

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

Post by "Cassius" of April 2, 2019 at 8:24 PM

[Elayne](#) has asked a great question which derives from Chapter 10 of A Few Days In Athens - specifically a paragraph in the section about consolation for death. Here is the part under discussion:

"What were the glories of the sun, if we knew not the gloom of darkness? What the refreshing breezes of morning and evening, if we felt not the fervors of noon? Should we value the lovely-flower, if it bloomed eternally; or the luscious fruit, if it hung always on the bough? Are not the smiles of the heavens more beautiful in contrast with their frowns, and the delights of the seasons more grateful from their vicissitudes? Let us then be slow to blame nature, for perhaps in her apparent errors there is hidden a wisdom. Let us not quarrel with fate, for perhaps in our evils lie the seeds of our good. Were our body never subject to sickness, we might be insensible to the joy of health. Were our life eternal, our tranquillity might sink into inaction. Were our friendship not threatened with interruption, it might want much of its tenderness. This, then, my sons, is our duty, for this is our interest and our happiness; to seek our pleasures from the hands of the virtues, and for the pain which may befall us, to submit to it with patience, or bear up against it with fortitude. To walk, in short, through life innocently and tranquilly; and to look on death as its gentle termination, which it becomes us to meet with ready minds, neither regretting the past, nor anxious for the future."

Elayne asks:

This is so moving and beautiful. [Cassius](#), the last paragraph is the only part that trips me up. She seems to be giving a more important role to pain than I would assign, as if pleasure can't be fully felt without pain for contrast-- and then people may go looking for pain or thinking about it a lot, similar to the Stoics meditating on anticipatory griefs as a way of appreciating what they have. Do you think of the last paragraph as something Epicurus would say? It would not align with his concept of the gods as completely blissful beings, without pain and with the expectation of continuing in complete pleasure.

I responded:

That is an excellent point Elayne! I am not able to think of a passage in the texts I have read that would provide an example for that, and I think you are right that it would not be consistent with the ability of "the gods" to continue to experience unending happiness. And can it be made consistent with the "continuous pleasure" argument? I think you are exactly right to raise this

issue

I had previously noted that Wright seemed to be freelancing somewhat on her statements on free will / necessity, but this one I had not noted.

I wonder if this was inspired by extrapolating out from the dual existence of matter vs void, life vs. death, and pleasure vs pain. Does Lucretius say the universe would not exist if all space was void, or all space was matter? If so, would that imply that one of these combinations of two could not exist without the other?

There are many issues involved in pursuing that. Would Epicurus say that that kind of "what if" isn't appropriate since reality is the way it is?

There are lots of good questions here: "It would not align with his concept of the gods as completely blissful beings, without pain and with the expectation of continuing in complete pleasure." Does Epicurus say specifically that gods are TOTALLY without pain? Or is it possible that gods too exist in a "net pleasure" environment in which their pleasures dominate over pain, but in which pain is still present to some degree. When Epicurus calls us to continuous pleasure, he does not imply that we are going to be continuously painless, does he?

OK so that sets up the questions: Is Frances Wright wrong to make this argument? Can it be reconciled with Epicurus? Did Epicurus in fact say that the "gods" are totally without pain? When Epicurus made the remark about calling us to continuous pleasure, did he mean to continuous painlessness?

These are great questions for us to discuss to advance our thoughts, not necessarily on the gods specifically, but on the argument that Wright seems to be making: Is the experience of pain necessary for the experience of pleasure?

Post by "Cassius" of April 2, 2019 at 8:40 PM

It may be relevant to this that DeWitt pointed out that Epicurus himself did not call the gods "deathless" (at least as far as we know). This may be another area where DeWitt has an instinct to look for views of the gods that we would not expect at all. Is it possible that Epicureans gods are not only not 'deathless' by nature, but are also not 'painless' by nature? This is from page 249 of the book:

are as follows.

The gods are not by nature deathless. They were never called immortal by Epicurus himself, though they were by his followers.

The gods are animate creatures, resembling human beings, that is, atomic in composition and structure. As such they are theoretically not immune to the contingency of dissolution but in practice this event is avertible. Thus they may be styled incorruptible in the sense that they are subject to a contingency that need never occur.

All gods, however, are not of the same kind: some are composed of the same atoms at all times, like human beings; others are composed of like atoms by virtue of the perpetual afflux and efflux of atoms self-arranged in identical formations.

The gods can ensure incorruptibility for themselves by their own vigilance. Just as this vigilance ensures incorruptibility, so the assurance of incorruptibility ensures blissfulness. The happiness of the gods is perfect because the assurance of its perpetuity is perfect.

principle, which is stated negatively and positively as follows: "First of all, believing the divine being to be a creature incorruptible and blessed, just as the universal idea of the divine being is outlined, associate no idea with it that is alien to incorruptibility or incompatible with blessedness and cultivate every thought concerning it that can have the effect of preserving its blessedness along with incorruptibility." ⁶ In this translation the word *incorruptible* has been retained for two reasons: first, Epicurus did not believe the gods to be inherently immortal and never called them immortal, though Lucretius and others

THE TRUE PIETY

did; second, the Greek word is the same that is rendered "incorruptible" in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 15.

Distinctly controversial, on the contrary, both in the time of Epicurus and centuries later, was the question whether the bodies of the gods were corporeal or incorporeal. For the benefit of youthful disciples the teaching was dogmatic. In his syllabus addressed to the young Menoeceus Epicurus loses no time in defining the divine being as “a living creature,” incorruptible and blissful, and the term employed is *zoön*, “animal,” applicable to beasts as well as to human beings.²⁹ This is important: the gods are viewed as part of the natural order of living corporeal things, the *scala naturae*. Their place is at the top of the scale but not outside of it.

While deeper inquiry into the nature of the gods was reserved for advanced students and for the very last place in the curriculum of study, the nature of the soul was explained for the young Herodotus, and similar reasoning applies to the nature of the gods.³⁰ The major premise is the third of the Twelve Elementary Principles, which states that the universe is composed of solid bodies—that is, atoms—and void. From this it is deduced, on the principle of the excluded middle, that there is nothing incorporeal except void, which can neither receive nor deliver a stimulus. If either the soul or the god is incorporeal, they must be equated with void, but both are capable of delivering a stimulus; the gods, for example, stimulate the sensory capacity of the mind in visions. Therefore the bodies of the gods must be corporeal.

Post by “Cassius” of April 2, 2019 at 8:50 PM

If there are gradations in gods, would at least some of them not be capable of experiencing pain? Would it offend Greek sensibilities to think that Zeus felt pain?

the existence of more than one class of gods. Both the specific evidences and general considerations would strongly favor the recognition of two classes, but scholars have been reluctant to make such a concession and

EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

they resort, as usual, to the device of emending the text.⁴⁴ In view of this situation a synoptic glance over the arguments is in order.

At the outset, as a factor of error, it should be diligently kept in mind that in the main the criticism of Epicurus has been hostile and the general desire has been to represent him as a heretic. In his own view, on the contrary, he was rather a traditionalist. He sponsored the usual polytheism of his countrymen and rationalized it. It has been noted already that his description of the bodies of the gods would not be unacceptable to the Greek who took Homer for a guide.

Although Epicurus had no choice but to call himself a sage or philosopher, he was in reality a reformer and a prophet, concepts for which his language had as yet no names. He believed he had discovered "true philosophy," originating in the teaching of Nature herself, as opposed to the corrupt beliefs of the poets, the multitude, and philosophers. As the upholder of the sanctity and dignity of the gods he rejected all the indecencies ascribed to them by the poets and the venalities and spites ascribed to them by the multitude. He was specially hostile to philosophers such as Eudoxus and Plato, who debased the gods by thinking of them as visible balls of fire coursing in circles around the sky.

Post by "Cassius" of April 2, 2019 at 8:54 PM

Dewitt mentions a number of times that he thought the texts indicated that the intermundia was a place where the forces of preservation prevailed over the forces of destruction. That is not at all the same as saying that the forces of preservation *eliminate* the forces of

As for daemons, which in current belief occupied a place intermediate between gods and men, we have the statement of Plutarch that Epicureans exhibited impatience if anyone asserted their existence.⁴⁵ In the language employed it is implied that this rejection would be on the grounds of both physics and logic. Here also the reasoning can be readily supplied. Under terrestrial conditions, in which these daemons were believed to live, it would have been inconceivable according to the teachings of Epicurus for a divine being to survive; only in the intermundia, where the forces of preservation remained superior to the forces of destruction, would this have been possible. As for the logical grounds of rejection, if once the doctrine of the sanctity and dignity of

262

THE TRUE PIETY

the gods be accepted, it would be inconceivable that divine beings would lower themselves to such a vulgar function as trailing after human beings to control their fortunes. The daemon of Socrates himself must have been a subject of ridicule to Epicureans.

Post by "Cassius" of April 2, 2019 at 8:55 PM

One aside: If Epicurus thought that the gods do at least occasionally experience pain, that would have obvious implications for his "gods among men" statement, or even Lucretius saying that Epicurus was essentially a god -- it would make both comparisons much more plausible.

Post by "Godfrey" of April 3, 2019 at 1:14 AM

Are there other translations of the Letter to Menoeceus available that use "incorruptible" instead of "immortal"? I found one that uses "indestructible", but DeWitt seems to be the only one using incorruptible. The implications of "incorruptible" are very appealing!

Can our Greek friends provide any insight on this point?

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2019 at 6:03 AM

Aside: DeWitt's own full translation of the letter to Menoecus is in the [appendix of his "St Paul and Epicurus" book](#).

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2019 at 6:11 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Can our Greek friends provide any insight on this point?

Another specific point on which our Greek friends might help would be: "Is there precedent in Greek religion for a god dying (or choosing to die)?"

I don't think that would be determinative of what Epicurus thought, because he clearly rejected many/most of the common attributes of gods, but if there are examples of such things (in Homer especially?) then that might be evidence to add to the discussion.

We presume that gods must be omnipotent and omniscient due to the influence of the major world religions. Is it possible that "immortal" and/or "eternal" is another attribute that we should not presume Epicurus accepted?

I have an open mind on this issue. I also have an open mind on whether [Epicurean gods](#) are "eternal" (no beginning or end) or simply "immortal" (no end, but having a beginning). And that would have to be answered both for an individual god as well as for "the gods as a group"

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.

Post by "Cassius" of April 3, 2019 at 6:27 AM

From Elli:

When the parents feel the great pain of the loss of their child the psychologists suggest "the displacement" i.e. the transference of their feelings of love that had for their lost child to the

rest of the children in their family. This procedure produces a healthy family environment and IMO is the real doctor that is able to cure their wound.

For the parents to lose their child is a great pain indeed, because it rejects the parents' hope to feel and share their child's pleasures in the future...But in parallel, the same parents reject the pleasures that they've shared with that lost child in the past.

This loss of their child rejects the feeling of the continuity of their genes in the present and in future...But in parallel, they reject that they may have in their family and other children that continue their genes in the present and in future. When the parents lose their child they also feel as being empty-handed and all the efforts they did were in vain... But in parallel, they reject their offering that was this great gift that is called LIFE to a child as long as was alive. Since they do not see that for a being for not living at all, it is like the darkness of the abyss.

Those parents also feel guilty and remorse that they did not offer more things and feelings to that lost child when was alive... But in parallel, they are focusing on the suffering and not on the pleasurable moments they offered and shared with the child when was alive. And if the parents have other children, with their continuous mourn, they make the other of their children to feel guilty and remorse too when those children want to feel pleasure in their life... So in parallel, those parents reject the fact to feel and share the pleasures with the other of their children and the real fact of the continuity of parents' genes that is still remaining in the present and in the future. For this reason, we see also many cases when the parents have lost a child, they're going to the procedure to have a new one.

I had the experience to lose my brother in a car crash, and through the empathy I felt my mother's pain that was indescribable, but during the time of the years that have passed, her great pain was decreased through the sharing of the pleasurable feelings of love with me, my sister and our children, i.e. her grandchildren as a real fact in the continuity of her family in the present and in future.

So, in that painful situation when the parents lost a child and have no other children or can't have a new one, it might be helpful and pleasurable to those parents for being more closely to their relatives' children for sharing the happiness and love they've lost. For this reason, the other relatives might be beneficial and good for them to speak to their children to be more closed to those relatives that had lost their only child.

For this Epicurus remarks in the starting point of his letter to Meneceus: "we must then meditate on the things that make our happiness, seeing that when that is with us we have all, but when it is absent we do all to win it".

Yes, positively, the transference of parents' feelings of love that had for their lost child, and as they are offering this love to the rest of the children in their family is going along with all the efforts to win their happiness again. And that is because Epicurus is sure that happiness is connected with pleasure, and it is so recognizable as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure, we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using

the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good. So, pleasure is born within us, it remains inside us as long as we live, and its power shows up, as it is enriched and developed when is shared with the next others.

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2019 at 6:29 AM

Elayne, I completely agree with your view stated this and similar ways: "For me it is more like I have pleasures _in spite of_ unavoidable pains of the past or present, not _because of_ these pains. "

The part where I am not sure is that saying that we only have pleasure because of the existence of pain (and therefore we need pain) might not be the only way to read what Wright is saying. (Although I agree that it seems she is saying that)

Where I am thinking there may be validity is to ask a similar question:

Does matter exist because there is void? Does void exist because there is matter? It may be that Wright senses that Epicurus was saying that reality is the way it is because of Nature and that we should be grateful to Nature that reality is the way it is (various sayings I think would support that including the one to the effect of being grateful that what is good is easy to get and what is bad is not -- I need the exact translation here.

So it might be possible that Wright is extrapolating from that.

Here it is:

GRATITUDE TO NATURE

The duty of gratitude to Nature is on record in these words: "Gratitude is due to blessed Nature because she has made life's necessities easy of acquisition and those things that are difficult of acquisition unnecessary."¹¹⁷ The true basis of the debt to Nature, however, is to be found in her function as a teacher. She is not to Epicurus, as she was to Aristotle, merely the creative force in the universe. She was also the aggregate of animate experience and especially of human experience.

It is Nature that reveals the Canon of truth and bestows upon man the means of contact between his soul and the material world, Sensations, Anticipations, Feelings. The true end of living as she reveals it is "the end of Nature." True justice is "the justice of Nature." The true attitude toward the desires consists in recognizing "the limits of Nature." The true attitude toward riches and poverty demands knowledge of "the wealth of Nature." She is the ethical teacher: "Nature teaches us to think the gifts of Fortune as of minor value and to know that when we are fortunate we are unfortunate."¹¹⁸ In the language of Lucretius she is so eager for men to know the truth that she "barks" it aloud,¹¹⁹ like a faithful dog that is keen to give warning. In a magnificent passage toward the end of the third book the poet steps aside and yields the pulpit to her so that in her own person she may lash self-pitying old men for their ingratitude.¹²⁰ If we take Nature in this Epicurean sense as a benevolent teacher, then gratitude is an imperative of Nature. It is owed to her by man and she in turn enjoins it upon man.

Post by "Elli" of April 3, 2019 at 8:00 AM

I have the impression on the issue of Gods that exists a hidden serious argument by Epicurus that gods have not that humans' craving/lust for immortality, because they have total ignorance that are mortals. So, gods have not the consciousness/knowledge of what is death. They are as living in the situation like the animals or humans' babies that born with the pleasure as set by Nature. Gods, animals and humans' babies are in that clear and obvious situation, that is described with that Myth - as a general picture - which says : before Prometheus offered the fire to the humans that is a metaphor of the consciousness/knowledge what is death, and it is the same with that myth of the lost paradise with Eve, Adam and the apple. In the former greek myth redemption became to the humans when the god Prometheus himself was punished by other gods, because he gave that consciousness/knowledge what is death to the humans. It is like to hear gods saying to Prometheus : why Prometheus lead the humans to have fears and pains what is death, and not living like us ? So, be punished now ! What a great myth indeed. 👍

But here is the huge and tremendous opposite that exists in the latter myth with Eve, Adam and the apple when it says that the humans themselves had punished by the god. So in the latter myth there is a tragedy but in parallel, there is not redemption at all. Because in the latter Myth it is a punishment to be mortal, and not a real fact that comes by Nature, and for this you can't enjoy also the pleasure that set by Nature too. 😬

Thusly, in the latter Myth there is no redemption at all to the humans. From what really ? From the craving/lust of immortality. And what comes after as an invention ? A son of god that he was resurrected from death, and gave you the same meaning that you can be resurrected from your death too. That is to say a vain and empty hope. Thus, the craving/lust for immortality has no end. And this is the main core inside the monotheistic religions. If there won't be this main core inside them, there is no any serious fact to have their existence at all 😬

So, here comes Epicurus to point out what is greek and non greek, and how it was made to be non greek by the foolishness that came by Plato et.al. Epicurus great proposals in his letter to Meneoceus are going like this : Hey, guys "[DEATH IS NOTHING TO US](#)", and as continues he also said : "So that the man speaks but idly who says that he fears death (as a future pain) not because it will be painful when it comes, but because it is painful in anticipation. For that which gives no trouble in when it comes is but an empty pain in anticipation".

"And therefore a right understanding that [death is nothing to us](#) makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality.

For we do not seek to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant time". This is the purpose for Epicurus : to take away that stupid craving for immortality that produces to us PAIN. Epicurus shows to us and always is focusing to the LIMITS of Nature and our nature.

For focusing on something that it did not yet come is an empty pain in anticipation. For this Epicurus suggests for being focused to the pleasures, past, present and an expectation of the future. Prudence and the procedure in the basis of our sober reasoning is the same tool that is used by us through our experiences, as we've been taught for reaching and a kind of a conclusion : on how to avoid any pain and pursue pleasure, and sometimes when we confront a pain it is for the achievement of a greater pleasure. The focusing that we might feel a pain in the future, is an empty pain in anticipation in the time being. But there is also this realization that has to be measured too as a real fact : that all we are mortals, and this is going along with the following ES by Metrodorus, but we have been taught by Epicurus that the craving/lust for immortality produces pain and fears. So with the study of Nature and epicurean philosophy you acquired that great art to live like gods among men. So, simple ! 😊

The ES by Metrodorus are :

30. Some men throughout their lives spend their time gathering together the means of life, for they do not see that the draught swallowed by all of us at birth is a draught of death.

31. Against all else it is possible to provide security, but as against death all of us mortals alike dwell in an unfortified city.

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2019 at 8:32 AM

You said a lot there Elli but here's one among many:

What do the gods have that humans cannot experience but more variation? Our variation is limited by our lifespan, in that we cannot control our atoms so as to self-renew our bodies. The "gods" can do that, and thus have unlimited variation.

But as Epicurus said, variation, while desirable, does not fill a vessel past the point of being full. The gods have an unlimited sized vessel, ours is of limited size. Is this perhaps the main difference between us and "the gods"?

Post by “Cassius” of April 3, 2019 at 8:33 AM

Elli also what about the point of whether any gods in Greek religion died, or chose to die?

Do I take it to be obvious that the Greek gods experienced pain of some degree, in that they were always fighting among themselves and being mad at each other?

Again, I am wondering about the context that was familiar to Epicurus when he started thinking about this subject.

Post by “Elli” of April 3, 2019 at 12:11 PM

[Elayne Coulter](#) to [Cassius](#) Amicus, well, in the sense that without the danger signal of pain we would die from tissue damage at a young age-- as people do who are born without the ability to feel pain-- that is how pain allows life, which is necessary for pleasure. But I do not think it is similar to matter and void. Then you would require pain in your cup of pleasure, just as void is required between the constantly moving atoms.

Although pain as a warning is necessary, the events which cause us pain are often not necessary, and we should attempt to avoid pain when the pleasure of an action is not greater. Agreeing to pains for greater pleasure is not because the pain brings balance or is necessary, but because it happens to be a result of a particular action. The pain of the death of loved ones is a necessary risk associated with the greater pleasure of deep love. But we will also love many people whom we will not grieve-- they instead will grieve us. So our pain would not have been needed for those loves.

I had another thought this morning upon waking-- if we took the approach of her last paragraph, we would be following the currently prescribed stages of grief, which is an acceptance of pain in an almost resigned manner.

My usual approach is more defiant-- I refuse to submit to pain and insist upon acting for the goal of pleasure. I don't refuse to feel pain of grief-- I just refuse to let it win.

I can't go into some of the specific occasions here... but an example is that when I was told my son would never improve from his schizophrenia enough to leave a group home, I grieved that he had an incurable illness but I refused to submit to doom. I kept searching until I found a place that agreed to try harder, and I took him there. Because I didn't give up, although he is not cured, he has a real life in the community. He has freedom, and friends. I see this as us having defied pain and insisted on pleasure, in spite of not being able to eliminate the pain.

I have done a similar thing when grieving deaths-- I have thought about how I hope my friends and family will not cave in to grief when I die and will live on seeking pleasure, including happy memories of me.

It has a more invigorating result.

[Elli Pensa](#) to Elayne Coulter : My friend [Elayne](#), you are a genuine Epicurean !!! 

[Cassius Amicus](#)

" in the sense that without the danger signal of pain we would die from tissue damage at a young age-- as people do who are born without the ability to feel pain-- that is how pain allows life, which is necessary for pleasure. But I do not think it is similar to matter and void. Then you would require pain in your cup of pleasure, just as void is required between the constantly moving atoms. "

This is a very interesting discussion I am going to have to think about. I totally agree about fighting pain every step of the way. On the other hand, I can see the possibility that we both fight it every step of the way and yet be glad that the *mechanism* is there.

I think in general we have to be alert that there can be multiple levels in what Epicurus was teaching. There is the (1) practical advice for normal intelligent people of good will, and there is (2) dialectical logical responses for the stubborn eggheads who refuse to understand that logical puzzles are not the most important thing in life. Epicurus had to deal with both types of people.

It seems possible to me that what we are discussing might be flipping back and forth between the two perspectives. Clearly (to me) it is right to fight pain every step of the way. But in the heat of battle with egghead Platonists, it might be appropriate to focus at least for that moment on the aspect from which pain is an intrinsic and inseparable aspect of human life.

Of course dealing with egghead Platonists is pretty close to pain / undesirable in itself!



[Elli Pensa](#) to [Cassius](#) : please read carefully what Elayne wrote : "My usual approach is more defiant-- I refuse to submit to pain and insist upon acting for the goal of pleasure. I don't refuse to feel pain of grief-- I just refuse to let it win".

In the above thoughts by our friend Elayne I found similarities of what Nietzsche has said :

"I have given a name to my pain and call it "dog." It is just as faithful, just as obtrusive and shameless, just as entertaining, just as clever as any other dog--and I can scold it and vent my bad mood on it, as others do with their dogs, servants, and wives". -Nietzsche, The Gay Science.

Nietzsche's book "The Gay Science" is written after a period of illness, so, Nietzsche makes embodiedness a central tenet of his philosophy, and pain a necessary component of that embodiedness. His relationship to pain, namely treating his pain as if it were a dog to be

trained and disciplined, turns pain from a thing that he submits to into a thing that has been submitted to him.

However, Elayne as a genuine Epicurean lady that she is, first thing first that she points out is : <<the goal of pleasure>>. Elayne does not point out a kind of gratitude, she does not move among the opposites, she does not point out anything of these things, but she points out the power of pleasure that is the right guide by Nature for her to train and disciplined any pain internal or external, so with this procedure any pain has been submitted to her like an obedient doggie ! At this point, all the genuine Epicureans shout out loud: Hooray ! This is the great moment of the evidence of the POWER that epicurean SWERVE has !!!!



Post by “Elli” of April 3, 2019 at 12:29 PM

Trust women, since they know many things about GREAT PAINS (labor pains), and GREAT PLEASURES (breast feeding and the hugging of our babies), and as Elayne knows the important role of the Oxytocin in general :

Oxytocin is a hormone and a neurotransmitter that is involved in childbirth and breast-feeding. It is also associated with empathy, trust, sexual activity, and relationship-building.

It is sometimes referred to as the "love hormone," because levels of oxytocin increase during hugging and orgasm. It may also have benefits as a treatment for a number of conditions, including depression, anxiety, and intestinal problems.

Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus, a part of the brain. Females usually have higher levels than males. 😊

Here are some key points about oxytocin. More detail is in this article : <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/275795.php>

Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus and released during sex, childbirth, and lactation to aid reproductive functions.

It has physical and psychological effects, including influencing social behavior and emotion.

Oxytocin is prescribed as a drug for obstetric and gynecological reasons and can help in childbirth.

Research shows that it may benefit people with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), anxiety, and [irritable bowel syndrome \(IBS\)](#).

Post by “Elli” of April 5, 2019 at 7:20 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Elli also what about the point of whether any gods in Greek religion died, or chose to die?

Do I take it to be obvious that the Greek gods experienced pain of some degree, in that they were always fighting among themselves and being mad at each other?

Again, I am wondering about the context that was familiar to Epicurus when he started thinking about this subject.

Let's examine the **Doctrine 20** which starts like this: **"The (human's) flesh perceives the limits of pleasure as unlimited, and unlimited time is required to supply it..."**. Why does that happen? Why does the flesh perceive that there are no limits in time? Maybe because the flesh/brain/feelings/senses of the human when is born it is like the animals that have not yet the consciousness that pleasure has limits. And when the human is getting older through the experiences is realizing the issue of death, and with the hedonic calculus realizes/conceives also that has limits. But with experiences it is beneficial for the human to achieve the prudence - that teaches us - on how to become able to put our personal limits for enjoying the pleasure in life.

Do gods perceive as part of Nature that may have a "flesh" that perceives that has unlimited time to enjoy pleasure? Maybe yes, maybe they are like the animals and the humans' babies that are protected or created by Nature such as to not feel pain and enjoy the net pleasure. But however, as Epicurus points out and even the gods obey to the laws of Nature that is capable to create and them, as well as the unlimited worlds both like and unlike with ours. But why Epicurus placed the gods in intermundia (metacosmia i.e. between the worlds) ? Because he

thought that yet there is infinite time for them to feel pleasure, there is also a finite space that is maybe like the void that is a "place", and as Epicurus said also for the void is an "untouched" place that makes the gods to have total inability to interact with the laws of Nature and with all worlds that created by Nature.

And continues : **"...But the (human's) mind, having attained a reasoned understanding of the ultimate good of the flesh and its limits..."** here is what I said above for "the consciousness of the humans" that the flesh to feel pleasure has limits and that comes from the time that human perception is his full consciousness of what is death, what is life and on how he should live well!

And now, on consciousness, please remember your experience, as I remember my experience that was an easter: when I was about 5 years old that I saw my grandfather with a slaughter man to have a hanging sheep on a tree and as the slaughter was trying to put out the sheep's flesh, I realized that that sheep I knew, it was not alive anymore, and at the same time I realized that in that situation it was, no one could it bring it back. I felt pain and I cried so much. Then, my grandfather fooled me to bring another sheep in the farm saying that it was that sheep. And then they fooled me inside school with the god, the soul and resurrection. They fooled me with Plato's philosophy, until the day I lost my father and my brother and I realized that those issues I learned are total foolishness for making me to live like a stupid slave. And as came to my life Epicurus and his philosophy, I shout out loud : **YES, this is the right way at last !**

And for this Epicurus continues in this PD 20 **"and having dissipated the fears concerning the time to come"...**"the time to come" is a fear with a pain in anticipation on something that did not yet come for us, because when the human realizes the next people death, in the same time is realizing the fact of thyself death. For this Epicurus says death is nothing for all of us. Here Epicurus rejects this selfishness that is provoked by later Christianity. So Epicurus unites us with next others that all we are mortals. In the plurality the pain and the fear of death is eliminated also. For this when he speaks for friendship, he called it as immortal good. In plurality, he also says that in death we have no sensations and that means also there is no consciousness at all.

And he continues on the issue of this consciousness: **"when the fear is dissipated in the same time it supplies us with the complete life, and we have no further need of infinite time:"** Because the flesh does not care anymore for the infinite amount of time (lust for immortality), but the most pleasant time (i.e. the desire for pleasure here and now (present) with the remembrance of (past) pleasures and an expectation of (future) pleasures. This is the voyage of Epicurus in time and space that are both limited, but this is also the way to enjoy pleasure in life.

and continues :**"but neither does the mind shun pleasure, nor, when circumstances begin to bring about the departure from life, does it approach its end as though it**

fell short in any way of the best life".

So, without the carving/lust of immortality i.e. the infinite time and infinite space human's flesh enjoys and feel the pleasure, past, present and expectation of future, and when is time to leave from the game of life, the human sings **a triumph song how WELL he lived.**

So **to live like god among men** it is the same to live well and die well. And that means that the craving of immortality is vain, an empty belief that provokes pain and fear with the result of what ? To have depression, to not be grateful and pleased of what a great gift life is,, and the worst of all is to not think **that there was also the probability** : to not be born at all, which - with an image is - like **the darkness of the abyss.**

Conclusion : What really stupid persons exist around us, and as I say sometimes, those are the people that take from us the oxygen to breathe free in a clear air.

For them are the following Epicurean sayings : 😊

68. Nothing is sufficient for him to whom what is sufficient seems too little.

69. The ungrateful greed of the soul makes the creature everlastingly desire varieties of in its lifestyle.

Post by "Cassius" of April 5, 2019 at 10:08 AM

Excellent stuff Elli ---

Before I forget where I was going originally, let me put this back out there again. Did the Greek gods feel pain? Did a Greek god ever choose to die? Is it possible that an Epicurean god could die if he chose, and feel pain if he chose, but simply chooses not to and has the ability to carry out that choice?

I think the practical application of that question is as above: "What, in Epicurus view, did "the gods" have that humans cannot experience? Is the only or main difference that the gods can experience pleasure longer and with more variation? Our variation is limited by our lifespan, in that we cannot control our atoms so as to self-renew our bodies. The "gods" can do that, and thus have unlimited variation.

Is it possible that this perhaps the main difference between us and the Epicurean "gods"? That may not be at all true, but if it were, certain comments like the "gods among men" comment would be more understandable.

Quote from Cassius



Elli also what about the point of whether any gods in Greek religion died, or chose to die?

Do I take it to be obvious that the Greek gods experienced pain of some degree, in that they were always fighting among themselves and being mad at each other?

Again, I am wondering about the context that was familiar to Epicurus when he started thinking about this subject.

Post by “bradley.whitley” of April 5, 2019 at 1:24 PM

I am enjoying this thread. Elayne and Elli are great writers!

Post by “Elli” of April 5, 2019 at 4:04 PM

I am sure for Elayne as for myself, first we live and then we write, as said by Liantinis for the Hellenes ! 😊