

Gosling & Taylor, The Greeks on Pleasure.

Post by "Charles" of June 25, 2020 at 3:26 PM

Perhaps we should make a new thread concerning the Cyrenaics, as I have a lot of material and small tidbits of information on them, as they're of huge fascination to me, contrary to popular belief, and perhaps some on this forum. I am inclined to believe that Epicurus took more inspiration and likeness towards the Cyrenaics than is often admitted.

As for the key differences between their approach to pleasure, where the Cyrenaics believed in only the pleasure of the moment whereas Epicurus believed in pleasures recollected and anticipated further and constant pleasure in the long run (not to be confused with time spent). Just as the Epicurean Canon is essential for understanding Epicurean ethics, so too must we understand the epistemology of Aristippus & his most immediate followers.

The first Cyrenaics were "empiric-skeptics", believing with certainty that your senses are accurate to what you are currently experiencing. But they do not regard the state, or properties of what they are sensing, and do not believe that knowledge can extend beyond your current state of sensational feeling. I had a brief conversation with someone on the subject of Cyrenaic pleasures & ataraxia quite a few months ago, and he cited a position taken by a researcher, that this sensation extant in only the moment becomes a verb, so that the experience of seeing yellow becomes "I am being yellowed", or to a more accurate example: "I am being pleased", "I am pleased", etc.

With this in mind, its perfectly clear why the Cyrenaics would deny the possibility of pleasure that could be experienced with the mind, and thus, when the present has not occurred, in essence, a "static" pleasure, since as we have discussed, and made known, pleasure and pain to the first Cyrenaics, only consisted in smooth and rough motions.