

PD30 - Breakdown of PD 30

Post by “Rolf” of April 21, 2025 at 5:23 PM

Wherever in the case of desires which are physical, but do not lead to a sense of pain, if they are not fulfilled, the effort is intense, such pleasures are due to idle imagination, and it is not owing to their own nature that they fail to be dispelled, but owing to the empty imaginings of the man. (PD 30)

I'm having some trouble understanding this one, specifically the grammar. What is Epicurus saying here?

Post by “sanantoniogarden” of April 21, 2025 at 6:32 PM

To my mind, this doctrine addresses desires that do not arise from genuine need but from empty values ingrained by social conditioning. Desires to be rich and powerful, to be popular, to own the latest status symbols, things of that nature

PD 15 Speaks to this as well I feel

Post by “Bryan” of April 21, 2025 at 8:42 PM

When we develop intense desires for what is **unnecessary** (οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον) -- and also not easy to get (οὐκ εὐπόριστον) -- we then have a problem that arises completely **from our thoughts and not from any actual need**.

Post by “Cassius” of April 21, 2025 at 9:14 PM

It's probably worth noting that of course this isn't saying that there won't be some desires which will take a lot of effort to obtain but also which will lead to great bodily or mental pain if they are not achieved. Those desires aren't the result of empty imaginings, but of real factors, and in those cases, it will make sense to exert great effort to obtain them.

So the point isn't "it's ok to be a slug and *a/ways* avoid desires which take a lot of effort." The point is that before you put in a lot of effort to pursue a desire, be sure the goal is one that you really will feel the absence of if you don't pursue it.

Post by “Don” of April 21, 2025 at 10:17 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It's probably worth noting that of course this isn't saying that there won't be some desires which will take a lot of effort to obtain but also which will lead to great bodily or mental pain if they are not achieved.

I'm not necessarily disagreeing, but do you have examples of these?

Post by “sanantoniogarden” of April 21, 2025 at 10:29 PM

[Don](#) Maybe something like a physical therapy regimen necessary to walk again? Going to the dentist for some painful procedure to prevent future difficulties? These are extreme examples but do sometimes happen

Post by “Don” of April 21, 2025 at 10:51 PM

[Quote from sanantoniogarden](#)

Maybe something like a physical therapy regimen necessary to walk again? Going to the dentist for some painful procedure to prevent future difficulties?

Fair enough; however, those desires are still not based on empty desires which have no limits.

[Quote from sanantoniogarden](#)

To my mind, this doctrine addresses desires that do not arise from genuine need but from empty values ingrained by social conditioning.

Exactly. It's important to make the distinction between unnecessary desires (which are part of pleasure seeking in Epicurus' philosophy) and the empty desire that have no limit. Note, I'm saying the desires have no limit. Pleasure itself always has a limit, ie, the absence of pain.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

some desires which will take a lot of effort to obtain but also which will lead to great bodily or mental pain if they are not achieved.

This strikes me as well represented by [sanantoniogarden](#) 's examples. The desire to walk when this inability is due to injury is well founded.

Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2025 at 2:47 AM

Yep - Santoniogarden's examples are good.

Epicurus is regularly pointing out that pursuing power and fame and glory and the like are generally not worth the effort.

It shouldn't be necessary to point out however that "effort" is not a bad word in itself, but that side of Epicurean philosophy can tend to get lost when fail to "denounce with righteous indignation and dislike men who are so beguiled and demoralized by the charms of the pleasure of the moment, so blinded by desire, that they cannot foresee the pain and trouble that are bound to ensue; and equal blame belongs to those who fail in their duty through weakness of will, which is the same as saying through shrinking from toil and pain.

[Quote from On Ends Book One](#)

On the other hand, we denounce with righteous indignation and dislike men who are so beguiled and demoralized by the charms of the pleasure of the moment, so blinded by

desire, that they cannot foresee the pain and trouble that are bound to ensue; and equal blame belongs to those who fail in their duty through weakness of will, which is the same as saying through shrinking from toil and pain. These cases are perfectly simple and easy to distinguish. In a free hour, when our power of choice is untrammelled and when nothing prevents our being able to do what we like best, every pleasure is to be welcomed and every pain avoided.

But in certain emergencies and owing to the claims of duty or the obligations of business it will frequently occur that pleasures have to be repudiated and annoyances accepted. The wise man therefore always holds in these matters to this principle of selection: he rejects pleasures to secure other greater pleasures, or else he endures pains to avoid worse pains.