

Eudaimonia and Makariotēs in the Letter to Menoecus

Post by "Godfrey" of June 1, 2026 at 1:05 AM

What I've attempted to say is that it's a matter of location. You can experience pain in your stomach and throat as well as painful thoughts, all at the same time. Or you could experience any one of them separately. You can add pleasure/ remove pain from any and all of them by using specific remedies.

This is a way of saying that pleasure is pleasure, without putting one above the other, in order to counter the "absence of pain" argument or the "ascetic" argument. You evaluate pleasures/pains by intensity, location and duration.

Taking the previous examples: 1) the dread can show up in the mind, but at the same time in the chest or the gut. 2) anticipation is primarily located in the mind, but at the same time can cause a feeling of giddiness or increased energy throughout the body. 3) obsessing occurs in the mind, but also possibly in the gut or chest. 4) Remembering a conversation with a friend can either be pleasant or painful, depending on the subject and context, and either way may elicit feelings in the body.

An illustration is that the ancients argued whether the brain was in the gut or the chest, apparently because bodily feelings are so associated with thoughts.

The last few days my body has felt pain free (a rare occurrence!) and this is giving me mental pleasure. The feelings move in both directions. A good workout elicits all sorts of feelings in a variety of locations, and you could say that those in the mind and those in the body are constantly changing in intensity, location and duration.

A good cup of coffee not only tastes good, but that good taste brings mental pleasure in response to the taste. It also might bring physical pleasure in the brain once the caffeine kicks in. Which in turn could bring the mental pleasure of increased alertness.... &c

So, practically speaking we can use the mental model of mental and physical feelings, but I think that if you dig deeper, the model of intensity, location and duration is more accurate. And possibly could bridge the gap between proponents of "absence of pain" vs those following "pleasure".