinction, as discussed in section two, between final goods and intrinsic goods such that the latter need not be the former.<sup>54</sup> A friend can be intrinsically valuable, i. e., valuable for her own sake, yet not a final good.<sup>55</sup> This means that a friend can at once be valued for her own sake and valued instrumentally. That this is the case seems to be the very point Epicurus is making in SV 39. Moreover, the sense in which an Epicurean's friend is at once valuable for the friend's own sake and instrumentally valuable is the sense in which the Epicurean's friends and friendships are inseparable from pleasure, for they are constitutive of his pleasure.

To claim otherwise, I think, is to misunderstand friendship. When I value my friend for her sake, I am recognizing her unique conduciveness to my own happiness. I am not valuing her any more than this, nor am I valuing her any less than this. To value her more would be to place her and her good above, or in some other sense independent of, my own good. We might say this also involves other-concern, but this kind of other-concern would mean that I value her unconditionally, and I have already shown both the problems with doing this and the fact

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<sup>54</sup> Failure to appreciate this distinction seems to account for the following question from Annas, quoted in section 4: 'How can I get pleasure from genuine concern for my friend, unless I can regard my friend's good as an intrinsic good, regardless of any pleasure that I get out of it?' For discussion on this distinction and why it is important, see Korsgaard (1996), 249–74.

<sup>55</sup> I recognize that it might seem as if I am asserting a problematic equivalence between being good and being valuable. The two might of course come apart. If they can come apart, however, I simply assert here that they would not or do not in the friendships I have in mind.

that this is not the only way, or even the most plausible way, to value a friend. This, furthermore, would clearly be in violation of my direct egoism as an Epicurean agent. Now, If I were to value my friend less than I am suggesting, I would be valuing her purely, or at least primarily, instrumentally, as merely a source of pleasure, and this is equally problematic, although it could at least be consistent with my direct egoism. The challenge for me is to show that valuing my friend in the way I am suggesting does not fall short of genuine friendship by allowing too much instrumental valuing.

Multiple accounts of friendship acknowledge that friendships are initially sparked by the recognition of the instrumental value each friend has for the other.<sup>56</sup> This instrumentality pervades even the strongest of friendships as they endure through time. As my strongest friendship blossoms, I come to value my friend for her sake, and she becomes unique and irreplaceable, because she is so central to the achievement of my own happiness. If she were not, or I did not play the same role for her, then this would appear to be something other than what we think of as genuine friendship. This sentiment goes both ways in a genuine friendship and is the fact we as friends care most about. She does not need me to value her unconditionally. Rather, she wants to know that she is a significant source of pleasure for me—that it is not my *friendship* with her but rather my friendship *with her* that makes her valuable to me. I care about her as my friend not because friends and friendships happen to conduce to my pleasure, but rather because she specifically, because of who she is to me, conduces to my pleasure. Instrumentality is always present. And to the extent that we are genuine friends, she has her own desire for my company and good, and this makes the instrumentality unproblematic: we both recognize in ourselves our mutual, unique instrumental value to each other. We value our friends for their own sakes, then, by valuing them instrumentally in the right way.

The upshot of this is twofold: first, I can genuinely say I value my friends for their own sakes in a robust manner consistent with an avowal of my own pleasure as my only final good; second, while this kind of valuing would certainly call on me to accept significant losses and pains in the name of friendship, it does not demand so much that it forecloses my ability successfully to achieve my own pleasure in the form of *ataraxia*. As for this second upshot, we should recall the Epicurean tenet that ‘it is just because [pleasure] is the first innate good that we do not choose every pleasure.... And we believe many pains to be better than pleasures when a greater pleasure follows for a long while if we endure the pains.’<sup>57</sup> If enduring certain pains would beget pleasures that on balance produce or contribute to *ataraxia*,

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<sup>56</sup> SV23; Badhwar (1987), 5; Stump (2006), 25.

<sup>57</sup> *Ep. Men.* 129.

we should endure those pains. A paradigmatic example might be pledging oneself to potentially unrewarding stretches of time for the sake of a genuine friend in need. Not only does the knowledge that one is and was there for a friend in need seem especially capable of producing such a pleasure, but to abandon the friend, if she is a genuine friend, could cause significant mental disturbance. This is a case in which acts of friendship plausibly contribute to *ataraxia*. And, critically, the other-concern one has for one's friend plays a central role in this being the case. Committing an act of genuine friendship because one values one's friend for her sake seems to involve two pleasures: first, there is the pleasure of having done the right thing (i. e., having acted as a friend should act when it is appropriate or necessary to do so); second, and more fundamentally, there is the pleasure of having contributed to the good of a friend in which one is genuinely invested because of its being constitutive of one's own pleasure.

This is not to say every act of friendship must take this form. To be sure, having been there for a friend begrudgingly and for instrumental reasons, just because one felt obligated to do so, seems capable of producing the sort of static pleasure I am appealing to here. That this is the case in isolated instances need not be problematic either for our understanding of Epicureanism as committed to other-concern or for our conception of friendship. But to rely too heavily on this sort of instrumental case in one's pursuit of *ataraxia* will raise familiar worries about violations of SV 39 and SV 70. What is more, it seems capable only of producing the first pleasure described above. So, the kind of other-concern characteristic of my more plausible account of friendship seems markedly more conducive to achieving *ataraxia* than merely instrumental concerns. We should bear in mind here the Epicurean notion that 'it is ... appropriate to make all these decisions by comparative measurement and an examination of the advantages and disadvantages.'<sup>58</sup> So even if instrumental concerns can contribute to *ataraxia*, the comparative measurement of pleasures associated with genuine friendship versus other instrumental concerns or relationships suggests an Epicurean agent would do well to cultivate genuine friendships, and that it should play a central role in her life.

If we pause and take stock of where we are, we should see an impressively unified and coherent understanding of friendship and its relation to pleasure, despite Epicurus' seemingly fragmented writings on the subject. SV 66 and SV 39 are particularly sensitive to the nuances of genuine friendship, characterized by other-concern that is not beholden to the unconditionality criterion, and this appears to have gone under-appreciated. As a result, the pleasures involved in my

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<sup>58</sup> *Ep. Men.* 130.



understanding of friendship and other-concern seem especially conducive to achieving *ataraxia*, giving friendship a privileged place in a good Epicurean life.

## 6 Conclusion

Considering SV 66 and SV 39 each within the context of Epicurus' other writings on friendship in particular, and his ethics more generally, strengthens the case that Epicureanism is both directly egoistic and committed to other-concern. Additionally, the most plausible understanding of friendship is one according to which the other-concern required by it is compatible with avowing our own good as our only final good. We are, if I am correct, left with no reason to think that committed Epicureans cannot have genuine friends. This establishes more than scholars such as Evans and Rossi are able to establish. While Evans is clearly skeptical that Epicureanism is committed to the kind of other-concern I defend, he still defends *some* notion of friendship that is possible between Epicureans.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Rossi defends friendship only within an Epicurean community, in part due to his skepticism about valuing friends for their own sake.<sup>60</sup> My argument, however, establishes not only that two committed Epicureans can be genuine friends, but that an Epicurean can have genuine non-Epicurean friends as well. Since we value our friends at once for their own sake and instrumentally, friendship can be compatible with whatever one ultimately values as one's final good.

Epicureanism thus emerges as a remarkably nuanced theory. For a theory that is avowedly egoistic and hedonistic, to be capable of accommodating genuine friendship, which Annas regards as perhaps its biggest challenge, suggests that it is a rather plausible theory as well. This is not to say Epicureanism is without problems: my understanding of how friendship hangs together with the rest of Epicureanism may well raise new questions about other aspects of Epicurean doctrine. But such questions notwithstanding, we should give the theory credit for so plausibly allowing friendship to play its rightfully vital role in a good Epicurean life.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Evans (2004), 423.

<sup>60</sup> Rossi (2017), 153–4.

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