

# PD26 - Does PD26 imply personal responsibility beyond oneself?

**Post by “Godfrey” of July 11, 2024 at 3:22 PM**

[PD26](#): *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.* (St-Andre translation)

This PD consistently ends with “seems to produce harm” in all translations included in @Nate 's compilation (as always, thanks Nate!). To me, this implies personal responsibility beyond oneself as it doesn't have wording to limit the potential harm produced to the particular individual or limit it in any other way. We often discuss the effect of the pleasure/pain of our friends on our own pleasure/pain but, if I'm reading this correctly, this goes way beyond that. In so doing, it implies a sense of responsibility to "do no harm" that extends well beyond the self-centered hedonism described by the opponents of Epicurus.

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**Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2024 at 4:25 PM**

## [Quote from Godfrey](#)

To me, this implies personal responsibility beyond oneself as it doesn't have wording to limit the potential harm produced to the particular individual or limit it in any other way.

I certainly see where you are going, but I would have to question that interpretation for a number of reasons and I bet a lot more can be listed.

First of all, I don't think there is a blanket prohibition choosing pain or harm, so I would not interpret those sayings in a way that conflicts with the clear statement that we sometimes do choose pain when it leads in the end to more pleasure or less harm.

Second, I do think that you are right to the extent that "friends" are involved, because if we are willing to die for them under certain circumstances we are certainly concerned about their well being.

But to extend that concern to "others in general" would overrule the more general rule that our goal by nature is pleasure for ourselves (and by extension our friends. There will certainly be times when it is for the greater pleasure of ourselves and friends that we do great harm to "others" who are not aligned with our interests. [PD06](#) has various translations but all imply that there are times when the interests of some people have to be placed above "others." Torquatus says in On Ends One that some men are so corrupted that they must be "restrained" rather than reformed.

We could probably go on and on with textual citations, but if "the production of harm of any kind to any person" were considered to be an ironclad Epicurean rule I cannot see the rest of the philosophy making consistent sense.

So I think the thread topic is a great question, but the question is a little ambiguous as to the meaning of "beyond oneself." Unless the "beyond oneself" is limited to "friends," I would answer the question as written ("Does [PD26](#) imply personal responsibility beyond oneself?") with a "No."

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### **Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2024 at 4:47 PM**

I will add also that as far as the translation goes "if they seem to produce harm" would have to be read "more pain than pleasure" to be consistent with the rest of the philosophy. But that caveat wouldn't change my view that the "more pain the pleasure" that is being discussed is to "yourself and your friends" rather than "more pain than pleasure to all possible people and animals anywhere in the world."

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of July 11, 2024 at 5:42 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

We could probably go on and on with textual citations, but if "the production of harm of any kind to any person" were considered to be an ironclad Epicurean rule I cannot see the rest of the philosophy making consistent sense.

That certainly wouldn't be an ironclad rule: we don't even have that rule against harming ourselves! ([PD10](#)) I'm seeing the phrasing as just not placing a limit on the desire being evaluated in terms of who or what one might use in their evaluation. On one level it implies that

we might wish to evaluate how any "collateral damage" might come back to bite us. On another level it works along with [PD05](#) in including the instrumental use of virtues.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2024 at 5:43 PM**

#### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

On one level it implies that we might wish to evaluate how any "collateral damage" might come back to bite us.

Now that part I certainly agree with!