

PD 25 meaning? by Woolf (2004)

Post by "Cassius" of May 11, 2026 at 7:54 AM

[Quote from wbernys](#)

We can have free will to believe absurd things, like the mythic gods or death being an evil, we have freedom to make extreme miscalculations, but not maybe not in deciding that we like pleasure and dislike pain, and that this always play a role in our decisions.

This is exactly what I think is *not* the case in terms of end result. Now I do agree that the feelings of pleasure and pain are largely "hard-wired" as we are born finding some things painful and other things pleasurable. Perhaps some modifications can be made in that over time and with training but they are relatively minor. And in that sense I do think there is a large element of necessity.

And that's the point. "Psychologically" in our mind we can tell ourselves to pursue some other goal than pleasure. We have the free will to do that as Godfrey makes the point and Don has observed the same thing. This is absolutely obvious when we consider all the different views in real life as in philosophy as to what goals we should pursue in order to maximizes "happiness."

And talking about "happiness" is another way of making the same point. Most everyone seems to "want to be happy" (a point that would support "psychological hedonism" but we can change our minds or have different opinions about what happiness means to us an infinie number of times.

So when Don says this I agree:

[Quote from Don](#)

I would argue that everyone pursues what they believe will bring them pleasure, will provide happiness. It's just that sometimes - often - we fool ourselves into pursuing those things that will not in reality bring pleasure in the long run.

But I don't see how that makes any kind of profound point. It's like saying "People do what they want to do" or "People do what they think they have to do" and those points may or may not be true in a given situation.

But the whole project of pursuing Epicurean philosophy is that your mind can choose what to pursue and to avoid, and that you should affirmatively and consciously seek to align your goals at every moment with the goal nature has given you to pursue, which is pleasure. And this statement presupposes that you have the power to choose another goal other than pleasure.

And in this context part of the point could be that everyone (even Stoics and Religionists) say that they are pursuing "happiness" but if you pursue happiness by pursuing anything other than pleasure (nature's goal) then your actions (pursuit of virtue or piety or duty, for examples) will not be consistent with your avowed goal (happiness)

As another comment from another direction, if in fact the best translation is one of "your" then I would not rule out the possibility that this statement was pulled out of a specific letter or some other specific context which would provide additional background to those who were aware of it. And that's another reason I would be reluctant to adopt any construction of its means that would seem to undercut the entire project of emphasizing our power through reason to align our actions with reasonable conduct so as to achieve a life of happiness which is a life of pleasure.