

PD 25 meaning? by Woolf (2004)

Post by “Don” of May 12, 2026 at 7:03 AM

Going back to the original purpose of this thread: the meaning of [PD25](#):

As I've said ad nauseum in the past, the [Principal Doctrines](#) were not originally "versified" into separate Doctrines. It was one text, granted covering a number of topics but not in distinct #1, #2, etc. This being the case, we can't necessarily read "[PD25](#)" in isolation. I will contend that we could read the whole way from "[PD16](#)" through "[PD26](#)" as a whole and each section builds in the other (Saint-Andre translation with some edits, ex. S-A "joy" = ἡδονὴν hēdonēn "pleasure". I've made that change below). For example, the idea of using reason and not relying on chance comes up several times. Thoughts?

Chance steals only a bit into the life of a wise person: for throughout the complete span of his life the greatest and most important matters have been, are, and will be directed by the power of reason. One who acts aright is utterly steady and serene, whereas one who goes astray is full of trouble and confusion. As soon as the pain produced by the lack of something is removed, pleasure in the flesh is not increased but only embellished. Yet the limit of enjoyment in the mind is produced by thinking through these very things and similar things, which once provoked the greatest fears in the mind. Finite time and infinite time contain the same amount of pleasure, if its limits are measured out through reasoning. The flesh assumes that the limits of pleasure are infinite, and that infinite pleasure can be produced only through infinite time. But the mind, thinking through the goal and limits of the flesh and dissolving fears about eternity, produces a complete way of life (τὸν παντελεῖ βίον) and therefore has no need of infinite time; yet the mind does not flee from pleasure, nor when events cause it to exit from life does it look back as if it has missed any aspect of the best life. One who perceives the limits of life knows how easy it is to expel the pain produced by a lack of something and to make one's entire life complete (τὸ τὸν ὅλον βίον παντελεῖ) ; so that there is no need for the things that are achieved through struggle. You must reflect on the fundamental goal and everything that is clear, to which opinions are referred; if you do not, all will be full of trouble and confusion. If you fight against all your perceptions, you will have nothing to refer to in judging those which you declare to be false. If you reject a perception outright and do not distinguish between your opinion about what will happen after, what came before, your feelings, and all the layers of imagination involved in your thoughts, then you will throw your other perceptions into confusion because of your trifling opinions; as a result, you will reject the very criterion of truth. And if when forming concepts from your opinions you treat as confirmed everything that will happen and what you do not witness thereafter, then you will not avoid what is false, so that you will remove all argument and all judgment about what is and is not correct. 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 desires that do not bring pain when they go unfulfilled are not necessary; indeed they are easy to reject if they are hard to achieve or if they seem to produce harm.

(NOTE: It's not necessarily the most fluid prose, and I would bet the text has been through numerous hands on its way to us; but I still contend it hangs together.)