

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.

Post by “Cassius” of August 1, 2024 at 10:45 AM

Diogenes Laertius on Eudoxus:

LIFE OF EUDOXUS.[¶]

I. Eudoxus was the son of Æschines, and a native of Cnidus. He was an astronomer, a geometrician, a physician,[373] and a lawgiver. In geometry he was a pupil of Archytas, and in medicine of Philistion, the Sicilian, as Callimachus relates in his Tablets; and Sotion, in his Successions, asserts that he was likewise a pupil of Plato; for that, when he was twenty-three years of age, and in very narrow circumstances, he came to Athens with Theomedon the physician, by whom he was chiefly supported, being attracted by the reputation of the Socratic school. Some say that his attachment to Theomedon was cemented by nearer ties. And when he had arrived at Piræus, he went up to the city every day, and when he had heard the Sophists lecture he returned. And having spent two months there, he returned home again; and being again aided by the contributions of his friends, he set sail for Egypt, with Chrysippus the physician, bearing letters of introduction from Agesilaus to Nectanabis, and that he recommended him to the priests.

II. And having remained there a year and four months, he shaved his eyebrows after the manner of the Egyptian priests, and composed, as it is said, the treatise called the Octaeteris. From thence he went to Cyzicus, and to the Propontis, in both of which places he lived as a Sophist; he also went to the court of Mausolus. And then, in this manner, he returned again to Athens, having a great many disciples with him, for the sake, as some say, of annoying Plato, because he had originally discarded him from his school. Some say, that when Plato gave an entertainment on one occasion, Eudoxus, as the guests were very numerous, introduced the fashion of sitting in a semicircle.

Nicomachus, the son of Aristotle, affirms that he used to say, that pleasure was the good.

III. He was received in his own country with great honours, as the decree that was passed respecting him shows. He was also accounted very illustrious among the Greeks, having given laws to his own fellow citizens, as Hermippus tells us in the fourth book of his account of the Seven Wise Men; and having also written treatises on Astronomy and Geometry, and several other considerable works.

He had three daughters, Actis, Philtis, and Delphis. And Eratosthenes asserts, in his books addressed to Baton, that he also composed dialogues entitled Dialogues of Dogs; others say that these were written by some Egyptians, in their own[374] language, and that Eudoxus translated them, and published them in Greece. One of his pupils was Chrysippus, of Cnidos, son of Erineus, who learnt of him all that he knew about the Gods, and the world, and the heavenly bodies; and who learnt medicine from Philistion the Sicilian. He also left some very admirable Reminiscences.

IV. He had a son of the name of Aristagoras, who was the teacher of Chrysippus, the son of Aëthlius; he was the author of a work on Remedies for the Eyes, as speculations on natural philosophy had come very much under his notice.

V. There were three people of the name of Eudoxus. The first, this man of whom we are speaking; the second, a Rhodian, who wrote histories; the third, a Siciliot, a son of Agathocles, a comic poet, who gained three victories at the Dionysia in the city, and five at the Lenæa,[\[119\]](#) as Apollodorus tells us in his Chronicles. We also find another, who was a physician of Cnidos, who is mentioned by this Eudoxus, in his Circuit of the World, where he says that he used to warn people to keep constantly exercising their limbs in every kind of exercise, and their senses too.

VI. The same author says, that the Cnidean Eudoxus flourished about the hundred and third olympiad; and that he was the inventor of the theory of crooked lines. And he died in his fifty-third year. But when he was in Egypt with Conuphis, of Heliopolis, Apis licked his garment; and so the priests said that he would be short-lived, but very illustrious, as it is reported by Phavorinus in his Commentaries. And we have written an epigram on him, that runs thus:—

'Tis said, that while at Memphis wise Eudoxus
Learnt his own fate from th' holy fair-horned bull;
He said indeed no word, bulls do not speak
Nor had kind nature e'er calf Apis gifted
With an articulately speaking mouth.
But standing on one side he lick'd his cloak,
Showing by this most plainly—in brief time
You shall put off your life. So death came soon,
When he had just seen three and fifty times
The Pleiads rise to warn the mariners.

[375]

And instead of Eudoxus, they used to call him Endoxus,[\[120\]](#) on account of the brilliancy of his reputation. And since we have gone through the illustrious Pythagoreans, we must now speak of the Promiscuous philosophers, as they call them. And we will first of all speak of Heraclitus.

Post by “TauPhi” of July 1, 2025 at 9:52 PM

I think it's worthwhile to provide the beginning of Part 2 in Book X from Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics' (EN X, 2, 1172b) to show Eudoxus' views on pleasure. It's chronologically interesting taking into consideration that Eudoxus had died a year before Epicurus was born.

Quote

That pleasure is the Good was held by Eudoxus, on the following grounds. He saw that all creatures, rational and irrational alike, seek to obtain it; but in every case (he argued) that which is desirable is good, and that which is most desirable is the best; therefore the fact that all creatures 'move in the direction of' 1) the same thing indicates that this thing is the Supreme Good for all (since everything finds its own particular good, just as it finds its own proper food); but that which is good for all, and which all seek to obtain, is the Good.

His arguments owed their acceptance however more to the excellence of his character than to their own merit. He had the reputation of being a man of exceptional temperance, and hence he was not suspected of upholding this view because he was a lover of pleasure, but people thought it must really be true.

He also held that the goodness of pleasure was equally manifest from the converse: pain is intrinsically an object of avoidance to all, therefore its opposite must be intrinsically an object of desire to all.

Again, he argued that that thing is most desirable which we choose not as a means to or for the sake of something else; but such admittedly is pleasure: we never ask a man for what purpose he indulges in pleasure - we assume it to be desirable in itself.

He also said that the addition of pleasure to any good - for instance, just or temperate conduct - makes that good more desirable; but only the good can enhance the good.

1) As we should say, 'gravitate towards.' Eudoxus, an unorthodox pupil of Plato, was an astronomer, and seems to have imported physical terminology into Ethics.

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Post by "Eikadistes" of July 2, 2025 at 9:32 AM

GREAT find!

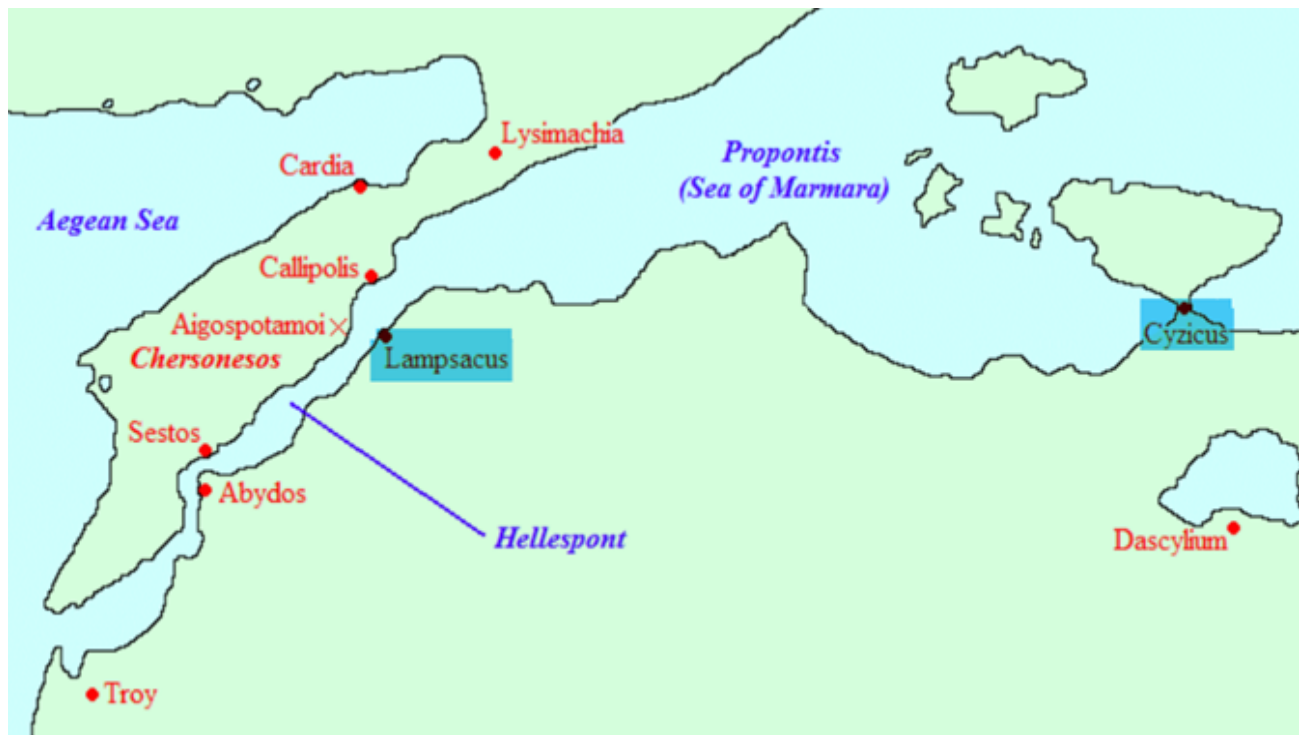
Post by “sanantoniogarden” of July 2, 2025 at 2:37 PM

Thank you for sharing this!

Post by “Bryan” of July 2, 2025 at 9:19 PM

A quote of Sedley [From this article.](#)

"According to Timocrates, Epicurus insulted the Cyzicenes... ..Eudoxus of Cnidos, the great mathematical astronomer and associate of Plato, taught for a period at Cyzicus, and produced there several distinguished pupils. One of these, Polemarchus, in turn became the teacher of Callippus of Cyzicus, who was later to move to Athens and exert a profound influence on Aristotle's astronomical thinking. All this points to an established Eudoxan school at Cyzicus, which our fragment suggests was still going strong in Epicurus' day."



Post by “TauPhi” of July 3, 2025 at 11:09 AM

Thank you, [Bryan](#)