

PD 25 meaning? by Woolf (2004)

Post by "wbernys" of May 10, 2026 at 9:15 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

PD25: If at all critical times you do not connect each of your actions to the natural goal of life, but instead turn too soon to some other kind of goal in thinking whether to avoid or pursue something, then your thoughts and your actions will not be in harmony.

The main with this translation (and interpretation) that Woolf points out, and i find convincing, is that the Greek apparently says "our words" (λόγοις), and under this interpretation why would "your thoughts and your actions will not be harmony. After all if we can choose to have a different principles aside from pleasure, like virtue, or sensual pleasure, why would their be a lack of harmony between actions and our words?

As Woolf says in Pg. 18.

"Certainly, there is something quite puzzling about what Epicurus seems to envisage here. Given that he is speaking of someone who turns aside from one goal to another, **why should there be any issue at all about conflict between deeds and words?...**

"A short answer will emphasize that it is indeed nature's goal that one is turning aside from. Under this description, it might seem more plausible that at some level it will continue to exert its grip even as one wrenches oneself away from it. **Exert its grip on what, though? Surely not on what we say (our logoi). There is nothing to prevent us from averring, when asked, that our goal is now virtue, or maximisation of intense felt pleasure (or whatever it may be). But these will be mere words (so that it is somewhat misleading to translate *logoi* as "principles")** (Commentary: Cooper does this). Given that Epicurus elsewhere (Letter to Herodotus, 37-8) shows an aversion to "empty words" and a preference for "the things that "underlie them", it would be very much in his spirit to be disparaging *logoi* here, and (in a case of conflict) taking what one actually does as the true measure of one's motivations"