

Welcome Max Duboff

Post by “Max DuBoff” of July 7, 2026 at 4:55 PM

Thanks, Cassius--great points. I don't think the textual evidence supports the G&T/[Nikolsky](#) interpretation, but I grant that your arguments are quite plausible if they're right.

Pleasure and pain are mutually exclusive *at the same time and in the same respect*, but one can experience both in different respects. "Interfere" could mean distracting ourselves from pain, and/or it could mean being able to experience katastematic pleasure even though we're also experiencing pain. My (extremely controversial) view is that bodily katastematic pleasure is only the fulfillment of needs. And (less controversially) I'm sympathetic to Long and Sedley's distraction model of recollection/anticipation. To experience katastematic pleasure is just to sense the absence of pain and recognize it as good; it doesn't require a positive sensation beyond that.

I apologize if I'm not being clear, but let me try this again: the problem with "weigh total pleasure against total pain" is that it doesn't say anything about the absence of pain. But the absence of pain is really important, not just some general idea of pleasure. The absence of pain is a pleasure, and our understanding of pleasure needs to give a large role to the absence of pain, as do our decision standards. "Weigh total pleasure against total pain" licenses a life with lots of pain, and it doesn't provide any way to criticize a raucous banqueter who has just a bit more pleasure than pain in their life, or someone who goes into politics because they think it'll be fun.

Your point about the variety of ways that friendship might contribute to blessedness is fair. My biggest point, throughout all of this, is that there's no way to "count up" katastematic pleasure. You can look at a whole life and the balance of pleasure or pain, but what that requires doing is basically ignoring katastematic pleasure. There are interpretations that make this move make sense; but when I read several of the core sources, the absence of pain plays such a crucial role, and it's really important to accommodate that role (or totally reinterpret those sources, but I'm not sure how one would do so).

I've really appreciated this discussion--your ideas are always keen.