

Differences between Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 1, 2022 at 2:06 PM

Here is another good entry on Cyrenaic philosophy from online Britannica:

Quote

Cyrenaic, adherent of a Greek school of [moral philosophy](#), active around the turn of the 3rd century bc, which held that the [pleasure](#) of the moment is the [criterion](#) of goodness and that the good life consists in rationally manipulating situations with a view to their hedonistic (or pleasure-producing) utility.

The school was called Cyrenaic because [Cyrene](#) in [North Africa](#) was the centre of its activity and the birthplace of several of its members. Although the elder [Aristippus](#), a pupil of [Socrates](#), was generally recognized as its founder, its flourishing occurred at a later date, probably at the end of the 4th century bc.

According to the Cyrenaics, a man knows that things external to himself exist because they have an effect upon him, but he can know nothing about their nature. All that he can perceive is the way in which he himself is affected by them; how other men are affected is unknown. The fact that two men give the same name to their experiences is no guarantee of identity. Thus, the only admissible objective of action is to ensure that one's own affections are pleasant. The three possible conditions of the human constitution are violent change, gentle change, and [stability](#). The first is accompanied by [pain](#), the second by pleasure, the last by neither. Man must avoid the first and seek the second; it is a mistake to suppose that the third is pleasant or desirable. Moreover, the pleasure to be sought is that of the moment; only present experience can give present pleasure. Happiness, the sum of pleasures, is to be valued because it includes momentary pleasures, which are like in kind, their relative value depending only on their intensity. Bodily pleasures (and pains) are more intense than those of the mind. Nevertheless, the latter were recognized and even held to include some that have an altruistic aspect; e.g., joy in the prosperity of one's country. To be stronger than pleasure is a true Socratic ideal and distinguishes the Cyrenaic from the wastrel.

Three Cyrenaics made [innovations](#) important enough to give their names to followers. Theodorus denied that pleasures and pains are good or bad. His aim was mental cheerfulness and the gift of wisdom, which he considered sufficient for [happiness](#). Hegesias, like Theodorus, doubted the power of reason to procure pleasures and so advised avoidance of pain; much pain of mind could be avoided by regarding such things as poverty and riches, slavery and freedom, death and life as matters of indifference. Finally, [Anniceris](#) revived the original doctrines with some additions.

The [ethical](#) doctrines of the later Cyrenaics were, in due time, incorporated bodily into the teachings of [Epicurus](#), founder of a later school of ethical [philosophy](#).

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With all this good material, I am thinging a table of comparisons could be created.