

# Euthydemus

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Plato

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**Plato**



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## EUTHYDEMUS

an English version by Christopher Kirwan adapted from Plato's dialogue

This podcast contains a performance of the *Euthydemus* in an English adaptation. The idea behind it was to have a group of faculty and students impersonate Plato's characters but in their own contemporary setting. The group was assembled at Princeton University in 1958, where I made the English version. In Plato's original the main characters are Socrates and two sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus who are visitors to Athens. Socrates here becomes Professor Carl Hempel, at that time doyen of the Princeton Philosophy Department, and the sophists become John Lucas and Richard Sykes who (like me) were young British visitors lodged in Princeton's Graduate College and pursuing studies in philosophy. Plato's other parts are for interested bystanders, and they get represented here by Professor C.C. Pratt of the Princeton Psychology Department as Socrates' crony Crito, and Donald Clemons, another Graduate College resident (he was studying chemical engineering) as the young and—in his acting part—irascible Ctesippus. The sixth and last character, Cleinias, who is Ctesippus' inamorato, was transformed for the sake of verisimilitude into a woman, but that part could not be taken by a Princeton student because in those days the place was all male. So what we did was recruit the wife of a faculty member to play the part under the assumed name of 'Valerie Stevens'.

The performance took place on 10 April 1958 and was recorded on to a reel-to-reel tape recorder. Its tape has survived, and thanks to modern wizardry has been converted stage by stage into what you will hear. Many have helped in the process of conversion, but acknowledgement and grateful thanks are due especially to Andy Davies of the Oxford Philosophy Faculty, and others at the Oxford University Computing Services where the final product was made. Age must excuse the sound quality of what emerges from all their work. Of the six performers two are no longer alive, but from the others (with two of whom I am happily still in regular contact) it has been possible to gain consent for this project.

The version's aim was to convey the intellectual level of Plato's dialogue which, helped along by Socratic 'irony', is often low and declines gradually (but it is hard to say just where) into deliberate badinage. It is no good as a version for the study of Plato's thought, for three reasons: the translations that were adopted of some of his key philosophical vocabulary (e.g. *epistasthai*, *adikia*, *esti*) can only be described as carefree; his examples are often distorted for 20th century effect (e.g. sputnik—then a few months old, Law Professors at the end, and many other instances); and the dramatic purpose has sometimes led to mere paraphrase.

A couple of other things need to be said by way of introduction. One is that the typescript from which these Princeton performers were reading is no longer in my hands, and I don't know whether any copy of it survives. However, I do possess a revised typescript, produced a decade later with the help of my pupil Michael Preston for a second performance which took place on 14 March 1968 at Exeter College, Oxford. Then the cast and setting were new, and some improvements were made to the translation; but the tape that was recorded on that Oxford occasion is now unreadable.

The other and final preliminary is this. As you start listening you may be perplexed about Professor Pratt. The explanation is that he comes in as part of a

framework, in which he converses with Hempel at the beginning, middle and end of the dialogue. In between these conversations Hempel—that is, Socrates—switches to reporting in direct speech the substance of the dialogue which he had heard and joined among the other characters. Professor Pratt speaks first.

Christopher Kirwan  
Oxford, 2011

Characters in order of their appearance:

Professor C.C. Pratt	reads the part of	Crito, a crony of Socrates
Professor Carl Hempel	reads the part of	Socrates
John Lucas,	reads the part of	Euthydemus, a sophist
Donald Clemons	reads the part of	Ctesippus, a young man
Richard Sykes	reads the part of	Dionysodorus, a sophist
Carlotta Sherwood (as Valerie Stevens)	reads the part of	Cleinias, Ctesippus' beloved

The performance lasts about 70 minutes. Here it is divided into tracks of between 3 and 8 minutes each. Stephanus page and section numbers are given below for those who wish to match their listening with Plato's text

Track 1	271a 1 – 272d. 6	Pratt asks Hempel about the sophists Hempel begins to report his encounter with them:
Track 2	272d 7 – 275b 4	Hempel inquires into the sophists' profession
Track 3	275b 5 – 278e 1	the sophists set to work on Valerie: Is learning possible?
Track 4	278e 2 – 282d 3	Hempel questions Valerie: Intelligence ( <i>sophia</i> ) alone is really good
Track 5	282d 4 – 285a 1	the sophists tackle Hempel; Clemons is nettled
Track 6	285a 2 – 288b 2	more with Clemons: Falsehood is impossible
Track 7	288b 3 – 290d 8	Hempel resumes with Valerie: Which mastery ( <i>episteme</i> ) is best?
Track 8	290e 1 – 293a 9	Hempel reports to Pratt, and then the encounter resumes
Track 9	293b 1– 296e 3	Hempel, the sophists, Clemons: Being competent ( <i>epistemon</i> ; have ability= <i>epistasthai</i> )
Track 10	296e 4 – 300d 9	the same: Identity and predication
Track 11	300e 1 – 304b 5	Hempel is enmeshed
Track 12	304b 6 – end	Hempel comments to Pratt