

Eudoxus of Cnidus - Advocate of Pleasure Prior To Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of August 1, 2024 at 10:07 AM

Eudoxus appears to be one of the major advocates of Pleasure as the highest good prior to Epicurus - and perhaps someone more even more appropriate to compare to Epicurus than Aristippus. Here is an opening discussion of Eudoxus from Gosling & Taylor's "The Greeks on Pleasure:"

Quote

3. Eudoxus 8.3.1.

At the time of the [Philebus](#), then, Plato is encountering two anti-hedonist positions, each backed by a theory of the nature of pleasure. But the opposition in the [Philebus](#) is a hedonistic thesis, and one which Plato thinks it worth while to attack with a wealth of argument not given to the subject in any previous dialogue. Some extra stimulus had been given to discussions of pleasure. This (cf. DL VIII.86-91; Proclus, In Primum Euclidis Elementorum Librum Commen- tarii, B.39) was probably given by Eudoxus of Cnidus (cf. 7.1.4). According to Aristotle (EN 1172b9 ff.), he argued that pleasure is the good on the grounds that

- (i) all animals, including men, pursue it, and what all pursue is the good;
- (ii) all animals and men avoid pain as evil, and the opposite of pain, pleasure, must therefore be good;
- (iii) pleasure is never for the sake of something else: no one ever asks 'why enjoy yourself?';
- (iv) if pleasure is added to anything it makes it better.

He is also said (EN 1101b27-31) to have argued that pleasure is prized, not praised, just as the good is. The point here is not altogether clear, and Aristotle interprets Eudoxus rather than cites him. It is plausible, however, to suggest that the point is that with other goods we praise them because of the benefits they yield, whereas with pleasure this is not the case. This suggests that this consideration might have supported argument (iii) above. For it seems to suppose that whereas people might cite pleasure as what justifies their praise of X and so gives point to pursuing X, no one praises pleasure because there is no further reason for pursuing pleasure. This might

have been thought to imply, what Aristotle considers lacking in Eudoxus' position, that there is nothing that can be added to pleasure to make it (more) desirable.

8.3.2. At first sight this might seem to be a rehash of the hedonism of the Protagoras, but further consideration reveals important differences. To begin with, in the Protagoras Socrates is simply addressing himself to human beings, and his procedure is to challenge an honest man to acknowledge any other final end. Eudoxus, on the other hand, relies on the supposed observation that all animals, whether rational or not, pursue pleasure, and this is regarded as supporting the conclusion that pleasure is the good (compare EN 1172b9— 15, 1172b35-1173a5). In other words pleasure is not shown just to be one goal among many, because the goal of one species, but to be the sole claimant to the title of goal with any goal-pursuing being. He also supports this with an argument from general pain-avoidance and the consideration that pain is opposed to pleasure. While arguments (iii) and (iv) doubt- less rely on facts about human beings' judgements they are not found at all in the Protagoras. Of course, in so far as 'pleasure' is taken in the Protagoras to mean 'maximization of pleasure' it will follow that no one will be able to supply a further end to give point to pursuing pleasure; but it is perfectly possible to ask of any individual pleasure what the good of pursuing it is. The point is not, however, made in Eudoxan terms, by appeal to the fact that no one asks a given question. Similarly it will follow from the Protagoras view that an addition of pleasure will make something better; but again, Socrates does not start with that as a premise, but works to it as a conclusion.

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Eudoxus of Cnidus (/ˈjuːdəksəs/; **Ancient Greek:** Εὐδοξος ὁ Κνίδιος, *Eúdoxos ho Knídios*; c. 390 – c. 340 BC) was an [ancient Greek astronomer](#), [mathematician](#), doctor, and lawmaker.^[1] He was a student of [Archytas](#) and [Plato](#). All of his original works are lost, though some fragments are preserved in [Hipparchus'](#) *Commentaries on the Phenomena of Aratus* and *Eudoxus*.^[2] [Spherics](#) by [Theodosius of Bithynia](#) may be based on a work by Eudoxus.