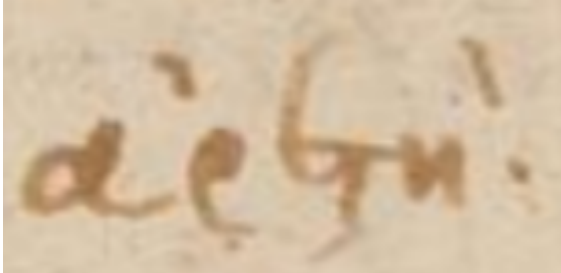


VS23 - Epicurus Reader Version

Post by "Don" of April 5, 2026 at 8:05 AM



The word in question in the manuscript is this above.

To my eye, it is clearly ἀρετή with a soft breathing mark at the α and an accent over the η at the end with a punctuation mark following.

πᾶσα φιλία δι' ἑαυτὴν ἀρετὴ· ἀρχὴν δὲ εἴληφεν ἀπὸ τῆς ὠφελείας.

Every friendship is an excellence (virtue) in itself, even though it begins in mutual advantage.

The scholars want "Every friendship is **choiceworthy** in itself; for it has its origins in benefit" (πᾶσα φιλία δι' ἑαυτὴν **αἰρετὴ**· ἀρχὴν δὲ εἴληφε ἀπὸ τῆς ὠφελείας).

I'm still convinced the manuscript reading should be kept.

I discovered a great article on JSTOR that addresses this exact issue:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1215547>

Epicurus on the Value of Friendship ("Sententia Vaticana" 23) by Eric Brown: *Classical Philology*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), pp. 68-80 (13 pages)

The author does a thorough job in laying out an arguments for and against the manuscript reading and the scholarly emendation. From those, I continue to prefer the reading transmitted in the manuscript itself. I recommend reading the paper.

Two short excerpts:

Another way of seeing this problem is to compare friendship to the virtues. Despite the fact that friendship is praised as even more valuable than the virtues (*RS 27, Sent. Vat. 78*), the Epicureans appeal to the value of the virtues to explain the value of friendship (e.g., *Cic. Fin. 1.66*). In fact, Torquatus tells us that "the very things that have been said about the virtues, how they are always attached to pleasures, should be said about friendship" (*Cic. Fin. 1.68*), and he backs up (*enim*) this claim by quoting Epicurus himself. So it is not surprising to find that Epicurus describes the virtues as inseparable from pleasure. The virtues, like friendship, "bring" pleasure "directly" and "in themselves."²¹ But the doxographers also attribute to Epicurus the explicit denial that virtues are chosen for their own sake (*ἀπεισθαι ὅτι αὐτῶν*).²² If we take seriously the suggestion that the same account of value should be given to both the virtues and friendship, then we should reject the emendation of *Sententia Vaticana 23*.

Finally, there is some independent evidence that Epicurus identified *φιλία* as an *ἀρετή*. I have mentioned that Epicureans were quick to analyze the value of friendship and virtue in the same way. But the evidence says more than this. According to Diogenes Laertius (10.138), "Epicurus says that virtue alone (*τὴν ἀρετὴν μόνην*) is inseparable (*ἀγρίστητον*) from pleasure," and Cicero attributes to Epicurus the view that friendship cannot be separated from pleasure (*Fin. 1.66* and *1.68*). From the conjunction of these two claims it follows that friendship is (at least a part of) virtue.²³

I have been arguing that it makes good philosophical sense to attribute to Epicurus

NOTE: One sticking point for the scholars' emendation is that their "correction" requires a rough breathing mark curved one way, the manuscript has a soft breathing mark curved the opposite way. So it's not just that the scribe forgot to copy an iota after the initial alpha. To be honest, I'll have to dig back into the manuscript to make sure they make that distinction, but just looking at this line, I wanted to mention it for future reference.