

"But when we do not feel pain, we no longer need pleasure"

Post by "Kalosyni" of December 24, 2025 at 4:28 PM

Some thoughts on a practical application of the phrase: "...but when we do not feel pain, we no longer need pleasure."

The following is Bailey translation:

[128] "The right understanding of these facts enables us to refer all choice and avoidance to the health of the body and (the soul's) freedom from disturbance, since this is the aim of the life of blessedness. For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear. And when this is once secured for us, all the tempest of the soul is dispersed, since the living creature has not to wander as though in search of something that is missing, and to look for some other thing by which he can fulfill the good of the soul and the good of the body. For it is then that we have need of pleasure, when we feel pain owing to the absence of pleasure; (**but when we do not feel pain), we no longer need pleasure.**"

I've been thinking about how the ending of this paragraph pertains to eating food. When I was a kid and teen, and also in my 20's, food to me was very "unimportant". Growing up my family rarely went out to restaurants, and my mom often did not use spices or salt in her cooking, and there were very few snacks kept on hand. In my 20's living on my own, I cooked very simple food and sometimes skipped lunch just because I was too busy. Then approx. in my early 30's I started shopping at Trader Joe's (lived in California at that time)... and this was for me a beginning of a California "foodie" culture (healthy, sometimes organic, but also special cheese and specialty snacks.) And I think as time went on the American culture also really amped-up the concept of "food enjoyment" through various products and advertizing for restaurants.

Now what do you do when when the quantities of food available are so great, and eating becomes a desire for experiencing various tasty things... "just one more bite" or "just one more taste of this or that"...and suddenly you are carrying around 10 extra pounds of "love-handles" or a "muffin-top" belly that you can't seem to get rid of (and eating too much brings on a bloated feeling or lethargy) -- all of which is not conducive to living well and most pleasantly.

Now, here is where this seems to be a phrase that seems to be a kind of remedy -- **when we are genuinely hungry we will feel pain, and when we no longer feel that pain from hunger then we no longer need the pleasure of eating.**

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 24, 2025 at 5:31 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Now, here is where this seems to be a phrase that seems to be a kind of remedy -- when we are genuinely hungry we will feel pain, and when we no longer feel that pain from hunger then we no longer need the pleasure of eating.

I think that this remedy is only for those who need it, and also worth remembering that the letter mentions that it is not the pleasures of the profligates that are being referred to as pleasures.

Also, we can anticipate that the pleasures of eating, although transitory, they are reoccurring and "easy to get". 😊

Post by “Joshua” of December 24, 2025 at 6:17 PM

Quote

τότε γὰρ ἡδονῆς χρεῖαν ἔχομεν, ὅταν ἐκ τοῦ μὴ παρεῖναι τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀλγῶμεν· <ὅταν δὲ μὴ ἀλγῶμεν> οὐκέτι τῆς ἡδονῆς δεόμεθα.

For it is then that we have need of pleasure, when we feel pain owing to the absence of pleasure; (but when we do not feel pain), we no longer need pleasure.

δεόμεθα ([δέω](#)) can have the meaning of *need*, but it can also mean *lack*, which is more in keeping with Epicurean ethics; when we are not in pain, we no longer *lack* pleasure because we are already experiencing the fullest possible pleasure (as described in [Principle Doctrine 3](#)).

As usual, I invite [Bryan](#), [Don](#), and @Eikadistes to review my handling of the Greek.

In the meantime, I recommend reviewing [page 61](#) of Don's *Translation with Commentary*.

Sage advice for the holidays, Kalosyni, which many of us will no doubt consider applying come...January!

Post by “Don” of December 24, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Fwiw, here's my translation of that section:

The steady contemplation of these things equips one to know how to decide all choice and rejection for the health of the body and for the tranquility of the mind, that is for our physical and our mental existence, since this is the goal of a blessed life. For the sake of this, we do everything in order to neither be in bodily or mental pain nor to be in fear or dread; and so, when once this has come into being around us, it sets free all of the calamity, distress, and suffering of the mind, seeing that the living being has no need to go in search of something that is lacking for the good of our mental and physical existence. For it is then that we need pleasure, if we were to be in pain from the pleasure not being present; but if we were to not be in pain, we no longer desire or beg for pleasure. And this is why we say pleasure is the foundation and fulfillment of the blessed life.

Post by “DaveT” of December 25, 2025 at 9:17 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Now what do you do when when the quantities of food available are so great, and eating becomes a desire for experiencing various tasty things... "just one more bite" or "just one more taste of this or that"...

One of the great attractions of Epicurus' teaching for me is that it seems so grounded in common sense. He clearly was not an ascetic, denying himself even simple pleasures, even acknowledging the “pleasure” of enjoying unnecessary pleasures. Of course, we all know this. I don't understand the complexity of the mind/body process that tells us we need to eat to live. I understand that even a single bite of that barely nutritious but wildly sweet or savory food can satisfy me. So, rather than “just one more bite,” perhaps just one bite (or what the heck—two or three) can be the answer while enjoying friendship and family during the holidays.

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 25, 2025 at 10:01 AM

[Quote from DaveT](#)

So, rather than “just one more bite,” perhaps just one bite (or what the heck—two or three) can be the answer while enjoying friendship and family during the holidays.



Somehow, I think that I have developed what is called a "sweet tooth", and which I notice that the more "goodies" that I eat the more that I crave. (I've bought/made a certain amount of Christmas goodies this year, perhaps a bit too many).

When I clean up my diet by eating whole foods rather than processed (cutting out bread, desserts, snacks) then the sweet tooth cravings actually easily subside and I greatly enjoy eating fruits and vegetables. And not having the "goodies" in my house helps with decreasing cravings. This is just my personal experience, and everyone is different.