

# Proselytising and pleasure: compatible?

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2022 at 4:50 PM

First, yes: There's no divine commandment or categorical imperative to save everyone in the world, as the Christians argue to be the case. Your own pleasure and that of your friends is ultimately the only natural standard for what to pursue. Of course that ends up meaning all sorts of other things in regard to virtue and relations with others and trying to be on good terms with them as well, but ultimately it all comes down to the feelings that nature provides, and that varies according to "who else" you are talking about. Your friends evoke stronger feelings of pleasure than do random strangers.

Also

## [Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

If I want to enjoy pleasure with the least amount of pain, I won't go out into the world and proclaim to know the truth

I would caution to be very precise with this formulation. I do not think it is correct exactly as written, although I probably say it that way often myself -- too loosely.

I think the proper approach would be a combination of several considerations, primarily:

1. You're looking for the maximum pleasure you can achieve at a cost in pain that you find worthwhile. (which is not the same as "the least amount of pain.") And in proof of that I would cite exactly what you did about the effort that Epicurus and the ancient Epicureans put into their work and the peril that came their way because of it.
2. Only you can determine what amount of pain is justifiable - there are no absolute standards of ranking pain or pleasure. (I don't think any Epicurean would argue that there is, and that includes the natural and necessary discussion, which doesn't add up to an absolute standard either. I would assert - and do ad nauseum - that those who assert "tranquility" or some other kind of "fancy pleasure" is the "best" pleasure are flat-out wrong under Epicurean theory and reality.)
3. Everyone experiences some pain in life; only the Epicurean god category would be theoretically able to avoid all pain. (I think everyone here would take that position regardless of their views of what Epicurus meant by "gods.")
4. There are almost always going to be limitations when you attempt to start starting the goal in words more precise than "pleasure." I would say that is because there are natural limitations in the ability of words to capture feelings, and Epicurus ultimately says that the proof of his position that pleasure is to be pursued and pain avoided comes from observing the infants of all species before they are corrupted with false ideas. That's an observational standard rather than a conceptual formula, and I think there are deep

reasons why conceptual formulas are always going to be lacking, just like a map is never a complete recreation of the territory described, just an outline.