

# Is pleasure as the natural goal of life falsifiable?

Post by "Cassius" of December 8, 2022 at 9:55 AM

## [Quote from waterholic](#)

But couldn't the same approach be applied to Gods? I don't see or touch pleasure, in the same way I don't see or touch Gods. Yet, I feel it. Who is to say that someone doesn't feel God, ergo she is as right as I am?

Who is to say? That answer I think would be just like any other question, and only you can answer it by evaluating the evidence that is available to you and making the best decision that is possible to you.

If someone tells me that they have direct evidence of God then I tell them I am from Missouri and I ask them to "show me." If they can't, then I place their claim in the category of many other claims that are made without evidence that I can verify or have good reason to accept, and which I therefore reject.

That's something I think Epicurus was trying to be clear about: There ultimately is no "final arbiter" of right and wrong. There is no center of the universe to stand in and say that this perspective alone is the "right" perspective. There is no divine god or anyone else who knows everything and can say "this alone" is right. There is no realm of forms or essences -- no "true world" outside of our own to which to look to as authority. This is not reason for despair but reason to saddle up and get back on the horse and ride life as aggressively as you can to manage all the evidence and all the decisions available to you.

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What this implies is that I am designed in a way that this balance is a natural state for me. In a simple example, if I am about to die, have only 3 minutes left and have an option for a great pleasure at the cost of great pain (possibly life) of another, it would be consistent with the Epicurean pleasure/pain calculus to forego the pleasure, because in those minutes the knowledge of harm to another would cause us pain. Why? Because we are built that way and we don't need virtue, belief in afterlife punishment or diety to act that way.

I think I am agreeing with your example, but only because ultimately it comes down to "you have to determine yourself what is the most pleasurable course for you given all your mental and physical reactions." When you say "because we are built that way" I sense that you are wanting to look for an absolute answer that says for everyone that "altruism" or "the interests of others" are always to be chosen over "selfishness" or "your own interests." I don't think the

facts or Epicurus lead in that direction and I would urge people away from that conclusion, or any other conclusion that implies that there is a "universal good" other than the fact that living beings have faculties of pleasure and pain.

And to carry that last point to a conclusion, I don't think Epicurus was a Benthamite and suggested that pleasure is out there floating in the air and that we should try to maximize "pleasure in general" or "the pleasure of everyone" no matter who is feeling it.

I think Epicurus is clear that each individual has to make that decision for themselves and decide what pleasure and pain is relevant to them. We can choose to be "Mother Theresa" and say that the pleasure of everyone in the world, or any stranger, is every bit as important to god (and to me) as the pleasure of my own spouse and children. Or we can choose to be much more limited and say that in the end the pleasure of our families and friends and ourselves is paramount. But either way, neither god nor platonic forms nor essences nor absolute justice nor anything else exists to justify the conclusion that one "must" or even "should" be selected one over the other. In the end most people seem to end up looking to what nature puts in them - which I gather to be stronger feelings for that which is close and less strong feelings for that which is distant.