

Gosling & Taylor, The Greeks on Pleasure.

Post by "Cassius" of June 23, 2020 at 7:21 AM

So I am thinking of this in terms of it being a "winner gets to write the history" problem.

Any advocate of pleasure has a legitimate and important question to answer in deciding how to weigh "time"

into the equation. Is it generally better for pleasure to be longer in time? Probably yes. Is it ALWAYS a requirement or a standard that the longest pleasure is the best pleasure? Probably no.

So the Cyreniacs point out that all we really have is the present, and that it makes sense to prioritize the present.

So Epicurus points out that we most of the time have a reasonable expectation of life over time, so it makes sense to focus on making sure our pleasant pleasures do not create future pain that offsets and "outweighs" our pleasant pleasures.

Both are legitimate positions that have an important role in debating specific logical issues in regard to pleasure, and they do not necessarily conflict with each other.

But because the anti-pleasure zealots won the competition and their textbooks survived, these points are pulled out of context and caricatured to make them appear to be the central thrust of their respective philosophies:

The Cyreniacs are ridiculed for ignoring future consequences of their actions in a way that is easily caricatured as an "eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die" position which is probably not an accurate reflection of what they taught.

The Epicureans are ridiculed for taking a "simple pleasures are always better" approach that is easily caricatured as a "better a hundred years as a sheep than a day as a lion" position which is also probably not an accurate reflection of what they taught.

One thing I do assert as true as of my experience in having lived to June, 2020: There is absolutely nothing in world history that should be taken at face value. Virtually everything that is written or discussed "today" has been distorted and misrepresented to serve the interests of the "winners" in the competitions of the "past." So we have to work very hard to drill down if we are going to uncover the truth about what people in the past really thought, or people in the present really think.