

Welcome Max Duboff

Post by "Cassius" of July 8, 2026 at 10:04 AM

[Quote from Max DuBoff](#)

But indeed, it shouldn't be taken to mean that all pleasure is absence of pain, because it conflicts with 1.37: "For we don't pursue only this pleasure which excites our nature itself by some pleasantness and is apprehended by the senses along with a certain pleasantness, but we regard as greatest that pleasure which is apprehended once all pain has been removed" (my translation).

Max, as you might expect, I will say that there's no conflict between these statements of Torquatus at all.

Here's Torquatus in 1.37 (Reid translation): "we look upon the greatest pleasure as that which is enjoyed when all pain is removed. Now inasmuch as whenever we are released from pain, we rejoice in the mere emancipation and freedom from all annoyance, and everything whereat we rejoice is equivalent to pleasure... therefore the complete termed pleasure."

He isn't asserting two competing goods, including a higher one with a completeness requirement. He's applying a general principle that everything at which we rejoice is equivalent to pleasure, and this leads him to conclude that release from pain simply is pleasure.

That's the identical point made at 2.9-11 ("freedom from pain does not mean the same thing as pleasure" / "Clearly the same, and indeed the greatest"). It's not a rival claim to 2.9-11 — it's the same claim.

Then Torquatus removes any doubt in the very next sentence, 1.38: "Epicurus thinks that the highest degree of pleasure is defined by the removal of all pain, so that pleasure may afterwards exhibit diversities and differences but is incapable of increase or extension."

That's the whole point - incapable of increase is a "hitting a ceiling" quantity claim, not a claim about which pleasures are eligible to count toward blessedness.

The same highest state is explicitly said to still exhibit "diversities and differences." If kinetic pleasures were structurally locked out as composing blessedness the way your reading needs them to be, there'd be nothing left for that phrase to refer to. The variety has to be the sensory pleasure from earlier in 1.37 — now understood as filling the ceiling, not excluded *from* it.

This is exactly the point of [PD18](#): "The pleasure in the flesh is not increased when once the pain due to want is removed, but is only varied." Same two points are made: quantity (has a limit) and content (keeps varying). There's no third perspective from which some pleasures count toward a blessed life but other can't.

So I don't think 1.37 conflicts with 2.9 at all. Once "greatest" is read correctly, both passages say the same thing. The conflict arises only if you import an absolutist premise and read "greatest" as "the only thing that qualifies" - - which the text doesn't say, and which 1.38 rules out in the very next line.

When Torquatus calls the pain-free state "the highest pleasure possible" in 1.38, he immediately says it can still "exhibit diversities and differences." What do you think that variety consists of, if not the sensory/kinetic pleasures your theory excludes from conferring blessedness?

All this comes in the context of:

Quote

[40] XII. Again, the truth that pleasure is the supreme good can be most easily apprehended from the following consideration. Let us imagine an individual in the enjoyment of pleasures great, numerous and constant, both mental and bodily, with no pain to thwart or threaten them; I ask what circumstances can we describe as more excellent than these or more desirable? A man whose circumstances are such must needs possess, as well as other things, a robust mind subject to no fear of death or pain, because death is apart from sensation, and pain when lasting is usually slight, when oppressive is of short duration, so that its temporariness reconciles us to its intensity, and its slightness to its continuance.