

# Catherine Wilson interviewed by Michael Shermer

Post by "Cassius" of December 25, 2019 at 2:52 PM

## [Quote from Hiram](#)

This view has some merit, and deserves further consideration and discussion. It is one thing to say "ethics is eternal", which is not a clear statement, but it's another thing to say "we know better", with the implication being that some societies are more enlightened and therefore have conventions that generate more pleasure / less suffering to people than others, which is an undeniable fact.

No I don't think it is undeniable and I would deny that as written. i would say that I CASSIUS or YOU HIRAM can make the statement that I or YOU consider that some societies are more "enlightened" than others, but i think Epicurus' point is precisely that there is NOT an objective point from which we can say that our judgment on these matters is the last word.

And i say that especially since the main implication of saying "more pleasure/less suffering to PEOPLE" is that this formulation implies "greatest good for the greatest number."

I see absolutely no justification in Epicurus for "greatest good of the greatest number" or even "Greatest pleasure for the greatest number." Only the individual can say whether he himself considers the pleasure of some number of people (presumably his friends) more important than the pain of a million times larger that same number of people.

Any other attempt to stack up the pleasure and pain of groups of people is unalterably going to run into the question: "Who says so?" And [PD10](#) and many other statements explicitly rule out there being a single correct answer to that question.

I presume Hiram you picked this part out because you know how controversial these conclusions are, and how they fly in the face of "secular humanism." But that's exactly what they do -- they flatly contradict "humanism" and that's the kind of choice a person has to make when they decide whether they are an Epicurean or a humanist or something else.