

Abstract

Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 3.8 presents a dialogue in which Aristippus of Cyrene questions Socrates on the nature of the 'good' (ἀγαθόν) and the 'fine' (καλόν). Socrates' answer is often thought to depend on a kind of Protagorean relativism, as he maintains that the same thing is both good and bad, fine and ugly. The dialogue concludes unexpectedly with Socrates pronouncing on the art of building houses that are both fine *and* useful – with provisions made for cool summers and warm winters. This paper argues for the centrality of Cyrenaic philosophy to contextualize the dialogue's argument and themes. As the founder of a philosophical school that prioritizes pleasure, Aristippus embodies a position that Xenophon's Socrates subtly but decisively critiques. I suggest that the dialogue functions as a sustained refutation of the ethical and epistemological foundations of Cyrenaicism through a) a strategic repurposing of Cyrenaic relativism and b) an argument concerning the fallibility of hedonic judgment. It is widely accepted that Aristippus' philosophy of hedonism is at stake in their first interaction in *Memorabilia* 2.1. That recognition, I argue, should be extended to their discussion on what is good and fine as well.

Bio

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