

# Are the Gods Totally Painless? Does Calling Us To "Continuous Pleasure" Mean Totally Painless?

Post by "Cassius" of April 3, 2019 at 6:26 AM

More from Elayne:

Thinking about my own life, I do not sense that the ability to experience pleasure requires pain first. Pleasure is a positive, active sensation, not only a relief from prior pain. There have been at least some times in my life when I have had no pain of body or mind, only pleasure, but when this was a less intense pleasure-- like the satisfaction at the end of a good day-- I was still able to feel bursts of more intense pleasure, such as when seeing beautiful colors of a sunset. When I am satisfied, I feel no urge to go looking for more pleasure-- which is, we think, dopamine related, the wanting. But already being completely happy does not prevent me from feeling "liking" pleasure (serotonin, oxytocin, endocannabinoids, endorphins?) if it happens to show up.

I think of pain as a danger signal of injury or impending injury-- which would have evolved because heeding it helped humans avoid damage. We pull away from a hot fire instead of being burned.

It just doesn't feel intuitively correct to me to think I would need to be burned before I could enjoy a pleasurable skin sensation-- or that I would need to lose a loved one to feel the pleasure of love.

What the knowledge of possible loss does is add some sense of urgency-- pleasure now or maybe never-- but I generally enjoy pleasure more when I am not thinking about losing it. Urgency has a slightly anxious quality that's not pleasant. So I don't like to use that anticipation of grief on myself-- the Stoic practice.

Talking about pain as if it is necessary for contrast, to make pleasure possible, instead of necessary as a warning signal IF damage happens or is imminent -- that is what leads people to think they need a "balance" of pain and pleasure. I had not gotten that impression from Epicurus.

I definitely don't expect life to be free of pain-- that's not realistic. But I do a lot better when I don't imagine happiness requires pain. From trial and error.

For me it is more like I have pleasures in spite of unavoidable pains of the past or present, not because of these pains. There's a big difference.